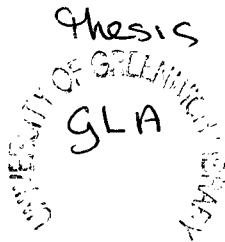# A COMPARISON OF 16 TO 19 YEAR OLD STUDENT EXPERIENCES, IN RURAL AND URBAN SCHOOLS, FE AND SIXTH FORM COLLEGES.

Karen Glanville

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Greenwich for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

September 2004

Declaration

I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not currently submitted for any degree other than that of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) of the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise stated.

Signed: Karen Glanville   Dr. Patrick Ainley

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Date: Date:

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Tables and Figures[1]

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[1] Not including photographs

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank many people for helping me either directly or indirectly with the planning, carrying out and writing up of this thesis. Firstly, of course, everyone at Greenwich University, but especially my supervisors, Patrick Ainley, Geoff Stanton and Bill Bailey: without all of you, and especially Patrick, I might well have given up long ago, so I thank you not just for your academic expertise but also for keeping me going and remaining enthusiastic and helpful even when it seemed I might never finish.

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I also want to thank my family, particularly my parents, Betty and Jack Glanville, for all their moral and practical support, and for believing in me enough to give me the self-confidence to continue, even when it was not easy to do so. Thanks also go to my friends, who provided invaluable support during the hardest times: Helen, for example, for lending me her laptop; Jacquie for caring for me when I was not able to do so for myself, and others too numerous to mention who helped in many other ways. Also James, who has supported me every step of the way, and who, as well as giving unstinting love and moral support, has also taught me how to use a scanner, how to install an internal cd-rw drive, and perhaps most importantly, how to keep things in perspective.

Abstract

This study investigates the experiences of 16- to 19-year old students in different educational environments: in school sixth forms, general FE colleges and a sixth form college, taking both A levels and Advanced GNVQs, and in rural (Cornwall) and urban (Southeast London) areas. Firstly, a framework for the study was established, with a consideration of the development of different courses and institutions from an historical perspective. A study of quantitative data, relating to the destinations of young people between the ages of 16 and 18, followed, including an in-depth look at the case-study areas of Southeast London and Cornwall. This lead into the main study, where interviews were carried out with 138 students, including 16 students who produced photographic diaries of their experiences, in nine institutions. These interviews and photographic diaries explored the experiences of the students in all aspects of their lives, including their time in education as well as their lives beyond the institutions.

On the basis of the interviews and diaries, students were classified as either jugglers (those who mixed studying with other interests); workers (those who focussed mainly on their studies) or players (those who did not put a great emphasis on their studies). It was discovered that there were more jugglers in schools, and more players in FE colleges, with figures for the sixth form college falling roughly between the two extremes.

Several differences were noted between students in rural and urban areas; for example, as those in relatively remote areas were often forced to remain at the school or college throughout the day, regardless of free periods, both the educational and

social aspects of their lives were altered accordingly. There were fewer differences between those on GNVQ and A level courses, although there were more players among those on GNVQ courses. Although students taking GNVQs and A levels reported different preferred learning activities, the subject had more of an effect on the teaching style used than the type of course, with both GNVQ and A level students typically experiencing similar classroom activities. Students in FE colleges were less likely to report feeling tired or stressed than those in schools and sixth form colleges, but were also more likely to complain that they were not pushed enough by the college, and were therefore not realising their full potential. The implications of these, and other results, are discussed, with suggestions for further research.

For my parents.

Chapter 1

Introduction

There are currently in excess of 400,000 students aged 16 to 18 in full-time further education[1] in England and Wales (DES, 2003); despite this extremely large number there is little research to date on this cohort (see, for example, Cantor and Roberts, 1986 and Gleeson, 2001). Education research has instead tended to concentrate on the primary, secondary and higher education sectors (although even then rarely discussing the 'student experience') with the 'poor sibling' of further education (Owain James, 2002), being deemed less important for research purposes. It is difficult to understand why this is the case, as the government has been keen to set targets for increasing the number of students staying on in education until the age of 18, and also for raising achievement levels in under-19 year olds: the original national learning targets were for 85% of 19 year olds to reach Level 2, and 60% of 21 year olds to reach Level 3, by 2002, but these were later revised as it became apparent they were unrealistic. The target of 85% of 19 year olds to have achieved a Level 2 qualification by 2004 was also revised to a three percentage point increase on the achievement in 2002 (Blunkett, 2000) but still represents a large increase in the number of young people remaining in education after the age of 16.

As well as being a sector in its own right, further education is also the stepping stone to higher education, which the government is also keen to expand, setting a target of

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[1] Throughout the thesis, unless otherwise stated, the term 'further education' is used to refer to all education for 16 to 19 year olds, including that in school sixth forms. FE, tertiary, specialist and sixth form colleges.

50% of all young people aged 18-30 having experienced higher education by 2010 (DES, 2001), so it is therefore even more difficult to understand the lack of investigation in this area.

Of the research which has been carried out in the further education area, much has been small scale, based on just one college or school sixth form or one area of interest, or has simply been descriptive (Dunne, 1983). In his notorious lecture to the Teacher Training Agency in 1996, David Hargreaves criticised research in education in general, claiming that: 'Education researchers write mainly for one another in their countless academic journals, which are not to be found in the school staffroom' (Hargreaves, 1996). It is therefore difficult to find research which is evidence-based, well designed and rigorous in method and procedure, and yet has some relevance to the teaching community, students themselves, or parents. The present research attempts to cross the boundaries between small-scale, local, policy-driven research, into larger scale, methodologically sound, generalisable research, yet also hopes to be relevant to not only policy makers, lecturers and college management, but also, in parts, to the students themselves and their parents.

This thesis examines the student experience, by using in-depth interviews (both individual and small group) with a total of 138 students aged 16-19 in full-time further education, either in a school sixth form, an FE college, or a sixth form college, in both an urban and a rural location.

One question which has been overlooked by many researchers is what the students are actually gaining from their time in further education, apart from academic

qualifications - what are their experiences, and what are they actually learning? It is easy to compare institutions in terms of their results, or even value-added results, but it is less easy to compare what the students really get out of their time at a particular school or college, and this is perhaps the most important factor for many. As much knowledge and developing skills are never examined, and therefore do not appear in any league tables, it needs a deeper, qualitative study to uncover the experiences of students and to ascertain what they are really learning. The current study looks not only at the pass-rates of students at different types of institution, but also at other achievements of the students therein, including extra-curricular activities, part-time employment and informal learning opportunities. Many researchers approaching this area from a sociological perspective would claim that attendance at a particular institution and performance at that institution are dependent heavily on social class: working-class students are more likely to attend an FE college, take vocational qualifications and not achieve highly, whereas middle-class students would be more likely to remain in a school sixth form, take A levels, and achieve better results. Although there is evidence to support this (see Chapters Two and Three), the present research looks beyond the class issue, and instead takes a psychological viewpoint, attempting to investigate individual student experiences of their time in further education. One of the reasons for this was, as will be seen in Chapter Four, when students were asked about social class, the vast majority did not have an opinion on the matter, and could not even estimate their own class. For these students then, class was apparently not an immediate issue in their everyday lives, and although the forces of class might be at work below the surface, the students themselves were unaware of this. It has also been hypothesised (for example, Wright 1984) that some statuses, such as students, have 'contradictory class locations' in which they share attributes of

the classes above and below them, and from which individuals may transfer either up or down the class hierarchy. However, as Roberts et al (1977) speculated, young people may lack class consciousness until later in life. Alternatively, Savage (2003) proposed a 'new class paradigm', whereby the upper class and underclass are separated by a new-middle-working class. In that case, students belonging to this new class would be less aware of the divisions of class immediately around them, and just be conscious of themselves in relation to those in the classes above and below them. This idea is supported by the comments referring to the 'snobs and yobs' as reported in Ainley and Bailey (1997).

As mentioned above, many researchers in the field of post-compulsory education focus on one, relatively small, aspect of the area: Hemsley-Brown (1999) for example concentrated on the reasons students gave for choosing a particular college and course. Hemsley-Brown herself commented that although there had been a great deal of research on choices of school at the age of 11 (for example, Stillman and Maychell, 1986; Hunter, 1991; Reay and Ball, 1997) there was relatively little research on choices made at sixteen. Hemsley-Brown found that although students made considered decisions about their continuing education at 16, they did not always take into consideration the information which it was supposed they relied upon, such as college marketing campaigns and parental pressure. Without such research, the behaviour of this distinct group could not be predicted, and as such it is extremely valuable.

Martinez and Munday (1998) completed a large scale study, collecting data from over 9,000 students at 31 different colleges, but again they looked at only one aspect of the

education experience, that of persistence and drop-out. Retention is obviously an important subject, with implications for both students' opportunities, and the funding for the institution concerned. This study concluded, as did several other similar, smaller-scale studies (for example, FEDA, 1998) that levels of student satisfaction in a number of areas correlated strongly with rates of student dropout and persistence. In particular, students' attitudes to their experiences at college were important factors in determining whether a student remained at college throughout some personal difficulties. Similarly, Davies (1999) found that 'student decisions to complete their programmes of study were less strongly influenced by demography and other factors external to the college, than they were by students' attitudes to their experiences at college'. From studies on one aspect of further education, retention and persistence, therefore, researchers have discovered that a student's experience of college is important enough to determine whether he or she finishes their course, and thus is worthy of research for this reason as well as in its own right.

Ainley and Bailey (1997) investigated experiences within the further education sector, comparing just two FE colleges, and questioning not only students but lecturing and management staff as well, to create an overall impression of the colleges. They could not be said to have given an overview of the entire sector, nor was that their aim. Instead they provided a detailed look at how colleges work, and the experiences of people at different levels of the learning hierarchy, from students to managers. Again, no comparisons were made between the colleges and other types of institutions in the sector.

Bloomer and Hodkinson (1997) also looked at student experiences, and took a larger scale approach to their research, questioning 79 students in different types of institution, including a sixth form college, tertiary college and general FE college, in a longitudinal study. They looked at the experience of college life from the students' viewpoints, focussing on the transitions from school to FE (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1997) and also their experiences of learning (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1999). Although these studies were wide ranging and took into account many of the criticisms levelled at previous research, again there were no comparisons with students who had remained in school sixth forms, and the amount of data on the students' lives outside the classroom was limited. Also, there was no differentiation made between rural, urban or suburban areas, and they admitted that the 'selection of students within the overall sampling frame was done on the basis of "interesting cases". We did not seek a representative sample but one which offered the maximum richness and diversity of students' experiences of learning in FE, including the apparently ordinary' (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1997, p.8). The original interviews took place while the students were still in compulsory education, and the follow-up interviews involved only 50 students, a relatively small number given they were spread across three types of college and three types of course (A level or International Baccalaureate courses; GNVQ Advanced or equivalent courses, and other full-time post-16 courses).

The current research seeks to take the best features from past research into similar areas, and to investigate as many facets as possible of the experiences of young people in post-compulsory education. Although a longitudinal study has not been possible, due to time and resource limitations, students from different institutions, in

different parts of the country, and on different courses, can be questioned as to their experiences both within and outside of the educational setting. A young person's life is made up of many facets, and the educational establishment attended and the course taken is only part of that life at this age. It is, however, expected that the academic life of a student would have some effect on the rest of their life, and as such the whole of their life should be examined to determine if this is the case. Therefore an holistic, approach is taken in the current research, with the whole person being examined, rather than just the educational aspects of the students' lives, as is often the case. To this end, a photographic diary method was used (see Chapter 4), in conjunction with semi-structured interviews (both group and individual), and a broadly humanistic psychological approach was taken throughout. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' was also found a valuable aid to analysis, and will be discussed in more detail below.

As well as looking at the whole experience of post-compulsory education from the viewpoint of the student, this study also makes comparisons which have so far been lacking in the literature on further education: firstly that of the differences in further education in rural and urban areas; secondly a direct comparison between institution types, taking general FE colleges, sixth form colleges and school sixth forms into account, and thirdly a comparison between students on different courses, including A-levels and GNVQ students. All these areas are examined through the interviews and photographic diaries which the students produced.

The rural-urban differences may well make the student experience a very different one depending on the part of the country in which the student lives. For example, a 17 year old in a London college may well be able to visit shops or go home during free

periods, whereas a student in a remote Cornish college would have to remain in college all day, waiting to catch a college bus home at 4-30, despite his or her lessons finishing at midday. These differences would lead to very different experiences of further education for the students concerned. Students in urbanised areas would also have greater opportunities to make use of museums, art galleries and the like, whereas students in relatively remote, rural areas would perhaps need more organised trips in order to visit such places. Students and institutions throughout the country have generally been treated as one homogenous sector, with little thought given to possible differences in different parts of the country. These differences mean the government should instead think of introducing localised policy decisions, rather than national changes which are inflexible and in some cases not useful or sensible. The setting up of the 47 local Learning and Skills Councils is perhaps the first step towards such a move, and as such should be encouraged.

As mentioned above, much of the research which has been carried out in this area has concentrated on either colleges: FE (for example, Ainley and Bailey, 1997), tertiary or sixth form (for example, Davies, 2002 and Lumby et al, 2002), or on school sixth forms, with few comparisons being made between the different types of institution. The government has encouraged sixth form centres in FE colleges, and there has been some research to date on this type of arrangement (see, for example, Morris et al, 1999), but it has not been explicitly compared to other provision in similar areas. This study looks at one FE college which offers a sixth form centre in a rural setting, and also a general FE college in an urban setting which has an academic centre. A small school sixth form which had been open for less than one full academic year, as well as several large, well-established school sixth forms were also visited and investigated.

According to recent government reports, small school sixth forms are not viable as the results are poor and only a small choice of subjects can be offered, but this study asks if the smaller school sixth forms have other benefits to students which are not as easily measured. If so, there could be an argument for keeping them open in certain cases, especially in rural areas where there might be a long journey to the nearest provider if the school sixth form was to be closed.

At a time of the introduction of new qualifications and a new curriculum it is also necessary to compare students on different courses and to consider their experiences. The introduction of key skills for all 16-18 year old students, for example, has been a major development for further education, and although not all educational institutions offer the certificate, in theory all students should have access to the key skills lessons if they wish to do so. As these were an integral part of the GNVQ, it is interesting to note what the old GNVQ students felt about the key skills, and how they felt they could be made better and more relevant. The introduction of Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs), in place of the old GNVQ qualifications, is also an important step. Another question which needs to be addressed is how students on different types of courses view those on other courses: in particular, do they perceive the parity of esteem between general, academic and vocational routes which the government has been trying to create? And if not, would it be desirable or possible to achieve this sense of equality between the routes, and could it be accomplished? This study provides a snapshot in time of the state of further education directly before the advent of Curriculum 2000. This is important to serve as a comparison of before and after the initiative, in order to determine if Curriculum 2000 has added anything in

terms of the experience of the student, and if there has been an improvement under the new regime.

The thesis therefore, examines in great detail the lives of the students who took part, by asking them about all the aspects of their lives, such as their attitudes to education, their reasons for choosing their courses and institutions, their social lives, their financial positions and their part-time jobs, as well as many other areas.

A crucial aid to the analysis of this data, is that of Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'. Habitus breaks with subjectivism (the belief that we have free will to act, regardless of any laws or societal restrictions), stressing that 'all human action is situated within determining structures that are not readily available to everyday consciousness, but must be constructed by the social scientist.' (Shwartz, 1997, p.57). Although we feel we experience free will, our actions follow patterns and are often predictable, and Bourdieu's concept of habitus attempts to explain why that should be so. One's habitus can be thought of as all one's past experiences, one's background and the way in which one has been brought up, which then shapes the way in which one thinks about the world, one's expectations, one's behaviour, and one's concept of normality. An early definition of habitus was as follows:

> "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems" (Bourdieu, 1971, p.83).

A later definition ran as follows:

"a system of durable transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53).

Thus, each of us has our own habitus, unique to our personal situation, and dependent on many things, including our gender, our social class, our age, where we live, and the way in which we were brought up. Within our habitus, some things seem normal to us, whereas to people with a different habitus, they would seem peculiar. In a rural area for example, many people would think nothing of waiting an hour for a bus, whereas city dwellers would become impatient after no more than 15 minutes, perhaps. Both sets of people would think their behaviour was normal, however, as it is what they have been used to, and do not need to comprehend life any differently. Many people feel that social class has the greatest effect on habitus, with each class having its own distinct habitus, but Bourdieu himself cautioned against this view, instead thinking in terms of gender, age and education as well as social status (Shwartz, 1997, p. 39). He uses the image of a flame 'whose edges are in constant movement' to best illustrate the idea that there are no 'clear-cut boundaries' or 'absolute breaks' in the social world, no more than in the physical world (Bourdieu, 1987, p.13). Having said that, however, Bourdieu does use the concept of class extensively, stating that although habituses can change over time, some are more durable than others, with lower-middle class habitus less resistant to change than working-class habitus, for example (Schwartz, 1997, p.107). Nevertheless, Bourdieu makes the claim that:

"Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal!" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.133).

As well as each of us having our own habitus, whole communities can also be said to have their own habitus, thus a school, or a town, or an area, can have a distinct way of thinking, and a set of expectations and acceptable behaviours. These ideas are dealt with in more detail in chapters Six, Seven and Eight, and inform much of the analysis therein. For example, much of the behaviour and experiences of the students questioned can be understood more clearly by placing them in the context of their dominant habitus: either their institution, location, or family circumstances. It was not practical in most cases, in this research, to examine individual habituses, thus most of the analysis uses institutional habituses, related to the three main dimensions of comparison – rural or urban, vocational or academic, and school or college.

Overview of the thesis

The second chapter of the thesis sets the scene for the rest of the research, by charting the changes in the post-compulsory education sector from the turn of the last century until the present day, concentrating on aspects such as the development of different types of institution and the development of the curriculum as the system changed from a minority to mass participation.

The third chapter uses statistics to look at the changes in further education over the last ten years, bringing the history up to date, and assembling a frame into which the succeeding qualitative data rests. The participation rates of 16 to 18 year olds during this recent period are shown graphically and discussed, and the types of courses taken, as well as the institutions attended, are considered and patterns analysed. The two case-study areas used (Southeast London and Cornwall) are also described in more detail, with the destinations of 16 year olds in the two areas compared.

Chapter Four introduces the holistic and humanistic psychological approach and the methodology used in the present study, justifying the use of interviews and photographic diaries, as well as noting their advantages and disadvantages. The sampling method and characteristics of the sample are also presented, together with their limitations.

Chapter Five serves as a general introduction to the results sections, again creating a quantitative framework for the succeeding qualitative data. Each institution is described in terms of its size, position and examination results as well as entrance qualifications for each of the institutions visited are examined. Three basic types of student are identified to be developed more fully in the presentation of qualitative results in subsequent chapters.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight give the qualitative results from the study and as such form the major part of the thesis. They compare the experiences of rural and urban students (Chapter Six); GNVQ and A level students (Chapter Seven), and students in FE colleges, sixth form colleges and school sixth forms (Chapter Eight). In all three

chapters much use is made of quotations from the students as well as the photographs they took as part of their photographic diaries, and where relevant, the behaviours and perceptions of the students are located within the dominant habitus.

The final chapter brings the study to a conclusion, and also brings it up to date from pre- Curriculum 2000. The effects of the new curriculum and the new qualifications are discussed, as well as the applications of the research findings.

Chapter Two

Charting The Changes In English Post-Compulsory Education During The Twentieth Century.

Secondary education for all?

Post-compulsory education in this country in 1999 bore little, if any, resemblance to the sector at the beginning of this century: what was considered a privilege for the fortunate few was by then seen as a right for the majority. This chapter charts the move from a system of minority to mass participation, focussing on the major areas of change: the curriculum (both compulsory and post-compulsory); the introduction of comprehensive secondary schooling; the changing labour market; the introduction of full-time vocational courses; the raising of the school leaving age, first to 14, then to 15, then later to 16, and the development of new types of educational institutions.

At the end of the nineteenth century, although sixth forms developed in the 'great' public schools, such as Eton and Rugby, in most schools there was no education beyond the compulsory leaving age. At the time this was 14, with the allowance that pupils could work part-time from the age of 12, effectively ending the school career of many. There were two main types of school, elementary and secondary schools. Elementary education was almost entirely for the working class, with schools enrolling children at five and keeping them until 14. State secondary schools were intended for middle class families, and were mainly endowed grammar schools, which took children at the age of seven or eight, and kept them until 15 or over, with

all pupils paying fees. There was no common exam for pupils either at the end of their compulsory schooling, or following extended study; each university had its own entrance exam for students to take at 18, and each school delivered and tested its own curriculum. At this time few non-public schools prepared pupils for the university entrance exams, and only a tiny elite attended the sixth form (1% of 16 and 17 year olds in 1894 (Bryce Report, 1895)).

Until 1902, the School Boards had run the majority of schools, but the Education Act of 1902 meant that county and county borough councils had to supply all post-elementary, non-religious education. The secondary system was expanded, thus more children were able to receive a secondary education, although this was still mainly limited to middle class children. One attempt to remedy this came in the 1907 Free Place Regulations, which guaranteed that 25% of grammar school places were to be filled by scholarship pupils from elementary schools. By 1915, nearly one third of grammar school places were free, yet hidden costs, such as expensive uniforms, and the lack of a reliable wage, meant that the middle class domination of the grammar school continued relatively unchanged.

At the turn of the century, post-school education was mainly 'night-school' in technical colleges and adult education centres. The School Boards had begun to provide evening classes for school leavers and adults in the 1870s, but these were mainly for basic education. New Regulations in 1898 had led to an increase in student numbers, especially in advanced subjects, with two examination boards, the government's Department of Science and Art (DSA) and the City and Guild of London Institute (CGLI, later City and Guilds), taking the main responsibility for

these, mainly theoretical, courses. As these evening classes were voluntary and took place in addition to a full-time job, however, retention rates were low, and few remained on the nine month courses long enough to take the examination.

As well as changes in the institutions and administration of education at this time, curriculum changes were also taking place. In 1911 the Board of Education's Consultative Committee criticised the multiplicity of qualifications available, and in 1917 a unified system of leaving certificates was introduced. There were to be two certificates: the School Certificate to be taken at 16, and the Higher School Certificate for those who remained in school until 18. These can be compared to GCSEs and A levels, although the choice of subjects was more limited in the School Certificates than in the latter. For the Higher School Certificate, pupils could choose one of three areas of study: science and mathematics; classics and ancient history, or modern humanistic studies. Thus specialisation was enforced at the age of 16, when the student's curriculum was restricted to just one area (i.e. science, history or humanistic studies). Each school was to aim at providing at least one of the subject groups, with co-operation between schools leading to a mutual transfer of pupils at 16 if necessary - a similar arrangement to the consortiums of schools and colleges today.

It was not until the 1920s that a similar system was developed for those following vocational courses. There had been earlier attempts by the Board of Education to 'group' subjects into courses to be taken over two or three years, but the CGLI had resisted this development, and had continued to award craft level certificates to learners at the end of nine month courses. In the 1920s, however, National and Higher National Certificates and Diplomas were developed (ONCs, HNDs etc.) awarded

jointly by the Board of Education and professional bodies. These were higher than craft level and based on grouped courses, but were initially only available in the major technical colleges, and mostly by part-time evening attendance.

The first moves towards vocationalism

One of the main problems with the education system at this time, was the lack of choice for students up to the compulsory leaving age. The curriculum for those remaining in education after the compulsory leaving age (then 14) was even more restricted: at the time of the Second World War, the degree of specialisation in England and Wales was much higher than in other countries, such as France, Germany and the United States (University Grants Committee, 1936). The narrowness of the curriculum did nothing to raise the number of young people remaining in education after the age of 14, and deterred many from doing so: those who had not been interested in academic subjects up until this time had nothing to tempt them to stay in education longer, and employers did not favour those who achieved the Higher Certificate, instead preferring to employ either younger school leavers, or university graduates. Suggestions for a broader exam were seen by many (especially grammar school teachers) to threaten and undermine the whole idea of sixth form work, which was unique in its depth of study. As mentioned above, vocational options were virtually non-existent for full-time students, with the majority of vocational education taking place in evening classes. A few vocational courses started during the late 1930s, mainly in girls' schools, for those wanting a year's study before starting teaching or nursing, but these were not as respected as the School Certificates. In 1935 the Board of Education's Technological Branch surveyed technical education in England and Wales, and found provision to be patchy with some areas (mainly in the

North) being particularly poor. It made recommendations to bring all regions up to an acceptable level, but few were implemented, either due to financial hardships or a general indifference to technical education (Bailey, 2002). The outbreak of war in 1939 prevented any further developments in this area for some years.

The Spens Report (Board of Education, 1938) Report: 281) claimed one of its aims was to reduce class differentiation within state education, but the Spens Committee could not bring themselves to let go of one of the bastions of the middle class - the grammar school sixth form. The argument that grammar schools provided an 'escape route' for the working classes was reiterated in countless debates, despite the fact that many working-class children were still unable to make use of the grammar schools for the reasons given earlier. The Report also discouraged the idea of 11-16 grammar schools replacing any 11-18 schools, as it was felt that the sixth form added to the school atmosphere, and should not be eliminated:

> 'The sixth form is indeed the most characteristic and most valuable
>
> feature in a Grammar School in the training of character and a sense of
>
> responsibility, and on its existence depends all that is best in the
>
> grammar school tradition' (Ibid.: 166)

This stance is reminiscent of the position today, when, although paying lip-service to the idea that education should be equal for all pupils, politicians are reluctant to get rid of the few remaining grammar schools, nor are they willing to see the end of the 'gold star' qualifications, A levels, which are traditionally middle class examinations. The view of sixth formers as an academic and social elite derives partly from the public schools and older grammar schools: Arnold's great sixth forms still exist today in the state sector.

In 1944, grammar schools took approximately 20% of the age group in state schools, with 4% going to technical schools, and the remaining 76% remaining in elementary schools until they were 14, where they received a general education with a practical bias, and left with no qualifications, and no immediate opportunity for further study. The state education system at the start of the 1940s was therefore more bipartite than tripartite, with some areas not having any technical schools at all, and others being very poorly provided with technical education. Although, as mentioned above, the ONC and HNC had developed, local authorities had no duty to provide technical education, and this situation did not alter following the recommendations by the Percy Committee (Board of Education, 1945) that technical education should be expanded, with some local colleges developing degree courses.

It was assumed by many at this time that students continuing until 18 intended to go to university, but this was still seen as a privilege for the academic and social elite, and in 1936/37, 87% boys and 73% girls leaving school at 18 were leaving education completely (Spens, 1938). There was therefore not a high demand for a very specific, in depth study of a restricted group of subjects at the ages of 16-18, and a more vocational alternative would have been more useful to the majority of stayers-on. As previously mentioned, employers were not keen to take young people who had taken the Higher School Certificate, as they had to pay them more, and yet they were often no better at the job than a 16 year old, or even 14 year old school leaver. Yet instead of a more general or vocational alternative to the Higher School Certificate, the Norwood Report recommended that there be two examinations at the age of 18: one for the majority leaving education, and one for those progressing to university. Both

the intended examinations were academic qualifications, however, with no sign of a more general or vocational full time alternative for 15-18 year old students.

The Education Act of 1944 both abolished fees in grammar schools, allowing more of those who were academically able to receive a certificated course of study until the age of 18, and also allowed multilateral schools to be legally established for the first time. It also forced LEAs to provide 'adequate facilities' for further education. The Act also proposed that 15 to 18 year old workers should all attend county colleges one day a week for vocational training, but hampered by the economic situation and the pressing need to rebuild schools damaged by the war, no plans for county colleges were approved. The Act assumed high political significance, as it was passed during the Second World War, and therefore by a coalition government. Some commentators even went so far as to claim it was 'the single most important piece of legislation during the War' (Rhodes-James, 1986). The wording was general enough to allow the tripartite system to continue, but some still saw it as a minor triumph that multilateral schools could be established.

The 1944 Act also proposed the raising of the school leaving age to 15, giving many pupils an extra year in education. This could be seen as encouraging more pupils to remain in school long enough to take their School Certificate at the age of 16; one more year of schooling was theoretically not as daunting as having to remain in school for two years after the last year of compulsory attendance, in order to receive some kind of certification for their education. The date given for this move was 'no later than 1 April 1947', which was disputed, but eventually enforced.

In April 1947, 'Examinations in Secondary Schools' was published by the Secondary Schools Examinations Council, revealing the new General Certificate of Education (GCE). Under this new single subject examination, a pass was the equivalent of a credit in the old exam, the theory being that if the standard required for a pass was raised, it would effectively prevent those from modern schools from taking it, without having to legislate for this. As pupils had to be at least 16 to take the first, so-called 'Ordinary' exam, and the vast majority of modern schools would only accept pupils aged 11-15, many able pupils were excluded from the exam in this way. At this time the complete abolition of an external exam at 16 was not proposed, but the opportunity for such a ruling was not removed, and towards the end of the Labour Ministry the government published a pamphlet entitled '*The Road to the Sixth Form*' (Ministry of Education, 1951), proposing that both O and A levels should be sat at 18, and those who left at 16 would have to sacrifice their examinations.

The fight to turn comprehensive

Small moves towards comprehensivisation began to take place at this time, and by early 1954, 13 comprehensive schools existed in England and Wales, along with nearly 40 bilateral schools. This process was helped by the gradual change in dominant psychological research occurring around this time: Vernon (1952) demonstrated that IQs could be improved with coaching. Also, a number of pupils from secondary modern schools had been entered for the GCE exams, and had achieved quite good results, while many of those in grammar schools had failed. Progressives in the Labour Party seized upon this, and at the Party's 1953 Conference resolved to include comprehensive education as a major measure within the next manifesto.

The Conservative Party chose to ignore the growing evidence against the selective system, and Sir David Eccles, who had by this time become Minister of Education, spent much of the latter part of 1954, and early 1955, speaking out against comprehensive schools, and reassuring grammar school teachers he was not going to see them closed. He did not believe new technical schools should be approved, unless there was a very strong case, but did say that technical education needed to increase, in order to fill the technician posts needed by industry at that time. More employers were by now choosing to send apprentices to college for day-release courses at this time, and the numbers of full-time day students were also increasing (Bailey, 2002). Instead of recommending the building of new technical colleges to house the new students, however, Eccles believed that the existing number of institutions was capable of supporting many more students, a claim which was disputed by those working in the sector at the time. Eccles also suggested that secondary modern schools should offer vocational courses, mainly to prevent parents from complaining if their child did not get into a grammar school (Ministry of Education, 1955). This move reinforced the idea that vocational education was the poor relation of academic qualifications, with only those who were not 'intelligent', as shown by the 11+ examination, following more general and vocational routes.

The move to expand technical education was accelerated with the recommendation in 1956 by the Scientific Manpower Committee that there be a radical expansion in the output of scientists and technologists from universities and technical colleges, from 10,000 to 20,000. The government accepted this target, and the White Paper 'Technical Education' was published in 1956. This laid out plans to finance the

building and extension of technical colleges, and proposed a new system of colleges. Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs) were to focus on advanced courses including postgraduate work and research; regional colleges would provide courses at a variety of levels, including degree level; area colleges would offer advanced work to part-time students, and local Colleges of Further Education would offer part-time non-advanced courses. The provision of full-time non-advanced courses was once again not discussed, yet despite this, these proposals as they stood would have increased the opportunities for post-compulsory education for many students. Sadly, the proposals were never fully implemented, and most of the money and attention was focused on the CATs: according to Bailey (2002), by 1962 there were ten of these, and in 1964, under the Robbins Committee recommendations, they were transferred to the university sector, as technological universities. Those pupils hoping to receive more opportunities for a technical or practical education up to the age of 15 or 18, were therefore disappointed.

In those comprehensive schools which had been set up, transfer between streams within the school was relatively easy, and children from the lower streams could move into the fifth and sixth forms. In general, there was a three-year common course, then a variety of courses to choose from, with the help of careers guidance. As courses became more established, more pupils stayed on past the minimum leaving age, and a different type of sixth form began to emerge, very different from those in the traditional grammar schools: they catered not only for those staying on to take A levels, but also for further study at O Level standard, or O level retakes, or even secretarial or pre-nursing courses in some schools. The proportion of 17 year olds remaining in education rose during this time, reaching 12% of 17 year olds by 1965

(Edwards, 1970). Due to the slow growth of comprehensive and technical school sixth forms however, in 1958, 95% of all 17 year olds in education were still in either independent or state-aided grammar schools. A small number of secondary moderns also entered students for the A level exam, with moderate success. This was now positively encouraged by the government, in contrast to earlier attempts to prevent non-grammar school pupils from sitting external examinations.

At this time, the Crowther Report was commissioned by the Conservative government, to research into education for 15-18 year olds. At the time of the report (1959) the number of pupils remaining in school beyond the age of 14 was still small (321,877), but significantly more than twenty years previously (174,380) with the post-war baby-boom cohort set to come through. Crowther recommended as his main priority, that the school leaving age should be raised to 16, with compulsory day-release for 15 to 18 year olds. The worrying statistics are those concerning the type of school these students were attending: by 1958, there was still a small minority of students aged 15-18 remaining in all-age schools (723, or 0.2% of the total number still in education). Officially this type of school had been abolished by the 1944 Act, yet in practice this was obviously not true, and the last of the all-age schools, in Norfolk, did not close until 1965. Only 3.5% of the 15-18 year olds remaining in education were attending comprehensive schools, with the vast majority of this age group (71.2%) receiving their education at a grammar school. This meant they were following the traditional, academic, GCE A level course, with little opportunity to move into more vocational areas, or even into technical subjects (Central Advisory Council for Education (England), 1959).

The technical schools, although few in number, had broadened their curriculum by this time, and the majority were now housed in buildings of their own, and provided integrated academic and technical courses, leading to both higher education and directly into industry. As well as GCE courses, the Report also suggested there should be a lower level exam for those pupils not capable of sitting O levels, but able to continue their education in some way. This was recommended to be in the form of a local, rather than national exam, to prevent it deflecting the education system from catering for the interests of the majority of pupils in modern schools. The CSE was developed to fulfil this purpose, and was sat for the first time in 1965, to a mixed reception; although it meant that pupils who would previously have left school with no qualifications now had certificates to show for their time at school, it was a divisive measure, which strengthened the class divide in schools.

The Crowther Report also looked at Further Education in depth, although it noted that most of the 15-18 year olds enrolled on FE courses studied part-time rather than full-time. At the time of the report, the number of full-time students was growing steadily, however, with a female majority. Among males, the most common course was GCEs, either O or A level, whereas for females, the majority studied commercial courses (ibid. p.322). The reasons for attending a local college rather than staying on at school were varied: some had not done very well in school, or the subjects they were studying were either not taught at school, or taught badly in their particular school. The biggest area of increase since the war was in part-time courses, mainly for males. Although a few part-time students were studying for GCEs, the vast majority were following industrial courses, with a sizeable number of females following commercial courses, as with the full-time students. Non-vocational adult education was also

developing during the 1950s and 60s, with part-time evening courses in subjects such as car mechanics and household management developing. When discussing the FE system at the time, the Report praised the open access policy:

> 'one of the strongest points of the further education system in England - and one that has frequently been admired by visitors from other countries - is that it never closes the door or refuses a second chance to anyone who has the persistence to continue and the ability to succeed' (ibid. p.337).

This policy within FE has continued to a certain extent, until the present, although some students may be dissuaded from taking particular courses, if they are not judged to be capable of completing them.

The difference between the teaching staff in FE and schools was also commented upon by Crowther: those in further education tended to be part-time, and mainly male, with technical qualifications, but not with teaching qualifications. This situation is only now, over 40 years later, being redressed, when a majority of lecturers are female and full-time, and with more FE lecturers achieving teaching qualifications. As the Crowther Report had stated earlier that 'it is the staff that makes the Sixth Form' (ibid. p.233).

Whereas the Crowther Report looked at the national picture at the end of the 1950s in great detail, data gathered for the Robbins Report on Higher Education (1963), referring to 1960, breaks down the national figures in education, and allowed local patterns to be seen. They showed that the variations concealed by the national figures for this period were mainly due to differences in social class, gender and geographical

location. The most influential of these factors was that of social class; the figures referring to 1962 showed that 45% of those from higher professional families went into HE, compared with 10% of those whose fathers were in clerical jobs; 4% of children of skilled workers, and 2% of those children from semi- or unskilled workers.

Establishment of sixth form colleges

Although the comprehensive school sixth forms continued to develop, offering the traditional academic qualifications as well as, more general non-examined courses, for those over the age of compulsory education, alternative institutions were being debated. The Crowther Report had suggested the idea of Junior Colleges, which should be qualitatively different from schools, 'with the adult atmosphere of a technical college but with a much wider range of curriculum ... there would be a wide range of practical courses-commerce, pre-nursing and catering, for instance, all lend themselves to full-time courses of two to three years duration - and also of academic courses roughly parallel to those that are found in the Sixth Forms of schools. ... We do not, then, think of a Junior College as replacing Sixth Forms, but as standing side by side with them, providing an alternative form of education for those who had got incurably tired of school and for those whose schools had no Sixth Forms.'(op cit. p.422-3)

Junior Colleges did not take off, but a similar idea, although based much more heavily on the old grammar school sixth form, was the Sixth Form College. Several of these colleges were set up around the country as part of comprehensive reorganisation, many of them housed in old grammar school buildings, as the economic advantages

were recognised. One of the first examples of such an institution was at Mexborough, Yorkshire, where the sixth form moved into specially designed premises in September 1964. There was a certain amount of opposition to the idea of separate sixth form centres, or colleges, mainly from grammar school teachers. They claimed that a move away from school at the age of 16 would unsettle students, and they would not be able to cope with the freedom allowed them. The alternative position was that the idea of a freer environment in which to study might persuade some pupils to stay on in education who would not have normally considered it. At first they were seen as following the comprehensive model, allowing pupils from local grammar, modern and comprehensive schools to continue their studies side-by-side. In a short time, however, 'academic drift' (Burgess and Pratt, 1974) saw the Sixth Form Colleges becoming relatively elitist, as they developed strict entrance criteria and a narrow, academic curriculum.

One suggested way of overcoming the problem of students leaving education at the earliest possible age (then 15) was to set up Tertiary Colleges - the merger of school sixth forms with FE provision, as suggested by Robin Pedley (1956) and several government officials during the late 1960s. As A levels had begun to develop in Technical Colleges, and sixth forms, especially those in comprehensive schools, had started to introduce more general and vocational work, the division between the types of institution became more indistinct, and the idea of mergers not unrealistic. Tertiary colleges offered academic and vocational education in one institution, and were the sole or main providers of post-compulsory education in an area; a truly comprehensive option. The first such Tertiary College was opened in Exeter in 1970, and provided full-time academic, general and vocational education, as well as part-

time day and evening classes. This system was the ultimate in comprehensivisation: all students attended comprehensive schools until the age of 15 or 16, and could then all move to the Tertiary College until the age of 18 or 19, with no discrimination at the entrance level between the social classes, although they might pursue different options within the college.

The 1960s and 70s: changes in all sectors

Throughout the early 1970s, despite the Conservatives being back in power, the comprehensive sector grew. There was an increase in the growth of comprehensive schools during the early 1970s, which was much more rapid than under the previous Labour government, as LEAs' plans were accepted and implemented. The government also implemented the raising of the school leaving age to 16, as promised in their Manifesto, in September 1972. By this time, over 60% of pupils were voluntarily staying on for a fifth year in maintained schools (DES, 1972), and it was commonly thought that this move was simply to disguise the rising unemployment figures at the time (for example, Ainley, 1999).

Throughout the 1960s and 70s teachers persistently asked for a single examination system to be introduced, minimising the division necessarily imposed upon students by the two-tier examination scheme. Most preferred the CSE as the common exam, allowing a larger number of students to sit the same papers. Their cries went unheeded for two decades, however, until the introduction of the GCSE in 1988. The curriculum was obviously in need of major revision; since 1967 the Schools Council had been working on the idea of a unitary exam to replace the existing GCE O-level/CSE divide. The Council had come up with test papers, and trialed them in

schools, and in July 1976 they unanimously decided that this exam should be adopted. Shirley Williams, then Secretary of State for Education and Science, however, claimed that although she accepted the idea of a unitary examination in principle, more investigation was needed before it could be accepted as official policy.

Meanwhile, two new examining bodies were established in the early 1970s: the Technician Education Council in 1973, and the Business Education Council in 1975. They were jointly responsible for implementing the changes in business studies and vocational courses for technicians in industry, as recommended by the Haselgrave Report on Technician Courses and Examinations at the end of the 1960s.

The traditional apprenticeship system went into rapid terminal decline from the early 1970s following worldwide recession. Until this time, the majority of students at the FE and Technical Colleges were apprentices either released from work to go to college, or those who completed one year of training before starting their job. With a reduced demand for such courses, the colleges had to find a new market. The establishment in 1973, of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) helped by setting up schemes for the unemployed: the first to be developed were Youth Opportunities Schemes (YOPS) for young people, and Training Opportunities Schemes (TOPS) for adults. The acronyms changed many times over the ensuing years, but all the schemes involved bringing unemployed young people and adults into colleges for training in basic skills and general work skills. Adults who had not followed an academic route when at school also began to enrol for GCE A level courses at their local college. This illustrated the flexibility of colleges: they were able to change their specialisms depending on the economic and social climate, unlike

school sixth forms which persisted regardless of circumstances. It is only relatively recently that schools have been in such sharp, direct competition with the colleges, and so have had to alter their provision to an extent, in order to retain their position in the educational market place.

The new vocationalism

High levels of youth unemployment also caused educators to look at the curriculum they were offering to school leavers. A Careers Office survey shows the dramatic effect of the recession on young people: at the beginning of 1974, the number of notified job vacancies for young people was 92,000, or 2,000 vacancies for every unemployed school leaver. Until the late 1970s, those leaving school with no qualifications at 15 or 16, started work; you often needed to have some exam results to do an apprenticeship, and even some of the FE colleges were selective. As jobs were no longer available, there was a need to provide courses for those who had not achieved at school. Many colleges designed one-year, so-called 'taster' courses - pre-vocational courses, with a general, varied curriculum. O-level retakes had traditionally received poor results, so these new courses, some of which were certified, were well received. In schools, at the same time, a course for those with CSEs was developing - the CEE, Certificate in Extended Education. This bridged the gap between CSEs and A levels, and was also very popular among some school leavers.

In 1979 the Further Education Unit (FEU) produced a report entitled 'A Basis for Choice', recommending 16-18 year old students who were not capable of A levels, followed a common core of vocational preparation, assessed by portfolio and records

of achievement. This report also suggested a change from subject-based to an integrated curriculum. From this, the CPVE (Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education) was developed, for those of 'average or below average attainment' (i.e. not capable of A levels) who had no definite ideas about which vocational areas they might be interested in. The CPVE was run jointly by City and Guilds and BTEC (Business and Technician (now Technology) Education Council), which had been established following the merger of the Technician Education Council and the Business Education Council. In the late 1980s, BTEC introduced its own First Diploma, aimed at the same set of students. This was a more vocationally focused qualification, and had a clearer progression route for students through the higher BTEC awards, and students tended to prefer this route to the CPVE. City and Guilds swiftly developed its own Diploma in Vocational Education, another similar qualification, and the two awards replaced the CPVE.

The new, pre-vocational certificates, whilst welcomed by many employers and students, were never to receive parity of esteem with the more traditional, academic qualifications, any more than previous vocational qualifications had done. The main reason for their lack of status was their link with the working class: further education and vocational preparation was almost by definition for working-class students. Compared with sixth form study, which offered possibilities of progression to higher education, training for a job at the local 'tech' has always been seen as an inferior option. Grammar schools continued to offer the old curriculum consisting mainly, if not entirely, of A levels. Although many thought grammar schools were the best institutions in which to continue their academic education, a survey by NFER in 1979 (Dean et al., 1979) concluded that sixth form and tertiary colleges were seen by

students as providing as good a standard of A level teaching as the grammar schools, with a larger range of subjects, better facilities, and a more adult attitude from the teachers. Taking into account previous exam performance of the students at the various types of institutions, the NFER study also found that colleges achieved as good results as the grammar school sixth forms.

After the 1981 Education Act, special needs education provision for both young people and adults also expanded in FE. Throughout the 1980s Access courses for adults returning to education also grew rapidly, showing once again that as well as providing a good standard of education to school leavers, FE institutions could also adapt to local needs and provide a diverse and comprehensive curriculum.

For those campaigning for a comprehensive, tertiary system of education at 16-19, welcome support came with the publication of the MacFarlane Report (DES, 1981). This recommended, for both educational, and economic reasons, that Tertiary Colleges should be adopted as official policy. Mrs. Thatcher did not accept this recommendation, however, which could have changed the face of post-compulsory education, and instead tried to return some of the comprehensive schools to grammar school status. When the government came up against opposition from parents and teachers, that idea was abandoned, but the desire to re-introduce selection remained, and was apparent in the presentation of the new TVEI (Technical and Vocational Education Initiative).

TVEI was a scheme launched by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) in 1982, developed by Margaret Thatcher, David (later Lord) Young, then director of the

MSC, and Norman Tebbit, and only later Keith Joseph, the Education Minister. This well funded initiative aimed to

> 'widen and enrich the curriculum in a way that will help young people prepare for the world of work, and to develop skills and interests, including creative abilities, that will help them to lead a fuller life and to be able to contribute more to the life of the community'. (Young, quoted in Dale et al., 1990)

Although this sounded impressive, in reality only a limited number of students were supposed to benefit from it. Schools had to bid for funds, which were to be spent on technological education for the middle achievers: the top 20% of pupils were supposed to be excluded from the scheme, and continued on the academic route to sixth form and university. Lower achievers were provided for by the LAPP (Lower Achieving Pupils Project), and thus the tripartite division between institutions which the government had failed to recreate successfully, was now set up **within** the comprehensive school system. As Joseph said,

> 'If it be so, as it is, that selection between schools is largely out, then I emphasise that there must be differentiation within schools.' (Joseph, 1984).

Many schools, however, used this opportunity to update the equipment which all pupils would use, not just the selected middle achievers. In schools, therefore, the scheme was relatively successful, even though it was not carried out as expected, and the tripartite divisions not as strong as envisaged. When TVEI was extended to colleges, however, it was an opportunity to bridge the academic - vocational divide, broadening the courses of both A Level students and those following vocational

courses such as BTECs. As the scheme was voluntary, and had a low public profile, however, take-up was low, as students did not want to be distracted from their main qualification aim by a scheme for which they could not see the immediate benefit.

Whilst the government tried desperately to reintroduce selection, if only as yet within schools, rather than between them, teachers and educationists were campaigning for a more comprehensive system of education, by introducing a single examination common to all pupils at the age of 16. As mentioned earlier, the Schools Council had been working on this since 1967, and the idea had been approved by the Waddell Committee in 1978, yet the government had managed to avoid it thus far. Throughout the beginning of the 1980s, however, pressure increased from schools and parents, and Joseph had little choice but to accept the long-awaited unifying examination - the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE). However Joseph announced it was not to be one exam, but a system of exams, with differentiated papers and questions in all subjects. Even the exam boards would vary, depending on the grades for which the pupils were entered: the GCE boards were to be responsible for the A-C grades, and the CSE boards to be responsible for the D-G grades. The advances which this new qualification brought to education were therefore minimal: the same exam boards were responsible for the same groups of people, with the only difference seemingly being the title of the awards gained. Although grades A-G were designed to mean a pass in that subject, it was acknowledged by pupils, employers and universities at the time, that a 'pass' was really a grade C and above, and that a grade below a C constituted a 'fail'. This is still the case today, 14 years after GCSEs were first introduced, with schools' positions in league tables depending on passes at A*-C.

The introduction of the GCSE, which placed a greater emphasis on continuous assessment and coursework, significantly increased the percentage of 16 year olds leaving school with five or more passes in their examinations (Jesson and Gray, 1991) This then had a knock-on effect in that the staying-on rate of 16 year olds increased at this time, from 46.8% of 16 year olds in 1986/87, to 55.2% in 1989/90, one year after the first students sat the new examination. This cannot be explained completely by the introduction of a new qualification for school-leavers however, as a nation-wide recession meant high unemployment rates, and as the Social Security Act of 1988 also withdrew eligibility for benefit from most 16 to 17 year olds, education was the only option for many.

Still, more young people than ever before were remaining in education after the compulsory leaving age. The Youth Training Scheme (YTS) was set up in 1983, providing one option for school leavers, but demand for places on good schemes soon exceeded availability, leading to sub-standard training in many cases. As the labour market was moving rapidly away from production industry towards service sector employment, the training of young people needed drastic reorganisation. A review was carried out by a working group set up by the government in 1985, which reported the following year (MSC and DES, 1986). It recommended new forms of qualifications, to be described as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), the creation of a framework for such qualifications, and the setting up of a new body to carry through these proposals, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). The government accepted these suggestions in its White Paper (DE/DES, 1986) and in 1986, NCVQ was formally established.

Establishing a national qualifications framework

The NCVQ was given the remit of pulling together the plethora of available vocational qualifications into a national framework, and to do so, introduced new forms of qualifications, to be known as National Vocational Qualifications. All NVQs, although offered by the existing awarding bodies, had to conform to set criteria, producing a statement of competence of what an individual had achieved; the emphasis therefore on assessment of competences and outcomes, rather than course design and learning experiences. The requirements for the NVQs were such that few existing qualifications could be adapted to meet the criteria, so new qualifications had to be developed. This meant that the new NVQs ran alongside other, older, vocational qualifications. (Stanton and Bailey, 2001). NVQs were designed at five levels, with Level 2 being equivalent to five GCSEs, grade A-C, and Level 3 being equivalent to two A-levels, and at the level of advanced craft or technician.

Vocational qualifications therefore were subjected to a great deal of change throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, and they provided a clearer, yet still confusing in places, set of paths for young people remaining in training of some kind, but not wishing to continue with academic study. For those students who were interested in academic subjects, the curriculum remained static. In March 1987 the Higginson Committee was briefed to consider changes to the teaching and assessment of A level examinations. The Committee reported in June 1988, with a report suggesting radical changes to the existing academic qualifications: instead of the three A levels traditionally taken by students, it was suggested that they sat five 'leaner' A levels, similar to the Scottish Highers, allowing for a broader curriculum. The existing A levels were said to be too narrow, encouraging a premature specialisation among

young people. The recommendations for a broader curriculum were thought to be beneficial for students, preventing them limiting their options at too young an age, and it also would have brought England closer to the education systems in most other Western countries, such as France, Germany, America and even Scotland. The report also suggested that a compulsory common core be brought in for each subject, allowing greater comparability between examination boards, and that the 400 separate syllabuses be reduced.

Educationists and educators applauded the report, but it was rejected on the day it was published by the government. It was the government's suggestion that students instead broaden their curriculum by taking the new 'Advanced Supplementary' (AS) level examinations alongside their A levels. These had been brought in in 1984, but had failed to achieve a high take-up rate amongst students. They were designed to be at the same intellectual level as A levels, but with half the content, and therefore half the teaching and studying time. Students were expected to take one AS level as well as their two or three A levels, or to combine AS levels to create a much broader curriculum for themselves. Unfortunately, most school sixth forms could not afford the resources for these new qualifications, and so they were mainly available in colleges. In 1987, in schools which offered AS levels, one in five A level students was taking them, but this represented only four percent of all first year A level students (DES, 1984). Those students who did take AS levels, tended to take complementary subjects, rather than widening their area of study to a great extent; although some science students took arts subjects, very few arts based students took an AS level in a science. There was therefore, very little choice for students wanting to continue their academic studies at the age of 16; A levels were the only option.

Baker's initiatives

In 1986, Kenneth Baker, the new Education Secretary, following a major realignment of Conservative educational policy, immediately announced several initiatives, which when taken together could be seen to have a radical effect on the way the education system was run. The first of these was a new type of institution for 11-18 year olds - the City Technology College (CTC). He proposed that these would be:

> 'government-funded independent schools run by educational trusts and not part of the local education authority. ... with private sector sponsors making a substantial contribution towards costs' (Conservative Party Conference, 1986).

Twenty colleges eventually grew to over 200 in the following few years. However, the scheme was not as successful as the government hoped; industrial sponsors were not forthcoming, and by 1989, the DES estimated they had spent £126.3 million on a handful of these institutions, with only a small contribution from private sponsors. It was announced that the number of colleges would limited to the original 20, although even this was optimistic.

Baker also introduced a National Curriculum, for all five -16 year olds. He attacked Local Authorities, and claimed a national system was needed. Both the National Curriculum and the CTC scheme served to take control away from Local Education Authorities, but with the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA), Kenneth Baker also made it possible for schools to 'opt out' of local authority control; meaning they had control of their own budgets, could hire the staff they wanted, and buy the equipment

they considered appropriate. Baker was surprised when schools did not jump at this opportunity; in fact nearly one year after the Act was passed, only 20 schools had been approved for grant maintained status, and these were largely failing, rather than thriving schools (Times Educational Supplement, 16 June 1989).

The 1988 ERA also had an effect on the further education sector. It was the forerunner to the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act (discussed below) and started to remove colleges from LEA control: LEAs were required to delegate financial responsibility to the governing bodies of institutions with 200 or more FT equivalent students, which in practice meant nearly all the FE and tertiary colleges in England and Wales. College governing bodies were also to be altered, comprising a majority of members from industry and none representing the local authority. The major change, however, was the redefinition of the term 'further education'; from the 1944 Education Act, further education provided by LEAs had been very loosely defined, and included all Higher Education not provided by Universities, i.e. Polytechnics and Colleges of Higher Education. It had been thought that there should not be a strict divide between the two sectors, and the continuum was often referred to as the 'seamless robe'. The 1988 Act, however, defined Higher Education outside of Universities, leaving Further Education to refer to non-advanced college work:

> 'those courses at (or below) the level of the General Certificate of Education Advanced level, or the Scottish Certificate of Higher Education Higher Grade, or the Business and Technology Education Council National awards or the Scottish Vocational Education Council National awards'.

Although this statement did not seem to affect the lives of students attending these institutions, it was a precursor to the 1992 Act, which had far greater effects.

1992 Further and Higher Education Act

This Act had two main effects: firstly, it took further education (including sixth form colleges) completely out of local authority control, and secondly it introduced a new funding mechanism for colleges, to be administered by the new Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The new funding mechanism especially, had a great effect on the experience of the student attending an FE, tertiary or sixth form college; whereas before the ruling, colleges were funded per student by the local authority on a somewhat ad hoc basis, a new national funding mechanism and also encouraged colleges to compete to improve their retention and recruitment rates. Funding from the FEFC depended not only on the number of students enrolled on a particular course, but also the retention and success rate of the students: colleges had to return data at several points on the academic year to show the numbers of students who remained on their courses, and also who successfully achieved their qualification aim. Colleges therefore now tried to improve their retention rates, making the beginning of the 1990s a good time to be a student. Colleges were also penalised if they did not expand every year: to retain the same amount of funding, they were forced to increase their student numbers, or as the FEFC put it, their 'funding units'. The type of courses which the FEFC was willing to fund also came under close scrutiny; those which came under Schedule Two of the Act were the only ones which would receive funding from the FEFC. The FEFC Circular 92-09 reported these as:

> (a) vocational qualifications; (b) GCSE or GCE A/S level; (c) access
>
> courses preparing students for entry to a course of HE; (d) courses which

prepare students for entry to courses listed in (a) to (c) above; (e) basic literacy in English; (f) teaching English to students where English is not the language spoken at home; (g) basic mathematics; (h) proficiency or literacy in Welsh; (j) independent living and communications skills for those with learning difficulties which prepare them for entry to courses listed in sections (d) to (g).

The intention of this Act was to take yet more power from the local authorities, which had already lost control over some of their schools, and also to force colleges to compete to expand. Sixth form colleges had also passed out of local authority control, and into the incorporated FE sector. Competition between colleges and also between colleges and schools increased, as colleges faced the possibility of bankruptcy if they did not expand rapidly, and marketing campaigns flooded the general public with glossy brochures, television and radio advertising. Unfortunately, this also meant that a much larger section of the budgets controlled by the colleges than before went towards employing marketing staff, but unless colleges competed, they faced the prospect of falling student numbers and financial disaster. Despite the best efforts of many colleges, the numbers of sixteen year old students remaining in full-time education did not increase following the implementation of the Act, although in 1995/96, for the first time, FE colleges overtook maintained schools as the main provider of education to 16 year olds (27% of 16 year olds remained at maintained schools, compared to 28% who went to FE colleges). This trend was exaggerated further the following year, with 35.7% going to FE institutions, compared with only 27.5% in school sixth forms (DfEE, 1997). If one of the aims of the 1992 Act had

been to move students in post-16 education from schools into colleges (where qualification aims were achieved at a much smaller cost) it had been successful.

Dual-track system changes to triple-track system

As mentioned above, students in the late 1980s and early 1990s, had to choose at the age of 16, whether they wished to continue with academic qualifications, and study for A levels, or to move into vocational training, and take either an NVQ or one of the remaining other vocational qualifications, such as BTECs. This academic-vocational divide was disliked by many, as, despite the government trying to establish 'parity of esteem' between the two tracks, the academic route was commonly acknowledged to be the superior option. In May 1991, the government had produced a White Paper entitled *Education and Training in the 21st Century*. It gave the NCVQ the task of extending the NVQ framework to include broad-based vocational qualifications which could be delivered through full-time programs in schools and colleges. These new qualifications were to be called General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), and it was hoped they would bridge the academic-vocational divide, creating a triple-track system for students. It was the government's intention that GNVQs and NVQs would replace all other existing vocational qualifications. After a relatively short time, it was announced that the new GNVQs would be available from September 1992, in five curriculum areas: manufacturing; art and design; business; health and social care, and leisure and tourism. All the courses also involved a component of 'Core Skills', which were originally: communication; numeracy; information technology; problem solving; personal skills and competence in modern foreign languages. The first three of these were introduced with the first GNVQs, with modern languages being available as additional units to students. Although they were

said to be equivalent in level to A levels, the fact that the qualifications needed to enrol on the course were lower than those needed for A levels did not support this statement. It seemed that yet again, the vocational option was being treated as second best; parity of esteem cannot be given by government edict - it has to be earned. The first Dearing Report was commissioned, in part, to organise the post-16 qualifications available and allow comparisons to be made between the three separate track systems.

Sir Ron Dearing's *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 year olds* (1996) was under considerable constraint by the Conservative government to preserve A levels as the 'gold standard' award. Tim Boswell, the Minister of State for Further and Higher Education, claimed 'We are absolutely committed to the maintenance of standards and rigour in A levels and that is fundamental to the remit we have given Sir Ron Dearing's review of the qualifications framework from 16 to 19' (Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 23 May 1995, column 702). One of the main recommendations of the report was a framework for existing qualifications into which A levels, GNVQs and NVQs could be placed, in order to enable comparability between the academic, general and vocational 'tracks' at the three levels: foundation, intermediate and advanced. Dearing also proposed that the core skills, or key skills as he termed them, of numeracy, communication and information technology should be incorporated into A level syllabuses as well as vocational syllabuses. Where this proved impossible he suggested a separate key skills AS level. AS levels in general were also recommended for redevelopment: the original AS courses introduced in 1987 as a two-year qualification to encourage breadth in the post-compulsory curriculum, had received a very poor take-up rate. Dearing's proposed changes made AS levels one-year courses, consisting of half of the content of a two-year A level, allowing those students who

chose to leave further education after one year to do so with qualifications. Perhaps Dearing's most daring recommendation was that of the introduction of a National Diploma, but as Dearing had been told to retain the A levels, the certificate merely represented 'an overarching award which will both accommodate and recognise them once they have already been achieved' (Pound, 1998). The proposed award was for A level students only, who would have to demonstrate ability in each of four subject groupings, two at A level, two at AS level, and also to pass a core skills AS qualification. As the Award was not compulsory, it was anticipated that few students would choose to take the further examinations needed in order to qualify for the certificate, so students wanting to follow an academic route were left with the old 'gold standard' A levels and a relatively narrow curriculum after compulsory schooling.

Dearing's report was followed by the consultation paper *Qualifying for Success* (9 October, 1997) which developed many of his ideas. Its main aim was to 'address undue narrowness and lack of flexibility in the post-16 curriculum ... to lead to broader A level programmes and improved vocational qualifications that are underpinned by rigorous standards and key skills'. This consultation document resulted in what is now referred to as Curriculum 2000, a reorganisation of programmes and qualifications for 16-19 year olds which was to operate from September 2000.

Under the Curriculum 2000 measures outlined in *Qualifying for Success* (1997), A levels were split into six units: three (usually taken at the end of the first year) to comprise the AS examination, and a further three (usually taken at the end of two

years) comprising the A2 examination. The AS and the A2 together make up the complete A level, although the AS can be taken as a qualification in itself. Each unit can be retaken only once, although the entire qualification can be retaken more often. Each unit is graded separately, with an overall grade (A-E and U) given for the entire qualification. GNVQs, renamed Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) remained divided into units, with 12 units comprising the whole award, and new six and three unit awards to be compared with A levels and AS levels respectively. To reinforce the comparison even more, each unit is graded A-E (with U for Unclassified) at the Advanced level, in line with the A level system. In *Learning to Succeed* (1999, see below) it was also stated that 'GNVQs will be significantly upgraded to ensure the candidates have to take a substantial element of demanding external assessment', bringing them even closer to the A level 'gold standard'. These measures take GNVQs further from the original idea behind the qualification, which was to provide a more vocational course for those who did not want to study A levels, and who preferred continuous rather than summative assessment. A new Key Skills Qualification for all students was also developed, consisting of units in Application of Number, IT and communication skills. This is not at the AS level which Dearing suggested, but is theoretically taken into consideration in university applications. Students may take each subject individually, or all three to gain the full Key Skills Qualification. Advanced Extension Awards, similar to the 'world class tests' for nine to thirteen year olds, were also developed as part of Curriculum 2000 and available from 2002, to test the more able academic candidates. These are similar to the old Special Papers, but theoretically more accessible to students in all types of institution, as no extra teaching is required. There are no plans to produce similar tests for AVCE students, and more vocational A level subjects, such as Business Studies, have also

been ignored when developing the Advanced Extension Awards, implying a lack of parity of esteem prevails, regardless of the restructuring.

Under the Curriculum 2000 guidelines, students are, in theory, much more able to 'mix and match' vocational and academic courses, being able to combine, for example, six units of an AVCE with two AS levels and Key Skills in their first year, then completing the further six AVCE units and taking one of the AS subjects to A2 level in the following year. The student would therefore leave after two years with an AVCE, an A level, a Key Skills Qualification, and an AS level: far more than before Curriculum 2000.

Along with the curriculum changes as the sector moved into the new millennium, organisational changes were set out in *Learning to Succeed*, a White Paper released by David Blunkett, then Secretary of State for Education and Employment in the new Labour government, on June 30th 1999, following a 'Learning and Skills Review' of post-compulsory education and training. The main development of this paper was to set up a new Learning and Skills Council (LSC), 'responsible for strategic development, planning, funding, management and quality assurance of post-16 education and training (excluding higher education)'. Between 40 and 50 local councils were proposed, organising post-compulsory education at a sub-regional level. There was also to be a large input from local employers, with the aim of encouraging a greater correspondence between the needs of employers and the courses available to young people. Two committees were also proposed to report to the Councils, one for 16-19 provision and one for post-19 provision. The inspection system was also to be 'rationalised', with OFSTED being responsible for the

inspection of provision for 16-19 year olds, regardless of institution type, and a new independent Adult Learning Inspectorate to inspect post-19 year old provision in colleges, even when adults share classes with 16 to 19 year olds. These proposals taken together, suggested the government was moving away from both the school sixth form concept and also the FE college, with the preferred institution for 16-19 year old students taking academic courses being the sixth form college, where they are treated as a discrete group, away from both older and younger students. The changes in the curriculum also support this view, with Curriculum 2000 being aimed almost exclusively at 16-19 year olds, rather than adult learners. The paper also summarised the costs of achieving results in each of the three main sectors, and reported that in 1996-97 the cost of achieving three A levels was £7,380 in maintained schools; £6,250 in general FE colleges, and £5,910 in sixth form colleges. The above suggestion of a move towards the sixth form model of 16-19 education seems therefore to have been based on financial considerations as well as the results achieved by the different institutions (see below).

The Paper also proposed a new resource for young people aged 13-19, *Connexions*. This has the aim of keeping as many of those young people who are likely to drop out of education, having failed the 'academic route', as possible in education until the age of 19, providing appropriate guidance to ensure they are on suitable courses. According to the paper, the key aims of *Connexions* 'will be to create a comprehensive structure for advice and support for all young people beyond thirteen, improving the coherence of what is currently provided through organisations such as the Careers Service, parts of the Youth Service and a range of other specialist agencies'. The government also pledged to tackle barriers (including financial

barriers) to learning, and in September 1999 they set up a pilot scheme of Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) in fifteen LEAs. Both Cornwall and South East London were pilot areas for the scheme, and this will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Five to Seven.

Learning to Succeed also aimed to improve overall performance in examinations (particularly stressing A levels). It pointed out that smaller school sixth forms do less well than larger school sixth forms (average 10.8 UCAS points per student in school sixth forms with less than 50 pupils, 18.6 in those with over 200). At the time of the report, of the 3,500 mainstream maintained secondary school, 1,800 had sixth forms: 6% of these had 50 pupils or less; 17% had 50-100 pupils; 74% had 100-200, and 31% had over 200 students, meaning less than a third of all school sixth forms were of the desired size (DfEE, 1999). Between sectors the differences were also wide (17.2 points in sixth form colleges; 14.2 in tertiary colleges, and 9.0 in FE colleges) but the paper stressed there were more variations within than between sectors, suggesting a need to 'address varying standards across sectorial boundaries'. In order to do this, small sixth forms which were not performing well were threatened with mergers and closures, and there was a resulting move away from competition and towards co-operation between institutions. Allied to this, at the same time as *Learning to Succeed*, the DfEE produced a consultation paper on school sixth form funding. This claimed to 'protect the funding of school sixth forms in real terms so long as they maintain numbers'. The paper then continued with 'We will, of course, wish to see greater co-operation with other providers so as to improve choice for students', implying the need for more consortium arrangements in the sector. The further aim that 'young people should be able to gain access to a broad learning programme, including A

levels and vocational qualifications, wherever they are enrolled', also supported the idea of consortiums, as it would be impossible to do so otherwise in many small school sixth forms. Consortiums were again implied with the statement that 'improved co-ordination should ensure the best use of physical resources and scarce expertise in a system which should put the user rather than the competition between providers at its heart'. Despite these sentiments, competition has continued and small school sixth forms survive.

At the time of research, the Curriculum 2000 developments had not been implemented, and students tended to be enrolled on a clear-cut academic or vocational programme in full-time post-16 education, with very few students attending a consortium of schools or colleges. The position in post-compulsory education towards the end of the century, and therefore the climate in which the current research took place, was as follows: more students than ever before were remaining in full time education and training (69.3% of 16 year olds in 1997/98), with the majority of these going to the FE sector, including sixth form colleges. Although A levels were still the most popular courses, GNVQs, NVQs and other vocational qualifications were chosen by a rapidly growing sector of the student population. Colleges were now incorporated, and so had more freedom, but the competition between colleges and schools was fierce, as funding for FE depended on the number of students both starting and finishing their qualification aims. The move from a minority to a mass participation system had occurred, although the increase in student numbers had slowed since the mid 1990s: in 1894, 1% of 16 and 17 year olds remained in education; one hundred years later this figure stood at 71% of 16 year olds, and 58% of 17 year olds. Throughout that one hundred years, the same themes kept recurring:

parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications; selection procedures, and their effects on students; the types of institutions in which students should be taught and the types of courses they should be following.

Chapter 3

Recent statistical trends in English post-compulsory education.

As seen in the previous chapter, the numbers of students[1] remaining in education and training after the age of compulsory schooling in England has grown considerably over the last century, and particularly throughout the last 18 years (Figure 3.1 below). In 1985, just 47.3% of 16 year olds remained in full time education, compared with 71.4% in 2000. The increases are similar for older students: the corresponding figures for 17 year olds show an increase from 31.8% to 59%, and for 18 year olds in further education the increase was from 8.9% to 17.1%. Closer inspection of the national figures, however, shows the growth has not been linear and constant, with figures for 16 year olds reaching a peak of 72.6% participation in 1993, and declining slightly from there until rising again from 1998. As would be expected, this led to a knock-on effect for older students, with 17-year-old participation peaking the following year (1994) at 58.7% and decreasing every year following until 1998. For 18 year olds, the peak of 19.6% came in a year later in 1995, as the 16 and 17 year olds moved through the system; since 1998 the level of participation has settled at around 17.5%, with no large increases corresponding to those seen in younger students. The numbers of 18 year old students in Higher Education, however, has been growing steadily throughout this period: in 1985, 8.1% of the cohort were in HE institutions; by 1992 this had almost doubled to 16.1% with figures continuing to rise, reaching a peak of 20.2% in 1997, and levelling off since then, with 20.0% of 18 year olds in full-time

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[1] Throughout this chapter, unless otherwise stated, all figures refer to full-time students only.

higher education in 2000. As the overall population of 16-19 year olds has been increasing since 1985 however, small decreases in proportions of students in education might actually mean an increase in actual numbers. As shown below in Figure 3.2, therefore, the **number** of students remaining in full-time education after the compulsory leaving age has risen almost without pause since 1985, and as described in the previous chapter, has been rising since the turn of the twentieth century.
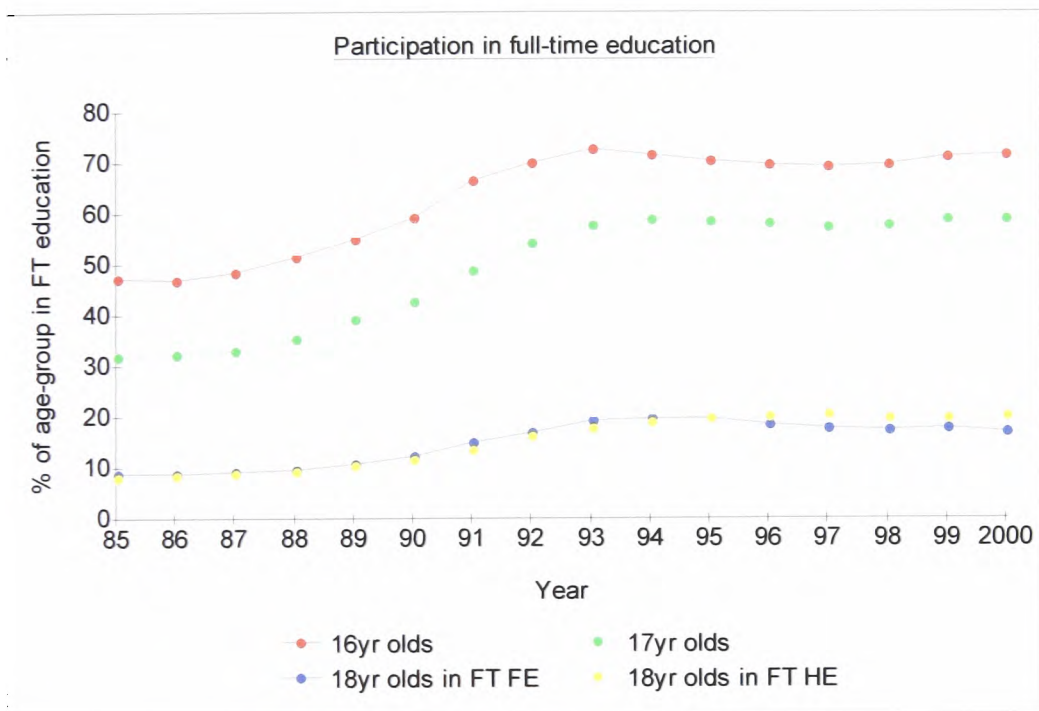
Figure 3.1: Participation of 16-18 year olds in full-time education (as a proportion of the age group)[2].

[2] Source for all national figures in this chapter is DfEE (2000) *Statistical First Release. SFR 50/2000. London: HMSO.*

Year	16 year olds	17 year olds	18 year olds
1985	47.3 %	31.8 %	8.9 %
2000	71.4 %	59 %	17.1 %

Table 3.1: Participation in full-time FE
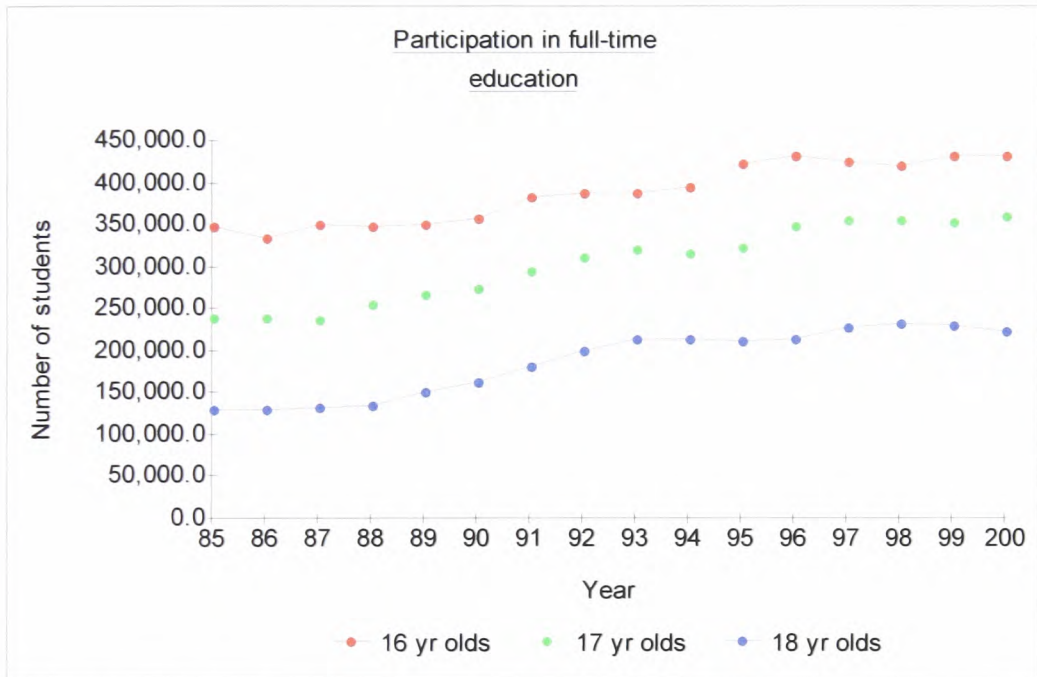
Figure 3.2: Participation of 16-18 year olds in full-time education (actual numbers).

Sixteen-year-old full-time students

As the numbers of students has increased rapidly over the previous 15 years, one important question is their destinations. As seen in Figure 3.3 below, and perhaps more clearly in Table 3.2, the proportions of students attending FE colleges at the age of 16 has risen slightly over this time period, and is now greater then the corresponding number of students remaining at school: in 1985 students in FE college (including sixth form colleges) accounted for 46.9% of those remaining in full-time education, whereas schools accounted for 53.1%, whereas by 2000 FE colleges

accounted for 51% with schools taking 49% of 16 year old students. The overall trend seems to be therefore, for 16 year olds at least, an exodus from schools into the FE sector, including sixth form colleges. The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act coincided with a rise in the proportion of 16 year olds choosing colleges over schools, and can be explained in part by the amount of advertising colleges were forced to take out at this time in order to increase their numbers (as discussed in the previous chapter) as well as other more or less desperate measures. The marketing used by the colleges obviously had an effect on student destinations (see, for example, Hemsley Brown, 1999), although with the spirit of 'co-operation' rather than competition fostered since 1999, the relative proportion of students in the two sectors has converged slightly.
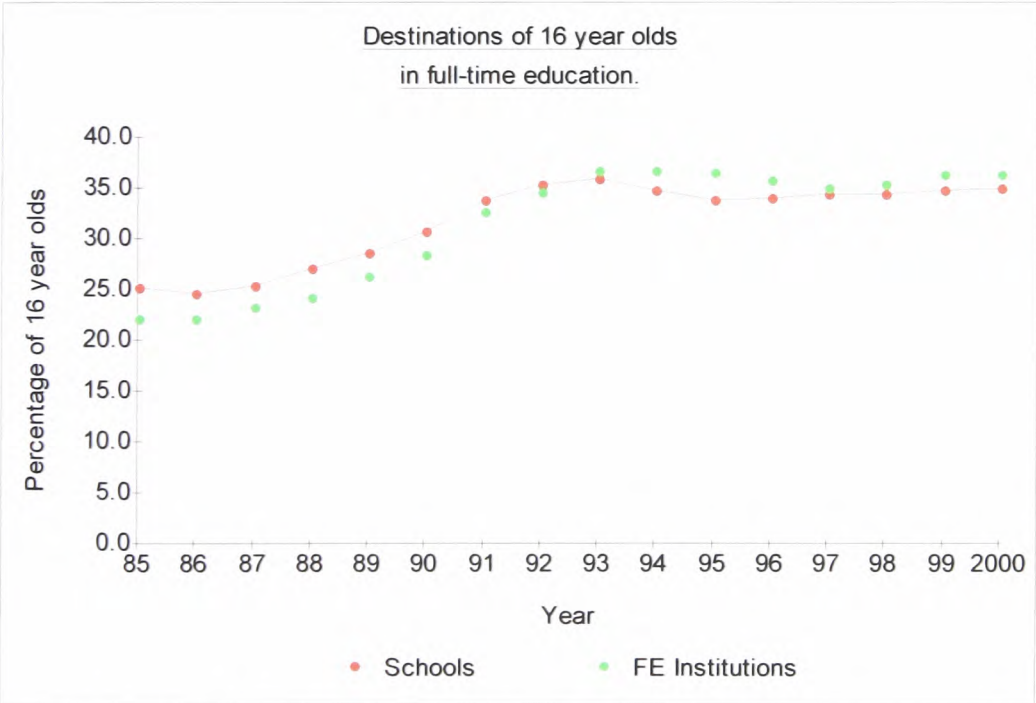
Figure 3.3: Destinations of 16 year olds in full-time further education.

Year	Schools	FE institutions
1985	53.1 %	46.9 %
2000	49 %	51 %

Table 3.2: Destinations of 16 year olds in full-time FE.

A recent Youth Cohort Study (2002) found that the division of students between institution types is not as straightforward as at first glance: using data from 2002, it found that the occupation of the students' parents was a large determinant in where the students continued their education after 16. For example, 39% students whose parents were classed as 'Higher professional', attended state schools at the age of 16, compared with only 18% students whose parents' jobs were classed as 'Routine'. The corresponding figures for FE colleges were 30% and 38% respectively, and for independent schools, 18% and 1%, showing a move towards FE for those from working-class backgrounds, and into schools for those whose parents had middle-class jobs. Parents' occupations were not the only contributing factor, with the education level of parents also having an effect: children whose parents had a degree were more likely to remain in schools after 16 than those whose parents did not have A levels (35% and 23% respectively). These effects do not necessarily have to be seen in terms of social class, however, with Ball (2003) arguing that is not social class per se which affects the choices of students and their parents. Instead, he claims that parents who have had more experience of the education sector at higher levels will be more likely to make rational decisions based on the marketing of each educational institution, and will be able to negotiate the maze of qualifications and institutions to better effect. Neither the students nor their parents, therefore, would see themselves as conscious class actors when choosing to remain in schools rather than going to the FE college, but instead consider themselves as having made a logical choice based on the information they had been given. This point will be referred to again in later chapters.

As well as the institutional destinations of students, the courses they have followed are very important when establishing the recent and current trends among school leavers. As shown in Figure 3.4 and Table 3.3 below, when qualification aims are considered relative to the entire 16 year old population, the majority of qualifications have shown an increase in the percentage of the population attempting them, at least until 1994, when the level of participation began to fall slightly.
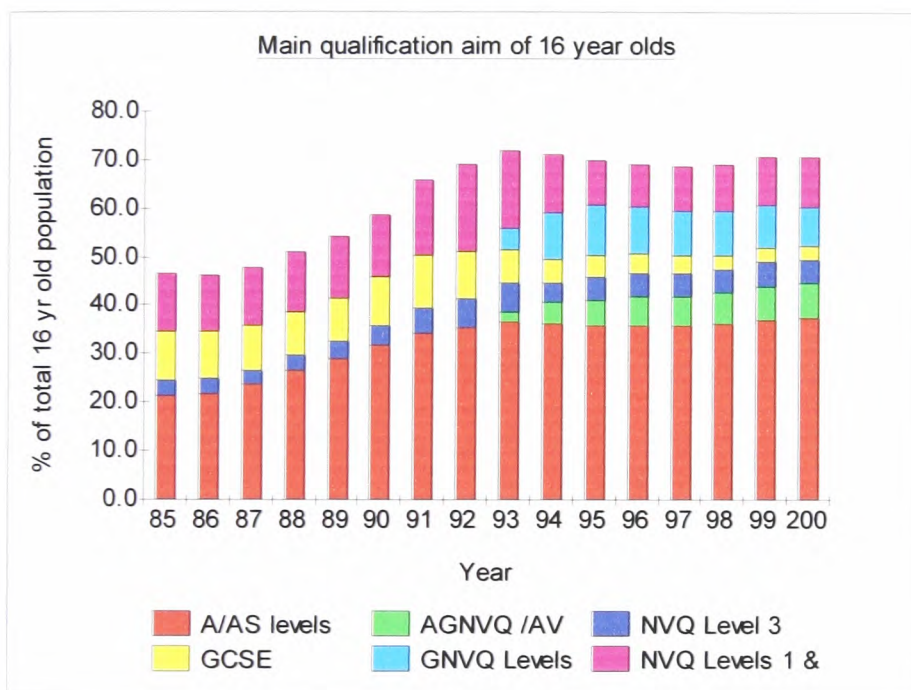
Figure 3.4: Main qualification aim of 16 year olds in full-time education (as a percentage of all 16 year olds).

Year	A/AS levels	AGNVQ/ AVCE	NVQ 3	GCSE	GNVQ 1&2	NVQ 1&2
1985	21.6 %	2 % (in 1993)	3.0 %	10.1 %	5.6 % (in 1993)	12 %
2000	37.5 %	7.4 %	4.8 %	2.6 %	11.3 %	10.4 %

Table 3.3: Qualification aim of 16 year olds (as a percentage of all 16 year olds).

When the percentage of students following each type of qualification is taken as a percentage of full-time 16-year-old students however, as in Figure 3.5 and Table 3.4 below, it is easier to see that some qualifications have become less popular amongst this age group over the past 15 years. For example, the numbers taking, or retaking, GCSEs have fallen sharply over this period from 10.1% in 1985 to 2.6% of 16 year olds in 2000. In 1985, GCSE students made up 21.4% of the total student population of this age, whereas in 2000 this figure had fallen to 3.6%. Over the same time the proportion of students taking 'replacement' courses such as GNVQ Intermediate and Foundation, rose from 5.9% of 16 year olds in 1993 to 11.3% in 2000, after peaking at 14.5% of full-time 16-year-old students in 1995. The overall proportion of students taking Level 1 and 2 qualifications has fallen over the last 15 years, from 46.8% in 1985, to just 29.5% in 2000. This indicates that the growth in student numbers over this period has been mainly due to an increase in students on Level 3 qualifications. There are several possible reasons for this: firstly, more students are passing five or more GCSEs now than previously, and are therefore qualified to start an advanced course at post-compulsory level; secondly there are fewer jobs available now to the school-leaver with good GCSE results, so they are encouraged to remain in education after leaving school to become more qualified. For those who were not successful in their GCSE examinations, more emphasis has been placed in recent years on schemes such as New Deal, Entry to Employment and Modern Apprenticeships, so those students who were not capable of Level 3 qualifications have been siphoned off into the work-based route rather than the academic route.
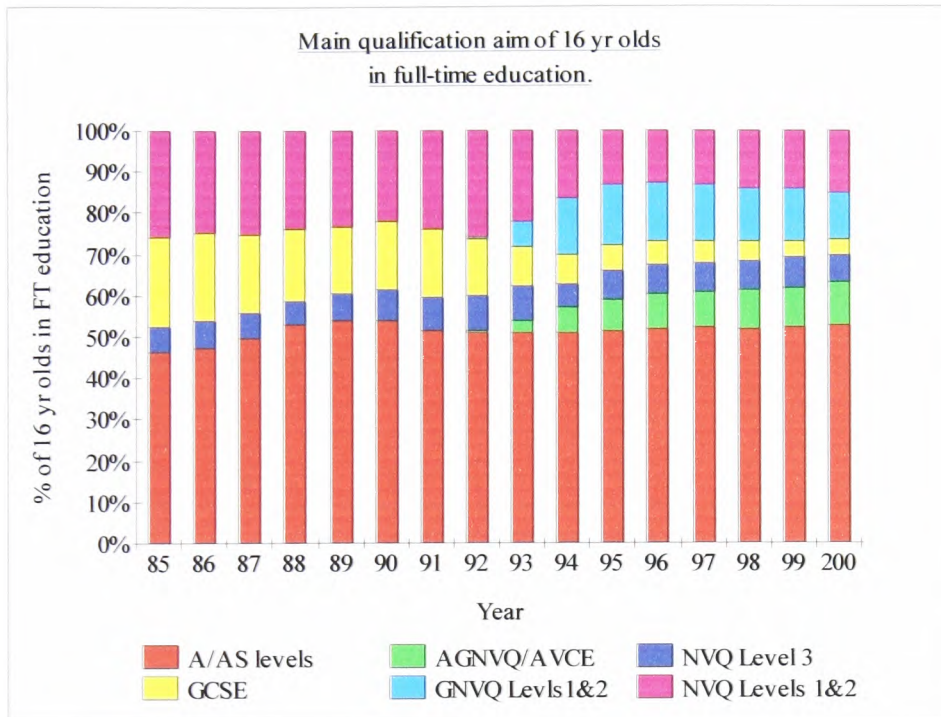
Figure 3.5: Main qualification aim of 16 year olds in full-time education (as a % of those in FT further education).

Year	A/AS levels	AGNVQ/ AVCE	NVQ 3	GCSE	GNVQ 1&2	NVQ 1&2
1985	45.7 %	2.8 % (in 1993)	6.3 %	21.4 %	5.9 % (In 1993)	25.4 %
2000	52.5 %	10.4 %	6.7 %	3.6 %	11.3 %	14.6 %

Table 3.4: Qualification aim of 16 year olds (as a percentage of those in FT FE).

Although the above figures showed that FE colleges increased their market share among 16 year olds, and that more students are taking Level 3 courses, a further question is whether the choice of course followed in each institution has remained the same: are schools still 'creaming off' the A level students, as has traditionally been the case, or are FE institutions increasing their share of the A level market? As shown

by Figure 3.6, below, the relative proportions of students studying A levels in different institution types has remained stable for the past 10 years: Maintained schools have retained 52-55% of A level students; independent schools 15-18%; sixth form colleges 14-18%, and other FE institutions 12-14%. Although FE colleges have increased their share of students therefore, it is not due to an increase in the number of A level students choosing FE colleges.
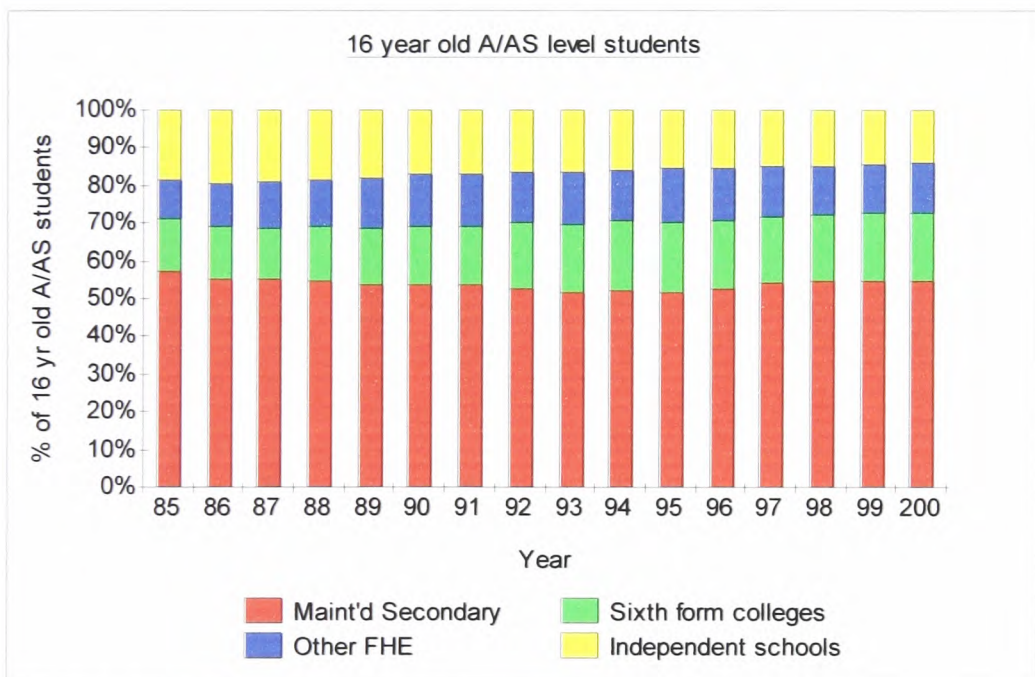
Figure 3.6: Destinations of 16-year-old A/AS level students.

The pattern for GNVQ Advanced or VCE A/AS level students has not been so stable, with schools increasing their share of students since their launch in 1992/93 (see Figure 3.7, below). When they were first introduced, all students taking GNVQ Advanced were in FE institutions, but as their popularity has grown, schools have started to introduce them, and in 2000, 39.2% of GNVQ Advanced/VCE A/AS level students were in schools, with 44.6% in FE institutions, and 14.9% in sixth form

colleges. FE colleges therefore lost some of their Level 3 students to schools, which, taken with the above finding that the proportions of A/AS level students in FE has remained broadly the same, indicates a loss of Level 3 students overall. Adding to this is the small loss in the proportion of NVQ Level 3 students in FE colleges: although FE colleges have always been the traditional home for technical and practical qualifications, a small number of schools and sixth form colleges have started to offer these qualifications, as shown in Figure 3.8 below.
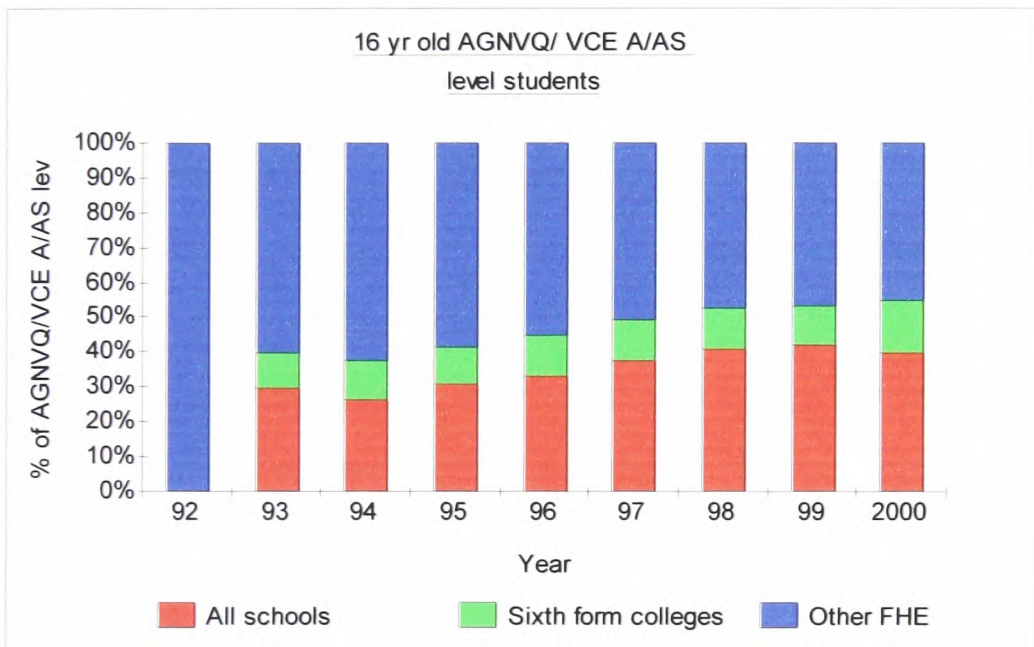
Figure 3.7: Destinations of 16-year-old AGNVQ/VCE A/AS level students. (In 1992 FE colleges ran pilot GNVQs)
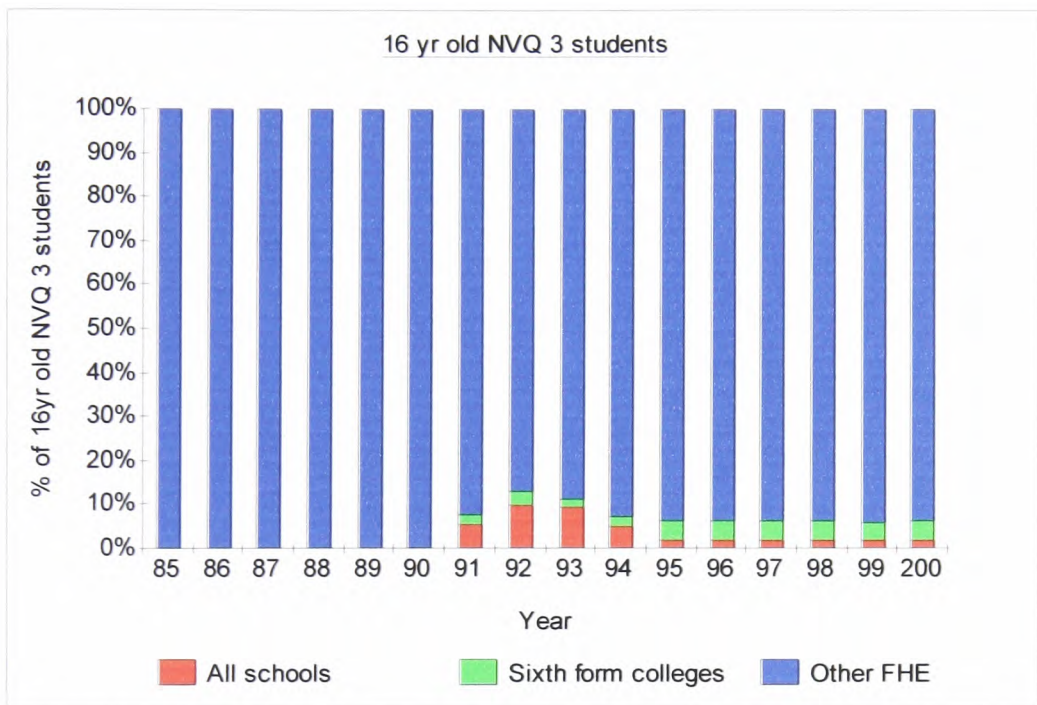
Figure 3.8: Destinations of 16-year-old NVQ Level 3 and equivalent students.

With GCSE students, the trend has been in the other direction, with an increasing number of 16 year old students choosing to take GCSEs in FE institutions rather than in schools (see Figure 3.9, below): in 1985, 64% of post-compulsory 16 year old GCSE students were in schools, compared with 14% in sixth form colleges and 22% in FE institutions. The proportions in sixth form colleges has remained quite stable until 2000, but by 1999, 44.8% of 16 year old GCSE students were in FE institutions, compared with only 37.9% in schools and 17.2% in sixth form colleges. There was a small change the following year (2000), with schools just taking more GCSE students again (48.1% compared with 40.7% in FE colleges). Throughout this time it must be remembered that the numbers of GCSE students have fallen rapidly, so even an increase in percentages is likely to mean a small drop in actual numbers studying.

16 yr old GCSE students

Legend: All schools (red), 6th form colleges (green), Other FHE (blue)
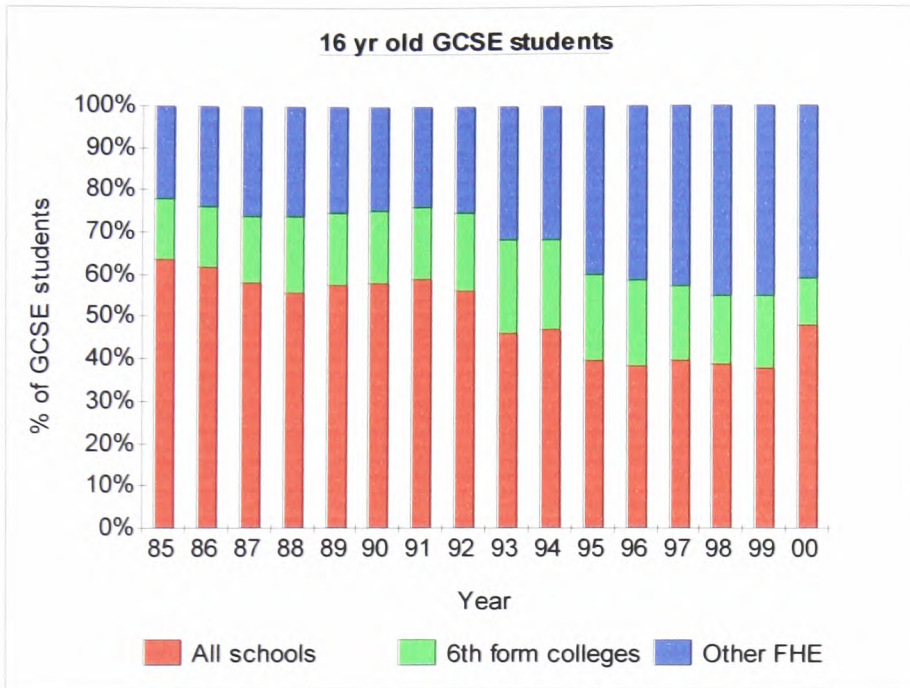
Figure 3.9: Destinations of 16-year-old GCSE students.

It is not the case, however, that FE institutions are taking over the intermediate levels of provision, with the advanced levels being offered more by the schools, as Intermediate and Foundation level GNVQs are offered in roughly equal proportions by both schools and colleges (see Figure 3.10, below): in 1993, 46.5% of 16 year old Intermediate and Foundation GNVQ students were in schools, with 44% in FE institutions, and 9.3% in sixth form colleges. These figures have not changed very much from then until 2000, when 11% of these students were still in sixth form colleges, 42.7% were in schools, and the remaining 46.3% were in FE institutions.
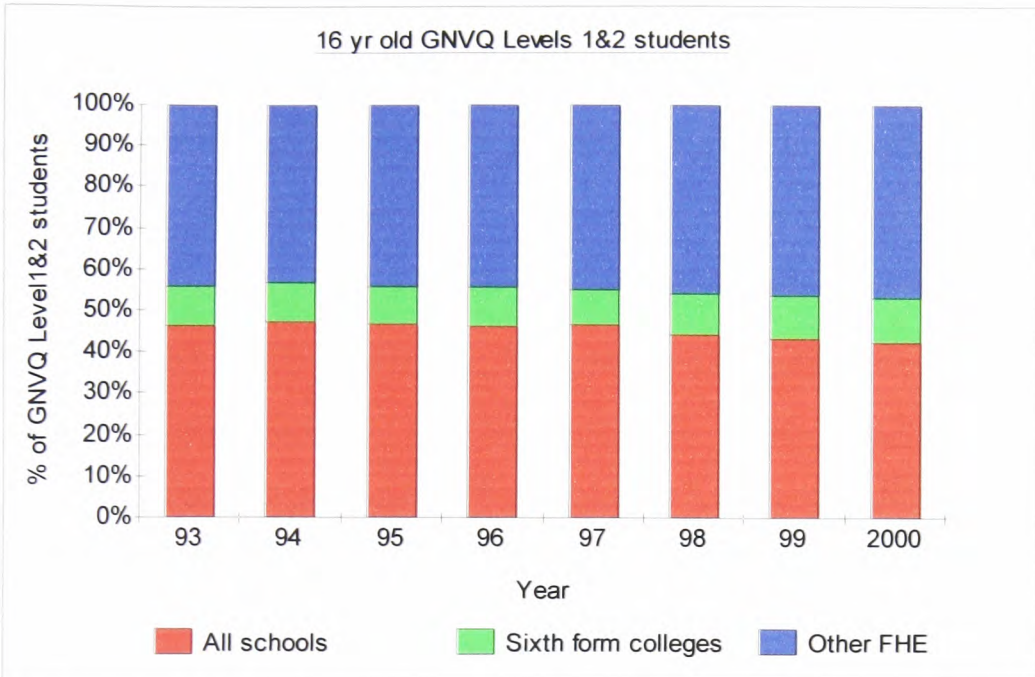
Figure 3.10: Destinations of 16-year-old GNVQ Intermediate and Foundation level students.

As expected, the vast majority of students following NVQ Levels 1 and 2 study are in FE institutions, and this has remained stable across time.

To summarise the statistics for 16-year-old, full time students, the overall numbers in education have increased over the past 15 or so years, although after 1993 the percentage of 16 year olds participating dropped slightly. Advanced level courses, such as A levels, Advanced GNVQs, VCE A/AS levels and NVQ Level 3 and equivalents have seen the greatest increases in numbers. The number of 16 year olds attempting GCSEs (presumably re-sitting examinations) has decreased, and students are instead choosing equivalent vocational qualifications such as GNVQ Foundation or Intermediate. Throughout this time, the relative numbers of students in different types of institutions have remained relatively stable, with maintained schools taking

approximately 53% of those remaining in full-time education in 1985, falling to 49% by 2000, and FE institutions (including sixth form colleges) taking approximately 47% in 1985, and rising slightly to 51% by 2000. Of the rise in FE college students, the main areas of expansion are Level 1 and 2 courses, such as GCSEs (a rise in proportions, if not in actual numbers) and Intermediate and Foundation Level GNVQs. In contrast, the proportion of A level, Advanced GNVQ and now VCE A/AS levels, has increased in schools, suggesting students see schools as the institution to take higher qualifications, whereas FE colleges are seen as institutions to re-sit qualifications at the same level.

Seventeen-year-old full-time students

As with 16 year olds, the numbers of 17 year olds in full-time education have been rising steadily for the past 15 years or more. As the population of the cohort has not remained stable, however, since 1994 the proportion of the age group remaining in education decreased slightly, from 58.7% in 1994, to 57.4% in 1997, then increased slowly, reaching 59% in 2000 (as seen in Figure 3.1, above). The relative proportions of students in different institutions shows a somewhat different picture to that seen among 16 year olds, as FE institutions have always been more popular among the 17 year olds than the school sixth form. After 1992, this gap increased even more, with FE college numbers rising swiftly, until gradually converging towards the figures for schools after 1997. This again indicates a reaction to the 1992 FHE Act, when marketing in colleges was increased drastically, as competition between institutions was amplified. The fact that FE institutions have been more popular than schools among 17 year olds for many years, whereas only relatively recently has the same been true among 16 year olds, suggests that some students leave school after one extra

year, either because they were on a one year course, because they decided to complete their studies at a college, or because they were dropping out of education altogether. As seen above however, recently, fewer students were taking one-year courses, such as GCSEs, at school, implying that many students leaving school after one year of post-compulsory education had not completed their courses. With the advent of Curriculum 2000, it will not be as easy to make such assumptions, however, as it is designed to allow students to take AS levels and/or VCE AS levels in one year, and leave with qualifications after this time. Given the trend seen here, this will be a step towards ensuring students who leave after one year of further education have something to show for their work.
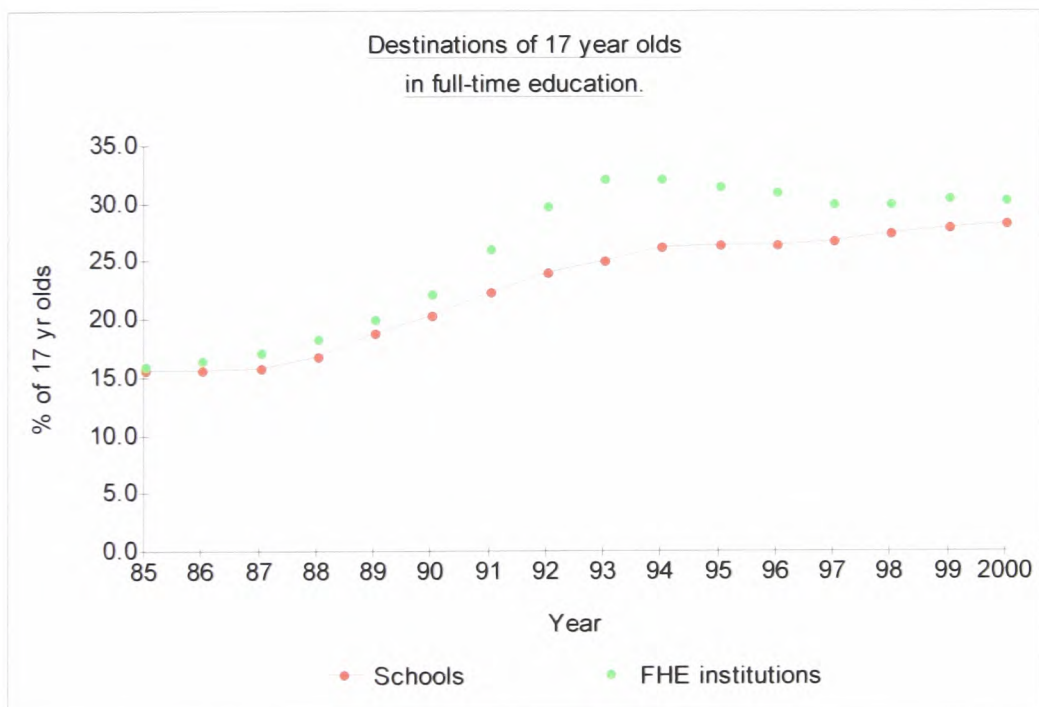
Figure 3.11: Destinations of 17 year olds in full-time further education.

The overall picture of the main qualification aims of 17 year old full-time students is similar to that of 16 year olds in some respects: the most popular course is A levels, as with 16 year olds, followed by Advanced level GNVQs and Level 3 NVQs (as

opposed to Level 1 and 2 GNVQs and NVQs among 16 year olds) (see Figure 3.12, below). When the figures are transformed to give the proportion of full-time students following each course, as in Figure 3.13 (below) it is easier to see that Level 3 qualifications, whether academic, general or vocational (A/AS levels, Advanced GNVQ/VCE A/AS level and NVQ, respectively) have risen in popularity in recent years: until 1993 NVQs were most often completed at Levels 1 and 2 by 17 year olds, but since that time Level 3 NVQs have been more popular. This suggests that more students are passing Level 2 qualifications and remaining in education to complete Level 3 courses. As more 16 year old students have been taking GNVQs at the Foundation and Intermediate level than GCSEs, an increase in retention and pass rates must be linked to this; GNVQ courses are either easier to pass, more likely to engage the students long enough for them to finish the course, or perhaps better suited to those students who did not achieve five GCSE passes at the first attempt.
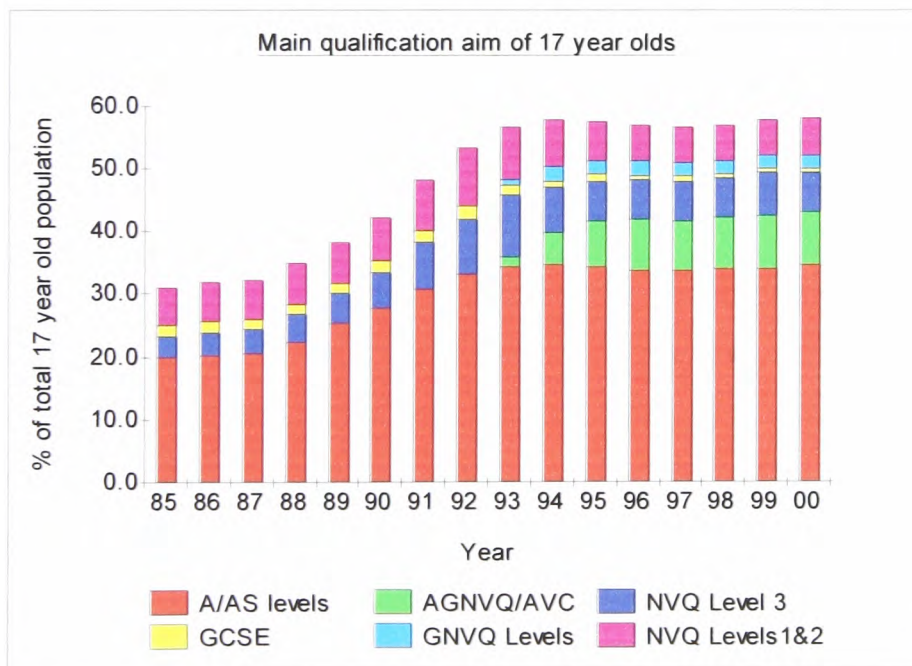
Figure 3.12: Main qualification aim of 17 year olds (as a percentage of the total age group).

Year	A/AS levels	AGNVQ/ AVCE	NVQ 3	GCSE	GNVQ 1&2	NVQ 1&2
1985	20 %	5.1 % (in 1994)	3.5 %	1.8 %	2.3 % (in 1994)	5.9 %
2000	34.8 %	8.4 %	6.5 %	0.5 %	2.0 %	5.9 %

Table 3.5: Qualification aim of 17 year olds (as a percentage of all 17 year olds).
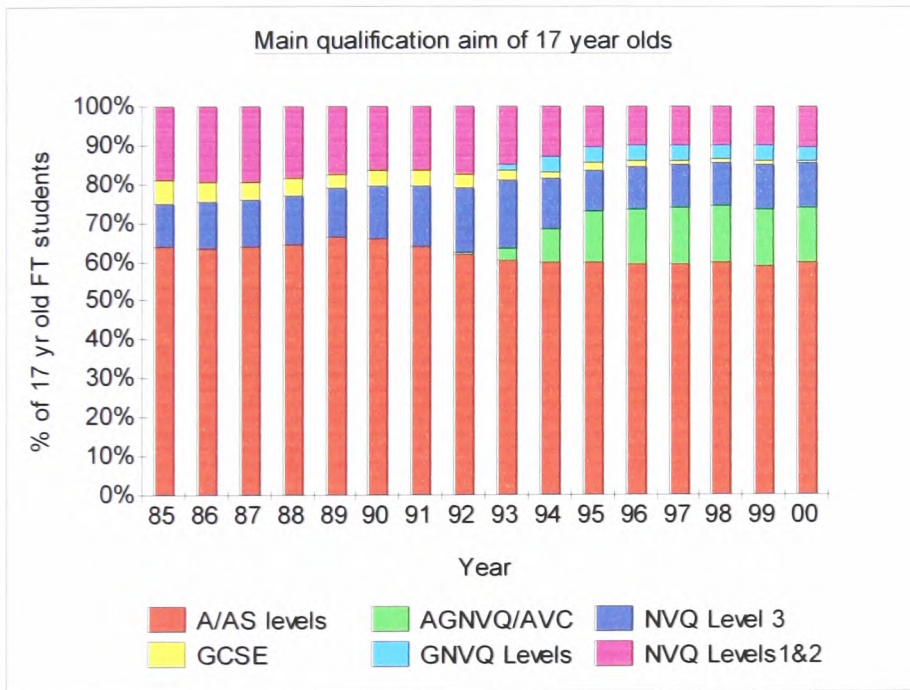
Figure 3.13: Main qualification aim of 17 year olds (as a percentage of 17 year old full-time students).

From Figure 3.13, it is also interesting to note that the relative popularity of A/AS levels among this age group has remained relatively stable since 1985, dropping slightly since 1990 (62.9% of 17 year old students in 1985, rising to 65.2% in 1990, then dropping slightly to 59% by 2000). The proportion of students of this age taking Level 3 NVQs has also dropped slightly from 1993 when it accounted for 17.4% of 17 year old students, to just 11% in 2000. The rise in the proportion of students taking

Level 3 qualifications must therefore be due to the Advanced GNVQ/VCE A/AS levels. For the first two years after their introduction, GNVQs at the Advanced level saw huge increases in take-up by 17 year olds, rising from 2.8% of students in 1993, to 14.2% by 2000. As the numbers of 17 year olds in full-time participation has also increased since 1993, perhaps part of the reason for this was the introduction of GNVQs; it was a welcome alternative to the strictly academic or vocational route for many, and after successfully completing an intermediate level GNVQ, many students remained in education to take the advanced course in the same subject. Before this alternative had been available to students, if students chose to re-take their GCSEs at the age of 16 it was unlikely they would have suddenly found they enjoyed and were successful at the qualifications at the second attempt, and would have been unlikely to have remained in education after their one year course. With the advent of GNVQs however, those who did not flourish under the GCSE system often found they did well at and enjoyed the GNVQ style of course, and felt confident to try for the next level of qualification. The vast majority of these students chose to take the Advanced GNVQ in the same subject, and rarely changed at this stage to an A level course. These possible explanations were examined in the interviews as part of this research, and it was found to be true in many cases: students who took GNVQs at Level 2 preferred that style of learning to their GCSEs and often continued to the Advanced level, but none of the students interviewed changed from the GNVQ track to A levels. Of course, the advent of Curriculum 2000 will theoretically have made this simpler, as students could take VCE A levels combined with A or AS levels, and this is discussed later in greater detail.

It was shown above (Figure 3.6) that the relative proportions of 16 year olds taking A/AS levels in different institutions had remained stable for the last 15 years, and the same is true of 17 year olds taking A/AS levels (see Figure 3.14, below). The proportion of 17 year olds taking their A/AS levels in schools (combining independent with maintained) fell slightly during this 15 year period, from 72% of A/AS level students in 1985 to 68.3% in 2000. The share in sixth form colleges rose slightly during this period, from 14.5% in 1985 to 17.5% in 2000, whereas the proportion in FE colleges remained stable around 13-14%. Despite the small fall experienced by schools over this time, they still took the biggest share of A/AS level students, the 'traditional sixth-formers'.
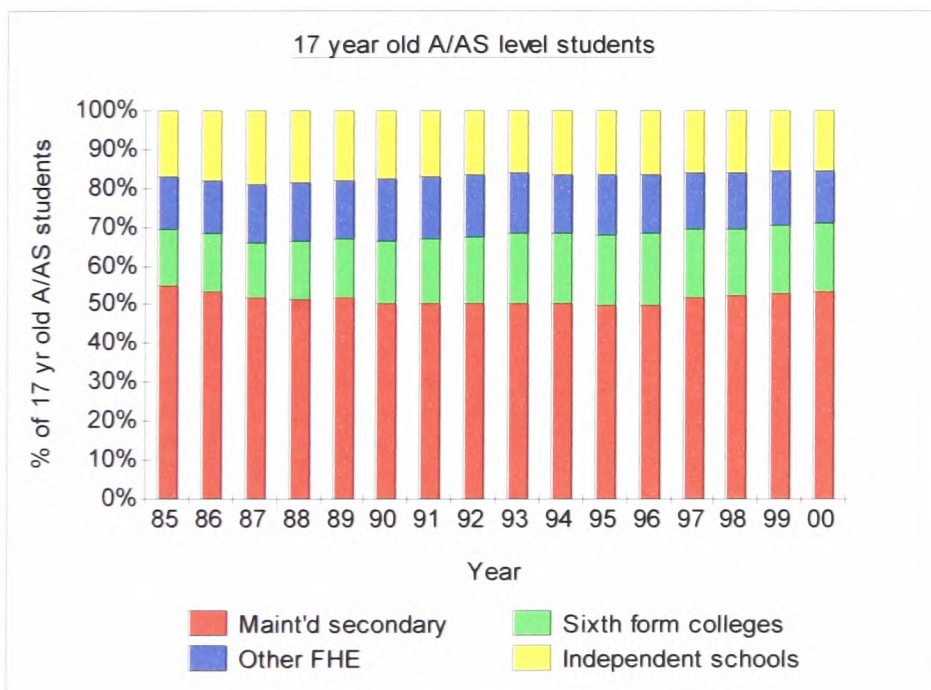
Figure 3.14: Destinations of 17-year-old A/AS level students.

As discussed above, the number of 17 year olds taking Advanced level GNVQs has risen dramatically since their introduction in 1992, and during that time there has been an increase in the proportion of students taking the qualifications in schools (see

Figure 3.15, below). When they were first introduced only FE institutions offered the qualification, but as their popularity rose schools also started to offer them, until by 2000 33.3% of 17 year old GNVQ Advanced students were in schools, with 13.1% in sixth form colleges and the remaining 53.6% in FE institutions. From Figure 3.15 it is also apparent that the proportion of students taking their Advanced GNVQs or VCE A/AS levels in sixth form colleges has remained stable since they became widespread, in 1993.
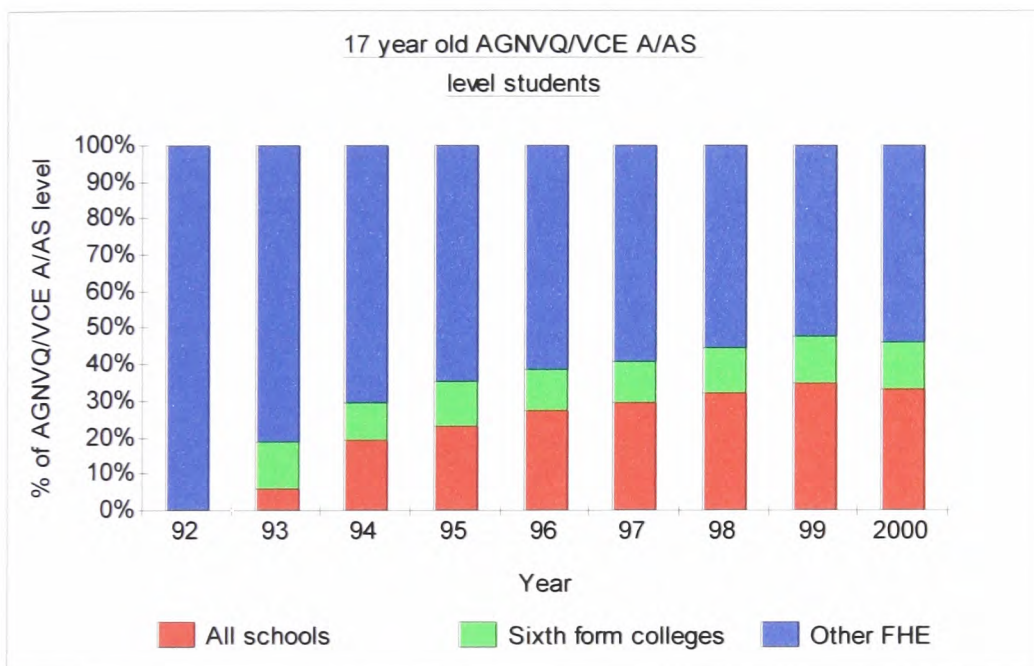
Figure 3.15: Destinations of 17-year-old Advanced GNVQ/VCE A/AS level students.

As with 16 year olds, the opposite trend is evident among GCSE students, with more students choosing to take GCSEs in FE institutions at the age of 17, and fewer choosing to remain in schools to do so (see Figure 3.16, below). As discussed above, the popularity of GCSE re-sits among this age group has dropped dramatically in recent years, but of those who do chose to do so the vast majority attend FE colleges (66.7% in 1999) with the remainder being spread quite evenly between sixth form

colleges and schools (16.7% at each in 1999). In 2000 however, sixth form colleges took a negligible number of students on GCSE courses, suggesting they were instead directing their students towards GNVQs at the Intermediate or Foundation level.
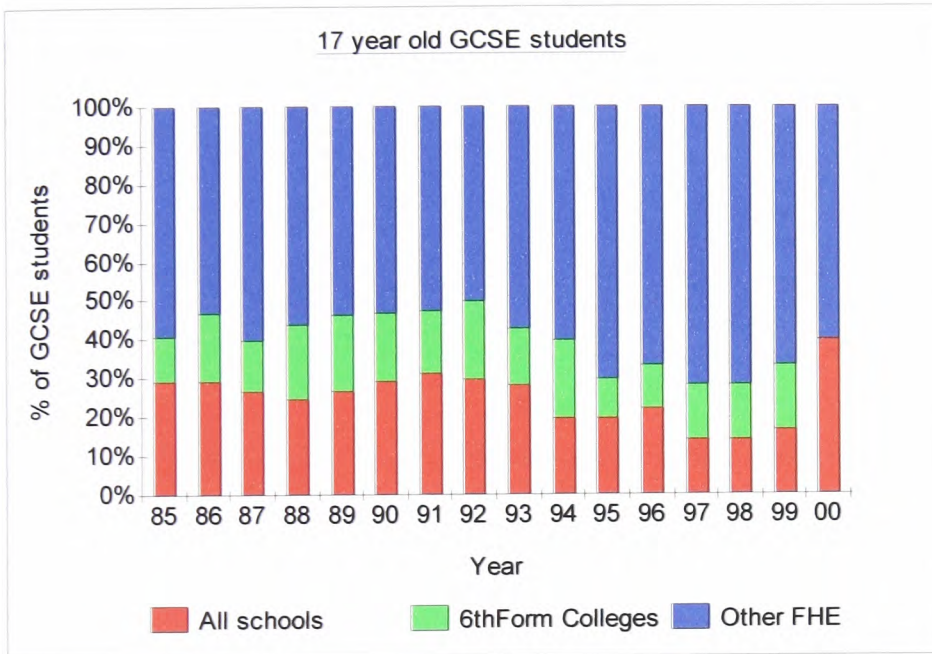
Figure 3.16: Destinations of 17-year-old GCSE students.

Looking at those students taking Intermediate and Foundation level GNVQs in more detail (see Figure 3.17, below), differences between 16 and 17 year olds are evident: whereas at 16 schools and colleges take roughly equal numbers of these students, for 17 year olds FE colleges are the provider for the vast majority (70% in 2000), with only a small proportion in schools (20%) and sixth form colleges (10%).
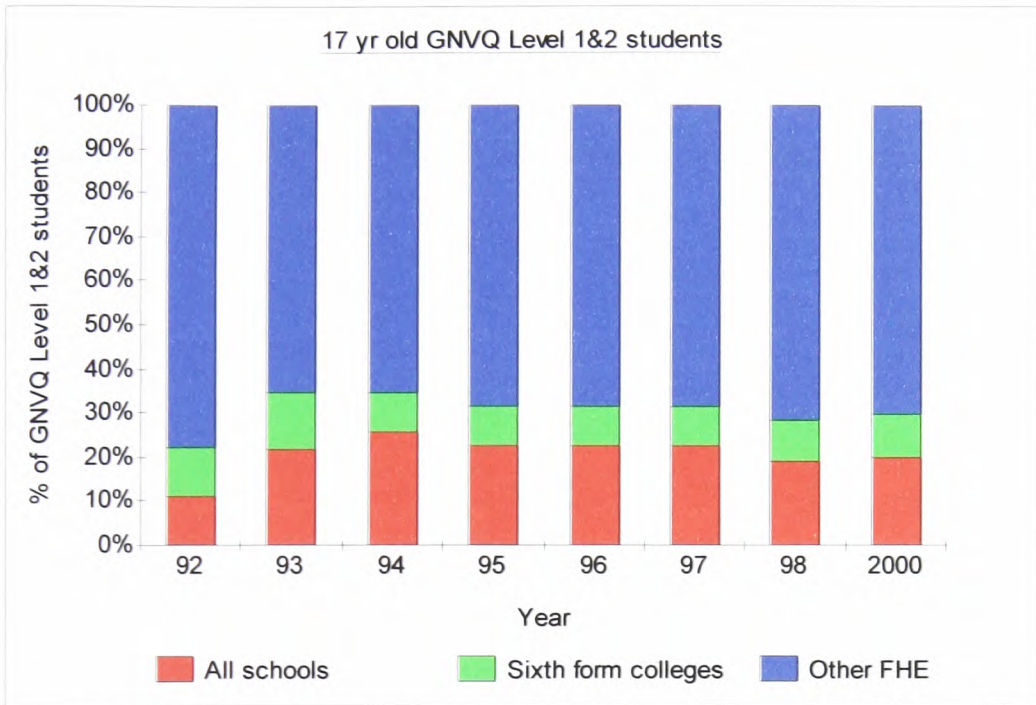
Figure 3.17: Destinations of 17-year-old Intermediate and Foundation level GNVQ students.

The fact that sixth form colleges have not increased their share of GNVQ students at this level, coupled with the drop in GCSE numbers mentioned above, suggests they are trying to move away from Level 1 and 2 qualifications altogether, and towards concentrating on Level 3 courses and in some cases even higher. One way of testing this is to chart the courses followed by students at sixth form colleges at various ages, since 1985. When looking at 16 year olds (see Figure 3.18, below) it is obvious that the amount of Level 3 provision has increased at the expense of Level 1 and 2 provision. (65.2% in 1985, compared with 85.1% in 2000). The picture for 17 year olds (Figure 3.19) shows similar trends, although with much higher proportions of Level 3 courses (93.1% in 1985, compared with 96.1% in 2000), as might be expected from this age group. For 18 year olds, sixth form colleges provide almost entirely Level 3 courses, with the majority of students (57.1% in 2000) taking A/AS levels,

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35.7% taking GNVQ Advanced/VCE A/AS levels, and 7.1% taking NVQ Level 3 qualifications. Sixth form colleges are therefore moving towards being Level 3 qualification institutions, and away from a comprehensive intake.
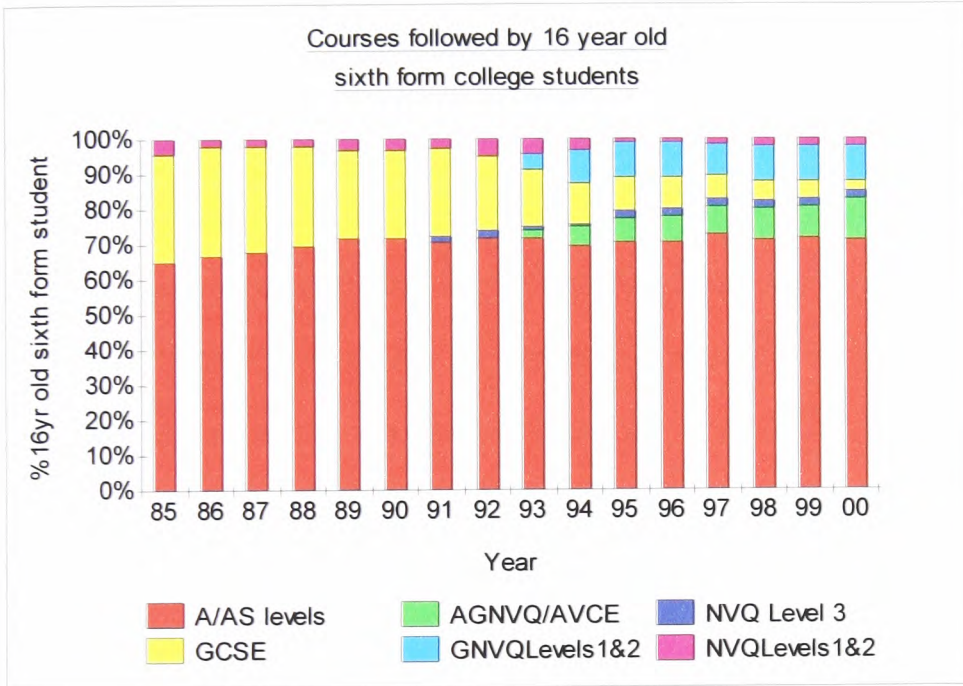
Figure 3.18: Main qualification aim of 16-year-old sixth form college students.
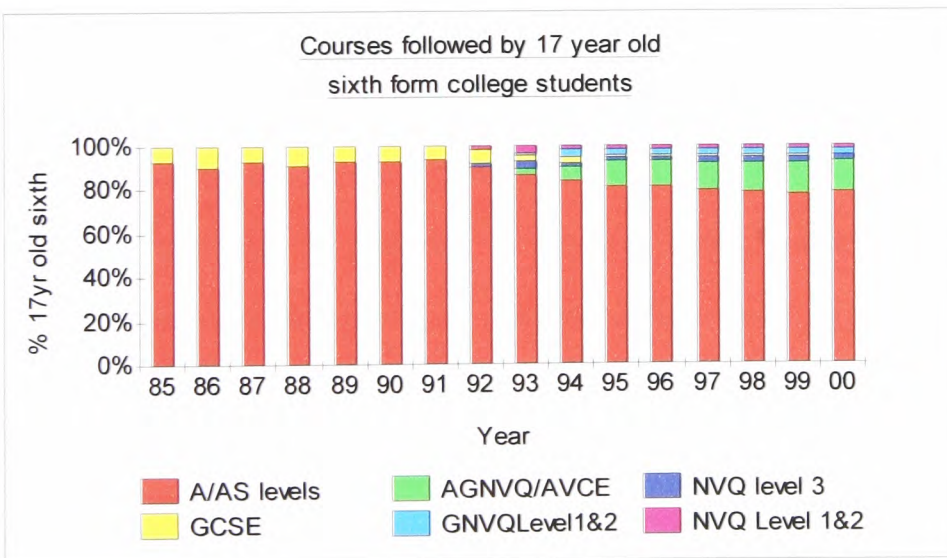
Figure 3.19: Main qualification aim of 17-year-old sixth form college students.

As seen for sixteen year olds, NVQ qualifications at all levels are most commonly taken at FE colleges, with a very small minority of students pursuing these courses in schools and sixth form colleges.

To summarise the information available for the national picture concerning 17 year olds in full-time education, the proportion of the cohort remaining in education rose steadily for the latter part of the eighties and early nineties (and before that, see previous chapter) peaking in 1994 at 58.7% of the cohort, then slowly rising again until reaching 59% in 2000. A year on year increase in absolute numbers of 17 year olds in full-time education was also seen every year except 1998 and 1999. More students at this age were in FE institutions than they had been at 16, indicating either that students had left school one year after their compulsory schooling, or had returned to education after one year out of education, and had chosen to do so at a college rather than at a school. Amongst those remaining in education at this age, A/AS levels have fallen in popularity slightly, as have Level 3 NVQs, but the introduction of Advanced level GNVQs/VCE A/AS levels and their ensuing rise in popularity has meant that overall there are more students pursuing Level 3 qualifications at the start of the millennium than 15 years previously. GCSEs have also fallen in popularity, whereas 'replacement courses' such as GNVQs at Intermediate and Foundation level have increased their market share of the cohort. Since their introduction in 1992, schools have consistently increased their share of GNVQ students at the expense of FE institutions, whereas FE institutions have increased their share of the falling numbers of GCSE students at this age. Sixth form colleges have also increased the proportion of Level 3 courses they are offering to

both 16 and 17 year old students, and decreasing the amount of Level 1 and 2 provision available for these students.

Eighteen-year-old students

When analysing the data for 18-year-old students, it must be borne in mind that this includes both further and higher education. Although the focus of this research is on further education, participation in higher education will be considered to some degree.

As seen earlier in Figure 3.1 and 3.2 (above), the participation of 18 year olds in further education has increased in both proportion and absolute numbers terms since 1985 (and before, see previous chapter) levelling off after 1995, and stabilising at approximately 17.5%. The numbers in higher education have also increased, rising from 8.1% in 1985 reaching 20.2% in 1997, before levelling off to 20% by 2000, before increasing again towards the 2010 target of 50% of all 18-30 year olds having experience of HE. As the proportion of young people remaining in post-compulsory education has increased over this fifteen-year period, it is not unexpected to find a similar increase in higher education participation rates, as these students move through the system.

An examination of the destinations of 18 year old students shows that the proportion in schools has increased in this 15 year period from 1985 to 2000, (from 1.8% of 18 year olds to 3.2%) as has the proportion in higher education institutions (from 8.1% to 20%). The proportion in FE institutions, however, reached a peak of 16.5% in 1995 and has decreased since that time (13.9% in 2000) (Figure 3.20 and Table 3.6, below). The increases apparent among 16 and 17 year olds in FE colleges after 1992 are not as

obvious amongst 18 year old students, possibly because they are less likely to have been in schools immediately before then, so there were few further students left to tempt with advertising and marketing campaigns.
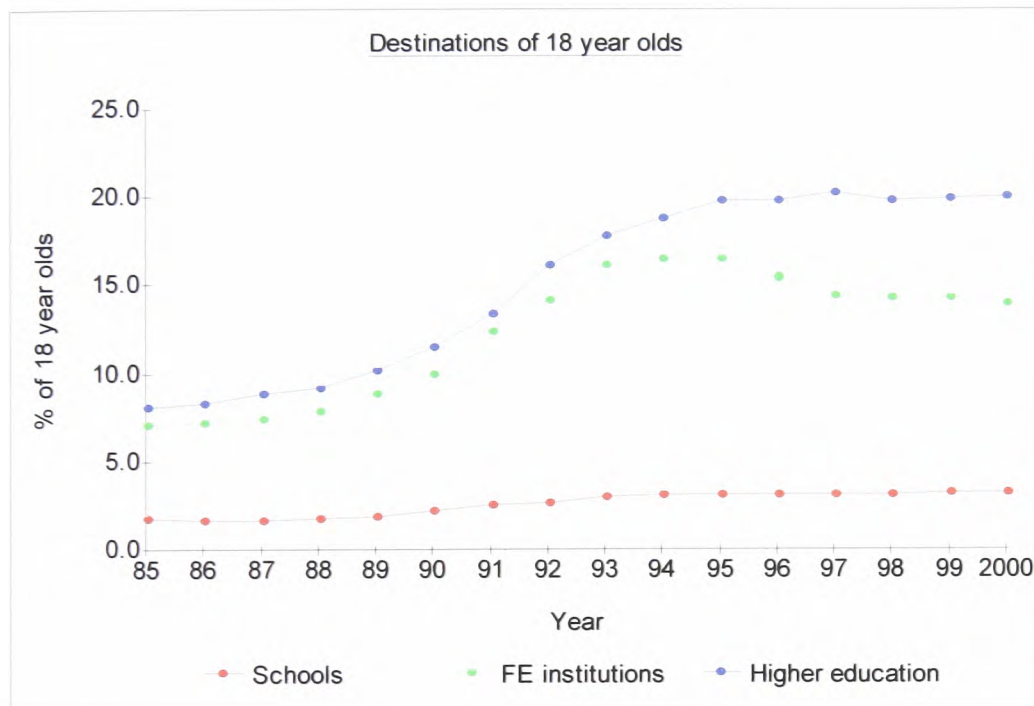
Figure 3.20: Destinations of 18 year olds in full-time education.

Year	Schools	FE	HE
1985	1.8 %	7.3 %	8.1 %
2000	3.2 %	13.9 %	20 %

Table 3.6: Destinations of 18 year olds in FT education

When looking at the courses taken by 18 year old students (see Figure 3.21, below) it is noticeable that the proportion of students on vocational courses (NVQs) at all three levels, from Foundation to Advanced. This has increased over time, rising from 2% of 18 year olds in 1985 taking NVQs at Level 3, to 4.5% in 2000, having peaked at 6.3%

in 1993. NVQ participation at Levels 1 and 2 peaked the year after, in 1994, with 4.9% of 18 year olds taking the courses. Looking at the proportion of students following each course as a proportion of full-time students (Figure 3.22 and Table 3.7) shows the relationships between courses more easily. It is apparent that the decrease in the proportion of students taking A levels has been counteracted by the rise in the proportion taking GNVQ Advanced, from 1994 onwards: in 1985, 42.5% of 18 year old full-time FE students were taking A or AS levels, whereas in 2000 this had fallen to 25.7%, with another 21.1% taking Advanced level NVQs or VCE A or AS levels. The proportions taking Level 1 and 2 courses and Level 3 courses has remained broadly equal over the fifteen year period, with GNVQs at Levels 1 and 2 replacing much of the share of GCSE students, as seen above with younger students.
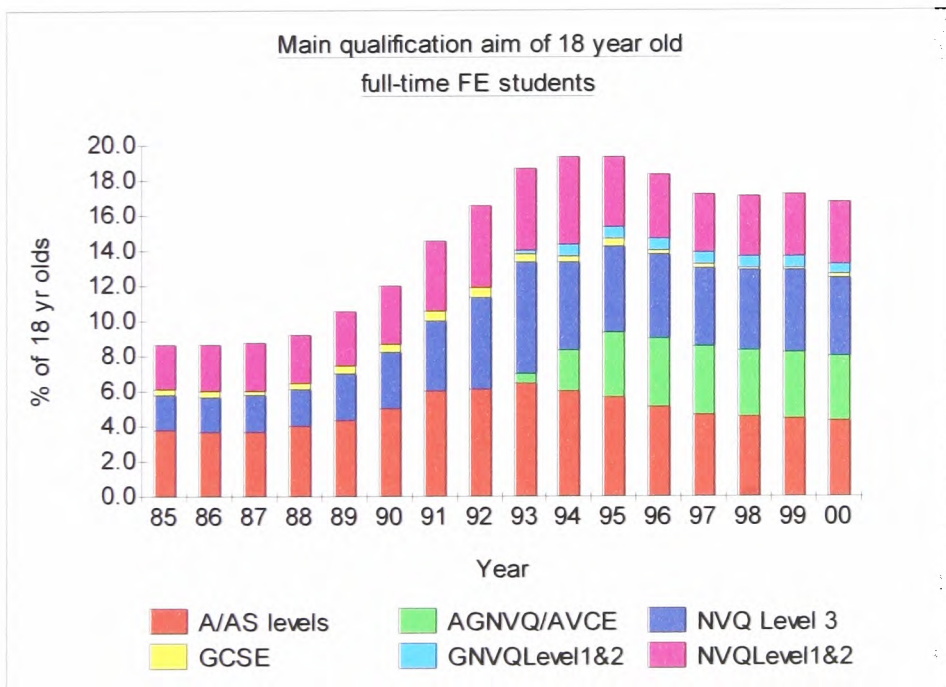
Figure 3.21: Main qualification aim of 18-year-old full-time FE students (as a percentage of all 18 year olds).
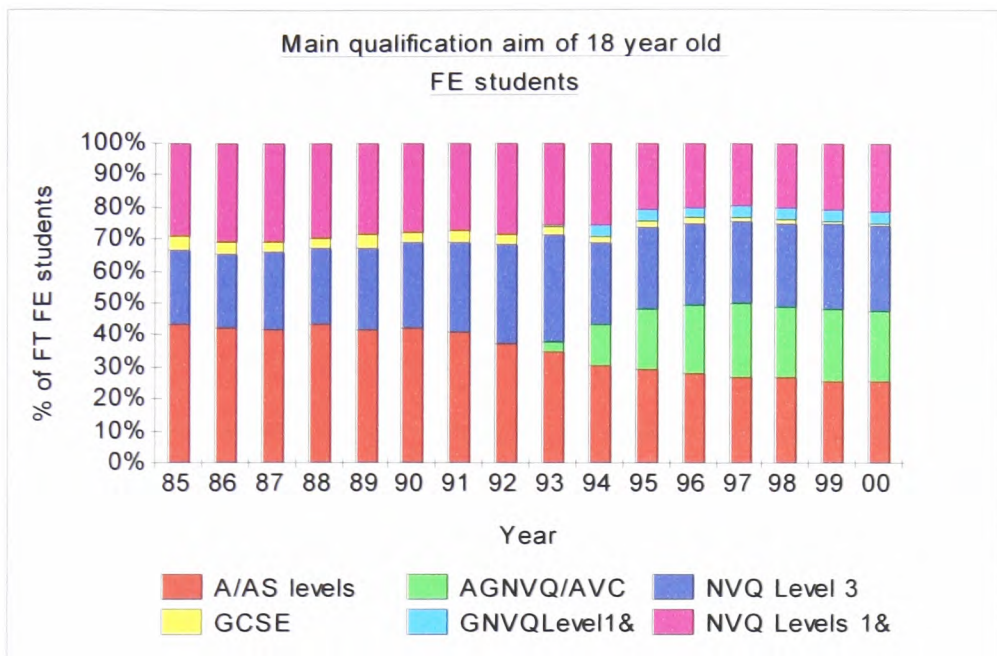
Figure 3.22: Main qualification aim of 18-year-old full-time FE students (as a proportion of all 18 year old FE students).

Year	A/AS levels	AGNVQ/ AVCE	NVQ 3	GCSE	GNVQ 1&2	NVQ 1&2
1985	42.7 %	12.2 % (in 1994)	22.5 %	4.5 %	3.6 % (in 1994)	28.1 %
2000	25.7 %	21.2 %	26.3 %	1.2 %	3.5 %	20.5 %

Table 3.7: Main qualification aim of 18 year old FT FE students

It was seen earlier that schools took the largest share of A/AS level students at the ages of both 16 and 17, with FE and sixth form colleges sharing the remainder: for 18 year olds the pattern changes, however, with schools no longer creaming off the more academic students, and instead, as shown in Figure 3.23 below, FE institutions hold the largest share of 18 year old A level students (40.9% in 2000). Given that less than 5% of 18 year olds are in schools, however, the proportion of A/AS level students in

schools (25% in 2000) is disproportionately large. Independent schools have risen in popularity among 18 year old A level students since 1992, taking 15.9% of 18 year old A level students in 2000, a similar level to younger students (15-18% of 16 year old A level students).

As mentioned previously, there has been a rise in the numbers of students of this age group taking Advanced level GNVQs or VCE A/AS levels since their introduction, and although the FE institution remains the main provider of this course for this age group, schools have slightly increased the proportion of students remaining with them to complete the course (Figure 3.24, below) as have sixth form colleges.
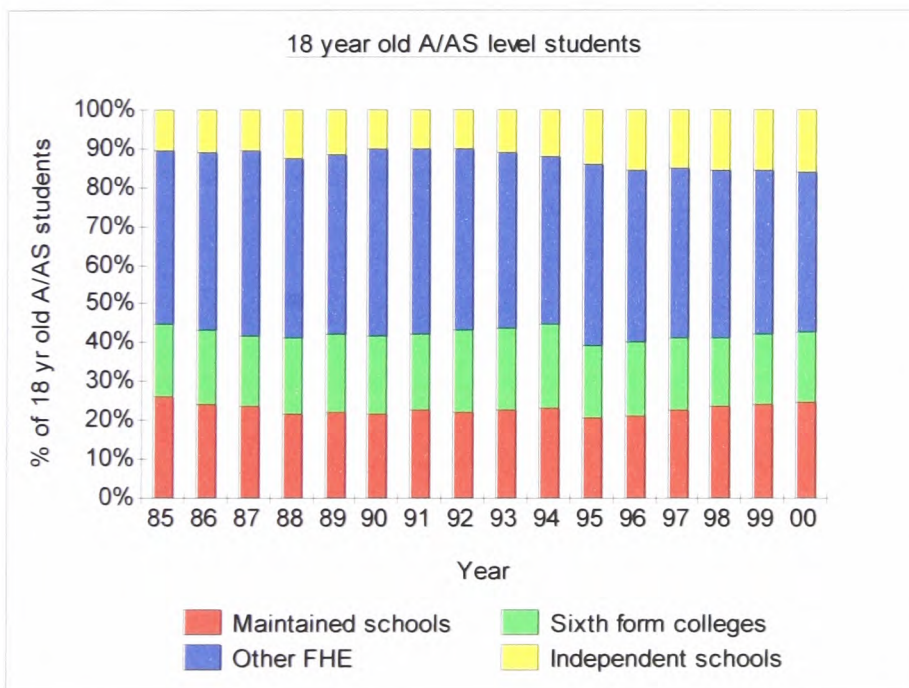
Figure 3.23: Destinations of 18 year olds A/AS level students.
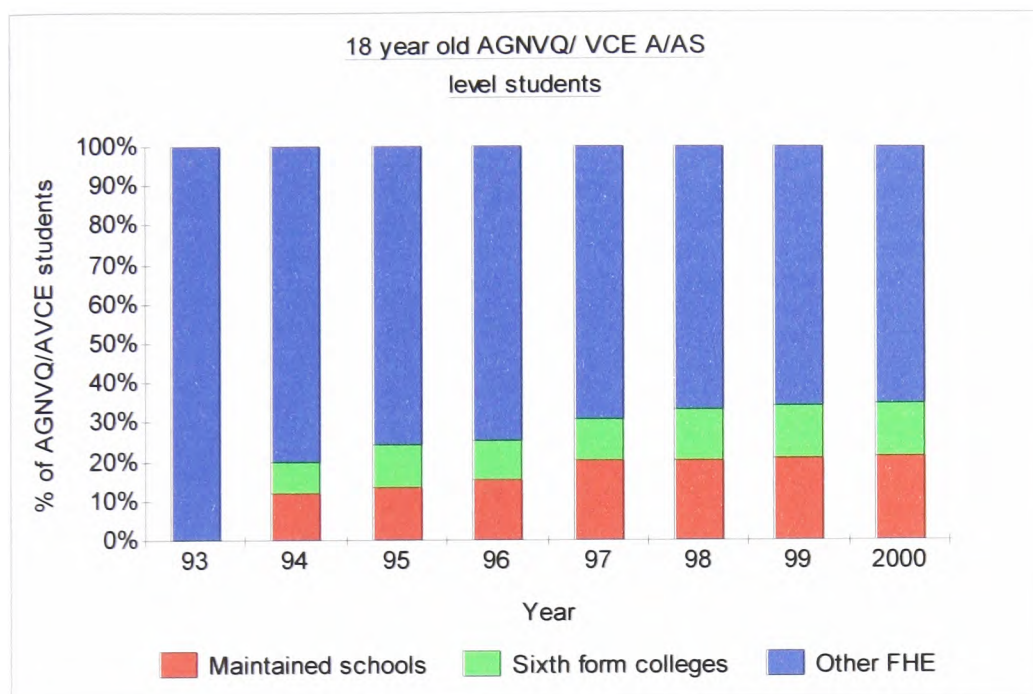
Figure 3.24: Destinations of 18-year-old Advanced GNVQ/VCE A/AS level students.

The move of sixth form colleges towards Level 3 qualifications at the expense of lower level courses has already been discussed, so the increase in GNVQ Level 3 courses is not unexpected, but the reduction in the proportion of these students attending other FE institutions suggests that FE colleges are moving more towards providing the Level 1 and 2 qualifications which sixth form colleges are leaving behind, although it is impossible to tell from these figures whether that is in response to an increased demand for these qualifications. Looking at the figures for FE institutions (excluding sixth form colleges) in Figure 3.25, below, the trend among 16 year olds in FE colleges over the past 15 years indicates a rise in the proportion of students taking Level 3 qualifications (from 30.1% in 1985, to 47.4% in 2000). As the overall numbers of 16 year olds taking Level 3 qualifications has also risen quite sharply over this period (from 53.2% in 1985 to 70.5% in 2000) this is what might have been expected if all institutions had increased their provision equally. For 16

year olds the provision is mainly for vocational (51.1% in 2000) and general (26.3%) qualifications, rather than academic courses (22.6%).
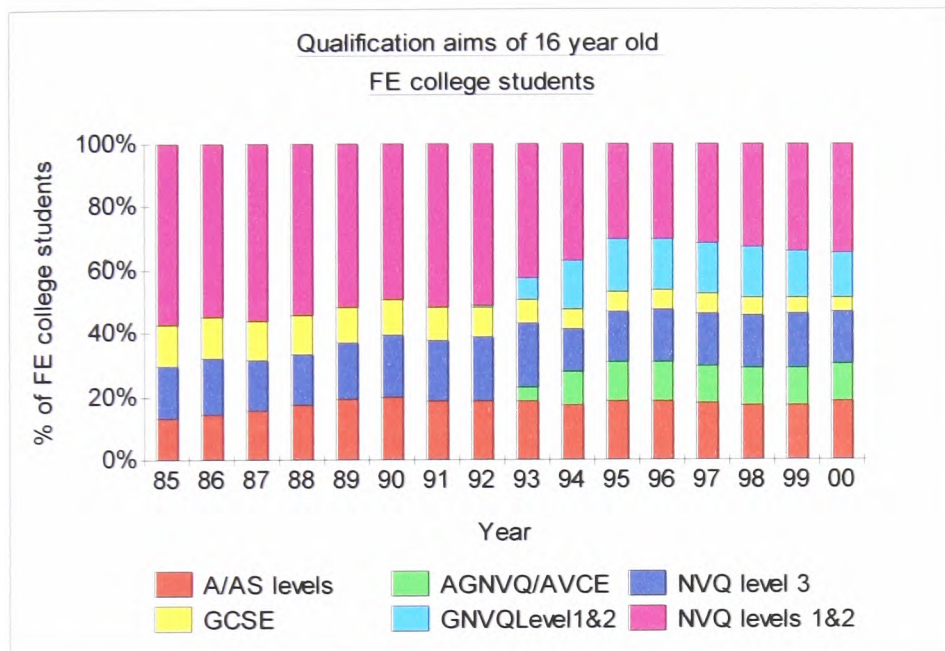
Figure 3.25: Main qualification aim of 16-year-old full-time FE institution students.

The picture for 17-year-old FE college students (Figure 3.26, below) is quite similar, with a rise in Level 3 qualifications over this fifteen-year period (from 48.4% in 1985 to 68.8% in 2000). Overall, student increases in Level 3 qualifications rose to a slightly lesser degree during this time, from 75.3% to 91.6%, showing that FE colleges were gradually taking on more of a share of Level 3 students. Looking at general, vocational and academic qualification routes, in 1985 28.9% of 17 year olds in FE colleges were on academic courses and 71.1% on vocational. Fifteen years later this had changed to 22.8% on academic courses, 26.3% on general courses, and 50.9% on vocational courses: these figures are almost identical to those for 16 year olds, with the introduction of general qualifications taking students from both vocational and academic courses.
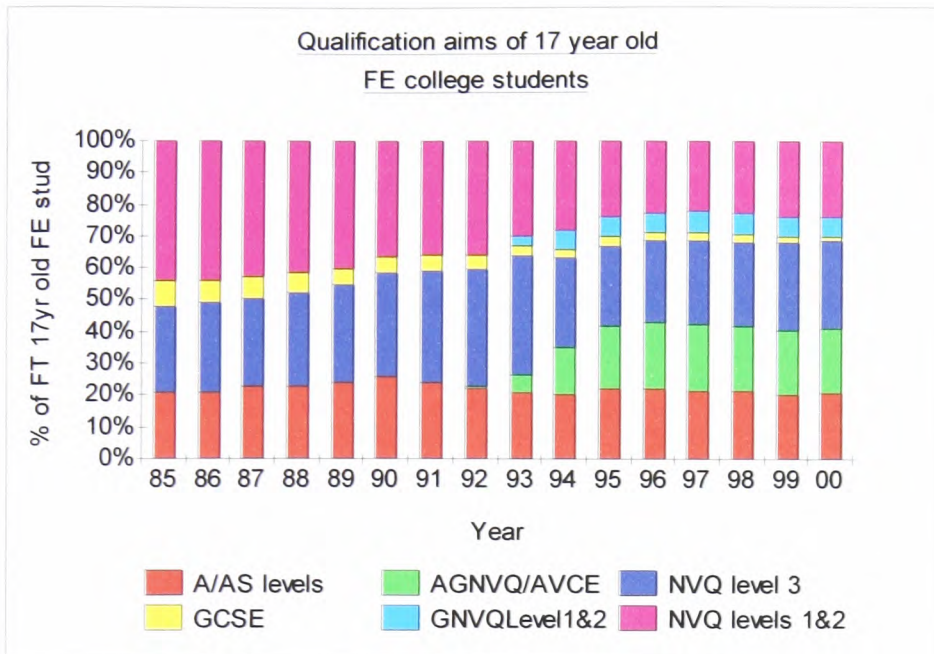
Figure 3.26: Main qualification aim of 17-year-old full-time FE institution students.

Figure 3.27 (below) shows the main qualification aim of 18 year old students in FE institutions, and shows a few small differences: the proportion of students taking Level 3 qualifications in FE institutions rose over this period from 57.8% in 1985 to 68.8% in 2000, compared with a lower overall increase in 18 year olds taking these courses from 65.2% to 73.1%. As with 17 year olds, this indicates that FE institutions proportionately increased their share of Level 3 students. A greater proportion of college students take vocational qualifications at 18 than at 16 or 17, with 61.6% of college students enrolled on vocational courses in 2000, compared with 23.2% on general and 15.2% on academic courses. It is clear from these figures that FE colleges are not moving away from Level 1 and 2 provision, and instead have maintained their share of 16 year olds taking Level 3 courses, and increased their share of 17 and 18 year old Level 3 students. For all 16 to 18 year olds, FE colleges provide more

vocational than general or academic qualifications, however, especially among 18 year olds.
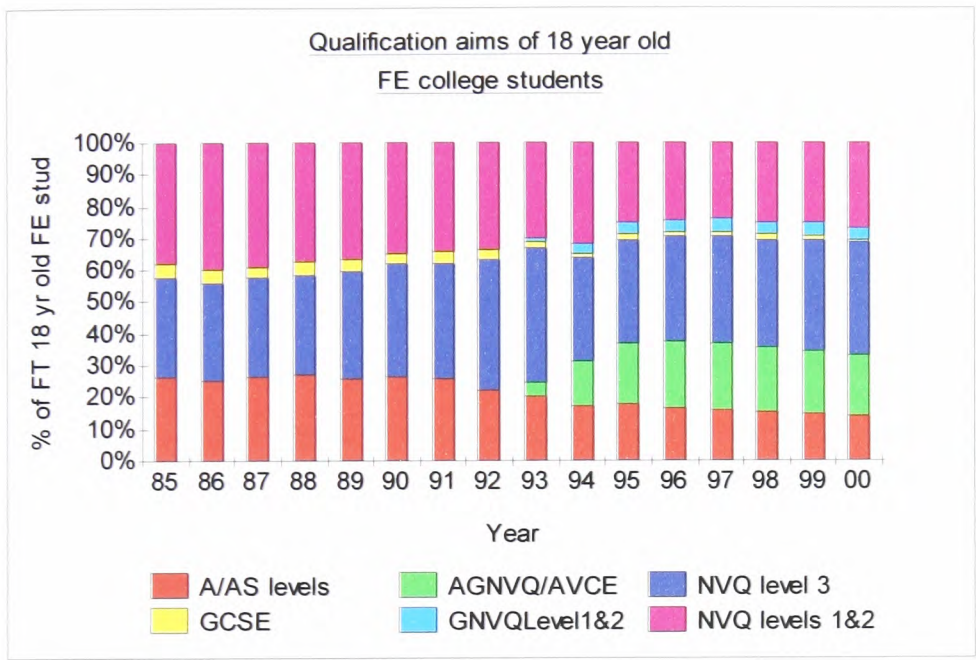
Figure 3.27: Main qualification aim of 18-year-old full-time FE institution students.

Returning to the analysis of 18 year old students, for GCSEs, GNVQ Intermediate and Foundation and NVQs at all levels, FE institutions are the main, if not the sole providers. This is as for previous age groups for NVQ 1 and 2 provision, and shows a movement away from Level 1 and 2 courses in schools for this cohort, although the numbers following each course are very small. To summarise the information for 18-year-old students, full-time participation in education rose steadily throughout the late eighties and nineties, with increases in both further and higher education. Among those studying at the FE level, A/AS levels remain the most popular courses, although their share of the market decreased quite dramatically after the introduction of GNVQs. Numbers taking GCSEs also dropped with the introduction of GNVQs at Levels 1 and 2. In general, there has been a decrease in the proportion of students

taking Level 1 and 2 qualifications, with more students taking Level 3 qualifications at the age of 18, and lower level qualifications are almost exclusively provided by FE institutions. The vast majority of students at this age are in FE colleges, and they are the main providers for every qualification for this age group, including A levels.

Comparison of case-study areas.

As well as the national picture in recent years, it is worth analysing the trends in the areas studied in this research in more detail. The areas of southeast London and Cornwall are almost diametrically opposite geographically, with the former being part of the capital city of England, with all the commerce and development that entails, and the latter being one of the most remote, rural parts of Britain. It was seen above that ethnicity also has an effect on the routes of young people after compulsory schooling, and there are huge differences in terms of the cultural mix in the two areas, with Cornwall being predominantly white, and southeast London being multi-cultural. There are also few homes in Cornwall in which English is not the first language, but this is common in southeast London, which would also be expected to have an effect on the choices made by young people at the age of 16. It was also discussed above that the social class or educational level of students' parents has an effect on the destinations of young people after compulsory schooling. Although Cornwall has some areas of great deprivation, a large proportion of the population are middle-class, compared with a much greater proportion of working-class families in southeast London. It is therefore expected that the routes of young people once they have completed compulsory schooling would be substantially different in the two areas, as both the local economies and geography both constrain them and force them down

certain avenues. As shown in Figures 3.28, 3.29 and 3.30, and tables 3.8, 3.9 and 3.10, there are some major differences between the destinations of students in the rural and urban areas explored, with more of the former in work-based training, and higher rates of employment in school leavers in the latter.
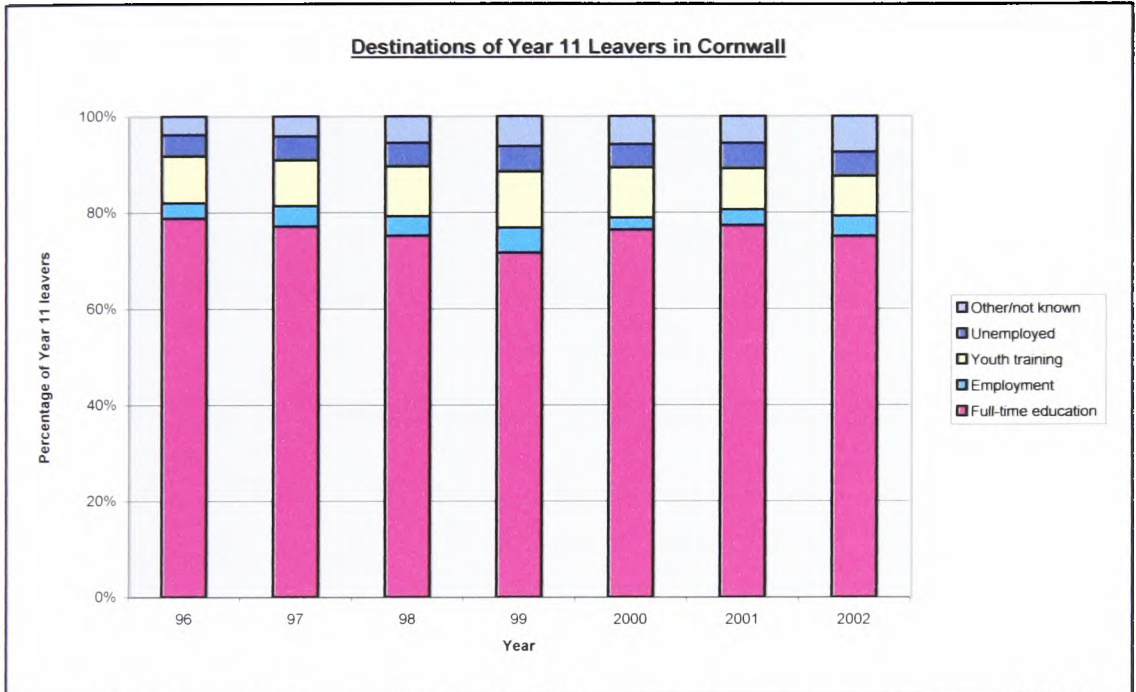
Figure 3.28: Year 11 Leaver Destinations, Cornwall (Source: Cornwall and Devon Careers, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999; Connexions Cornwall and Devon, 2000, 2001 and 2002).

Year	FT education	Employment	Youth training	Unemployment	Other/don't know
1996	78.7 %	3.2 %	9.7 %	4.4 %	3.9 %
2002	75.2 %	4.2 %	8.3 %	5.0 %	7.55 %

Table 3.8: Year 11 Destinations, Cornwall

Figure 3.29: Year 11 Leaver Destinations, Lewisham (Sources: Lewisham Careers Service, 1996, 1998 and 1999; Prospects Connexions, 2001 and 2002). Data were unavailable for 1997 and 2000.

Year	FT education	Employment	Youth training	Unemployment	Other/don't know
1996	71.1 %	6.2 %	4.7 %	4.5 %	13.5 %
2002	80.0 %	4.7 %	2.7 %	7.6 %	5.1 %

Table 3.9: Year 11 Destinations, Lewisham
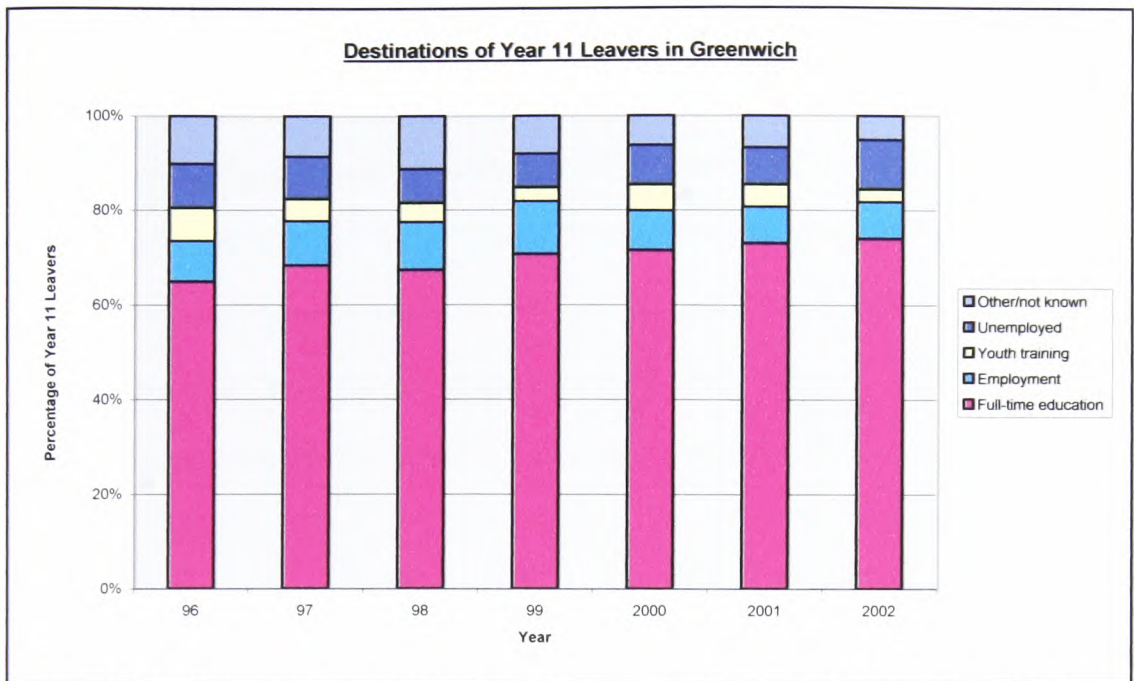
Figure 3.30: Year 11 Leaver Destinations, Greenwich (Sources: London South Bank Careers, 1997, 1998 and 1999; Prospects Connexions, 2000, 2001 and 2002).

Year	FT education	Employment	Youth training	Unemployment	Other/don't know
1996	64.9 %	8.6 %	7.0 %	9.3 %	10.2 %
2002	74.0 %	7.8 %	2.7 %	10.4 %	5.1 %

Table 3.10: Year 11 Destinations, Greenwich

Both Greenwich and Lewisham have increased the proportion of students remaining in full-time education from 1996-2002 (from 64.9% to 74% in Greenwich and 71.1% to 80% in Lewisham), while the corresponding figures for Cornwall show a slight fall, from 78.7% to 75.2%. The rates of employment in the chosen areas are also quite different, with only 4.2% of Cornish school leavers finding immediate employment, compared to 7.8% of those in Greenwich and 4.7% in Lewisham (2002). Many more Cornish students move into employment with training, however, than in southeast London (8.3% compared with 2.7% in both urban areas, 2002). Given that Cornwall has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, it is surprising that the

levels of unemployment are not higher among young people, but at 5% the proportion of unemployed school-leavers in Cornwall (2002) was much lower than in both Greenwich (10.4%) and Lewisham (7.6%). The high percentage of young people in work-based training explains this to some extent: also, by 2002 there were also 7.6% of 'other/not known' responses in Cornwall, more than in southeast London, which is likely to include a significant number of unemployed young people.

As well as looking at the broad destinations of students in the two case-study areas, it is worth exploring the specific destinations of those students remaining in full-time education: do the two areas follow the national trend of a move towards FE and sixth form colleges and away from schools at 16? As mentioned above, southeast London and Cornwall are very different geographically, with the former being a very built-up, urban area, with many schools, FE colleges and a sixth form college, whereas the latter is very rural, relying mainly on tourism and farming, with few schools which have sixth forms, a small number of FE colleges, and no sixth form colleges. These differences have had an effect on the destinations of students choosing to remain in education after the age of 16 (see Figures 3.31 and 3.32, and Tables 3.11 and 3.12 below).
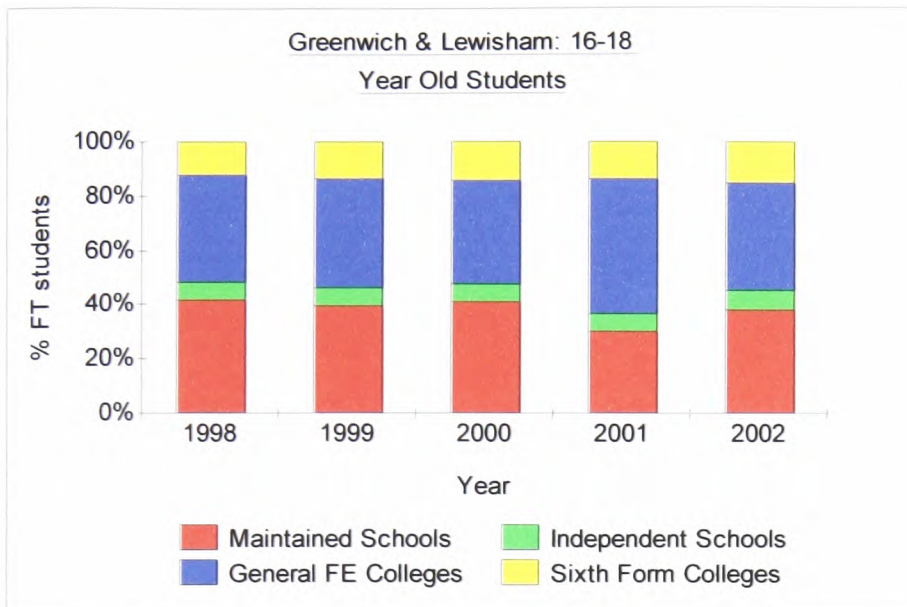
Figure 3.31: Destinations of students in SE London. (Source: DES, 2003)

Year	Maintained schools	Independent schools	General FE colleges	Sixth form colleges
1998	41.8 %	7.0 %	39.1 %	12.1 %
2002	38.3 %	7.2 %	39.6 %	14.9 %

Table 3.11: Destinations of 16-18 year olds, SE London
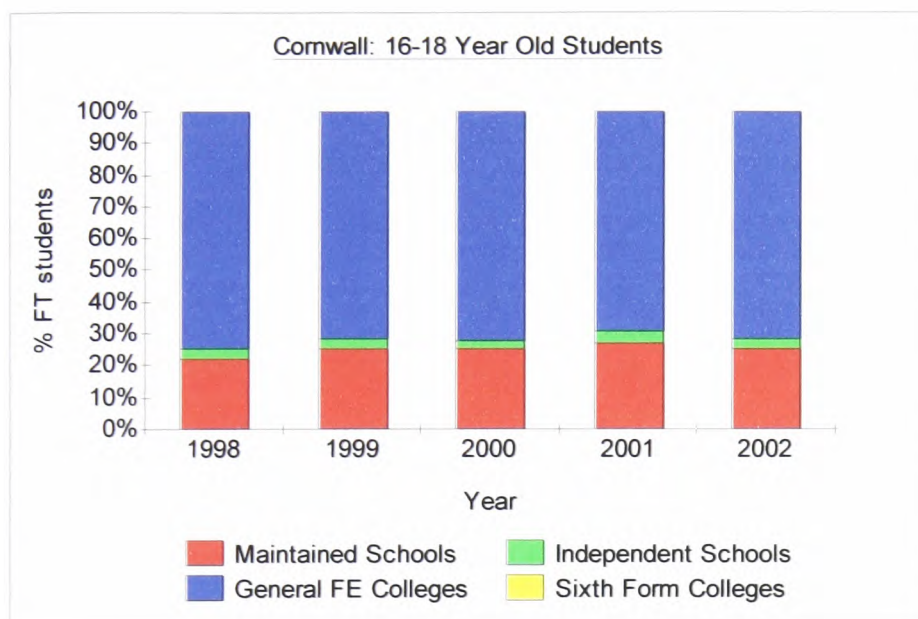
Figure 3.32: Destinations of students in Cornwall. (Source: DES, 2003)

Year	Maintained schools	Independent schools	General FE colleges	Sixth form colleges
1998	22.2 %	3.1 %	74.7 %	0.0 %
2002	25.6 %	3.1 %	71.3 %	0.0 %

Table 3.12: Destinations of 16-18 year olds, Cornwall

From the above figures, it is apparent that during this period there were fewer students in Cornwall in both independent and maintained school sixth forms, than in SE London. The difference was greatest in 1998, with 41.8% of students in SE London in maintained school sixth forms, compared with 22.2% of Cornish students. By 2002 these figures were 38.3% and 25.6% respectively. Although there are no sixth form colleges in Cornwall, even when the figures for general FE colleges and sixth form colleges in SE London are totalled, they do not reach the high percentage of students in FE institutions seen in Cornwall. The reasons for this disparity are mainly

geographical, as mentioned above: in SE London, the dense population of young people allows a large number of providers of further education, and most of the schools have sufficient numbers to sustain a sixth form. In addition there are several large independent schools with sixth forms. Cornwall is a much larger geographical area, but with only a slightly larger, and a more scattered population (465,500 as compared to 456,320 in Greenwich and Lewisham combined, Office for National Statistics, 2001), thus few schools, either maintained or independent, are large enough to sustain a viable sixth form: of the 31 maintained secondary schools in the region, under half have a sixth form. Although, theoretically, young people in Cornwall could move from a school without a sixth form at the age of 16, to one with one, in practice they are constrained by the lack of efficient public transport; unless they have private transport, they are restricted to those institutions which provide buses or are on public transport routes, which in most cases means a college. Therefore, as in many rural areas, the system of further education has become almost tertiary, with large FE colleges accommodating the majority of post-compulsory students.

There are therefore large differences in the picture of FE in the two case study areas, with Cornish students being less likely to go from school into a job, but more likely to go into employment with training, than young people in southeast London. Although between 1996 and 2002 both areas within southeast London saw a rise in the proportion of young people remaining in education, Cornwall saw a fall over the same period. Looking at those who did remain in education, a much greater proportion of students in Cornwall went to FE colleges, with far fewer in school sixth forms than in southeast London. As discussed above, most of the reasons for this are geographical.

Summary

This chapter has shown that participation rates in full-time education have risen since 1985 with notable patterns in the institutions attended and the qualifications taken by the students: FE colleges being the main providers of qualifications at Levels 1 and 2, and sixth form colleges and school sixth forms providing more Level 3 qualifications. A reduction in the numbers of students taking GCSEs at 16, 17 and 18 was clearly linked to the introduction of 'alternative' courses such as GNVQs at Levels 1 and 2, which have risen dramatically in popularity since they began in 1993.

Looking at the two case study areas, Cornwall and southeast London, it was apparent there were large differences between the areas, particularly in terms of the distribution of students in schools and FE institutions, with many more in the latter in Cornwall than southeast London. The geography and population density of the two areas are the main reasons for this difference. Because of the huge increase in FE institutions in Cornwall, the FE colleges are similar to tertiary colleges, being the main providers of post-compulsory education for all students in a particular area, a near comprehensive system. In London, however, the abundance of institutions offering post-compulsory education means that students have more choice, and thus there is more chance of a hierarchy developing, with school sixth forms at the top, and FE institutions at the bottom. All these factors will therefore have a bearing on the choice behaviours of students in the two areas, the experience of students within institutions, the habitus of each institution (see Chapter 8 for more on institutions' habitus) and the examination results of each institution.

Chapter 4

Methodology

This chapter firstly identifies and evaluates the methods used in past research into similar areas. The framework of humanistic psychology will also be explained, and the methods used described and evaluated in terms of this theoretical perspective. The methodological issues raised during the conducting of the pilot studies will then be explored, and the changes to the final fieldwork techniques as a consequence of the preliminary studies identified. Finally, the techniques used during the analysis stage will be discussed.

Further education in general has been under-researched when compared with the compulsory school and higher education sectors (Elliott, 1996; Hughes et al, 1996; Robson, 1999). Hughes et al (1996) also claimed that research which is carried out in the further education sector is limited, tends to be based on a single institution, is often policy-based, and is largely descriptive. There has been little research into the area of the student experience in further education, in particular, to date, but the research there has been has tended to use interviews and questionnaires to gather data. One example of this comes from Ainley and Bailey (1997) who interviewed students, lecturers and managers from two FE colleges. The interviews they conducted with the students were semi-structured, and the interviewees were either alone or in pairs. The authors compared the views expressed in the individual and paired interviews, and noted that students were more likely to express certain opinions when alone than in front of another student. In the paired interviews, however, the students often

discussed matters amongst themselves, revealing a level of detail which was not often obtained with the individual interviews. In total approximately 100 interviews took place in this research, with the individual interviews being slightly shorter than the paired interviews, but with an overall average length of 45 minutes.

Bloomer and Hodkinson (1997) used a very similar methodology (although their study was longitudinal) in their study of students 'Moving into FE: the voice of the learner'. They conducted semi-structured interviews initially with 79 Year 11 Secondary School pupils, to discuss their opinions of FE as well as general topics such as their attitudes to learning. Of these 79 pupils, 50 were interviewed six months later during their first term in post-compulsory education, and a small number were interviewed for a third time, towards the end of their first year in FE. A small number of teachers, tutors and parents were also interviewed. Again, each interview lasted about 45 minutes, was tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed. In this case, all interviews were individual. Analysis of the initial interviews provided areas for focus in the second and third phases of the interviewing, and in this way, models were built up and validated through the data obtained.

One further study which examined the experiences of students in post-compulsory education, but in this case exclusively looking at students in school sixth forms, was that of Schagen, Johnson and Simkin (1996). Their methodology was very different, with a large-scale questionnaire being sent to 400 schools, telephone interviews with relevant LEAs, in-depth interviews with 22 school head teachers or heads of sixth form, and finally group discussions with students in nine schools.

During the design of the pilot studies, the different methods which had been used by others in this area were taken into account, and the relative merits of the approaches they had taken evaluated. Although the large-scale survey used by Schagen et al. had provided them with a large data set, and was useful for their purposes, I felt that to really understand the students' experiences, a more detailed, in-depth, qualitative method such as interviewing was necessary, and neither the time nor finances allowed a large-scale questionnaire to precede such interviews. The holistic viewpoint of the research also does not support the use of such quantitative measurements when discussing something as individual and personal as a student's experiences of post-compulsory education:

> 'There is too much measurement going on. Some things which are numerically precise are not true; and some things which are not numerical are true. Orthodox research produces results which are statistically significant but humanly insignificant; in human inquiry it is much better to be deeply interesting than accurately boring.'
>
> (Reason and Rowan, 1981).

The humanistic psychological approach developed during the late 1950s and early 1960s, led by pioneers such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Humanistic psychology is often referred to as the Third Force in psychology, developing as an alternative to the main perspectives in the first half of this century - behaviourism and the psychodynamic approach. Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow between them created a new way of looking at human interactions. Whereas the behaviourist paradigm had adopted a strict, scientific approach, using quantifiable data, and eliminating differences between subjects, in order to get a generalised picture, the

humanistic approach took the opposite view, using qualitative research methods, and exploring individual differences in participants. While psychodynamic theorists concentrated on the unconscious mind, humanists looked at the conscious mind, and explored how people think and act, and how people are shaped by the desires of others. Although it is perhaps best known for its contributions to therapy and counselling, this approach to human behaviour has also provided researchers with alternative research paradigms. Humanistic psychology is concerned with the whole person, and refuses to treat individuals as subjects:

> 'The holist standpoint includes the belief that human systems tend
>
> to develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity. They are not
>
> simply a loose collection of traits or wants or reflexes or variables of
>
> any sort ... they have a unity that manifests itself in nearly every
>
> part.' (Diesing, 1972, p.137)

The information that participants provide generally allows the investigator to build a holistic understanding of how the participants see their world and act upon it. Humanistic psychology also recognises that human existence consists of multiple layers of reality: the physical, the organic and the symbolic, and advocates the use of a variety of research approaches to study their characteristics and intentions (O'Hara, 1996). It also encourages the discovery of new research approaches which seek to further understand the richness of the human experience. The research process must be emancipatory and the participants must feel they too have gained something from the experience:

> 'The holist's belief in the primacy of subject matter is closely related to his
>
> more general attitude of respect for human beings. Human beings, he feels,
>
> are not things and should not be treated as things; they should not be

experimented upon, controlled, duped, and generally used in the name of science. Even a scientific reduction of a person to a set of variables is in a way disrespectful because it mutilates integrity. The holist's attitude of respect is often not expressed explicitly, but one feels it again and again in the way he goes about his work.'(Diesing, 1972, p.141)

Humanistic psychologists do not confine themselves to what can be directly measured or perceived, as they believe personal values, judgments, feelings and decisions are highly significant and worthy of research. Research methods which allow access to all characteristics of human existence are therefore preferred. As the subject matter of this research was the experiences of students in post-compulsory education, and it was the aim to explore all aspects of the students' lives, rather than simply the educational aspect, the humanistic psychological viewpoint was extremely relevant, and thus the main tenets of the approach were borne in mind when designing the research methods used in both the pilot and main studies. In interpreting the results, however, Bourdieu's notion of habitus, as discussed earlier, was found to be an invaluable aid to understanding.

For the pilot study a combination of methods was used to ascertain the best way of obtaining the relevant information from the students. Although questionnaires were considered, they were eventually rejected as they would not have allowed the participants to steer the course of the exchange between participant and researcher to any extent, and could not be considered to have given anything back to the participant, as the holistic approach recommends. Instead, interviews were thought to provide the greatest opportunity for participants to air any questions or uncertainties to the researcher, and allow them to gain something from the experience, be it simply

the time to think about their lives and the directions in which they were heading. Interviews were therefore chosen as the first research method to be used in the pilot studies.

Interviews

Both individual and group interviews have their advantages and disadvantages, with each soliciting different sorts of information, as Ainley and Bailey acknowledged (see above). This does not mean the data from group interviews was any less valid; the information given was valid, and we can only assume, given in good faith, but a different type of information less personal, perhaps is gained from group interviews than from individual interviews. Another potential advantage of group interviews is what Burgess (1984) terms 'respondent triangulation' where statements presented by participants in a group interview are subject to peer scrutiny and evaluation. Lewis expands on this:

'Group interviews have several advantages over individual interviews. In particular they help to reveal consensus views, may generate richer responses by allowing participants to challenge one another's views, may be used to verify research ideas of data gained through other methods and may enhance the reliability of children's responses.' (Lewis, 1992, p.413)

One possible problem with the use of group interviews is that the presence of others could bias responses from some participants: it might be difficult for an introvert to stand his or her ground against two or three vociferous extroverts arguing against them, for example. To keep the bias to a minimum the interviewer must not make value judgements about what is said, and should not take sides if a disagreement takes

place. Smaller groups are also less likely to produce this type of situation, and despite the possible problems involved with group interviews it was felt the data obtained by this method would be rich and a worthwhile addition to information from individual interviews. Therefore, both individual and group interviews (with either two or three students) were undertaken in the pilot study.

The type of interview also had to be decided: face-to-face interviews range in style from very formal, which are more like an oral questionnaire, to very informal and completely non-directive. In education research, the majority of interviews are semi-structured, or guided, with both open-ended and more directed questions, allowing the participants to expand on answers, yet maintaining ease of analysis as much as possible. Although a strictly holistic approach would advocate the use of informal, non-guided interviews, the data obtained would be very difficult to analyse and also not easily subject to comparisons: if different questions were asked of students in different institution types their experiences could not be compared in any meaningful way. The semi-structured interview was thus chosen for the pilot studies, whereby a list of possible subject areas was determined beforehand, and the interviewer attempted to work the questions in, phrasing them appropriately so the interview resembled normal conversation. The participants still had a large degree of control over the proceedings as they decided how much time to spend on each topic and on which topics they were more or less inclined to share their views. One of the main advantages with this interviewing technique is that the interviewer can be flexible, and can pursue any lines of enquiry which seem interesting and relevant. As they are not tied to a pre-set list of questions, the conversation flows freely and naturally. This promotes relaxation in the interviewee, and is likely to lead to richer, fuller

information. The consistency of information is relatively high compared to the totally unstructured interview: there are at least guidelines for the interviewer to follow, and several pre-determined questions which will be the same for all interviewees. The level of control will be much less than with more structured interviews, however, and the fact that questions are not worded in exactly the same way for all participants will create varying interpretations and emphasis among interviewees. The interviewer may also miss important topics if they do not proceed naturally out of the conversation. Reliability is therefore quite low, as a different interviewer could get very different information from the same participant.

In the pilot study individual interviews were planned to last around 30 minutes, but in reality ranged from 20 to 45 minutes in length, depending on the interviewee and how long he or she wished to talk. The group interviews (involving two or three students) were planned to last around 45 minutes, and in actuality lasted from 45 to 60 minutes, again depending on the interviewees. It was felt that any longer than 45 and 60 minutes, respectively, would have meant the students giving up too great a portion of their time, and any shorter than 20 and 40 minutes respectively, would not have allowed the discussions to have covered as many topics as was desired. The group interviews involved either two or three students, depending on how many were free at the same time and willing to participate in the study. It was felt that if the groups were larger, although the discussions would have produced interesting material, individual voices would have been lost, and as the aim of the research was to investigate student experiences from a holistic point of view, this would not have been satisfactory.

All interviews were tape recorded with the participants' permission, and later transcribed and analysed using content and discourse analysis techniques (examined in more detail later).

Photographic diaries

The second method developed to use in the preliminary study, was that of the photographic diary. This is a relatively new method, and variations of it have only been used in a small number of studies. Humanistic psychology seeks to encourage the discovery of new research approaches which seek to further understand the richness in the depth of human beings, so the development of a new technique is particularly appropriate:

> 'it has been assumed that the method of obtaining an account is through the
>
> use of the interview. Indeed this is likely to be the most appropriate means of
>
> obtaining a detailed and rich encounter with the lifeworld of the student. ...
>
> However, the ideal situation is one in which the phenomenography is
>
> founded on as open a technique for eliciting experience as possible.'
>
> (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000)

Although still photography, video and film have been used for many years in anthropology, in the fields of sociology, psychology and education they have been seen as ways of illustrating text only, rather than as a means of collecting data itself. It is only in very recent years that social scientists have begun to realise the potential advantages of using visual data for research purposes. The main way of using film and photography is for the researcher to handle the camera, and use it as a 'field notebook', taking visual 'notes' of the person, situation, or setting (Prosser, 1992). This can greatly enhance data obtained by more conventional methods, such as

observations and interviews (for example, Schwartz, 1993, who looked at images from the crowd at the American Superbowl, as well as conducting interviews with some of the spectators). Another method of using photographs is to show photographs to interviewees and use the pictures to start a discussion on a specific topic. This 'photo-elicitation' technique (Harper, 1987) can be very useful for averting the strangeness of the interview situation, and for bridging the gap between the interviewer and the interviewee(s).

An alternative way of recording visual data, and the one which will be discussed here in more depth, is to give the camera to the participant, and after a brief training session, allow him/her to record the situation from their own perspective. They may have the camera for a period ranging from minutes to days, or even weeks, and are free to photograph the aspects of the situation they deem to be important. In this way they retain some of the power in the situation, and are not subject to the preconceived opinions of the researcher as to what he/she thinks is important. Heisley and Levy (1991) termed this method 'autodriving', as "the interview is 'driven' by informants who are seeing their own behaviour' (Heisley and Levy, 1991, p.261). Douglas (1998) used a similar technique, terming it 'reflexive photography', when she asked black students to present their impressions of a predominantly white university, and used the photos produced in subsequent reflective interviews.

One well-known example of this approach is *Through Navajo Eyes*, produced by Worth and Adair (1972). The researchers taught Navajo Indians to operate video cameras, and asked them to make a film of their culture. This creative, cross-cultural project has received much admiration, but not as much academic recognition as could

have been expected. Another example of this technique is from an unpublished PhD thesis (Archer, 1998) which looked at young British-Muslim pupils' constructions of identity. One of the ideas which this investigated was the stereotype of young Asian women as 'caught between two cultures', trying to reconcile a restrictive home life and a more permissive attitude at school. The young women (aged 14-15) were given a camera for 24 hours, and asked to record 'A day in my life'. Through this method Archer was able to demonstrate that in some cases the idea of a 'dual identity' was a myth, with girls behaving in similar ways in both environments.

This is the chosen method of using the cameras in this pilot study, with the students (two from each institution) being given a disposable camera for one week, and asked to take photographs illustrating a week in their lives. It was stressed that anything they thought was important in their lives should be taken; there were no restrictions on what they should or should not photograph. After their time with the camera was over, the photographs were developed, and the students given a copy of all the photographs to keep. In the context of an informal interview, the students (either alone or in pairs, depending on the situation and the time constraints of both the students and myself, as interviewer) then selected the photographs, from a second set of prints, that they thought best described their experiences, added captions to them and stuck them in a scrapbook. These photographs and the reasons for their choices were then used as cues to ask further questions, and to build up a full picture of their lives and their experiences. These exchanges were recorded and treated to the same analyses as the other interviews. These photographic diary interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, with longer interviews taking place when both participants were interviewed together.

This research method has many strengths - one of the main ones being that it seemed to be very interesting for the participants involved, and they felt they had gained something from the experience, an important point in a humanistic psychological approach. All the students had used a camera before, and were familiar with the disposable type of camera. They were left alone to collect the data, so did not feel pressurised or constrained by the presence of a researcher. This in itself had many advantages; for example, the results were highly valid in the sense that the participants themselves decided what to portray (although see below for a discussion of validity). They had greater autonomy over their responses, and also the method gave access to situations which may not otherwise have been accessed; although observation in the institutions was an option, for example, it would have been impossible to have followed the students concerned into their homes, part-time jobs, and in some cases, away on holiday. Using the photographs taken by the participants as a means of stimulating an interview discussion also removes some of the asymmetry of the power balance between the researcher and interviewee, a common goal in humanistic research. Mischler (1991) commented on a need for new research methods which maintain an even relationship between researcher and participant, and claimed that these methods led to richer narrative accounts:

> 'attempts to restructure the interviewee-interviewer relationship so as to empower respondents are designed to encourage them to speak in their own "voices". ... When the interview is opened up in this way, when the balance of power is shifted, respondents are more likely to tell "stories". ... Interviewing practices that empower respondents also produce narrative accounts' (pp.118-119).

The data obtained was thus very rich: it is well known that 'a picture is worth a thousand words', or as Eisner (1991) stated 'Photos and films can say things that would not only require pages and pages of words to describe, but in the end could not be adequately described with words' (p.187). This is illustrated well with the data collected by this method: the information captured in each photograph would have taken a lengthy interview to elicit in some cases:

> 'photographs may not be unbiased, objective documentation of the social and material world, but can show characteristic attributes of people, objects and events that cannot be described well in words. With photos you can communicate emotions and environments, and give a great deal of detail' (Prosser and Schwartz, 1998, p.116).

An example of photographs having exactly that effect can be seen in Wilson and Wylie's (1992) book, *The Dispossessed*. The book uses both text and photographs to demonstrate the abject poverty in which some people in London, Belfast and Glasgow live. Although the interviews with the people concerned imparted much information, the photographs captured the misery, despair and frustration, contrasting it in some cases with photographs of more affluent neighbouring areas. Also the photographs eliminated the reliance on the word of the participant that certain events took place; it was possible to see that they were a reality (although see later point on realities). A lasting visual image was also produced, which was more accurate than either field notes or memories, and which could be re-analysed by other researchers if necessary.

The use of images can also cross cultural and age or gender related boundaries, which text and speech are not always able to do; as Penaloza (1998) explained, in English, 'The words "I see" are used interchangeably for "I understand"' (p. 351).

The informal discussion which took place during the selection and captioning of the photographs was also rich in data, and took the interviews in directions which would not have been covered during a semi-structured interview without the photographs as a stimulus.

Obviously there are also some disadvantages with the photographic diary method, not least the problem of publication; many journals and publishers are often reluctant to accept photographs for publication, and parts of the research struggles without them. With the more widespread use of alternative technologies, however, this seems like a short-term problem, and one which will be soon overcome. As Prosser (1995) points out, currently language is both the dominant form of data and the dominant form for communicating findings in social research. In this 'discipline of words' (Walker and Weidel, 1985) research findings which use non-verbal data seem not to be as accepted by the research community.

A more serious practical problem arises from the possibility of technical failure; if an entire film had been taken without removing the lens cap, for example, this would have been a waste of time, effort and resources. Many other, similar technical failures are possible when relying so much on equipment such as cameras. In the future, as people become more familiar with the technology, giving participants a digital camera, allowing them to take unlimited numbers of pictures, which can be transmitted instantly to the researcher via the Internet, would be an interesting alternative.

Although the majority of people are comfortable with a camera, and are used to using the equipment, the design of the research is still something of a novelty, and being asked to record 'a week in my life' is not an everyday request. The unfamiliarity of the situation may have caused participants to act differently from normal, and/or ask those around them to behave in a certain way 'for the camera'. One way of checking this was to ask probing questions during the discussions when selecting and captioning the photographs. Some interesting material was discovered in this way (see below).

The reliability of the photographs is questionable, as is often the case with apparently highly valid data (Coolican, 1994): would independent raters interpret the photographs in the same way? If high inter-observer reliability was achieved by training researchers in pre-determined coding categories, the richness of data which is obtained by seeking competing interpretations would be lost (Simco and Warin, 1997). Simco and Warin discussed the issue of reliability in some depth, pointing out that because the interpretation of non-verbal behaviour, such as a facial expression or gesture is a more subjective response, the processing of image-based data may feel more value-laden and interpretive than the processing of text-based data, even if the images are transformed into text for the purposes of analysis. As Watling (1995) states, however, reliability and validity are concepts which are heavily grounded in a positivist, quantitative paradigm, and are less applicable to such qualitative methods:

'Reliability and validity are tools of an essentially positivist epistemology. While they may have undoubtedly proved useful in providing checks and balances for quantitative methods, they sit uncomfortably in research of this

kind, which is better served by questions about power and influence, adequacy and efficacy, suitability and accountability' (Watling, 1995)

In this research, the areas which concerned Watling were not an issue, with the researcher having little, if any, power or influence over the research participants: they were all given the cameras to use in their own time, with the researcher not present at the taking of any of the photographs. In terms of adequacy and suitability, the reasoning behind using the photographic diary as a tool for capturing the students' experiences has already been discussed, and the conclusion drawn that, along with other methods, such as group and individual interviews, this method is entirely suitable and appropriate. The accountability and efficacy issues are discussed with reference to Simco and Warin's recommended form of reliability. Instead of the more traditional interpretations of reliability, the form of reliability advocated by Simco and Warin (1997) is that of 'transparency', where every stage of the research methodology is communicated explicitly, allowing other researchers to replicate the study. The researcher therefore becomes accountable to the research community.

The type of validity suitable for this type of study is internal validity: the extent to which the findings are genuine for the group they claim to represent, rather than the more commonly used quantitative use of external validity, which is instead concerned with the generalisability of findings to other groups and situations. In this instance, as the students chose what to photograph themselves and also selected the photographs to be put into their photographic diaries, the findings were unquestionably genuine for the individuals concerned, with the researcher having little or no effect on the collection of the data. One possible problem would have been that of demand characteristics: the participants recording only what they thought was wanted of them.

In this research however, there were few preconceived ideas as to what might have been found, as there was little precedent of research in this area. As the humanistic approach suggests, instead of assuming what the results of the research would be and finding examples from the students to support this, the participants were allowed to tell their stories, which were listened to with an unbiased ear, avoiding the problems cited by Betrand Russell:

> 'If the matter is one which can be settled by observation, make the observation yourself. Aristotle could have avoided the mistake of thinking that women have fewer teeth than men, by the simple device of asking Mrs. Aristotle to keep her mouth open while he counted. He did not do so because he thought he knew. ... Thinking you know when in fact you don't is a fatal mistake to which we are all prone.' (Russell, 1950, p.135)

Deliberately not making prior assumptions as to the findings of the research removed the possibility of passing on to the participants any notions as to what was wanted from them regarding the photographs, reducing demand characteristics to negligible levels. All that each of the participants were told was that they were to record whatever they saw as important in defining a week in their lives, and however they interpreted that was up to them.

A further point is that photographs can distort reality, even disregarding the possibility of 'touching up' pictures once developed. Although they have been termed 'mirrors of reality' (Ball and Smith, 1992, p.4) all photographs are far from objective: 'cameras don't take photographs, people do' (Byers, 1966). Bourdieu (1990) also attacked the notion that photography was realistic, arguing against the often-held belief that a photograph implies a technical reproduction of any objective reality, as

the photographer creates the picture just as any artist would do with his selection of subjects and composition. But as Carlsson (2001) states:

'In one sense a photo is an exact representation of reality printed on a flat piece of paper. On the other hand, because the camera does not take pictures by itself, a photo can be regarded as a fairly complex expression of the photographer's relation to the world' (p.130).

Without descending into the post-modern argument however, the post-modern view that there are multiple realities and the one photographed is no less valid for being just one of these, is relevant here:

'In the post-modern ... there is a questioning of the powerful notion that there is "one true reality", stable and ordered, that exists independently of knowers, which can be experienced "as it really is" and which is best represented in scientific models of research. Instead, postmodernists argue that the "real" is unstable, in flux and contingent.' (Usher, 1996)

The fact that the participant saw the situation in a certain way and captured it in that way should add to the validity of the data rather than detract from it:

'a photograph is a result of the photographer's decision that it is worth recording that this particular event or this particular object has been seen' (Berger, 1972).

A final, very important criticism of this method is an ethical one: when conducting interviews, questionnaires or observations, the reporting of the data can be disguised enough to ensure anonymity for the participants themselves, and the institution concerned. If the report contains photographs of the participants and/or the institution,

however, such anonymity is not always possible. This raises serious questions as to the use of the data, and even if permission is received to publish the pictures, care should be taken over images which may contain sensitive material. In this case, all students agreed to me using any of the photographs they chose for the scrapbook; they were aware that other people would be likely to see their photographs, and any they did not want people to see they did not include in their selection, but they did discuss them as part of the holist approach; although the images would not be used the discussions about the images could be used.

Pilot study

Institutions

A total of 30 students were interviewed initially, from four different institutions: a school and a college in Cornwall (Rural School and Rural College, respectively) and a school and a college in Southeast London (City School and Urban College). The choice of institutions was not random: I myself had attended Rural School, although at that time it did not have a sixth form. I thought it would be easier to gain access to a school as an old pupil, and did indeed find the staff most helpful and accommodating, eager to hear about my research. I was also teaching part-time at Urban College whilst conducting the research, so again felt access to students would be easier. Rural College and City School were chosen as being average instances of their type of institution in the areas under investigation, according to size and examination results published in the DfEE league tables.

<u>Participants</u>

All students interviewed were full-time 16-19 year olds. Although an attempt was made to ensure equal numbers of male and female students, and of students on A-level and GNVQ courses, this was not always possible due to the availability of students, and their desire to participate in the study. Table 4.1 (below) shows the breakdown of students interviewed, and Appendix 5 gives a more detailed breakdown of their details. There was a possibility of bias in the sampling method used, which was essentially opportunity sampling; students were approached either by the researcher or by a teacher, and asked if they would mind participating in the study. Most of those approached were judged 'helpful' and 'likely to be willing' by a teacher, so they do not necessarily represent a balanced cross-section of the student populations at the institutions. In addition, a few students approached declined to take part, further skewing the final sample to include only those who were willing to be interviewed: again the most 'helpful' students. It is well documented that those willing to discuss a subject are more likely to have a strong opinion on the subject, either positive or negative (for example, Ora, 1965) and it could be that those who agreed to take part had particular views on their experiences that they wanted to share, although as they had little prior information as to what would be discussed, this was relatively unlikely.

Institution	Total no. of students	Males	Females	A-level students	GNVQ students
Rural School	8	4	4	6	2
Rural College	7	1	6	5	2
City School	8	4	4	6	2
Urban College	7	4	3	3	4
Totals	30	13	17	20	10

Table 4.1: Distribution of pilot study interviewees by sex and by course.

Procedure

Firstly, the students were allocated to either a group or individual interview (10 and 12 students respectively, see Appendix 5 for details) or the production of a photographic diary (7, again see Appendix 5 for details) in each institution. An interview schedule (see Appendix 1) was used for the interviews, which as mentioned above were semi-structured in design, allowing students to explore any topics of particular interest to themselves. The interviews progressed as much like a normal conversation as was possible, while covering as many of the topics on the interview schedule as practical: the fact that they were recorded meant there was no need to take notes during the interviews and therefore attention was not diverted from the participants.

For the photographic diary participants, the procedure was somewhat different: they were given the disposable cameras and instructed to take photographs which would illustrate a week in their life. It was stressed that anything they felt was important should be photographed, and they were reassured that they would be given an

opportunity to remove any pictures when they had been developed. In some cases, students were able to hand the cameras back personally one week later, but in others they were posted back for developing. When the pictures returned, a second visit was made, giving the students a copy of all of the photographs they had taken, and they were asked to choose as many as they wished to stick into a scrap-book and caption, showing their experiences in that week as accurately as possible. They were reminded that by choosing a particular photograph they were agreeing to it being used in the thesis and possibly in other publications. The session in which they received the pictures and chose which to use in their photo-diary was recorded and later analysed in conjunction with the diary.

Interview topics

A major aim of the pilot study was to refine the interview schedule, and to identify areas of further interest. This was successful, in that some areas of questioning were found not to be useful, and other areas, in retrospect, would have benefited from further probing. In the original interviewing schedule (Appendix 1) questions were divided into the following sections: personal information (e.g. family background, health problems); previous education; choice of course/institution (including who influenced their decision, and any other options they considered); finances (including part-time employment); social life (both inside and outside the institution); attitude to work (for example how frequently they did homework, if they ever missed lessons, and preferred methods of learning); student services (including tutorial systems); future plans, and miscellaneous (for example, what they liked most and least about the institution). Some of these areas provided rich information, and were judged worthy

of pursuing, but others did not cover uncharted territory, and did not seem necessary. For instance, choice of institution, and alternatives considered brought out several interesting differences between students in Cornwall and London, with Cornish students, on average, considering more alternatives than their London-based counterparts, despite transport difficulties. This seemed counter-intuitive and worthy of further investigation. Questions relating to the student's attitude to work were also informative, and pointed towards differences between school and college students. This was therefore also thought to be a useful line of enquiry. Differences in part-time employment and social lives were also shown between institutions and between regions, and therefore worthy of further investigation. Questions concerning future plans, however, did not seem to be very relevant, and therefore it was decided not to include them to the same extent in the main study. Similarly, students appeared to have little interest in the concept of 'social class' and in most cases could not say what class they thought they belonged to, or if social class had an effect on the education of themselves or others. Although they were also asked about their parents' educational history and employment, in an attempt to distinguish their social class, in many cases the students could not say with any confidence what their parents did, often given vague answers such as, *"My dad works for the MoD, and I don't know what he does."* (Stuart, Rural School). A large number of students were even unsure as to whether or not their parents had been to university. It was therefore decided that this was also a fruitless area of investigation. A revised interview schedule was thus developed (Appendix 2) incorporating these changes.

Practical problems

One of the first problems faced was in recruiting students at Urban College: although the Principal had been very encouraging and had given permission to use as many students as necessary, no introduction to the students was given, and instead students had to be approached personally in the canteen. This was not really satisfactory, as the students in the canteen were relaxing, often eating their lunch, and it was difficult and uncomfortable asking them to give up any of their relaxation time. Many who were asked were just about to return to lessons, or could not spare the time. Cassell (1998) discusses this type of situation, making a distinction between 'getting in', which may be thought of as physical access to an institution, and 'getting on', which also involves social access. Even once physical access has been granted, Hornsby-Smith (1993) acknowledges 'that the achievement of social access still presents considerable problems to the researcher and still has to be negotiated carefully' (Hornsby-Smith, 1993, p.59). Consequently, having been given physical, but not social access, it was difficult to recruit participants at this institution, until several lecturers agreed to allow access to their classes to recruit students. This was much more successful, and seven of the desired eight students were found by this method. As so many of the students seemed unwilling however, the interview time was shortened to 20 minutes in most cases at Urban College - the most the students told me they could spare. As a result, slightly less data was obtained from these participants, although the experiences of trying to obtain the students was informative in itself.

At Rural College, there were also several practical difficulties, not least actually getting to the institution. A further problem arose at Rural College when one of the

students who had been carrying out a photographic diary was not in college on the day on which it had been arranged to pick up the cameras for processing. She then forgot it on a subsequent visit, and finally posted it a few weeks later. The film was then developed and she was sent a copy of the prints as promised. She also gave her permission to use any of the photographs required by the research, but there was no opportunity to go through them with her, nor to get her to create captions for the pictures. It is well known that it is often difficult to recruit participants for research, and once recruited, to arrange times and get people to turn up at the allotted times, but when the process involves three meetings (one to give instructions to the photographer, one for them to return the camera, and one for the photographic diary interview) these difficulties increase.

Analysis

Although there is much written about the analysis of interview data, the issue of analysing the photographic diaries was more complex and there was less precedent in this area. A quantitative approach could have been used, for example counting the number of instances of specific items in the photographs, or the number of photographs taken within and outside the educational institution, but this on its own would have lost the richness and complexity of the data available. The qualitative approach adopted in conjunction with the quantitative method in this research, was instead judged to be much more useful, with the photographs also being treated as constructive texts, as understood by Barthes:

> 'Pictures become a kind of writing as soon as they are meaningful: like writing they call for a lexis. We shall therefore take language, discourse, speech etc., to mean any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or

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visual: a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a

newspaper article; even objects will become speech if they mean something.'

(Barthes, 1977)

Photographs are thought to have two meanings, similar to the interpretation of dreams

according to Freud (1955): the manifest content, or what appears on the surface, and

the latent content, or the hidden deeper meaning. In some cases in this research the

manifest content of the images was interesting in its own right, but occasionally the

latent content was explored, producing a deeper analysis of the photographs.

It is very important to consider the photographs along with the captions and the

discussions they provoked, as the images produced in isolation could provide an

unrealistic view of the student experiences. The context of the photographs, and the

material from the interviews help to place the image in a more realistic position.

As regards the interview data, content analysis was used, defined by Holsti (1968) as

'any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying

specified characteristics of messages'. Gilbert (1989) expressed concern about the

breaking down of informative text into context-free data units, arguing that it is

'theoretically reductionist and methodologically superficial' so in this research the

unit of content used was a theme, defined as a discussion or monologue about a

particular idea or event (Haggerty, 1995, p.189). This meant the statements made and

quotations used were taken within context. The same method was used in individual,

group and photographic diary interviews. This will be described in more detail in the

Main Study section, to save repetition.

The Main Study

Participants

The same schools and colleges were not visited in the second phase of the research, but to get a greater breadth of experiences a new selection was made, bearing in mind the DfEE data on size and examination results as before, to ensure typical instances of each type of institution. The schools visited were Urban School, London, and Clifftop School, Cornwall, and the FE colleges Cornish College in Cornwall, and City College in London. A sixth form college, St. Joseph's Sixth Form College, the only one within the designated research areas, was also visited. This was a Catholic College for 16 to 19 year olds within the Southeast London area. A total of 108 students were interviewed in this part of the research, as shown in Table 4.2, below. (Appendices 3 and 4 show a more detailed breakdown of participants by institution, course and qualification).

Institution	Males	Females	Year 12 students	Year 13 students	A level students	GNVQ students	Total
Clifftop School	11	11	11	11	13	9	**22**
Cornish College	9	12	10	11	12	9	**21**
Urban School	10	12	11	11	13	9	**22**
City College	9	12	10	11	11	10	21
St. Joseph's College	11	11	11	11	11	11	**22**
Totals	**50**	**58**	**53**	**55**	**60**	**48**	**108**

Table 4.2: Distribution of participants by gender, course and year.

In each institution, Year 13 students were interviewed in November and December 1999 and year 12 students in January and February 2000. There were several reasons for this, not least of which was the desire to interfere as little as possible with the students' education; it was thought that interviewing year 13 students any later would have impinged on their forthcoming examinations. With many A level subjects becoming modular, the summer term also needed to be avoided for the year 12 student interviews, but if these had taken place any earlier the students would have had limited experience of life in post-compulsory education.

The method of selecting participants varied from institution to institution: in some cases a full interview schedule had been arranged by my contact from the school or college, with time-slots filled with students' names. In other cases, I was taken into classrooms and allowed to ask for volunteers, or in one case, I accompanied my contact into the library and canteen, looking for suitable participants. In all cases the sampling was therefore not random, and could most accurately be described as an opportunity sample. The contacts had been informed that I wanted to interview a cross-section of students however, and not simply the most able or those with the most interesting stories, and it was hoped that they respected those wishes. The interviews themselves did show that some extraordinary students had been selected in some institutions (for example, Ben in Urban School, who had 13 GCSEs and was taking 5 A levels, one of which was self-taught), but that the vast majority were average, and in some cases, struggling, students.

Procedure

The availability of students determined the type of interviews to some extent: although the intention was to interview eleven students in each year in each institution, with one being a photo-diarist, two groups of three students, and four individual students, this was not always possible and compromises had to be made. For example, with the Year 12 students at Urban School, one group interview (with three students) was held, a photographic diary completed, and the remaining seven students were interviewed individually. With the year 13 students at the same school, one group interview with three participants, another group interview with two participants, a photographic diary, and five individual interviews were completed. Where possible, therefore, four group interviews and eight individual interviews took place and two photographic diaries produced at each institution, with some unavoidable minor variations.

The interviews used the revised interview schedule (see Appendix 2) and were semi-structured in style, allowing students to expand on topics of particular interest to themselves, thereby creating a full picture of their lives and experiences. The topics can be summarised with the following headings: previous education; choice of institution; choice of course; finances; part-time employment; social life (in and out of school/college); transport; attitude to studying; informal learning; student services (including tutor groups); attitudes to the school/college. Obviously as the interviews were semi-structured not all of the topics were dealt with in the same depth in every interview as in some cases they were less relevant, or in others participants chose to spend longer on other areas of interest. All interviews started with the question "What for you is the most important thing in your life right now?" which served as a good

springboard for the interview, both engaging the participants' interests and allowing other topics to follow on in a natural fashion. This also gave a good indication as to what type of student the participant was (i.e. juggler, player or worker, see later).

Analysis

As reflexivity is an important part of any qualitative research, especially one using a holistic approach, the analysis will be described in some detail, maximising the reliability and replicability of the data obtained.

As mentioned above, the interviews were analysed using content analysis techniques, using a theme as the unit of analysis. Once each of the interviews had been transcribed by the author (word-for-word) they were separated into different institutions and read through several times. In this way the main categories became apparent, and a thorough, intimate knowledge and understanding of the participants was possible. These categories were refined several times whilst re-reading the transcripts until they were considered an accurate portrayal of the interview data. Once the main categories had been identified (for example, attitudes towards GNVQs), each transcript was annotated with sections corresponding to each category highlighted. In several cases one statement was relevant to more than one category, and it was treated as such. Once all of the transcripts for each institution had been treated in this way, 'cut and paste' methods in a word processing package were used to collate all the statements relevant to each category. Statements from individuals could then be compared, and the main underlying themes easily established (for example, a belief that GNVQs were for less academically able students from many A level students). Once each of the categories had been analysed for each institution, a

preliminary institution report was drawn up, combining the information from all the categories. Once all institution reports (including those from both the main and pilot studies) had been completed, they were compared and contrasted in much more detail, again using the categories originally devised as well as the themes which had emerged. The results could then be written up into chapters comparing rural and urban institutions, students on academic and vocational courses, and institution types. In addition, all interviewees were categorised as either workers, jugglers or players (see Chapter 6 for more details) based on the overall impression given from their interview responses. These can also be seen in Appendices 3 and 4

For the photographic diary students, the analysis was slightly different in some ways, but similar in others. As mentioned above, the photographs were treated as a type of constructive text, therefore they fit well into the categories and themes analysis discussed above in reference to the interview data. In some cases the photographs were thought to simply illustrate a point more eloquently than the words of another student, and they did provide support to many of the emergent themes. In other cases, however, the photographs were the starting point for a theme or category, or in one important case, the idea of jugglers, workers and players. It was noted from the pilot study that some of the students with the cameras took most of their photographs in and around their school or college, whereas others took most of them outside their educational establishment. There was also a middle ground consisting of students who spread their photographic choices between inside and outside of school or college. Those who took most of their photographs in around their educational establishment tended also to put their studying high in their list of priorities, whereas those who took few photographs of their school or college tended to focus themselves on aspects of

their lives other than the educational. Closer inspection of some of the interview data found several students mentioned this distinction, talking of those who worked really hard, those who 'just dossed' and the average students in the middle who worked quite hard but also had other interests. Further analysis of the transcripts showed that it was obvious in most cases as to which category each student belonged, and it was decided to investigate this further. It is almost certain that without the photographic diary material this would not have been discovered. There were other instances of the diary method bringing themes to light which would not have been discovered otherwise, which are discussed in later chapters, as well as instances of photos providing support for emergent themes.

Chapter Five

Introduction to Results.

This chapter sets the quantitative framework for the main, qualitative part of the study. It looks firstly at the GCSE passes of the students interviewed in each institution, and compares these to trends to ensure the sample was representative of the population. The different types of student (jugglers, workers and players) are then explained, and the relative numbers of each at each institution and on each course are then discussed and analysed statistically. Finally, the results of each institution are inspected, and compared with entry qualifications to ascertain if the distribution of student types has an effect on the results obtained by an institution.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, due to the nature of the study, the institutions visited were in South East London and Cornwall. During the examination of the results it must be borne in mind that the disparate locations may have had some bearing on the data collected, as follow-up visits were more difficult to arrange with some institutions being many miles apart; if an interesting point arose during one of the later interviews it was not possible to return to institutions to ask more questions to previous interviewees.[1] These geographical constraints, coupled with the semi-structured interview technique employed, mean that not all students were asked the same questions, or in the same order. The arguments for and against such interview techniques have already been discussed in the methodology chapter, and do not need

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[1] It is noted that if the study was to be repeated today, more students would have mobile phones, and these could be used for any follow-up questions. At the time of the interviews, however, (1999) only a small percentage of students had these phones, and thus it was not practical to use these in the study.

to be explored again, but when numbers are given for particular responses, it must be acknowledged that this may not be a totally accurate representation of the views of all the students interviewed, as some will not have been questioned on that particular topic.

The aim of the pilot study was to explore techniques and areas of questioning, to discover the most productive ways of gaining information, and topics of potential interest. The questions used in the pilot study institutions, therefore, were slightly different to those used in the main part of the study, although the techniques used were broadly similar. It was to be expected, therefore, that the results from the former differed in some small ways from those received from the latter, but these differences were not judged significant. In the pilot study, the following institutions were used: Rural School (school sixth form, Cornwall); Rural College (FE college, Cornwall); City School (school sixth form, London), and Urban College, (FE college, London). The institutions used in the main study were as follows: Clifftop School (school sixth form, Cornwall); Cornish College (FE college, Cornwall); Urban School (school sixth form, London); City College (FE college, London), and St. Joseph's College (sixth form college, London).

GCSE passes among interviewees

All the institutions visited were very different in many ways, but one of the more obvious ways was in the geographical locations; in order to contrast rural and urban areas, some were remote, others near a town or city. In addition, some were in relatively affluent areas, whereas some were in relatively deprived areas. Also some were in predominantly white areas, and others were in areas of high numbers of ethnic

minorities. The intake differed widely from place to place due to a combination of these factors as the following tables show: the tables indicate the average number of GCSEs passed (A*-C) by those interviewed in each institution, according to year, gender and course.

London	City College	Urban College	St. Joseph's	Urban School	City School	Total
Year 12	6.2	3	8.25	7.73	7.17	6.87
Year 13	6.7	3.67	7	9.64	5.5	7.37
Total	6.45	3.29	7.59	8.68	6.75	7.11

Table 5.1 Average number of GCSEs, grade A*-C, per student interviewed, by year, London.

Cornwall	Cornish College	Rural College	Clifftop School	Rural School	Total
Year 12	8.65	8.2	7.73	7.14	7.95
Year 13	8.95	4	8	n/a	8.28
Total	8.81	7.5	7.86	7.14	8.09

Table 5.2 Average number of GCSEs, grade A*-C, per student interviewed, by year, Cornwall.

Several facts are immediately apparent from these tables: firstly, the students interviewed in Cornish institutions had, on average, higher grade GCSE passes than their counterparts in London. Secondly, the variation between institutions was great within as well as between areas. A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the data, and showed that the differences between institutions were highly significant (F= (8,121) 4.08, p=0.0002). The low pass rates from Urban College were partly explained by the

inclusion of two students who were taking Intermediate GNVQ courses, whereas at all other institutions the interviewees were on Level 3 courses. At Rural school, as it was the first year that a sixth form had been in operation, all students were in Year 12. Sampling bias also accounted for the low average pass rate achieved by Year 13 students at Rural College: only one student in Year 13 was interviewed, a female GNVQ student. Similarly, in City School, only a small number of Year 13 students were interviewed. Twelve students in total had passed no or few GCSEs, but had completed an Intermediate GNVQ, which is the equivalent of five good GCSE passes; this was not taken into account however, when calculating average GCSE passes[2]. In both areas, year 13 students interviewed had more GCSEs than Year 12 students, but t-tests showed this difference not to be significant ($p=0.385$). There are two possible explanations for the general trend, however: firstly it could simply be due to sampling bias; secondly, some of the Year 13 students could have re-taken GCSEs such as English and maths in year 12, increasing their average number of GCSEs. As several year 12 students were re-sitting these subjects, it is likely this was the case.

London	City College	Urban College	St. Joseph's	Urban School	City School	Total
A level students	7.3	6	9.1	9.69	7.17	8.37
GNVQ students	5.6	1.25	4.83	7.22	5.5	5.35
Total	6.45	3.29	7.59	8.68	6.75	7.11

Table 5.3 Average number of GCSEs, grade A*-C, per student interviewed, by course, London.

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[2] The addition of these grades to the tables makes few differences, with the only discernible differences being in the total number of GCSEs for students at Rural School (a move from 7.14 to 8.71) and at Urban College (from 3.29 to 5.41).

Cornwall	Cornish College	Rural College	Clifftop School	Rural School	Total
A level students	9.33	8.2	9.67	9	9.23
GNVQ students	8.11	4	5.7	2.5	6.32
Total	8.81	7.5	7.86	7.14	8.09

Table 5.4 Average number of GCSEs, grade A*-C, per student interviewed, by course, Cornwall.

Tables 5.3 and 5.4 again show the differences between the intake of students in the two areas and between institutions, but highlight the differences in the intake of students on academic and vocational courses: in all institutions A level students had, on average, more GCSEs than GNVQ students. As previously mentioned some of the differences were statistical anomalies due to sampling bias, such as two GNVQ students at Urban College being on Intermediate rather than Advanced courses (although even with the removal of the two Intermediate students, the results are the same). The greater differences between students on the two courses at Urban College, Rural College and Rural School, can be explained by the small numbers of GNVQ students interviewed at these institutions. Taking into account these methodological problems, nevertheless there remains a highly significant statistical difference between the two sets of students when the data are subjected to one-tailed t-tests (t=6.2, d.f.=81, p=0.00000001). This compounds the idea that students who achieve less well in their GCSE examinations were more likely to take a vocational than an academic qualification at 16, whereas those who achieve well at 16 will be more likely to take A levels. With the advent of Curriculum 2000, the boundaries between

the courses have blurred slightly, with there being more opportunity to combine vocational with academic subjects, as was already the case at Rural School. There are other interesting points in the data as it is clear the relationship is not a simple one of all A level students achieving higher than all GNVQ students: in Cornish College and Urban School, for example, the GNVQ students still achieved more than the average number of GCSE passes for all institutions in that area. The majority of GNVQ students interviewed at Urban School had started their course directly after their GCSEs, unlike many other students on vocational courses who had previously taken the Intermediate; this was particularly true for students at St. Joseph's College.

London	City College	Urban College	St. Joseph's	Urban School	City School	Total
Male	6.67	4.5	7	8.4	6.25	6.94
Female	6.27	1.67	8.25	8.92	7.25	7.26
Total	6.45	3.29	7.59	8.68	6.75	7.11

Table 5.5 Average number of GCSEs, grade A*-C, per student interviewed, by gender, London.

Cornwall	Cornish College	Rural College	Clifftop School	Rural School	Total
Male	8.44	7	7.55	9	8.04
Female	9.08	7.6	8.18	5.75	8.13
Total	8.81	7.5	7.86	7.14	8.09

Table 5.6 Average number of GCSEs, grade A*-C, per student interviewed, by gender, Cornwall.

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show the differences between males and females interviewed at each institution. In both areas the females had more GCSE passes than the males, although this was not true for all institutions: in Urban College for example, as mentioned above, two female GNVQ students were enrolled on a Level 2 course. In both Rural School and City College males also had a higher average number of exam passes, but as Rural School yielded such a small sample the results for that establishment cannot be assumed to be immune from sampling problems. The differences due to gender were not significant however ($p=0.246$). There has been much research on the subject of male and female achievement at GCSE level, with females achieving more passes than males in all subjects in recent years (for example: Burns and Bracey, 2001; Clark and Millard, 1998; Francis, 2000; Gorard et al, 2001). As the females in this sample achieved higher numbers of passes overall at GCSE level than the males in all but three institutions, this supports the view that the sample interviewed is representative of the population.

All students interviewed	Year 12	Year 13	A level students	GNVQ students	Males	Females	Total
Total	7.37	7.73	8.75	5.75	7.38	7.66	7.53

Table 5.7 Average number of GCSEs, grade A*-C, per student interviewed, all areas.

Table 5.7 shows the differences between years, courses and genders, irrespective of area and institution, and allows patterns among these factors to be seen more readily. It supports the earlier statements that Year 13 students have more passes than year 12 students; that A level students have more passes than GNVQ students, and that females achieve more highly than males. The possible explanations for Year 13

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students' higher GCSE scores have already been discussed, and were likely to reflect the relatively high numbers of students who take an additional GCSE (or more than one GCSE) in Year 12 alongside their A level or GNVQ course. Likewise, the fact that the female students were higher achievers than the male students has already been discussed, and has been shown to correspond to the national average picture. Despite the government trying to ensure parity of esteem between A levels and GNVQs, in reality this does not seem to be the case, with those students achieving good GCSE results either choosing, or being persuaded, to follow the academic route, and those with slightly lower GCSE passes being steered towards the GNVQ route (Wallace, 1998). This appears to be the case for the students involved in this study, with the A level students having better GCSE grades, on average, than their GNVQ counterparts.

Student types: jugglers, workers and players

After transcribing and analysing each of the interviews, each participant was classed into one of these 'ideal types' (Weber, 1967): a worker (person who concentrated heavily on their studies); a player (person who did as little studying as possible) or a juggler (person who split their time and energies between their studies and other interest). As noted in the previous chapter, these distinctions were first noticed through the use of the photographic diaries, where it was apparent that some students had focussed on their time in school or college when using their camera, whereas others had concentrated on their social lives and out-of-school/college activities, and a third section had combined the two parts of their lives. From the photographic diaries, the three type of student: juggler, worker and player, were developed, and the transcript of each participant's interview was re-read to determine into which category each student fell. In most cases it was obvious as to which category a student

belonged: for example, Tracy, an A level student at City College, was torn between her job at Woolworth's and her possible application to Cambridge University. She was therefore classed as a juggler, having to juggle her time and energies between her studies and her job. Angela, from Urban School was classed as a worker, as she was focussed on her A levels to the exclusion of all other activities, and spent many hours out of school on homework and revision. Seb, from Cornish College was classed as a player, as he seemed to care more about his social life, which included playing rugby for a local men's team, than he did about his college work. When deciding to which group each student belonged, one of the most useful questions was the first asked in the main study: that is, 'What is the most important thing in your life right now?' The information gained from this question was not the only source of information when classifying students, however, as sometimes this was misleading, with a student initially claiming their course was the most important thing, but later admitting that they did not spend as long studying as they perhaps should have done, as they worked long hours at their part-time job. Jugglers often spread their energies between a job and their studies, but in many cases their social lives, families or hobbies also played a large part in their lives. Although it might be argued that this approach of classifying students according to the way they prioritise various parts of their lives is reductionist, and as such veers away from the traditional, humanistic approach, the idea of looking at the whole of each young person's life and deciding what is the most important aspect for each of them is very much in the holist tradition. In the past, many education researchers have implicitly assumed that studying has taken the most important role in the young person's life, and have failed to recognise other demands on their time and energy, and therefore this study encompasses more aspects of the students' lives than is traditionally the case.

The classification of students into these three main types allowed for comparisons to be made between and within institutions, and several trends were noticeable. Table 5.9 summarises the distribution of student types according to gender, course, area, year and institution type. [See Appendix 6 for the actual figures: as the numbers of student in each category (for example, males and females) were slightly different, the percentages are more informative.] Figure 5.1 illustrates the distribution of all students interviewed, by student type.

		Jugglers	Workers	Players
Gender	Male	48	22	30
	Female	49	39	12
Course	A levels	54	31	15
	GNVQ	41	31	28
Area	Urban	46	30	24
	Rural	52	33	16
Year	12	49	29	22
	13	48	33	18
Institution type	FE College	32	39	29
	School	67	20	13
	Sixth Form College	41	41	18
	TOTALS	49	31	20

Table 5.8: Percentages of students of each type.
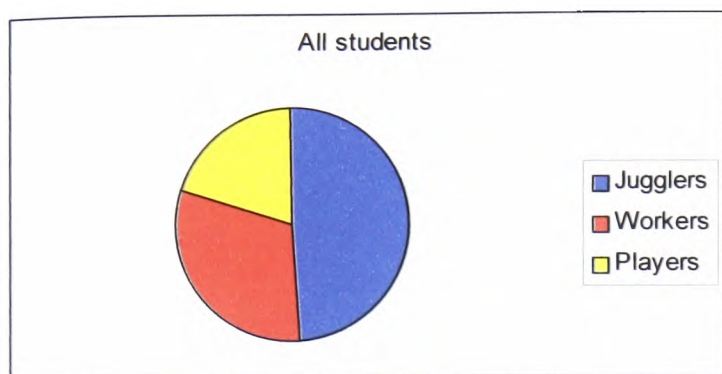
Figure 5.1: Proportions of student types.

From Table 5.8 and Figure 5.1, the following patterns can be seen: roughly half of all students interviewed were jugglers (49%), with the majority of the remainder being workers (31%), and a small proportion players (20%); male students were more likely to be players than females, whereas females were more likely to be workers than males; A level students were more likely to be jugglers than GNVQ students, whereas the latter were more likely than the former to be players; students in rural areas were more likely to be jugglers and less likely to be players than students in urban areas; there were few differences between year 12 and year 13 students, although the latter were slightly less likely to be players than the former. The biggest differences were seen in relation to institution type, with schools containing many more jugglers and fewer workers and players than either FE or sixth form colleges. In FE colleges there was a more even spread between the student types, with workers being the largest group, and almost even percentages of jugglers and players. In the one sixth form college studied, the proportion of jugglers and players falls between that of schools and FE colleges, with a slightly higher proportion of workers than the other categories of institution. One possible explanation for the differences seen between institutions, is the effect of social class on students' destinations. As seen in Chapter 3, above,

students whose parents achieved higher levels of education, and who were classed as 'Higher professionals' were more likely to remain in school than go to an FE college at the age of 16. This suggests the possibility that the players seen in greater proportions in FE colleges could be due to the greater number of working class students within that institution: perhaps working class is synonymous with player? This does not, however, explain the higher percentage of workers in FE colleges, and rather than looking for a sociological explanation, a psychological theory fits the data more completely (see below).

The data in Table 5.8 were subjected to a range of χ^2 tests with the following results: the differences in the distribution of students types between males and females were significant (χ^2=8.56 (2d.p.), d.f.=2, p=0.014 (3d.p.)); the differences between A level and GNVQ students were not significant (χ^2=3.69 (2d.p.), d.f.=2, p=0.158 (3d.p.) n.s.); the differences between urban and rural students were not significant (χ^2=2.91 (2d.p.), d.f.=2, p=0.223 (3d.p.) n.s.); the differences between Year 12 and Year 13 students were not significant (χ^2=0.36 (2d.p.), d.f.=2, p=0.834 (3d.p.) n.s.), and the differences between institutions were highly significant (χ^2=15.05 (2d.p.), d.f.=4, p=0.005 (3d.p.)). To summarise these findings, only gender and type of institution had an effect on the proportions of jugglers, workers and players, with year group, course and area having no significant effect. Whether the institution type is the cause or the effect of the differences cannot be established from these figures; the qualitative data from the interviews is needed for this, and will be explored in detail in Chapter Eight.

When each institution was looked at individually, more trends became evident, as shown in Tables 5.9 to 5.16 and Figures 5.1 to 5.10.

Clifftop School, Cornwall		Jugglers	Workers	Players
Gender	M	7	2	2
	F	9	2	0
Course	A levels	11	1	1
	GNVQ	5	3	1
Year	12	9	2	0
	13	7	2	2
Total		16 (72%)	4 (18%)	2 (9%)

Table 5.9: Distribution of student types in Clifftop School, Cornwall.
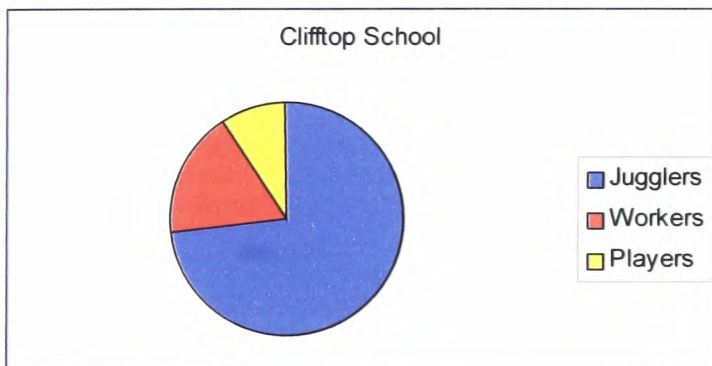
Figure 5.2: Student types in Clifftop School, Cornwall.

One of the most noticeable features of Figure 5.2 is the high proportion of jugglers: the students at this school were not unconcerned about their studies (very few players) but also had many outside interests. There were very few differences between genders, courses or academic years, although A level students and year 12 students were slightly more likely to be jugglers. Compared with overall percentages of 49% jugglers; 31% workers and 20% players, and an average school percentage of 67% jugglers; 20% workers and 13% players, the school can be seen as encouraging

outside interests, although not allowing these to dominate their studies (see next chapters for more details on the activities the school organises for the students).

Urban School		Jugglers	Workers	Players
Gender	Male	7	1	2
	Female	8	3	1
Course	A level	8	3	2
	GNVQ	7	1	1
Year	12	7	2	2
	13	8	2	1
Totals		15 (68%)	4 (18%)	3 (14%)

Table 5.10: Distribution of student types in Urban School.
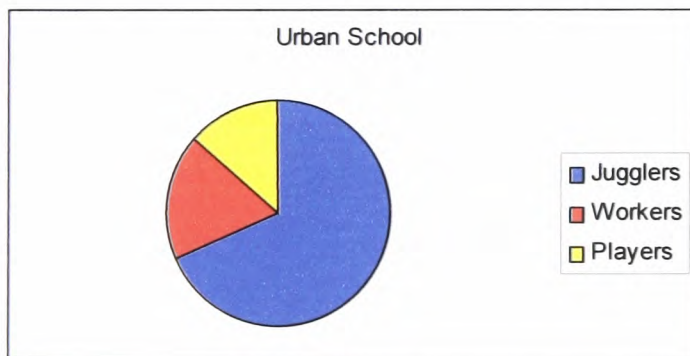
Figure 5.3: Student types in Urban School, London

The most obvious comment to be made about Table 5.10 and Figure 5.3 is the number of jugglers at this school. This was a similar proportion to that at Clifftop School in Cornwall, and accounted for the majority of the students at this school, and when taken in conjunction with the interview data (seen in more detail in later chapters) it is apparent that the school organises activities for the students, as well as the students

being involved in outside interests. The number of players was very small, suggesting that pupils here took their studies seriously. There appeared to be no large differences among age groups, gender or course; there were slightly fewer male than female workers, and slightly fewer GNVQ than A level workers, but these differences were very small and were possibly due to sampling.

City College		Jugglers	Workers	Players
Gender	Male	3	3	3
	Female	3	7	2
Course	A level	5	5	1
	GNVQ	1	5	4
Year	12	3	2	5
	13	3	8	0
Totals		6 (29%)	10 (48%)	5 (24%)

Table 5.11: Distribution of student types in City College, London.
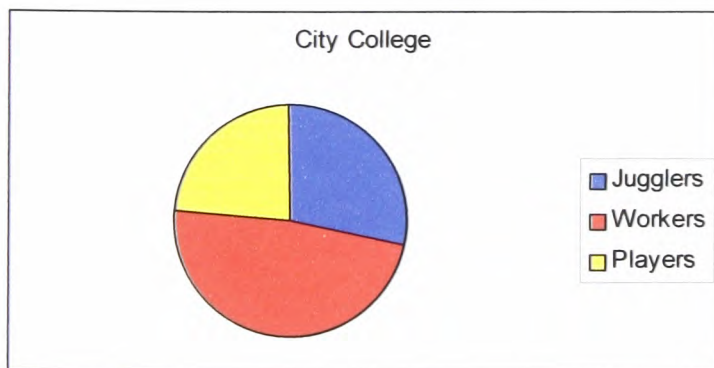
Figure 5.4: Student types in City College, London

The pattern of student types was very different from that seen in the schools already discussed, with a greatly reduced number of jugglers, and many more workers and players; in all the schools studied the most common category was the juggler, with an average of 67%, followed by the worker with 20% and the player with 13%. The picture for FE college students was very different, with an average of 39% workers, 32% jugglers and 29% players. Comparing City College's students to those in other FE colleges studied, City College had more workers and fewer players than average, and slightly fewer jugglers. There were trends within the college population as well, with more female jugglers than both workers and players added together. In addition, there were more A level jugglers, but more GNVQ players, and more year 13 workers and year 12 players. Some of these observations make intuitive sense: once in year 13, for example, students realised they were going to have to start working hard if they wish to pass their exams, and had the process of applying to university to inspire them. As the interviews were carried out in December, the UCAS process was an active presence in many of their minds, and therefore the idea of working hard was uppermost for the majority. In year 12, however, students who had just started college (interviews were conducted in February and March) were still enjoying much of the freedom and novelty of being at college, and had not had many serious reminders about the purpose of their being there. The male/female and A level/GNVQ differences are not so easily explained, however.

St. Joseph's College		Jugglers	Workers	Players
Gender	Male	6	2	3
	Female	3	7	1
Course	A level	6	4	1
	GNVQ	3	5	3
Year	12	5	5	1
	13	4	4	3
Totals		9 (41%)	9 (41%)	4 (18%)

Table 5.12: Distribution of student types in St. Joseph's College, London.
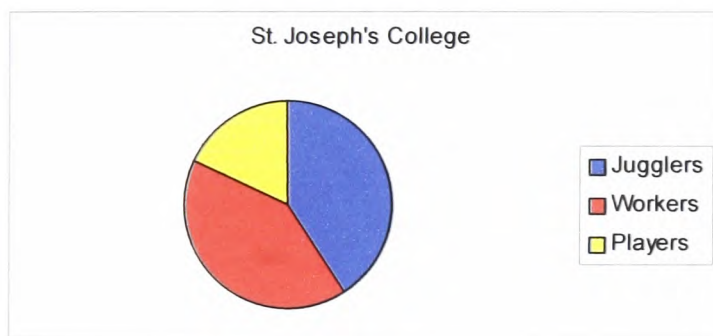
Figure 5.5: Student types in St. Joseph's College, London

Comparing these figures to Urban School, and City College, we find that St. Joseph's College fell between these institutions in the proportions of each of the three types: Urban School had 68% jugglers, and City College 29%; Urban School has 18% workers and City College 48%, and Urban School had 14% players, with City College having 24%. In each case, St. Joseph's figures were closer to those of City College, but the sixth form college appeared to be a 'third way' which lay between the two extremes of the FE college and the school sixth form. Trends within the college were

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also apparent, with more females being classified as workers, and more males classed as jugglers. There was a difference between courses, also, with GNVQ students being slightly more likely to be classed as players than A level students, and the latter to be more likely to be jugglers than the former. There was a small difference between the year groups, with slightly more players in year 13 than in year 12, which although counterintuitive and against the patterns seen in other institutions, the numbers are small and not significant, and can be considered a statistical anomaly.

Cornish College		Jugglers	Workers	Players
Gender	M	3	3	3
	F	5	4	3
Course	A levels	5	5	2
	GNVQ	3	2	4
Year	12	3	4	3
	13	5	3	3
Total		8 (38%)	7 (33%)	6 (29%)

Table 5.13: Distribution of student types in Cornish College, Cornwall.
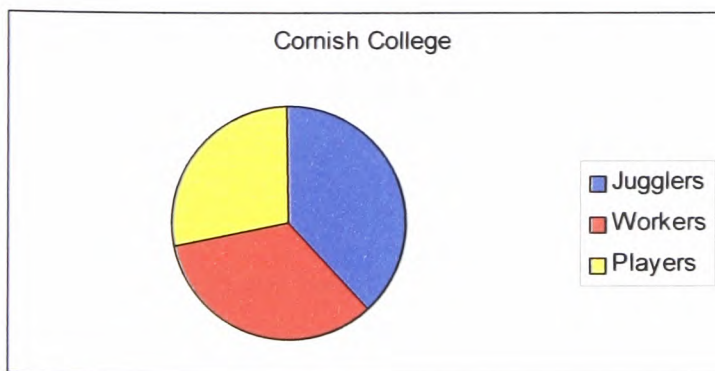
Figure 5.6: Student types in Cornish College, Cornwall

Comparing the figures in Table 5.13 and Figure 5.6 to the averages for FE colleges in the study, it can be seen that Cornish College had more jugglers but fewer workers than the norm, (averages 31% and 39% respectively, compared to 39% and 32%) with roughly the same proportion of players. Taking the averages for all institutions used in the study, Cornish College had fewer jugglers and more players (49% and 20% respectively). Looking at the figures for all rural institutions, regardless of institution type, Cornish College had fewer jugglers, a similar proportion of workers, and more players. Looking at trends within the institution, most of the figures were similar to the average figures, but the college had a larger than average proportion of GNVQ students who were players, and a smaller proportion of GNVQ workers. This could be due to the small sample used, or could be an indication that GNVQ students at this institution did not have as strong a work ethic as GNVQ students elsewhere, or that the college did not push the students to the same extent. This theory will be examined in later chapters.

The following institutions were all visited during the pilot study phase of the investigation, and therefore had fewer interviewees, and in many cases an uneven distribution of students across gender, year and course. With such small samples, the conclusions which could be drawn were tentative, but the data are briefly discussed here, albeit with some caution.

There was a larger proportion of workers and a smaller number of jugglers at Rural School when compared to both the overall averages for the study and the averages for all rural institutions, suggesting students at this school were encouraged to work hard and had few interests beyond their studies. As it was the first year of the sixth form at

this school, it was likely that students were encouraged to study as much as possible, to give the school a good start in the league tables. They themselves may also have been motivated to do well for their school, as the students interviewed were very proud of their sixth form (see later for more discussion on this point). One other possible explanation for the large proportion of workers and relatively small proportion of jugglers, is the lack of opportunities for part-time employment in this area, as one of the more common reasons for someone to be classed as a juggler was if they were working long hours as well as studying. The opportunities for leisure activities were also fewer in this area than in other areas in Cornwall, as will be discussed later.

The vast majority of students at City School were jugglers, with 25% players, and no workers. The proportion of players was much higher than was seen in the results for all schools, but was roughly equal to the proportion of players in all urban institutions.

In contrast, there were no players at Rural College, and a majority of workers. This college had a sixth form centre in which A-level students had lessons, keeping them apart from the rest of the college for most of the day. In this way, for A level students the college experience was much more similar to a school sixth form or sixth form college than was the case with the other colleges in the study, and as such, it might have been expected that the number of players might be less than the average for FE colleges. This was indeed the case, with the distribution of student types resembling the school sixth form or sixth form college more than the other FE colleges. The idea of a sixth form centre has attracted considerable interest of late, with many colleges

adopting the principle in an effort to increase pass rates and retention figures (Morris et al, 1999).

As has been already stated, at Urban College two of the students interviewed were on Intermediate courses rather than Advanced courses, which might be expected to have an effect on these figures. The large number of players (72%) could be due to several factors: firstly, the immediate catchment area for the college is a deprived one, and many of those interviewed had to work long hours to bring an extra income into the family: this would lead to a predominance of both jugglers and players, with the difference between the groups explained in part by the number of hours the students had to work. Secondly, most of those interviewed at this college were the first in their family to attend further education, and so did not have the support or understanding from their parents they may have needed. This was also the only institution where more GNVQ than A level students were interviewed, and although the differences between students on these courses were not significant, the general trend showed that GNVQ students were more likely to be players than A level students. It is also noted that all four Year 12 students were players, whereas only one of the three Year 13 students was a player, showing that at this college, as with all the other institutions, knowledge of exams and the end of the course was enough to increase the work rate of students. This has implications for Curriculum 2000: if students have important examinations at the end of Year 12, they might work harder during this year, rather than 'coasting' during the first year of their course and making up for it in the second year. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Although this thesis focuses upon the experience of the student, rather than the outcomes of education in terms of attainment, it is necessary to include a small section on the results of each institution, for several reasons: firstly these may have provided the inspiration for the choices of the students in terms of institution and/or course; also to some extent the experience of the student will depend on the quality of teaching, which it is assumed can be measured in some way by the results achieved, although it is acknowledged that the quality of intake has a greater influence over the results. The figures in the following tables are all from the DfEE (1997-2001).

Institution	Average point score per student entered for 2 or more GCE A/AS					
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002 *
City College (area 1)	7.2	6.1	10.4	10.3	9.9	112.2
St. Joseph's (area 1)	15.9	15.5	15.4	14.5	15.4	210.0
LEA Average London Area 1	13.0	13.6	14.4	14.6	13.8	199.7
Urban College (area 2)	7.8	8.3	10.2	10.7	8.5	139.0
Urban School (area 2)	20.5	16.8	17.0	19.6	15.0	233.6
City School (area 2)	13.6	15.7	14.8	12.5	11.7	166.8
LEA Average London Area 2	12.9	12.5	12.9	12.7	10.5	170.2
Cornish College	15.4	18.1	20.5	17.7	n/a	n/a
Rural College	15.4	17.6	15.2	19.3	16.6	221.0
Clifftop School	17.8	19.3	20.8	20.9	17.2	209.4
Rural School	n/a	n/a	n/a	10.4	12.4	169.5
LEA Average	16.5	17.8	18.9	17.8	17.0	239.9
England Average	17.3	17.8	18.2	18.5	17.8	254.5

Table 5.14: Performance of students in A level examinations 1997-2002.

* The scoring system changed in 2002. Prior to this time GNVQ and A levels were reported separately, with an A grade at GCE A level being worth 10 points, a B eight

points, C 6 points, D four points and E two points. A/S level grades were half that of

A levels. In 2002 the grades for GCE A levels and AVCEs were combined, with an A

level A grade being worth 120 points, a B grade worth 100 points, C 80 points, D 60

points and an E grade 40 points. Double Award AVCEs were worth the total of their

combined grades, and AS level half of the A level grades. To compare, under the

system pre-2002, candidates achieving BBC at A level would have had 24 points,

whereas under the new scoring system they would have received 140 points. The

national average for England in 2001 of 17.8 points was therefore the equivalent of

just under CCC at A level, and in 2002 the England average was equivalent to just

under BCC at A level. As the system change is not a simple one, an adjusted score

cannot be calculated.

Table 5.14 shows that in all but two cases (1998 and 1999 in Cornwall) the LEA

average for the areas studied fell below the national average. The relative poverty of

the areas and additional factors have already been discussed, and reasons for the

below average results do not need to be restated here; but it is worth noting that not all

the institutions studied show results below the national average, despite the

performance of their LEA as a whole: Clifftop School in Cornwall, for example,

consistently produced above average results until 2002, as has Urban School, in

relation to its surrounding area. The England average point score has increased every

year, and most institutions followed this tendency. St. Joseph's is the only

establishment to achieve successively lower results every year since 1997, and it

dropped below the LEA average for the first time in 2000. It did however then

improve in 2001 and in both 2001 and 2002 St. Joseph's College achieved above the

LEA average point score.

When the GNVQ results for these institutions and areas were inspected, a slightly different pattern can be seen: not including the 2002 results, two of the three LEAs, and the majority of the institutions studied consistently achieved above the national average. This suggests that vocational qualifications received more emphasis in these institutions than they did in other areas of England and Wales, and in many of the institutions, perhaps because of the student intake, they were seen as a priority. It was not just in the colleges that this trend was noted, with Rural School achieving much better results for vocational qualifications than for A levels.

Institution	Average point score per student entered for Advanced GNVQs*					
	1997**	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002***
City College (area 1)	75%	4.4	9.4	12.0	6.4	80%
St. Joseph's (area 1)	80%	12.8	10.5	11.3	11.1	n/a
LEA Average London Area 1	N/a	10.7	9.4	11.4	9.9	80.0%
Urban College (area 2)	41%	10.9	5.7	7.8	10.7	35%
Urban School (area 2)	70%	9.6	14.0	12.0	13.5	n/a
City School (area 2)	93%	8.0	N/a	6.5	6	n/a
LEA Average London Area 2	N/a	10.9	8.8	9.5	10.4	55.9%
Cornish College	76%	10.4	10.6	9.8	n/a	n/a
Rural College	65%	8.9	11.4	13.6	10.0	81%
Clifftop School	73%	14.0	12.5	13.3	9.7	n/a
Rural School	N/a	N/a	N/a	18.0	13.3	n/a
LEA Average	N/a	10.1	10.5	10.5	10.1	82.8%
England Average	73.5%	9.6	9.9	10.1	10.2	81.6%

Table 5.15: Performance of students in Advanced GNVQs, 1997-2002.

* Students are given 18 points for a distinction, 12 for a merit, and 6 for a pass at level 3.

** DfEE figures were recorded differently for 1997: instead of grades of pass, merit and distinction, the DfEE figures simply show the percentage of students passing the course.

*** DfEE figures were recorded differently again in 2002: AVCEs were grouped with A and AS levels (see table 5.14 above) and the figures in this column represent the percentage of candidates passing BTEC National or City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education at National level courses. The figures cannot therefore be compared directly with those from other years, and as these courses were not available in schools, were only available for colleges.

The results can be compared to the entrance qualifications of the students interviewed and the type of student at each institution, to establish if student type affects results. Taking each establishment in turn, City College achieves relatively poor A level results, but above average GNVQ results. This is supported by the entry qualifications of those students interviewed: although the A level students had below average GCSE results (7.3 compared to a London average of 8.4), the GNVQ students had an average of 5.6 GCSEs compared to a London average of 5.4). Therefore, although the intake at City College was below average ability overall, the GNVQ students had a slightly higher GCSE score relative to other students interviewed. Looking at the distribution of student types, it is recalled that comparing City College's students to those in other FE colleges studied, City College had more workers and fewer players than average, and slightly fewer jugglers. This suggests that results would be slightly

better than predicted from the entrance grades of students, which is not true for A level students, but is true for GNVQ students.

Secondly, looking at St. Joseph's College: both the A level and GNVQ results were roughly similar to the averages for the local area, which for A levels was below the national average, and for GNVQs was above the national average. This was in contrast to the entrance qualifications of those interviewed: whereas GNVQ students had fewer GCSEs than average (4.8 compared to a London average of 5.3), A level students had above average GCSE results (9.1 compared to 8.4). There were fewer players than average at St. Joseph's College, but relatively more jugglers and workers: perhaps the amount of juggling being carried out by A level students brought down their achievements, or possibly the quality of teaching was lower at this college than elsewhere.

At Urban College, the results were poor for both A levels and GNVQs, and entry qualifications were low. The college also had a much higher proportion of players than normal, and both the latter facts would have affected the former. Urban School had well above average A level and GNVQ results for the area, with the school also performing well in relation to the national averages in both qualifications. The entrance qualifications of the students interviewed were also above average both for the area and for the study as a whole, and of those interviewed, the vast majority were either workers or jugglers, with only three players identified: these conditions would have helped to account for the good results that Urban School produced. City School also produced above average A level results for the area, but below average GNVQ results. As with St. Joseph's College this was not the pattern predicted by the entrance

qualifications of those interviewed, where the GCSE results of A level students was below average, but those of GNVQ students was above average. This was also not predicted by the fact that there were more GNVQ than A level players at City School, among those interviewed, but as the sample size was so small at this institution, the conclusions that can be drawn from this are minimal.

At Cornish College both the A level and GNVQ results were around the local and national average. The GCSE results for those interviewed were above average however, especially among the GNVQ students, whose average of 8.1 GCSEs was the highest found among vocational students. It would therefore have been expected that GNVQ results would have been better, but the distribution of student types helps us to understand why this should not be so: as discussed above, Cornish College had a relatively high proportion of players, especially among the GNVQ students interviewed, compared both with other Cornish institutions and all institutions studied. It is predicted that although the college produced average results, given the entry qualifications of its students, it could have achieved more if the students could have been persuaded to prioritise their studies more.

Clifftop School produced excellent A level and GNVQ results, all of which were above the national average as well as the LEA average. Although the GCSE results for A level students interviewed at this school were above average, the GNVQ students' results were below average for the area (5.7 compared to an average of 6.3). The school contained a large proportion of jugglers however, and a small number of players, and as will be shown in later chapters, many of the activities with which the

jugglers were involved were based within the school, hence increasing the school based work ethic in the institution.

Rural School had only recently opened a sixth form at the time of the interviews, so it is difficult to judge results in comparison with their entry qualifications and student types. Early indications were that the GNVQ courses were more successful than the A levels, but it is too early to state more than this at this stage. Only one GNVQ student was interviewed at Rural College, making it difficult to make comparisons between courses; results showed, however, that performance in both A levels and GNVQs were around the local average, with a relatively high degree of variation from year to year. The GCSE results from the students interviewed at Rural College were similar, in that they were just slightly below the average for Cornwall.

This chapter has set the quantitative framework for the main part of the study, and has shown that both entry qualifications and the types of student (i.e. jugglers, workers and players) at an institution will have an effect on the results of that institution. The next three chapters will use qualitative analysis to look more closely at the experiences of students at each of these institutions: one issue which will be discussed is cause and effect of students types - whether the establishment itself influences the student type, and the ways in which this might occur, or if different types of student seek out a certain institution and/or course. Other factors which influence the students' experiences of post-16 education will also be discussed, including issues such as transport, extra-curricular activities, teaching methods, attitudes to studying and part-time employment.

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The chapters are arranged in the following way: Chapter Six compares the experiences of students in different areas, contrasting Cornish and London students, and how their lives were affected by the areas in which they live and study. The issue of rural and urban habituses is introduced and used to analyse the data. Chapter Seven compares students on A-level courses with those on GNVQ courses: this distinction was blurred with the introduction of Curriculum 2000, but, as has already been observed, most schools and colleges continue to make the distinction between the academic and vocational routes. As Rural School tried to integrate the two qualification aims since its inception, this institution will be of particular interest in this chapter, although obviously it is borne in mind that as a new sixth form it is not typical of all institutions which attempt to do this. Chapter Eight asks the main question of the study, namely whether experiences of post-compulsory education for 16-19 year olds differ depending on the type of establishment attended, and if so, in what ways? Comparisons are made within and between school sixth forms, FE colleges and sixth form colleges, in terms of how they treated students, and what the students got out of their time at each institution. Institutional habitus, which is compared to 'ethos' is also used to make sense of some of the data in this chapter.

Chapter 6

Results: Comparing Rural and Urban Areas.

In this chapter, the main areas discussed are Cornwall (rural) and southeast London (urban). Although each rural area is unique in history and at the level of fine grained particularity, and similarly all urban areas, certain generalisations can be made about the experiences of young people in post-16 education in each type of area. The strengths and weaknesses of the case-study approach have already been discussed and the conclusion drawn that the number of institutions visited and students interviewed has increased the generalisability of the results.

There have been few studies of young people in rural areas (Wallace et al., 1991 being an exception) although recently there have been several attempts to look at issues in general facing rural communities (for example: Lowerson and Thomson, 1994; Ryley, 2002; Atkin, 2003a; Atkin, 2003b, and Atkin, 2004). With approximately 20% of the English population living in rural areas (Atkin, 2003a) the issue is not an insignificant one. Is the experience of living and attending post-compulsory education in a rural area necessarily very different to that in an urban or suburban area? Ryley (2002) argues that the most popular view of rural society is one of 'cosy advantage', but in reality most rural areas survive with a fragile post-agricultural economy, relying heavily on light industry and tourism, with many small businesses and large numbers of people in part-time and/or seasonal employment. Life is not necessarily idyllic and peaceful in the countryside then, and in many cases education, particularly post-compulsory education, takes second place to surviving

under poor economic conditions. Indeed higher education threatens the stability of rural life, as it promotes out-migration. This chapter attempts to discover if the experiences of students in rural areas differ considerably from those in urban areas, and if so, in which ways.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is a useful one with which to aid our understanding of the differences between rural and urban areas. Although Bourdieu's discussions of habitus focus mainly on the individual or in some cases the institution (which is often social class) it is also the case that communities can have a shared habitus, distinguishing them from other communities:

> 'whole communities can be defined as having a collective habitus, characterised by having shared views of the world, common sets of values and dispositions to behave and act in certain ways' (Webb et al, 2002, p.93).

Following this theory, it is possible to envisage a distinct 'rural habitus', whereby people who live in relatively isolated areas will have the same shared set of experiences, expectations and beliefs. Indeed Atkin (2003b) found a distinct rural habitus in his research in Lincolnshire, and suggested that rurality, or long term exposure to its cultural characteristics, had a clear influence on identity and behaviour: according to his research, rurality was not just an economic construct, but also a social construct. This rural culture cut also across other social categories such as class or economic status. Although there is little or no research on the urban habitus, it is assumed that if there is a distinct rural habitus, then by default an urban habitus also exists, whereby people who have lived in towns or cities for prolonged periods think in similar ways, for example, they would take being able to go to the cinema, or ordering a take-away meal for granted in a way a rural inhabitant could

not. If this is the case, then young people are just as likely to be influenced by the character, or habitus, of the urban location, and thus the students interviewed in this study will divide themselves into two distinct groups – the rural and the urban – each with its own experiences and dispositions.

This chapter is divided into sections corresponding to some of the main categories discovered during the analysis of the interviews, and those areas in which the differences between rural and urban students were most noticeable. The first of these discusses students' choice of institution. The hypothesis was that the rural habitus would mean students living in relatively remote areas would be more likely than urban students to choose the nearest institution to themselves, for several reasons: firstly, institutions offering post-compulsory education are widespread in a rural area, such as Cornwall, and the experience of public transport in rural areas is often very poor, with some villages having a bus just once a day, or even once a week, thus reducing the students' options on a purely practical basis. In urban areas, by contrast, there are more choices of post-compulsory education institutions within a relatively small area, and much better public transport links. The urban student was also expected to show a greater disposition to using public transport to reach another institution, as this is part of the urban habitus. Students from Cornwall were thus predicted to cite distances and familiarity more often than London-based students when discussing their choice of school or college, and to have considered fewer choices than their London counterparts. This section also expands on the influence of transport over the experiences of the students in the two areas, and goes beyond the reasons for choosing the institution. As the two subjects were often related, it was considered sensible to consider them together.

The second section in this chapter concerns the extra-curricular activities and social life of the students in the two areas. This is also an interesting area, and one in which the dominant habitus (either rural or urban) has a noticeable effect. On a purely practical basis, there are usually more activities available in an urban environment for young people than in a rural area, with the possible exception of some country- and water-based activities, and therefore students in rural areas were therefore expected to have a much more restricted social life than students in London. The opportunities to meet people are also greater in an urban environment, with many people sharing a relatively small physical space, and also more places in which disparate groups of people can gather and meet: for example, dance classes, pubs and bars. By contrast, in a rural area people tend to stay within their own community, both physically and mentally, and therefore have little prospect of meeting new people. The rural habitus would suggest that people who had had prolonged exposure to a rural lifestyle would not consider this a disadvantage, and would highlight the positive aspects of a strong sense of community feeling, rather than stressing the lack of opportunities of meeting new people. Bearing these distinct differences in opportunity and habitus in mind, it was anticipated that students in rural areas would base their social lives much more around their school or college life, and would be more likely to be involved with extra-curricular activities provided by the institution. Students from London, however, would see their social lives as more separate from their school or college lives, and would be involved with more social activities outside of the institution.

The next area to be discussed in this chapter is that of part-time employment and finances. This is a subject where the two regions have very different experiences, with

many more opportunities for students to have part-time jobs in urban areas than in rural areas. In London, for example, the dominant habitus among students is to work at least at weekends throughout the school or college term, and few students do not have a part-time job. By contrast, the dominant attitude in a rural area which relies heavily on tourism, such as Cornwall, is to have a job during the holidays, especially the summer, and not to work during the terms. This obviously has a knock-on effect for the students' financial situations, and also has an effect on their work and social lives.

The above subjects are the main ones discussed with relation to the differences between students' experiences in rural and urban areas, but throughout the chapter other, more minor issues are introduced where appropriate.

Reasons for choice of institution

There is a small but growing literature on student choice in post-16 education (for example, recently: Mangan et al. (2001); Hemsley-Brown, 1999; Foskett and Hesketh, 1996; Taylor, 1992) but to date there has been no attempt to compare rural and urban areas. As mentioned above, it was hypothesised that students from each of the regions would have different reasons for their choice of institution, the prediction being that students in Cornwall would be more likely to cite transport and distance as reasons for choosing their school or college than students in London. From past research, such as Atkin (2003a), it is also expected that the rural habitus would mean young people in Cornwall would prefer to stay in their own self-sufficient community, where everyone knows everyone else and they feel a sense of 'belonging' or 'fit'. The tendency to use familiarity discourses would therefore be

likely to be greater in rural than urban areas. As the students who had chosen to go to college could not claim to do so because of familiarity, however, it was felt the issue of familiarity would not show itself clearly in a comparison between rural and urban areas, and is instead discussed in the chapter looking at differences between institution types (Chapter Eight) with regard to an interaction between institution type and area. This section therefore focuses on the effects of transport and distance on institution choice.

Research by Fletcher and Kirk (2000) showed a great disparity between provision and availability of transport for students in urban and rural areas, and also between FE colleges and schools. Based on information from 194 colleges in rural, urban and with both rural and urban catchment areas, they discovered a distinction between urban institutions who saw supporting students with transport mainly as a financial issue, and rural colleges who were also forced to take on an organisational role. The role of the LEA is not straightforward in the area of student transport, as although they are not legally required to assist FE college students with transport, if they operate a scheme for 16-19 year old school students, they have to make the same scheme available to FE college students. In many cases it is left to the FE college itself to organise, provide or subsidise transport for students, and over 80% of FE colleges in Fletcher and Kirk's study reported providing assistance for students aged 16-19. There were differences between areas however, with rural colleges supporting 29% of their 16-19 year old students, and urban colleges supporting only 10%. Further differences were apparent with the type of support given, with 57% rural (60% in the South West) and only 28% urban (5% in Greater London) colleges running their own buses. The relative costs to the college for student transport in rural

areas were unsurprisingly almost double those of urban areas (£49.03 per student enrolled, compared with £25.07 per student respectively). One further differentiation was made, with just 5% of general FE colleges, compared with 20% of sixth form colleges, providing no support with student transport. There are several possible reasons for this: students at sixth form colleges might fit more clearly into the categories of support offered by the LEA, or more simply, sixth form colleges might be more often located in urban areas, therefore requiring less support - this factor was not discussed by Fletcher and Kirk. Fletcher and Kirk did make the point however, that the transport issue differed a great deal between rural and urban areas, with the effects of transport or the lack of it, affecting students in different ways in these areas:

'where the issue is one of financial hardship it affects a proportion of students, albeit a high proportion in some inner-city areas. If it is an issue of transport availability it potentially affects all students. At the very least it affects a cross-section of the college rather than just its poorest students' (Fletcher and Kirk, 2000 p.12).

These findings were supported by the present study, with all of the Cornish institutions, but none of those in southeast London providing special buses for students.

Taking this information into consideration, it would also be expected that students in London would make a more informed choice, taking more possibilities into consideration when deciding where to continue their studies after the age of 16. For many students these predictions held true, but this was not always the case, with many students in Cornwall (26/57) rating other factors as more important when judging the best place to study, and with some London-based students (24/79) claiming distance

was the main motivating factor.

Taking the rural institutions first, at Clifftop School, the most common reasons given for remaining at the school sixth form involved travelling and the time and money involved with going to the nearest college (Cathedral College) [n=10]. The students interviewed at Clifftop School lived varying distances from the school, with one 'across the road' and another 11 miles away, with many at the seven mile mark. When asked how they got into school everyday, the most common response was to have a lift (n=6), followed by 'walk or lift' (n=5), bus (n=4), drive their own car (n=3), 'bus or a lift' (n=2), walk (n=1) and by scooter (n=1). Of those who had regular lifts, most relied on their parents, with a few receiving lifts from friends or friends' parents, or other family members. Buses were seen as unreliable by many of the interviewees, and as they often only ran once in the morning and once in the evening, allowed little flexibility for those with free periods at the beginning or end of the school day.

Students had to pay for a bus pass if they wanted to use the school buses, which cost between £60 and £85 a term, or they had to pay an adult fare on public buses; about half of those taking buses were able to catch a school bus, but some found the initial outlay of expense prohibitive:

> "Well, the only problem with transport, is it's £4.20 a day to come to school
> - it's too expensive. It's a good job I get my EMA[3] money, cos that pays for
> it. ... There are school buses, but ... the bus pass is, I think, £85 and I get £30
> a week, but I can't save it, cos I'm paying to come to school, so it goes round
> in circles. " (Phillip, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

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[3] See later section for more information about EMAs.

The inconvenience as well as the cost of the public transport system was highlighted by a number of the students:

> *"My mum pays for my bus pass. Well, I pay her back out of my EMA, but we worked out that it's cheaper to do that than pay every day."* (Cordelia, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

Many of the students learned to drive as soon as they turn seventeen, and driving was seen as a route to independence:

> *"I'm learning to drive at the minute, and so as soon as I can drive, I'm going to have a share in my mum's car and she said I can use it to get to school and back. I can't wait. ... It's so hard for me, if I'm out anywhere I rely on my mum and dad and have to ring them up and I have to organise my life around them really to get anywhere...where I live, the public transport is terrible. There's no bus on Saturday and Sunday, there's only one I can get back from school to get to my actual village well, near where I live, on a Thursday. So it's really terrible. So driving is really important to me!"* (Helen, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler).

Six students interviewed were currently having driving lessons, and a further four had passed their test. As five of the interviewees were under seventeen at the time of the interviews, this means 65% of those eligible to drive or learn to drive were doing so – a very high percentage, indicating this was part of the dominant (rural) habitus. Just one student who was over seventeen showed no desire to learn to drive. The others tended to stress how important it was to be able to drive, or at least to have a friend who could drive, in this area – learning to drive was very much seen as the normal thing to do as soon as you reached your seventeenth birthday. Comparing rural and

urban young people, Wallace et al. (1991) found that although parents in urban areas were more likely to give their children material goods, regardless of economic status, the opposite was true was for the giving of cars and motorbikes where parents in rural areas were more likely to do so (15% of rural parents compared to 9% or urban parents). The use of private transport was seen as essential by the rural young people in Wallace et al.'s study especially for finding jobs and having a social life, and was confirmed by the present study.

Similarly, at Rural School, one of the main reasons given for remaining at the school was geographical: before the development of this sixth form, students had had several options from which to choose, none of which were ideal: if they wanted to go to a school sixth form, they could travel for 20 miles on a (free) bus to the nearest school sixth form in Cornwall; travel 20 miles to another school sixth form approximately the same distance away in Cornwall, with their travel expenses paid by the LEA; go to an independent school sixth form, or to a selective school sixth form in Devon, taking a passenger ferry and a combination of buses, paying for public transport. The nearest FE college was approximately three miles away, in Devon, but the journey also involved a bus and ferry journey, which were not reimbursed by the LEA. All students who remained at Rural School sixth form who did not live within walking distance, had free transport to the school on one of the school buses provided. The buses arrived at the school just before morning registration, and left just after the end of the school day. Students had to stay in school for their free periods, and had a study room available to them, or the library where they could work more quietly. Many of the students interviewed, however, claimed not to use their free periods for studying. Instead they socialised in the common room, or went to the IT suite, and tended to do

their homework at home. This was at least in part due to transport difficulties: as they found it difficult to meet up with friends in the evenings, they felt they had to do their socialising during the day, and use their evenings for study. This fits with the rural habitus discussed earlier, with many students basing their social lives around their school or college, partly due to practical restrictions, and also partly due to the ingrained desire for a strong sense of 'community spirit'. This was in direct contrast to many students in urban institutions, who tried to complete their school or college work during their free periods, so they could have their evenings free for socialising or working.

Only one student admitted compromising his subject choices in favour of his institution choice, in order to remain at Rural School:

> "I did consider doing law, but as I said before, it wasn't available at Rural
>
> School, and I didn't really consider going anywhere else. So I **settled** for
>
> politics instead." (Simon, A levels, Rural School, Worker).

The use of the word 'settled' indicated this was not what Simon had hoped for, but he preferred to compromise on his subject choices if it meant he could remain at Rural School. He later talked about CHOOSING politics, rather than SETTLING for it: this could be a way of convincing himself that he made the right decision:

> "Well, I want to go and do law, so I thought history and politics. I **chose**
>
> politics because it's a new subject, and I thought it would be interesting. I
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> find history interesting anyway, so I chose that. And I couldn't really think
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> what to do for the third subject, and I thought I was quite good at maths last
>
> year, got an A, so may as well try it again this year." (Simon, A levels, Rural
>
> School, Worker).

He had also justified his choices as being relevant for the area of employment he was interested in, although previously he had thought that law would have been a more appropriate subject. Hemsley-Brown (1999 p.87) terms this 'self-deception', a psychological mechanism whereby the student rationalises a decision to persuade him/herself that it was the best possible decision in the circumstances. Janis and Mann (1997 p.87) used a similar term: 'defensive avoidance' whereby students often exaggerate the positive aspects of their choice and deny the negative attributes. This often occurs when the individual does not feel they have been able to make a completely satisfactory decision and has had to settle for the best option. These processes help students to feel more satisfied with their decision, and were seen many times throughout the present study.

At Cornish College, all the students interviewed had been to schools which did not have a sixth form; the college was in partnership with five local schools, and the nearest alternatives were Cathedral College, situated 16 miles away, or Clifftop School, which was at a similar distance. It was therefore unsurprising that the most common reason given for choosing that college was the distance or travelling time [n=15], with many comparing the time it took them to get to Cornish College with how long it would take them to get to Cathedral College. Cornish College was situated very near to both bus and train stations, and also ran a college bus service to some of the outlying areas. This college bus only operated once in the morning and once in the afternoon, however and the public buses were often infrequent (usually once an hour). Trains were also infrequent and unreliable according to the students. The most usual way of getting to college, for the 21 students interviewed, was walking (n=5) with journey times varying from ten minutes to half an hour. Two

further students combined a bus or lift in to college, with a walk home. Bianca was a slightly unusual case in that she lived with her friend Natasha during the week, walking in to college, and went home to stay with her mum at weekends.

The second most common form of transport at Cornish College was the public bus (n=4). This was taken by some students because they did not live near a college bus route, by others because they could not afford the up-front payment for a college bus pass at the beginning of term, as at Clifftop School, and by some because they did not like to be restricted to remaining in college when they had free periods, until the college bus ran:

> "I get in by public transport — by bus...they're quite regular, every hour... but next term I'm going to use the college bus, which is better. But at the moment it's something like £12 a week for the bus, to get in. ... I was going to do it this term, but I didn't save up enough money to do it, so I've got to wait now until next term to be able to do it. You've got to pay it all up front."
>
> (Laura, GNVQ, Cornish College, Worker)

The idea of a bus being regular if it arrived once an hour, as Laura put it, was very different to the conception of regularity in London. Again Bourdieu's concept of habitus is relevant here, with Laura adopting the rural habitus and believing the lack of buses to be the norm, although a person who had been lived in an urban environment would feel this was not acceptable (see Harry from Rural College, below, for example). As everyone else with whom Laura comes into contact has the same experience of public transport, she does not have her perception of normality challenged, or as Stebbing put it:

> 'A local habitus tends to reproduce itself, gaining legitimacy from those who

share the habitus. Meaning is given by others in the locality and mixing with like-minded people plays an important part in the maintenance of perceptions of reality' (Stebbing, 1984, p.205).

Despite larger distances however, there was much less traffic in this part of Cornwall, so it often took students less time to get to college by bus than in SE London. Three students from Cornwall College used the college bus, three drove in their own cars, and three got a lift either from a parent or a friend. Just one person, Tony, caught the train regularly, although before Sally could drive, both she and her friend Wendy, to whom she currently gave a lift, used to take the train. The train timetable was not ideal, however:

> *"It's a bit of a pain really, cos I actually get in half an hour late in the morning, either that, or I have to get up an hour earlier, and rush and get everything ready."* (Tony, GNVQ, Cornish College, Worker)

Being able to drive gave a young person in this area a huge amount of independence, and learning to drive as early as possible was part of the local habitus, as discussed above: when asked about the most important thing in her life at that moment, Sally claimed her car was the most important thing to her:

> *"My car. I've had it about a month, and I love driving - it's all I ever wanted to do, I love it."* (Sally, GNVQ, Cornish College, Player)

So many social activities were excluded without the use of a car, or a willing parent or friend to give lifts: the alternative was to use taxis, which were prohibitively expensive for most students, and also not as easy to find in Cornwall as in urban areas. The college did run classes in driving theory in the enrichment slot, which Ian

had started, and in line with the dominant rural habitus, many of those I interviewed were either learning to drive, or planning to do so once they reached the age of seventeen. Seb was the only person to say he was not going to learn to drive, as he thought it was too expensive, and his mum was willing to give him lifts whenever he needed. In rural areas, students' social lives were affected as well as their journeys to and from school or college, but for those students who remained at school, transport problems associated with socialising were not as acute, as most of those in the school lived relatively close to each other, but once in a college many interviewees commented on how much more geographically spread out their friends were. Those who lived in the centre of Cornish Town itself, and who had previously gone to nearby schools found this less of a problem, as many could walk to college, and remained within a friendship group mainly made up from other former pupils from that school, who also lived within walking distance.

Transport was a major issue in the Rural College area, as many students lived in quite isolated hamlets, and to try to help the problem the college also ran a bus network, which visited many small towns and villages, and provided subsidised bus passes for use on the local buses. In many cases, however, there were only two buses a day; one into college in the morning, and one back home in the afternoon, meaning students were forced to remain in college all day regardless of free periods. As with students at other rural institutions, the transport problems associated with going out in the evenings meant most of them tried to do their socialising during college hours, leaving the evenings free for studying: most free periods at Rural College were spent in the library or the large common room, and students reported playing cards, drinking coffee and generally socialising, as well as studying in their free time:

"I go to a lot of clubs, like swimming and judo, and stuff, but I mean, if I
want to go out in the evening it normally involves my parents, so I just tend
to go out to my friend's house, who lives just up the road, and sit on her
floor. Otherwise you have to pay to go out somewhere, or someone has to
pick you up, and someone has to take you. So it's just too much hassle. So, I
go out sometimes, but not that often." (Lauren, A levels, Rural College,
Worker)

Harry, who had lived in more urbanised areas was the only person who criticised the
public transport system so vehemently, supporting Atkin's finding of a dominant
rural/urban habitus, which cuts across other social boundaries:

"Public transport is appalling. I've never lived anywhere where it's been
worse, I really haven't." (Harry, A levels, Rural College, Juggler).

As discussed earlier, all the other students who had grown up in the area and had
adopted the rural habitus felt this was the norm, and therefore did not question the
transport available to them. None of the interviewees at Rural College mentioned
distance or transport when discussing the reasons for choosing the college for
example, and they often talked of options that would have been even further from
their homes. For example:

"I came to a taster day, and I did the same with Remote College, and
coming up here, it's more like you're moving on from school, whereas with
Remote College, there's a sixth form attached to [my old] school, so there's
more of a school atmosphere. You don't feel like you've moved anywhere -
it's too close to [home], still too much of a school atmosphere for me,

whereas up here you get treated like you're older, and there's more responsibility on you, and I preferred that." (Janet, A levels, Rural College, Worker).

For Janet, although Remote College would have been closer and easier to get to, this was also part of the problem; she wanted to feel she had moved on, and was entering a college rather than attending an extension of her school. The motivations for choosing a college over a school sixth form will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight, but here it is sufficient to note that Janet's desire to attend a new institution which had no links with her old school, more than compensated for the transport problems associated with it. As most of the students at Rural College would have had to travel some distance wherever they continued their studies, a few more miles did not make much difference to them, so they contemplated several alternatives. When there was an alternative which was much more accessible than the other options however, distance and transport became more important: at Cornish College and Clifftop School the alternatives were either much further away or involved costly transport, which put off many students. There was another school with a sixth form near to Clifftop School, but it is unusual for students attending a school with a sixth form to leave at the age of 16 to attend another school sixth form, and as the nearest college was approximately an hour away by bus, this also accounts for why so many of the students interviewed there gave distance and transport as reasons for choosing the school. Nevertheless, with all the Cornish institutions, students were usually quick to point out that if their chosen establishment had not offered the course they had wanted, they would have gone elsewhere, despite any transport difficulties that would have involved.

In the urban institutions, as already stated, it was predicted that students having a greater choice of available providers would make a more informed choice of where to continue their studies, and that as members of an urban habitus, would consider taking public transport as part of the norm, and therefore would be less likely to state transport and distance as reasons for their choices. This was not always the case however, and as we have already seen many of the Cornish students researched their choice of course and institution thoroughly, making the differences between the two sets of students smaller than anticipated. Students in London had not always carefully considered many available options: at St. Joseph's College, for example, two of the most common reasons for choosing the college were that their school was a feeder school [n=8] and that it was close or easy to get to [n=6]. Some examples of their comments included:

"Mine wasn't [a feeder school], but I heard St. Joseph's had a very good reputation. I was going to go to Out of Town College, but it would have been so much travelling." (Hannah, GNVQ, St. Joseph's, Worker)

The most common form of transport for the students at St. Joseph's College was the bus: eleven students took the bus regularly, with two (Owen and Sarah) having to take two buses. Two students used the train regularly, but both admitted to not paying, and generally getting away with it. Stephen was the only person who cycled to St. Joseph's College, taking him 20-25 minutes each way. Keenan was the only student interviewed who drove to the college.

Transport was a source of irritation for many of the St. Joseph's students: unlike those at other urban institutions, they spent a long time in slow-moving traffic while on the buses, and four of the students were having driving lessons or had passed their tests. Catherine claimed that her driving test, as well as college, was the most important thing in her life at that time. Helen and Keenan were the only two interviewees to have their own cars, but this was a higher percentage than in other London institutions. Helen also took a photo of her car for her photo diary, (Figure 6.1) and was obviously proud of it.

Figure 6.1: *"My car, Fiat Panda, £650 and £510 insurance."* (Helen, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

At St. Joseph's College the average journey time was 32 minutes, ranging from ten minutes (Aaron, by train) to Owen's journey which could take up to an hour and a half, depending on traffic. Travelling times and distances were sometimes given as reasons for choosing the college, but in general, distance was weighed up against reputation, and despite City College being closer for some students, pass rates were seen as more important, as seen by Christopher's comments:

"It's close. It's about a 20-minute bus journey. City College is closer, but as well as that the pass rates at this college are quite high, so that added to it."

(Christopher, A levels, St. Joseph's, Juggler)

To conclude, transport was seen by many students at this college to be a source of irritation, but not a major problem in most cases. The fact that St. Joseph's College is on the edge of the urban area covered by this research perhaps explains why students were more likely to learn to drive and own cars here than at other urban institutions – the urban habitus was not as dominant as in other parts of the region.

None of the students at City School mentioned transport or distance considerations, although they all lived within 30 minutes' travel, with some students walking, some catching buses, and a minority catching the train to school. Public transport serving the school was frequent, and the students found it is easy to travel to and from the school during the day. When the three boys in the group interview were asked what they did in their free periods, for example, the overwhelming, immediate response was 'Sleep!': as they found it very easy to go home, they did so, and used the time to catch up on lost sleep.

All but two of those interviewed at City School had attended the school from Year 7, were comfortable at the school, and saw no reason to move at 16, so had not considered other options. Arisa was among a small minority (n=2) who had considered alternatives, and had wanted to go to a college in a neighbouring borough. Her parents were very strict, however, and insisted she remained at school, despite them not offering her chosen course (GNVQ Advanced in Business Studies). She

acquiesced and remained at City School, taking a GNVQ Advanced in Leisure and Tourism (the only GNVQ Advanced course offered by the school). Arisa was the only student who had been so influenced by her parents throughout the course of the study: very few interviewees even mentioned their parents when talking about their choices, and those that did so did not appear to have taken any notice of their opinions (although see Dwayne at City College, later). As mentioned in Chapter 3, above, the occupation and level of education of the students' parents had an effect on the type of institution attended, but according to theorists such as Ball (2003) this was not an overtly class-based decision. Hemsley-Brown (1999) found that the preliminary search stage was the time when parents had most influence over students' choices: although they might not have realised they were being influenced by such things as their class or parent's educational experiences:

> 'students entered the preliminary search stage of the decision-making
> process with a set of "preconceptions" which affected their willingness to
> pursue a particular option, and served as a filter mechanism when
> assimilating information later in the process' (Hemsley-Brown, 1999).

The influence of parents was therefore likely to be indirect and unrecognised; hence only a small minority mentioning their parents when discussing their decision-making. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) in their research on career decisions in young people also acknowledged this, using Bourdieu's idea of habitus to understand the processes, commenting:

> 'decisions can only be understood in terms of the life histories of those who
> make them, wherein identity has evolved through interaction with significant
> others and the culture in which the subject has lived and is living'
> (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997, p.33).

Not all young people will therefore have the same opportunities, as Bourdieu himself wrote:

> 'Those who talk of equality of opportunity forget that social games ... are not "fair games". Without being, strictly speaking, rigged, the competition resembles a handicap race that has lasted for generations' (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 214-215).

The dominant habitus for these young people and their parents then, whether based on class, economic status, or locality, would have had an effect on the students' choices at 16, but at a subconscious level, and therefore not easily elicited by interview alone: in depth discussions with the students' parents and other significant influences such as the school careers advisers, would also be necessary to start to unravel the underlying dispositions to which the young people had been exposed.

At Urban School, all but one student (n=21) had been at the school for their GCSEs, and the most common reasons for choosing to remain at the school were: familiarity [n=8]; influence of friends [n=7]; the atmosphere [n=6]; the opinion that it was 'a good school' [n=7], and liking the teachers [n=5]. Only four students claimed they chose to stay at Urban School as it was the nearest place that offered their chosen course, and only two gave the reason that it was close to their home. This fits with the dominant urban habitus which would suggest issues of transport and distance were not noticed as much in urban areas as in rural areas. Many of the students interviewed here lived very close to the school, as expected by the limited radius of the catchment area: of the nineteen who mentioned distance, eleven lived within one mile of the school, with the remaining eight living between one and four miles from the school. Ten students walked to school regularly, with a further six saying they normally

walked but occasionally had a lift from parents or a friend's parents. Martha took the train every day, and took photographs of herself at the train station, but chose not to include them in her photographic diary, suggesting this was not an important part of her life: again, public transport was seen as routine. Most of those who walked did so either with siblings or friends, and their average journey time was 20 minutes. This contrasted with the students at Clifftop School, where one person walked regularly, four took the bus, three drove their own car, and six had a lift. None of the students interviewed at Urban School used the bus, although there was a bus stop directly outside the school. The desire to learn to drive was not present among many of the Urban School students, with only one, David, mentioning that he could drive, and one more, Jon, saying that he wanted to learn to drive. In this area, there were so many facilities within walking distance, and also the public transport system (both buses and trains) was very reliable and relatively frequent, meaning that being able to drive did not bring with it the huge increase in independence it does in rural areas, and therefore was not part of the local culture, or habitus.

The fact that all the students at Urban School lived either within walking distance, or within 20 minutes by public transport from the school in Martha's case, meant they tended to go home during their free periods more frequently than students in rural areas, who did not always have the ability to do so. For example, when asked what he did in his free periods, Alex explained that he stayed at home when he was not required to go into school. This ability to go home during free lessons, or come in later if lessons did not start until later in the day, meant the students at Urban School had a very different experience to those at Clifftop School: although both schools had a similar policy on the amount of time students could use as 'home study', in practice

this was not always feasible in a rural area, whereas students in an urban area could take at least the maximum allowed time as home study leave, and often took more than this.

There were several differences between the students' reasons for choosing Urban School as compared with the students at Clifftop School, with ten of the students from Clifftop School, but none of those from Urban School, claiming that travelling and the costs associated with it were a large part of the decision-making process. Students from Urban School were also much more likely to mention their friends when talking about their decision to remain in the school sixth form: they liked to remain with their friends, possibly because they had more chances of making friends outside of school through part-time jobs than those from Clifftop School, and therefore did not feel the need to make new friends at a new institution.

The reasons given by the City College students were much more negative than those given by the other students in the study: four students said that City College had not been their first choice, but due to rejections or late applications, they had not managed to get into their first choice of college, for example:

> *"This college actually was my second choice. Cos I'd already registered in Inner City College, well, seen Inner City College, but they said I wasn't up to standard. But here they gave me an aptitude test, and I passed."* (Leander, A levels, City College, Juggler)

Tracy had started A levels at her old school, but had left in order to have more freedom and pursue different subjects:

"They wanted me to do medicine, and I took my first modules, and got Cs,

and I wasn't very impressed.... I mean, it's a brilliant school up to year 11,

but once you've passed year 11 it's not so good in the sixth form, so I

thought I'd leave. ...I left on the Friday and I had no college to go to...and

my best friend goes here as well, and she said why don't you apply to City

College, they might have some places left, and I came here and they let me

in. And that was it! And so they let me in, and this was the first college I

applied to and I got in even though they were full. But they squeezed me in. "

(Tracy, City College, Juggler)

For Tracey then, coming to City College was not as much an informed choice, but one of the few options available to her at that time, with very little thought going into the application process. Another student, Dwayne, had come from Nigeria with his parents arranging his place at the college before he had arrived. It was apparent therefore, that City College was not actively chosen by a number of students, but rather had been chosen for them, either by someone else, as in Dwayne's case, or by default as other options were not available. This was not the case at any of the other schools or colleges visited.

Of those who had actively chosen City College, the most common reason for their choice was that the college was close to where they lived [n=8]:

"I never really thought about any other colleges. This is close to where I

live; it's convenient. " (Leonard, A levels, City College, Player).

Proximity to City College was not enough for all students, however, as Christopher from St. Joseph's illustrated above: City College was closer to him, but he preferred to travel further and go to St. Joseph's College as the pass rates were better at the

latter. City College was well served with public transport, with both campuses being almost directly opposite a train station. There were also buses which stopped outside both of the college campuses. Apart from one exception, Habib who lived in South West London, the students all lived near to the college, with the longest journey taking 30 minutes by bus and the average journey time being 20 minutes. Six students took the bus regularly, with another one sometimes walking and sometimes taking the bus, and one additional student taking two buses. Habib took an hour to get to college and used a combination of trains and buses. Two students walked regularly, as they lived within five minutes of the college. None of those interviewed at City College complained about the transport, either the time taken to get to college or the cost of public transport. Overall, although transport was one of the factors which were considered by some students (n=8) at City College when choosing where to study, once enrolled at the college it was of minor importance for them. Learning to drive was not a priority for these students, and only one student, Leonard, mentioned driving lessons:

> *"I want to learn. My mum said something about a car when I'm 18, so I'm*
>
> *just hoping. Maybe if she gets a new car I can have her car."* (Leonard, A
>
> levels, City College, Player).

This was similar to the students at Urban School. With public transport so accessible to them, it was not surprising that these young people did not particularly want to learn to drive: unlike their counterparts in Cornwall it would not affect their independence, as they did not have to rely on other people for lifts. The cost of driving in central London was also very high, with high petrol consumption due to driving in heavy traffic, and scarce and expensive parking.

Students at Urban College gave similar responses, with many of them mentioning distance (4/7), but also adding other reasons for choosing the college: unlike most other institutions, many of those interviewed had pursued courses elsewhere before embarking on their current course, and had learned what they wanted from a college from their previous experiences. Hema, for example, went to another college after school and took a GNVQ Intermediate in Business and another GNVQ Intermediate in IT, before doing her GNVQ Advanced in IT at Urban College. She had enjoyed her time at her last college, and felt the IT facilities had been better than those at Urban College, but it took an hour each way travelling, so she decided to move to Urban College which was only five minutes from her house. Dariush also went to a different college straight from school, but only stayed there for three months. He originally went to a college a long way from his home because:

> *"I needed to get away really - that was the reason I went that distance, to get*
>
> *away from my old school and Urban College area, but I've ended up back*
>
> *here anyway."* (Dariush, A levels, Urban College).

As with Hema, the travelling became a problem for him, meaning he did not always go into college, so he chose to move to Urban College *"to achieve something rather than mess about."* Chester and Omar had also chosen the college because it was near to where they lived, although Omar added that many members of his family had been there: *"a whole generation of my family has been here - my cousins and my brother and my sister, and now me."*

To summarise, although students in rural areas were more affected by transport difficulties, and often had to travel much greater distances to school or college than their urban peers, students in London were almost as likely to give proximity or

transport as reasons for their choice of institution (n=31 in Cornwall, n=24 in London). Unsurprisingly, students in Cornwall were more likely to see transport as a problem, although they did not always moan about it, as they had become used to the situation after living with it for so many years, and saw it simply as a fact of life, or, in Bourdieu's terminology, as part of the dominant habitus. Despite there being more viable alternatives within relatively easy travelling distance in London, however, relatively few students had considered other institutions, and urban students were likely to attend the nearest one available. One possible explanation for these results is that, in rural areas, young people are used to travelling long distances to reach various services, and therefore expected to have to travel a considerable distance to school or college. For urban students, however, although public transport is part of the dominant habitus, more facilities are available within relatively short distances, and therefore there is less of an expectation to travel long distances. In this case, they would be less disposed to travel long distances to continue their education, and would therefore look at the nearest available institutions.

Extra-curricular activities and social life

The use of photographic diaries was a useful way to explore students' social lives and extra-curricular experiences, and when taken in conjunction with the interview data, provided valuable insights into the students' lives away from the classroom. The most significant findings are described below.

Rural College students took very different photographs from each other. Unfortunately 1 was unable to go through the photographs taken by Rachel with her, so have no captions for them, but I did receive permission to use them as they were.

Rachel went away on a trip with the college during the week she recorded, so had several photographs of her time in France (e.g. Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 *No caption available.* (Rachel, GNVQ, Rural College - on study visit to France)

Rachel also took photographs of her teacher and the refectory/common room, where she and the majority of students spent their free periods. Many of her photographs taken in college showed students on other courses (students whom I had interviewed, for example, were easily identifiable as not being on her course), demonstrating that she was not only friends with those on her GNVQ course.

Charlotte at Rural College also took several photos in college, but these only showed her in work situations (e.g. Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 *"Sociology class on a Wednesday morning"* (Charlotte, A levels, Rural College, Worker)

Charlotte obviously worked hard, as there were also several photographs of her doing homework at home both at the weekend and on weekday evenings (for example, Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4 *"In the evenings I catch up on my homework and copy up my notes from*

the lectures. " (Charlotte, A levels, Rural College, Worker)

Her social life came second to her studies at that time:

"I don't have a lot of free time, 'cos I'm always doing homework and essays and such like. And then I go to work, although I do get paid to go to work. But I don't get a lot of free time really. " (Charlotte, A levels, Rural College, Worker)

She did say when interviewed that she had made many new friends at the college, but that she rarely got to see them as transport was such a problem in the area. Charlotte was an example of a student whose life focused around her time in education, and for whom gaining qualifications was the main goal: a stereotypical 'worker'. By contrast, students such as Rachel saw the experience of being in college as the most important factor, and the course they were on as secondary to that: a 'player'. The experiences of these types of student were very different, with emphases on different aspects of their lives; they were looking for different things from their time in further education, and would therefore seek circumstances within their institution which satisfied those needs. Rachel was able to go away on a college trip, whereas Charlotte concentrated on her studies and enjoyed her time in the classroom and time spent on homework.

By contrast, many of the photographs taken by the students from Rural School, were taken in and around the school: Peter took 21 of his 22 photographs chosen in school, and Laura 22 of the 30 she chose. They consisted of both classroom and work-based photographs as well as more social pictures, taken in the IT suite or the common room. Laura, for example, took several photos of the common room, (for example, Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: *"This is the common room where I spend most of my time in the sixth form."* (Laura, GNVQ, Rural School, Juggler)

She also included several photographs of the IT suite (e.g. Figure 6.6) and admitted to being addicted to the internet. It appeared that although Laura took a few photos of her lessons, for her they were of secondary importance, and the most important aspect of her time in school was the social aspect.

Figure 6.6: *"Me using the computer room at lunchtime"* (Laura, GNVQ, Rural School, Juggler)

Outside school, Laura was involved with running a Youth Club, and included several pictures of events they had there, including an all-night charity disco (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7: *"This is the Youth Club smoking room. These are my friends, at the all night disco."* (Laura, GNVQ, Rural School, Juggler)

Peter also took several photos of the IT suite (e.g. Figure 6.8) and also showed use of the study room on several occasions (e.g. Figure 6.9). Most students seemed to like the study room, and found themselves able to work in there in relative quiet. As they were not allowed to leave the site during the day there were always a number of students in the sixth form area, and they seemed to divide their time between the study room, common room and the IT suite.

Figure 6.8: *"A popular lunchtime activity, chat lines on the internet"* (Peter, A levels, Rural School, Worker)

Figure 6.9: *"The study room"* (Peter, A levels, Rural School, Worker)

As with Rural College, therefore, students at Rural School were restricted by transport considerations, and had little choice but to remain in school all day, regardless of free periods. This meant more of their socialising took place in and around the school environment, and friendships were necessarily formed among those also at the institution.

At Cornish College although some students had arrived with others from the same school, all had made new friends since starting at the college; this was particularly true of the second year students. There were several small common rooms at the college, rather than one large common room, and students tended to have a favourite room frequented by the same group of people every day. Thus friendships were mainly made among people on the same courses and those who spent their free time in the same areas as each other. This was particularly true for GNVQ students, who had all their classes with the same group of between ten and twenty people; A level students had the opportunity to mix with people from at least three different classes:

"I mainly just mix with people on my course." (Ian, GNVQ, Cornish College, Player)

"I've made loads of new friends, loads. Some of my best friends at college aren't in any of my lessons, and I didn't got to school with them, I just sort of got to know them, by hanging round with people who knew them, who introduced us, and we just got talking and found out we had a lot in common and we get on really well." (Kylie, A levels, Cornish College, Worker)

There were exceptions to this however, and some students would have preferred to

have had one big common room, and thought it would be less divisive than several separate rooms:

"I don't think this is a very sociable college though. In my experience anyway. When I went to Cathedral College, they've got great big rooms, like a great big area, where they used to have functions and that, and they just had tables and chairs in there, and they had a serving hatch which sold junk food, cos that's what the students wanted, and you could come out of your lecture and say, where will people be? Oh they'll be in the blue room, and everybody would always be there, and you'd talk to your friends, and your friends would come in with a couple of friends from their class, so you'd start talking to them, and everybody started knowing everybody. But here you get two or three people standing there, and two or three standing there, and I don't feel there's any major place that everyone gets together. ... you get certain types of people that go in certain places." (Edward, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

Very few students participated in organised extra-curricular activities at Cornish College: Bianca and Laurie did the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme; Laurie played badminton and squash in college; Kylie went swimming in the enrichment time and Seb used to play rugby for the college. Outside college, few of the interviewees took part in organised activities other than sports: Seb played rugby for a local men's team; Dylan played hockey for a local team; Bianca went trampolining; Ian played football for a local team; Ruth went horse-riding; Debbie went to aerobics classes; Dave was heavily involved in bowling, being part of a league team as well as organising a junior league and Celine was involved in a local pantomime every year.

Apart from Celine's involvement in the local pantomime, all of these activities were sports orientated; there seemed to be little else to do in the local area in terms of leisure activities. Those who had always lived in the area did not comment on this particularly, but those who moved to the area from more urban regions did discuss the lack of things to do for young people.

There was a big emphasis on drinking among nearly all the students, as most of their social lives revolved around going to pubs and clubs, and although most of the drinking was done in the evenings, some students went to the pub in their free lessons. Seb was one of the students who seemed to have a drinking problem, although he was not alone in enjoying alcohol:

"I go to play rugby with the boys, but after a bit I just sit in the bar, talking to the first team players and that, getting drunk. They all buy you a pint. They say they prefer you to be up there with them, ... it's better off than being in a pub in town, when I can go and get drunk out my brains, and then get beaten up for being so mouthy. But then if I'm there with them, then they'll tell you when I've had enough. ... I got drunk on Friday night, and Saturday night. Actually I was very drunk on Saturday night. I only had four cans last night. And I'll probably get drunk tonight." (Seb, A levels, Cornish College, Player)

For some rural students, their social life and college life were completely integrated, but for others the two were very separate:

"It's like the week days are about college and the weekends are about fun ... when I go out now I always go out with my friends from college." (Natasha,

GNVQ, Cornish College, Juggler)

"It's all intertwined, college and socialising - it's all the same thing isn't it?" (Celine, GNVQ, Cornish College, Juggler)

One aspect of their lives which, throughout all the interviews, only Kylie, Laurie and Jennifer at Urban School (see p. 233) mentioned, was their religion, with Laurie claiming it was the most important thing in his life:

"I'm a Christian, so probably my religion is the most important thing to me. I'm from a Christian family, and I go to church regularly. It influences what I think. There's a youth group as well I go to." (Laurie, A levels, Cornish College, Worker)

"I got involved with the church last year as well ... I'm Christian.... it's just changed me completely, because it's something which is helping me to understand a lot of things. I actually took part in this thing called the Alpha Course, which is about the Bible and reasons behind it and things like that, and it does help a lot. It does help." (Kylie, A levels, Cornish College, Worker)

Despite the strong faiths that these two young people obviously had, neither knew whether there was a Christian Union in the college, which suggested they felt their religion was somehow separate from their studies.

The students at Clifftop School, Cornwall, were very different in their socialising, in that many took part in extra-curricular activities organised by the school, although there was a similar emphasis on drinking and going to pubs and clubs outside of

school. Within the school, the majority of students [at least n=11] had been involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, with most of those successfully completing, or working towards their gold award. The school encouraged this, and helped the students with the tasks:

> *"I did do D of E, but that's finished now. I did my gold, but it's really easy,*
>
> *cos the school sets up everything for you, and you just have to go along and*
>
> *do it."* (Becky, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

This is perhaps not quite the point of the award scheme, but it was still considered a challenge by many students, and they seemed to have enjoyed/be enjoying their experiences.

It was around the time of the interviews that year 13 students were starting to think about their UCAS forms, and what activities they might be able to put on it, although the majority of Clifftop School students had many such activities:

> *"It's awful, my life is just aah! The solar powered bike, I'm involved with*
>
> *that. I'm doing a video diary for that, just helping out. So there's that.*
>
> *There's my drama, which is a senior production of Oh What A Lovely War! I*
>
> *am involved with that. It's Year 10 and Year 12. I'm acting in that. Oh D of*
>
> *E. I've done bronze and silver, and I'm doing gold. We're going up to the*
>
> *Lake District in April, which will be good. ... I try to surf as much as I can,*
>
> *skate boarding, water-skiing, parachuting."* (Stewart, A levels, Clifftop*
>
> School, Juggler)

It is hard to know where Stewart fitted in his schoolwork with all his activities, and he later revealed he had a part-time job as well. Several students were involved in sports,

and several girls enjoyed dancing, from can-can dancing to choreography. Unsurprisingly, given the location of Clifftop School, many were involved in water sports, from diving and surfing, to canoe polo and sailing, although football was also popular amongst the male students with two of them playing for local teams. A number of students said they had represented the school at a particular sport lower down the school, but no longer did so, due to pressure of studying.

Like most students, many of those interviewed at Clifftop School enjoyed going to pubs and nightclubs, although transportation problems meant this was not as regular for some of them as might be expected in a urban area. About half of those going to clubs regularly went with other students from the same school, but half had friends from outside school, either from part-time jobs or people they had met whilst clubbing. As there were only a limited number of young people, and relatively few places for them to go to, it was likely that they met the same people every time they went out, and made new friends in this way, something which would be very unlikely to happen somewhere like London.

> *"I suppose I've made more friends this year from going out and clubbing in Clifftop Town. ... It's getting in here though, cos we live in Seaside Village there's nothing to do in Seaside. Apart from a few inbred local pubs, which we sometimes go to when we're really sad, and just play pool in the corner, but most people from Clifftop Town go out every week, so if we feel like it we'll catch a bus in and stay at someone's house and go out."* (Mark, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

The above shows again that transportation problems affected not only the journey to school, but also the social lives of many students in isolated rural areas; as buses often

only ran until approximately six pm, they had to rely on lifts from parents or friends with cars after this time.

The photographic diaries from the students at Clifftop School reflected the prevalence of jugglers at the school: both John and Cordelia took pictures of their time in and out of school, with a variety of interests represented by the photographs: starting with a simple quantitative measurement, Cordelia chose nine photos for her diary, four of which involved her horse (for example, Figure 6.10), three were taken in school, and the remaining two out of school with her friends. Several students at this school were interested in horse riding, and two of those interviewed had their own horse and this was a major part of their lives.

Figure 6.10: *"I enjoy riding her as often as I can in my free time."* (Cordelia, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

John chose twelve photographs for his diary, six of which were taken at school (three involved him working, three were of him socialising, for example Figure 6.11); three were of him playing or teaching football; one was of him having a driving lesson; one was at his home, and one was of him walking to school.

Figure 6.11: *"Playing pool in my free time."* (John, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

John's interest in football kept him occupied during a lot of his free time:

> *"The whole of Saturday is taken up by football, cos I start this at about half eight in the morning, and I don't finish until twelve. And then I need to get home, grab my lunch, before I'm out again about half twelve, to get to my football game, and then I don't get in until about six in the evening."* (John, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

The photographs he took reflected this, with one picture of the team he played for, and two of the children whom he taught on Saturday mornings (for example 6.12).

Figure 6.12: *"Saturday morning skills session."* (John, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

There was also a photo of John *"Relaxing before lessons"* with his friends in the common room (Figure 6.13). It is interesting to note in this photograph that Cordelia was central, and was looking directly at the camera, suggesting she was good friends with John. As she was in the year below John, and was also doing a GNVQ whereas he was doing A levels, this indicated friendship groups at this school were not entirely determined by age or course in this school; it was often factors such as the primary school attended, or where a person lived which determined their friends.

Figure 6.13: *"Relaxing before lessons."* (John, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

Interestingly, not all of Cordelia's friends shown in the pictures remained at Clifftop School, with some of them going to Cathedral College:

> *"We meet up with people who are in Cathedral College and things, we were like a group of mates in Year 11, and a few of us stayed here, and a few of us went there, but we all meet up and keep in touch with each other, or we try to."* (Cordelia, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

Her social life was obviously important to her, and she enjoyed going out with her friends. Her schoolwork was also obviously important, with several photographs of her working either in a lesson, on the computer, or doing research. She had no photographs of herself socialising inside school, suggesting her social life and school life were kept separate: the majority of friends she did have in school who appeared in

other photos, were doing different courses to herself. This confirms the idea that factors other than course or year determined friendships within this school.

Overall the photos from Clifftop School reflected the general impressions gained from the interviews with students at the school: most people were happy at the school, and for almost all the students their time at school was an important part of their lives, if not the most important. They were encouraged by the school to have outside interests, however, and many of the students could be classified as 'jugglers': although few had part time jobs throughout the year, many had hobbies or interests which took up much of their time.

One of the noticeable features of the photographs taken by students from Urban College was that they did not show students in social situations with their fellow students; there were either no photographs at all of fellow students (in Chester's case) or only of themselves with other students in the classroom (in Hema's case - e.g. see Fig 6.14) This tied in with data gained from the interviews, which showed, firstly, that none of the students interviewed from Urban College had gone there to meet new people, or make new friends. Several interviewees, especially players, like Dariush, at Urban College had also mentioned the lack of social life connected with the college:

> *"The social aspect and team culture and all the rest of it is dead here. It's*
>
> *very much, you come to class, you go home. ... It's not like an American*
>
> *college ... [where] they have a lot of emphasis on social things and*
>
> *growing up and developing your emotional skills and social skills. But*
>
> *you don't get that here - you've got to do that for yourself."* (Dariush,
>
> Urban College, Player).

Figure 6.15 *"Me and the rest of the class"* (Hema, GNVQ, Urban College)

When questioned about the lack of photographs of his time in college, Chester replied, *"I wouldn't take pictures of college I've been here for four years!"* He seemed not to dislike college particularly, but did not centre his life around it either - it was seen merely as a means to an end. He described himself as "a bit of a loner" in college, and said that his friends came from outside college. In his diary he has many photographs of himself and his friends enjoying themselves in a local pub (e.g. Figure 6.16). This seemed to be the most important aspect of his life at that moment; he had been studying at the college for four years, and saw this is a minor inconvenience, instead concentrating his energies on going out with friends. The other main area from which he took photographs was a trip to Amsterdam with the college (e.g. Figure 6.17: "Me asleep in a hotel room in Amsterdam"). This was organised by the student union, and offered a cheap weekend away at the start of half term. Despite claiming not to have many friends in college, Chester went on the trip, but said that he had met the friends he went with outside college, and they were not on any of his courses.

Figure 6.16 *"Group hug!"* (Chester, A levels, Urban College, Juggler)

Figure 6.17 *"Me asleep in a hotel room in Amsterdam"* (Chester, A levels, Urban College, Juggler)

Hema, by contrast, took over half her photographs in and around college, although they were very work related, with pictures of herself in the library (Figure 6.18) and the classroom (see Figure 6.15, above).

Figure 6.18 *"Me in the college library"* (Hema, GNVQ, Urban College, Worker)

Other photographs showed her at home studying (Figure 6.19) and out shopping with one of her friends with whom she went to school (Figure 6.20).

Figure 6.19 *"Me studying at home"* (Hema, GNVQ, Urban College, Worker)

Figure 6.20 *"Me at Bluewater with best friend Pat"* (Hema, GNVQ, Urban College, Worker)

Again these showed a lack of social interaction with her fellow students outside the classroom, and little of a college 'atmosphere': her choice of photographs suggested

she saw college as a place to study and learn, and her life outside college was very separate from that.

Sally and Nick from City School tended not to fall into the two types of Player or Worker described above, and instead their photographs showed a more balanced mixture of time in and out of school: they were 'Jugglers'. Sally's family fostered children, and at the time of interviewing they were fostering two sisters, which obviously had a big impact on Sally's life. She took several photos of the children, as well as photographs of herself looking after them (e.g. Figure 6.21) and said she didn't have much time or energy for a social life after she had finished looking after the children for the evening. Because of this, she also spent most of her free periods working in the library at school, so she did not have to do homework when she got home. She took several photographs of her lessons, but also of her friends during break (Figure 6.22) showing she socialised well at school with other students, despite not seeing them very often outside school.

Figure 6.21: *"Friday, helping to make dinner for kids."* (Sally, A levels, City School,

Juggler).

Figure 6.22: *"My friends at break."* (Sally, A levels, City School, Juggler).

Nick also took many photographs of himself in school, both in and out of the classroom, and was also involved with activities such as Venture Scouts, and mixed with people from his work (see Figure 6.23).

Figure 6.23: *"Me going to work at Sainsbury's, Thursday or Sunday"* (Nick, A levels, City School, Juggler)

The social lives of the students at City School were very varied: for Catrin, her social life was based around her involvement with the church, and for Sally her social life revolved around her family. Arisa spent most of her free time with people with whom she worked (in a sports shop), and most of the other students combined friends from school with friends from other places, such as part-time jobs or sporting activities.

The interviews and photographic diaries taken by students at City College, London, reflected very different social lives, with few students reporting an involvement in

organised activities either within or outside the college. There were a few exceptions to this, however: Barika, Tracy and Rafalek were all class representatives in the student union, although as they had only just been recruited they were not yet sure what this would involve. The other activity in which Rafalek and Tracy took part through the college was the Millennium Volunteers scheme, where students could do work experience in the community to gain an award. Rafalek had been doing this for a while, but Tracy was just starting.

Several students complained about the lack of things to do in college, in particular the fact that they had no common room where they could go to play pool and chat with their friends, for example. The only places to which they could go were the learning resources area, where they are not allowed to talk, and the canteen, where there was little to do except chat, and the chairs were fixed and uncomfortable. Those who had been at other colleges often spontaneously compared facilities, with City College coming off worse:

> "We've got a little office next to the canteen in the other building. Just like a
> little shop where you can get your NUS cards from. We try to organise like
> basketball or football, but there's no real common room. There's no real
> place where you can just go and play pool or darts or anything." (Rafalek, A
> levels, City College, Juggler)

Liko mentioned the fact that there were sports facilities at the other campus, but that he did not know anyone who went there to use them. A few of those interviewed took part in some sort of sports outside college, although as with the other institutions studied, it was common for them to have given up their activities on starting further

education. For some of these students this was because they had decided to concentrate on their studies, and therefore did not have enough time for the activities they used to do, and for the others they did not have the opportunity to continue with them.

A large gender, and also cultural, difference arose at City College with the subject of housework: the black females tended to say they had to do a lot of, if not all, the housework, which, when combined with their studying and part-time jobs, left them little time or energy for socialising:

Rina - But we have to housework and stuff as well.

Tina - We have to do it all - cooking and cleaning

Halima   You're used to it by now- it's part of the culture - you've always had to do it.

Tina - I go out sometimes. But sometimes I feel like it's too much for me, college and work and everything, so when I get home I'm too tired for all that, so I can't go out. (Rina, Tina and Halima, GNVQs, City College, all Workers)

Barika and Isobella also said they were expected to do a large share of the housework, but none of the males, even those who lived separately from their parents, mentioned housework. Halima's comments reflected the dominant ethnic habitus of which she was a part: among Afro-Caribbean females it was assumed that housework would be a part of their lives, and therefore it was not questioned or challenged by these students. The carrying out of housework and chores did not apply to the males of this culture, however, hence their not mentioning the subject. The only school student to have this much pressure to help in the house was Sally at City School in London,

whose parents fostered children on a regular basis. It is worth noting also, that Sally was also the only white student who mentioned the pressures put on them by their families to help in the home, and her very negative comments on the subject showed it was not part of her ethnic habitus, and she did not accept the situation as readily as her Afro-Caribbean counterparts.

A minority of those interviewed at City College (n=8) felt they had at least as many friends within college as from outside college. Unsurprisingly it tended to be the overseas students (n=5) who felt this way, as they had only arrived in the country shortly before starting at the college:

> *"You make friends through friends through friends, so it's like a very large network. Mostly I know people with science subjects, I know people who are doing maths, cos there are a few people doing maths on my course. ... I've found a few people in the college who are the same religion as I am, Muslim, so I've met people like that."* (Habib, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

The majority of students stated that they mostly associated with friends from their old schools, or from where they lived:

> *"[I] mainly [socialise with] people that I just know from where I live, and from meeting people through people. I only really socialise with a couple of people in each of my classes, and then the others are friends of them or live near me."* (Isobella, A levels, City College, Worker)

A few students (n=4) claimed to have a mixture of friends both inside and outside college, but they were the exception.

The divisions between the workers, players and jugglers were obvious when looking at the answers to questions about the students' social lives: players such as Hayley claimed, for example, that:

"[The most important thing in my life right now is] going out having fun. Life's too short to waste. I go out twice, three times a week. Normally I just go and party and stay out and drinking, mucking around really." (Hayley, GNVQ, City College, Player)

For the workers such as Rina, Tina, Halima and Habib, socialising came second to their studies, and they only went out if they had enough time after doing their work for college. Jugglers, such as Tracy, Susan and Rafalek found time for socialising, but tried not to let it interfere too much with their college work, although occasionally it seemed to cause problems for them, juggling all the different aspects of their lives: the college, job, other responsibilities, and socialising as well.

St. Joseph's College is very close, geographically, to City College, therefore it might be supposed that with similar catchment areas, transport links and socialising opportunities, the social lives of students at this college would be similar to those at City College. This was certainly true in some respects, as the college did not organise many extra-curricular activities, perhaps presuming that there were ample opportunities for students to follow their interests locally outside of the college environment. The only organised 'activity' outside lessons was RE; this was a weekly session, where topical issues were discussed, and was met with a mixed reception by the students interviewed. This was a compulsory activity, and those who missed sessions had a letter sent home to their parents; the effectiveness of this punishment

was debatable, as will be seen. Some students believed RE offered a good opportunity for interesting debate, and welcomed the change from their other lessons:

> *"I love the RE lessons ... it's really good actually cos we have so many debates, and that's a change from all the other lessons."* (Hannah, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

Sarah was more positive about RE than other students, but although she found it quite interesting, she found it irrelevant:

> *"A lot of people don't turn up. I think a lot have unconcerned parents, cos if you don't go in to any two lessons in a row, this is in any subject, they'll send a concern letter to your tutor, who keeps it and if you get too many your parents get a letter."* (Sarah, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

The letter home to parents seemed to concern few students, with many, including Hannah, who had stated that she enjoyed RE lessons, missing several lessons. In many cases, the lessons themselves were not to blame for the lack of interest, as a number of students said they were interesting, but more the fact that they were compulsory, and were seen to be taking up precious free time; post-compulsory students enjoyed having more freedom than during their compulsory schooling, and resented having this encroached upon.

There was very little else organised by the college for students to do in their free periods: they were supposed to do 'Enrichment' every week, which could be sports, other courses or voluntary work, but very few actually did so:

> *"There's enrichment, which everybody HAS to do at some point, there's sports courses and community service, they go to a primary school and help with the reading. At the moment the chaplain's organising some people to do*

voluntary work at City hospital. I'm doing a first aid course. There are

things to do, but it depends on how much free time you have on your

timetable. " (Owen, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

Only three of the other students, Kerry, Isobel and Aaron mentioned enrichment

activities, and that was to say that they did not do them.

Like City College, sport was not a large part of the college lives of these students, for

two main reasons: firstly it was supposed by the students that to be in any of the

college teams, you had to be very good; and secondly, to play any sports on college

grounds, you had to provide your own equipment. As a result:

"It's kind of boring here. No offence, cos when it comes to break times and

lunch time, there ain't really nothing to do, just mostly walking around

talking to people. " (Aaron, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Player)

There was a chaplaincy which students could use as a small common room during

their free periods, but this was not well thought of by the majority of students, being

criticised for being too small and too boring:

"[The chaplaincy] is too small. It gets too packed. " (Christopher, A levels,

St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

Most students (n=17) wanted to mix more with students from other courses, and have

somewhere they could go between lessons. This was a similar request to the students

at City College, and suggested that at both of these London colleges there was little

effort made to integrate students on different courses and in different subject areas.

As with many teenagers, the majority of students at St. Joseph's were keen on going

to pubs and nightclubs, although there were exceptions to this, mainly among the Black-African females. This was similar to the results at City College, with female students having to take on many of the household duties. One complaint from students was that they were too tired and too stressed to enjoy a full social life once they had completed their college work, and also their part time jobs; as a result their social lives were virtually non-existent, for example:

> "I don't really go out that often, but that's more because I'm usually quite tired on the weekends. I will go out socially, but not really in the evenings out a lot cos it's quite expensive as well. ... I do go out sort of on the weekend, but sometimes I just want to stay in bed the whole weekend."
> (Sarah, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

Sharie was an example of a juggler in the extreme, as she juggled her college work, a job, a boyfriend and also outside interests:

> "I thought it would be good, I thought I've got time to go home and do what I need to do and I can get my work done and I can get this done. Maybe I can even do some extra hours at work, earn a bit more money. But it hasn't worked out like that ... it's hard - I don't see there's enough hours in the day. ... Maybe I'm spreading myself out too much, cos three A levels, it is full time study, so maybe you should just do that. ... I wish I could just go home and sleep, but there's too much going on." (Sharie, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

Although all students at St. Joseph's College said they had made friends since they

had been at the college, only a small minority (n=5) socialised outside college with their college friends, with most preferring to socialise with old school friends. Again this was in accordance with the results from City and Urban Colleges. All five of those who socialised with their new friends more often were male, with female interviewees being more dismissive, on average, of their new friends than males.

Annabel - To go out we've got our other friends.

Sharie - It's alright at parties or someone's birthday or something, that would be alright, but sometimes you can't really see yourself talking to the people after college is over. (Annabel, (Worker) and Sharie (Juggler), A levels, St. Joseph's College)

This could be due to several factors, including the fact that several males claimed not to know anyone else at the college when they arrived, whereas a lot of females tended to come in big groups from their old school; for example Helen explained that all her friends within the college had also gone to her secondary school. She used two photos in her diary of these friends, for example Figure 6.23.

Figure 6.23: *"Me and friends at St. Joseph's. All at secondary school together as*

well." (Helen, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

Aaron was the exception to this rule, however, as he knew other people when he arrived, but had also made a conscious effort to meet new people:

> "*There were quite a lot from our school ... but I don't really talk to them at the moment, it's like I come to a new college you know, I want to get to know new people. I still talk to them, don't get me wrong, but at the moment I'm just getting to know new people.*" (Aaron, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Player)

Aaron's Player status explains his attitude to friendships: his studies were not his priority and therefore he was happy to spend a large proportion of his time in college socialising and meeting new people. Workers, on the other hand, like Sharie, above, would be less likely to use college time meeting and making new friends, if they already had existing friends at the college.

For those who had made new friends at the college, these tended to be doing the same or similar courses to themselves, although not in all cases. Selmar for example, mentioned he had made friends from his tutor group and RE class, as well as from his course. For some students taking an Advanced GNVQ, their friendships within college were formed whilst doing the Intermediate course. Many students were able to combine old school friends with college friends, as they came with several other people, and gradually expanded their circle of friends. There was still the tendency, however, to concentrate on more established friends when socialising outside college, even among the males:

> "*Most of my friends are from my old secondary school, but I've made new*

friends through the college from other places, so that's really good. It's easy

to make friends here. " (Christopher, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

Annabel explained one of the reasons for this, claiming that it was easy to remain with

her old group of friends, and until she stopped doing that, she would not make as

many good new friends:

> *"If you've got your own friends then you're not likely to go out of that group,*
>
> *cos it's safe. Cos now I don't really see a lot of the friends that I came here*
>
> *with, my friends have, kind of like, expanded. "* (Annabel, A levels, St.
>
> Joseph's College, Worker)

The college did not appear to actively encourage new friendships to develop, as there

was no central common room in which students could meet people from other courses

or areas, and instead they were divided into several small cafeterias or cafés and the

chaplaincy, each with its own group of 'regulars'. This was very similar to Cornish

College, and had both advantages and disadvantages: although students might not

have met students from other courses, they had more chance of developing closer

relationships with those they saw on a regular basis, as they spent more time with

them out of the classroom as well as in it. Many would also argue that there is no real

reason to encourage students from different courses to mix, as they would have little

in common, and prefer to be among those with similar interests. Although this is a

valid point, it is worth bearing in mind that in schools where students on A level and

GNVQ courses mixed more effectively, there seemed to be less prejudice towards

vocational qualifications than in colleges where the academic and vocational courses

were separated (see next chapter).

Family was mentioned as being very important to some students, and both Selmar and
Helen took photographs of their families.

Figure 6.24: *"Myself and baby cousin, Shanks."* (Selmar, GNVQ, St. Joseph's
College, Juggler).

Figure 6.25: *"My Mum, the other best friend."* (Helen, A levels, St. Joseph's College,

Juggler).

One shortcoming of the photographic diary method was illustrated by Helen, as she went on to talk about one of her passions, which she did not manage to photograph:

> *"Another main thing in my life is that I've got a season ticket for Charlton Athletic, but they didn't have a home game the week I had the camera, so I didn't take any photos of that."* (Helen, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

The fact that this did come out in the interview, however, showed that the diary in combination with an in-depth interview elicited more information.

At Urban School, London, there were also few extra-curricular activities organised by the school, and those which did exist tended to be of an academic nature: a number of students were involved in helping students lower down the school, often those with special needs, in their free periods. There was also a Critical Thinking course, which two students mentioned, and a philosophy class mentioned by another student.

Apart from a few students who were involved in music, such as Ben who played the steel pans, and also a few who used the school's dark room facilities to develop photographs (Ben and Martha) other social activities took place outside school. This was in sharp contrast to Clifftop School, where many students were involved in various aspects of social activities within the school, particularly sports and drama. There was obviously more scope for outside activities in London than there was in Cornwall, however, and students did not need input from the school in the same way. Several students at Urban School (n=7) mentioned the fact that their jobs took up a lot

of their free time, so they had less time for socialising than they would like.

Going to pubs and night-clubs was mentioned by the majority of students at Urban School (n=14), and transportation problems were not mentioned, in contrast with students from Clifftop School: trains and buses were more frequent, and many students lived within a short walk of each other:

> *"I'm a bit of a film fan, so I go to the cinema quite a bit, but I do go clubbing in London. But that's quite an expensive night out, so I don't do that too much now."* (Nick, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

> *"I'm out every weekend - pubs, cinemas, clubbing, football, depends what's on."* (Janie, A levels, Urban School, Player)

Martha also enjoyed activities which differed from most of the students, as shown in her photo diary; she had photographs of herself and her friends out in Trafalgar Square in the early hours of the morning, after clubbing (Figure 6.26), but stressed this was not common:

> *"We went to a club in North London, and got back to Trafalgar Square about 3-30. We don't go out in London very often, but it was one of the girls' birthdays."* (Martha, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

Figure 6.26: *"Trafalgar Square at 3.30 am on Sunday morning   waiting for a bus after a fantastic night out for the girl on the left's 18th."* (Martha, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

It was more usual for her to spend her time going to art galleries, particularly the Tate Gallery, which she often visited on a Friday, when she had no lessons. There were few opportunities to take part in most of the activities mentioned here in a rural area such as Cornwall; while there are pubs and clubs, there are few art galleries, cinemas or Quasar centres, so it was not surprising that more students in rural institutions mentioned only pubs and clubs as sources of enjoyment.

The majority at Urban School (n=12) claimed that all or most of their friends were also at the school, with a further five saying they had similar numbers of friends from in and out of school, and a minority (n=4) saying that their friends were mostly from outside school. For Gary and Eden, who both fell into this latter group, this was not surprising, as Eden had left school and then returned after all her peer group had left,

and Gary had only been at Urban School for a few months. Those that had friends from outside school tended to have met them through their work, or through living near to them:

> *"I've only got one friend that I go out with from school. Mostly I go out with*
>
> *her, or I might see people from school while I'm out. But I go out with people*
>
> *I've known for a long time   they're more my age really."* (Eden, GNVQ,
>
> Urban School, Juggler)

As with students elsewhere, it was common for students at Urban School (n=6) to say that they used to play sport, either for the school, a local team, or for fun, but that work pressures and pressures from school had meant they had been forced to give it up, or reduce the amount of time spent on the sport.

For just one student, Jennifer (a Juggler), religion was a large part of her life, with most of her friends belonging to the same religion (Mormon) as herself. Her social activities differed from most students, in that pubs and clubs played a very minor part, and instead she enjoyed shopping or *"silly stuff, like going to play Quasar or laser games or ice-skating. Or we might go round someone's house and watch a video."*

In summary, it is clear that while there were huge individual differences between students within institutions, the rural - urban divide was at its most noticeable in the area of extra-curricular activities and social lives, with those in urban areas relying less on the institution for their friendships than those in rural areas, and also having more opportunities for varied social lives. The problem of transport was a big factor in the differences, with students in rural schools and colleges having to remain in the

institution for longer than their urban counterparts, and therefore necessarily forming at least part of their social lives around the institution and those within it. As fewer students in rural areas had part time employment (see next section), there were also fewer opportunities to make friends in a work environment, which many of the urban students had reported. A final factor which influenced the social lives of those in rural areas was simply the smaller numbers of young people: students tended to see the same groups of people every time they went out, and these tended to be those with whom they were at school or college.

Part-time employment and finances

The issue of working whilst studying is not a new one but one which has seen an increase in attention in recent years due to the increased number of students in both further and higher education who are forced to work as well as study in order either to support themselves or contribute towards the family income. This is often seen in a negative light by academic staff, who believe students' studies suffer because of their employment. This is not necessarily the case, with some students picking up useful skills from their part-time jobs, as well as increasing their independence and widening their social circle. Many students feel that their jobs interfere with their studies, however, with a TUC survey (2000) finding that the majority of higher education students felt that was the case. As well as the problems of unsocial hours, students often felt pressurised to work longer hours than they would like (Davies, 1999), and were unable to take time off to prepare for exams (Taylor, 1998). In some cases they were also subject to unsafe working conditions (NUS, 1999). By contrast, other research has found that students valued their part-time jobs: Lucas and Lamont (1998) found that the benefits of work experience, increased confidence and skills

acquisition, were as important as the drawbacks mentioned above. Hodgson and Spours (1999) similarly found that 14-19 year olds with part-time jobs enjoyed the financial independence this gave them as well as the increased social life. Davies (1999) in a large-scale research study found that although many young people saw their employment having an adverse effect on their studies as well as their home and social lives, the majority felt they were able to cope with both. Davies concluded that working up to ten hours per week does not have a negative effect on academic performance, and in some cases appeared to enhance it, but over this level there was a strong negative correlation between hours worked and examination grades. As almost two-thirds of 16-19 year olds in his study with part-time jobs worked over ten hours a week during term time, and almost a third worked for over 15 hours a week, the problem was obviously very widespread. In the present study, the number of hours worked differed significantly between rural and urban areas.

As mentioned in the above sections, students in London found it easier to find part-time employment than those in rural areas such as Cornwall, and were therefore more likely both to have jobs, and work longer hours. In Cornwall most of the employment was seasonal and students typically worked through their summer holidays, and occasionally Easter and Christmas holidays, rather than working at weekends or evenings throughout the year. In London students tended to work throughout the year, increasing their hours or taking on extra employment during their holidays. There were exceptions to this however, with many rural students having more permanent jobs (n=33; 57%), often working within a family business, although few worked as many hours as students based in London. Similarly, several students in London did not have paid employment (n=23; 29%), although the majority who wished to have

part-time jobs had secured them.

The issue of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was also raised, as both the rural and urban institutions studied here were part of the EMA pilot scheme. The initial pilot involved 15 LEAs, including Cornwall and the two SE London boroughs studied, with a further 40 areas being involved from September 2000. This is a means tested allowance given by LEAs to full-time 16-19 year old post-compulsory students to encourage young people from low-income families to remain in education after the age of 16. It was also used to test the effect of financial incentives on retention, attendance and achievement. The remuneration varied according to the variant of pilot scheme in the area concerned, with, for example, Cornish students receiving up to a maximum of £30 per week (means tested), as well as a £50 termly retention bonus and a £50 achievement bonus at the end of the course. A full grant was available for students whose parental income was less than £13,000 per annum, with incremental awards for those with an income of up to £30,000 per annum. The idea of an EMA is not a new one, with the Weaver Committee in 1956 recommending a national system of means-tested allowances for children remaining in full-time post-compulsory education (Rice, 1987), but the 1999 pilot was the first step to implementing a national scheme since this recommendation.

Looking firstly at rural institutions, at Rural School, seven of the students interviewed had part-time jobs, although they all worked much longer hours in the summer than they did during term time. The number of hours worked ranged from six a week (Joanne) to 16 per week (Peter), with wages ranging from under £2 an hour (Peter - although this was just baby-sitting for his sister) to £8.50 (Laura), with an average

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(mean) of £3.55 (median of £2.76). Only Jacquie and Peter worked during the week, where there was more of a possibility of work interfering with their study, but as Peter baby-sat for his sister, he could do his work while he was there. Jacquie also managed to balance her study and working in a local shop for nine hours a week. She did not see herself continuing in that sort of job for very long - it was simply a way of getting money to help her through the sixth form. She was financially worse off than most of the other students interviewed, as she had to pay for everything herself: school trips, all her social life, clothes, etc., whereas the others tended to get subsidised from their parents, or get given their child benefit. Claire, for example, used to have a part-time job, but had given it up shortly before the interview took place:

"I was a cleaner, up at [a holiday park]. ... it was all day Sunday, from eight to four, but I was usually home by 2.30. It was not bad money, but it was just, Sundays are usually the days I do all my work, 'cos I put them off throughout the week, 'cos I've got so much going on, and I normally do it on a Sunday, but obviously with my work, I couldn't ... and it just started wearing me out, so I couldn't do it any more, so I just quit. I miss the money, but I don't miss the job, so I've just got to find a new one now." (Claire, A levels, Rural School, Worker)

She was instead given £60 every month from her parents, claiming her mum would rather have given her the money than for her to have a job which interfered with her studies. As Claire was a Worker, and concentrating hard on her A levels, this constitutes a good investment on her parents' behalf: if she had been a Player, this would have been a less sensible move, as she would have been unlikely to use the extra time available to her for studying.

Neither Donna nor Peter took any photographs of themselves working, suggesting they did not consider this an important part of their lives. This reflected the general feeling among the students, that their part-time jobs were not the first rung on a career ladder, but just a way of getting some money while they were still at school.

At Rural College the pattern was similar, with a minority of students (n=4) having part-time employment, and only one considering it a step towards gaining a job after college. Emily, for example, did childminding and worked in a nursery during her holidays, but did not have a job in term time, claiming:

"You're lucky if you get a job in Cornwall, even a part-time job." (Emily, GNVQ, Rural College, Worker)

Figure 6.27: *"I go to work on a Wednesday afternoon at my local library. I work two till six pm. Here I'm doing the paperwork."* (Charlotte, A levels, Rural College, Worker)

Charlotte realised she was lucky in having a job: she worked in a library on a Modern Apprenticeship scheme, and was hoping to continue there after she left college. She took several photographs of herself at work (for example Figure 6.27), showing that she considered this to be an important part of her life.

Ione worked during the summer, but when asked about getting a part-time job during the terms, she said:

> *"I'm looking for a job, but there's - you get seasonal jobs, and that's it. So I've got to wait until like Easter..... I think we all know pretty much what it's like, it's only in the tourist season there's any jobs. ...... There's really not that much in my village, and I think it's pretty well known."* (Ione, A levels, Rural College, Juggler)

The previous summer she had done waitressing and chambermaiding, and hoped to either do that or work in a shop the following summer. When asked if she would consider doing that full time, she laughed, and said: *"What waitressing? No. That's why I'm here!"* The fact that it was generally assumed that there were few part-time jobs in the area fits with the rural habitus, as expected. Ione's comments that *"I think we all know pretty much what it's like"* reinforces Bourdieu's concept, as does the fact that Harry, who had moved from an urban area recently, was the only person in this area to challenge this idea, claiming that if you wanted a job in the area enough, you could get one.

At Clifftop School, ten of the 22 students had permanent part-time employment, and a further ten had seasonal jobs, as Clifftop Town is a large tourist area and attracts many people every summer. Only two students did not have part-time jobs of any

description - Jenny and Dale. Dale was currently looking for a job after being sacked from the petrol station where he had previously worked, but Jenny was not looking for a job. The seasonal jobs mainly consisted of waitressing, shop work or at tourist attractions, although James worked at the golf course, and Samuel coached tennis at a hotel for the summer. The permanent jobs were more varied, and often meant the students were working for their parents: Tom, for example was a lifeguard at the leisure centre at which his Dad was the manager; Yusuke worked in his parents' Chinese takeaway; Bridget worked in her parents' newsagents, and Phillip worked with his mum in a butcher's shop. It appeared from this that nepotism was a very good way to secure employment in this area, as those who only found seasonal jobs complained at how difficult it was to find permanent part-time work. Only two interviewees worked at what might be considered the largest employers of this age group - Becky worked in Burger King, and Stewart in MacDonald's. Both only worked one a day a week in the winter, however, compared to the many shifts expected of students in SE London. The vast majority (n=8) of those with permanent jobs had increased hours throughout the summer months.

"Over the summer [I work] like six days a week, then at the moment it's two, and over the winter when it's dead it will be one. It depends how many people are around and how many staff they need." (Becky, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

Only two of the students thought their jobs interfered with their study, especially those who only worked in the summer - Yusuke and Tom:

"I find it quite hard working as well as doing the course but I'm on top of it. ...At the minute I'm doing 32 hours a week, but I might be dropping down to

27, which is still quite a lot. I don't really mind working and I need a job, so. ...It does [interfere with school] a bit yeah, like I know I should be doing homework, but I haven't got time to do it, so I just do it in school one day just before the lesson." (Tom, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

"*I'm helping out with my parents just over weekends, in a Chinese take away. I work about 20 hours a week, over the weekend. ...It does interfere with my study, it gives me less time to work in the weekend.*" (Yusuke, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

This was very different from students in SE London, who claimed much more regularly that their part-time jobs got in the way of their studying.

For nine of the ten rural students working in their holidays only, as long as they found a job for the summer months, they did not need to work during term times, as the EMA provided them with the financial support they needed. If true for the rest of the country, it would lead to a reduction in students working so many hours at their part-time jobs, and possibly therefore an increase in achievement among this age group. The effects of the EMA have been studied at both a national and a local level, although the findings are still incomplete in many cases as the first full cohort of students has only just completed their course in the original 15 pilot areas. A small scale survey in a College in Cornwall by Hope (2000) concluded that the effect of the EMA on college enrolment was significant (25.7% of EMA students believed the EMA had affected their decision to remain in post-16 education) and additionally just over half (52%) of students receiving the EMA believed it had had a direct effect on their attendance. Legard et al (2001) however found that the decision to remain in education had often been made before the introduction of the EMA scheme, as the

pilot schemes were rushed through very little warning. It would thus be expected to have even more of an effect in subsequent years. Rice (1987) calculated the expected effect of such an allowance in 1987, and predicted that its introduction would significantly increase participation rates among 16- and 17-year old females, with the greatest increases being seen among the poorest 10% of the population. Ashworth et al. (2001) found some contradictions to this, however, with the scheme having a greater impact on the participation rates of males than females. They did also find, however, a greater effect among those eligible for the full amount (i.e. the poorest students), as Rice had predicted, and also among rural students. The range of increases in participation in the pilot areas ranged from three per cent (females in urban areas) to nearly 11% (males in rural areas), with an average of seven per cent for those eligible for the full EMA. The most significant finding however, was that all students eligible for the EMA showed an increase in participation compared with matched areas in which the pilot scheme was not operating.

Davies (1999) found in his larger-scale research that over a third of students would continue to work the same hours if they received a grant of £40 per week, with just over 10% reporting they would give up work completely if that were the case. This suggests that the EMA would not be likely to persuade students not to work during their term-time, although in areas such as Cornwall where term-time jobs were rare, the EMA would serve to alleviate the financial pressures on the students and their families. Ashworth et al. (2001) agreed with Davies, showing that there was no relationship between eligibility for EMA and having part-time employment among students: those eligible for the EMA were less likely to work than those not eligible, but this was true in both EMA pilot and control regions.

As mentioned above, it has previously been shown by Davis (1999) that working up to ten hours a week when studying for A levels can increase the grades achieved, but working more than this is detrimental to the students, with their grades suffering. Only two students at Clifftop School were working over ten hours a week - the two who claimed that work was interfering with their school work - Tom, who worked 32 hours a week, and Yusuke who worked 20 hours a week. Tom cited his diving course and his brand new car as reasons for his having to work so many hours as a lifeguard, and he did seem more committed to his diving courses, than to his GNVQ course, which appeared to be a time-filler until he was old enough to become a diving instructor. Although Yusuke didn't explicitly give a reason as to why he worked such long hours, the words he used suggested he was not doing his job for the money, but to help out his family in their business: *"I'm helping out with my parents ..."*. The students did not all work purely for financial gain, although this was obviously a factor, but the social aspect was also important; in a small Cornish town it was one way to get to know a few new people, although of course many of them worked with people they already knew from school. Even Tom was not sure that he was only working for the money; when I asked him if he would still work if someone gave him the same amount of money every week without him having to work, he replied

"I don't know I do like the money, but we have a laugh as well down
there." (Tom, GNVQ, Clifftop School)

There were also those students for whom their part-time jobs were providing them with good work experience: by working in the local golf club, mainly in the golf shop, James realised that he didn't want to go into the business side of golf, and John had

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useful experience teaching youngsters football skills, as he wanted to be a sports coach:

> *"I actually started doing this [teaching football] about five or six years ago now, when I actually went to the schools session. And when I got too big for it there was an FA coach that did it, and he took me on and trained me and now eventually I run it on my own now. ... It's like a mini business - it's quite good, I enjoy doing it."* (John, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

For those who did not work during the year because they received an EMA, it was a big incentive to improve attendance and to pass the course, as they received extra money for going to every lesson, and for keeping up with work set. The school monitored this very closely, which for some students felt like they were still being treated as children:

> *"It does help - I don't think I'd be coming to school if I didn't have my EMA, there's no way I could afford to come to school. I would have had to have gone to get a job. It does help a lot. And if you go to all your lessons, you get £50, I got mine the week before Christmas, so that was a really good help. It's a good incentive to come to all your lessons, ... sometimes I can't be bothered to go in, but I come in just to get my bonus. It does make you come in."* (Phillip, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

Many of the students did own up to using their EMA money to fund their social lives, but some, like Phillip, could not have continued at school without receiving the weekly allowance from the government.

Those students in Year 13 and those who took an Intermediate GNVQ before their

Advanced GNVQ were not eligible for an EMA, but a small minority did receive a grant under the old system. This was not even approximately equal to the EMA in worth, however. Students who did not qualify for an EMA because of their parents' earnings usually received an allowance from their parents, although again, this often did not equal the EMA maximum of £30 per week.

The majority of those interviewed at Cornish College had part-time jobs during the college term (n=12), with just seven not having any work. Of those who worked, most worked exclusively at weekends, although some did work throughout the week:

> *"I work in security now. And Asda. ... I do 15 hours a week at Asda, and seven or eight hours in security."* (Edward, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

The average number of hours worked by those in regular employment was 13.4 hours, ranging from Laura's two hours a week to Edward's 22-23 hours a week. Almost all of the students with term-time jobs increased their hours during the holidays, many working full time, especially during the summer. Those without permanent jobs felt it was very difficult to find jobs which were suitable for their age group and for the hours they wanted to work; although many had worked during the holidays, they had been employed in the tourist trade and so were not needed once the season had ended. Geographical problems also prevented some people, such as Rosie getting a part-time job, as she stated:

> *"I haven't got anything at the moment cos my village is so small and I have to go across on the ferry to get to the next biggest town."* (Rosie, GNVQ, Cornish College, Juggler)

Of all those with jobs, only Sally saw her time at work as anything more than a way of earning money, as she worked in a clothes shop and was interested in a career in fashion retail management. For the others, their part-time jobs were merely a way of financing their college and social lives, although this should not be underestimated, as the independence that employment brought was extremely important to these young people: Julie, for example, cited working to get some money as one of the most important things in her life at that time. The ability to run a car was also dependent on some of these students working regularly, which increased their independence, as discussed above; Sally and Edward, for example, could not have run a car without working the number of hours that they did.

Many of those questioned at Cornish College worked over Davies' recommended level of ten hours a week, however, only Bianca mentioned the fact that it was difficult to fit coursework in with her weekend job, the other students who worked long hours felt their studies did not suffer as a result. One common complaint, however, was that they did not have any free time, as they were at college all week, sometimes working in the evenings, and if they worked one day at the weekend, the other was spent doing college work. Edward (who worked the most hours out of those interviewed) and Rebecca also discussed the fact that their jobs meant they could not take part in college-based activities, as they often required weekend participation:

Dylan - You do get the opportunity to do Duke of Edinburgh.

Rebecca   But if you work on a Saturday, how are you supposed to fit your job in? You need to do weekend hikes.

Edward - I think Duke of Edinburgh, at college, the way that it's done is

aimed at the people that their parents are more comfortable, cos if you're

got to work, you've got no chance cos you just couldn't fit it in at all.

(Edward, Dylan and Rebecca, A levels, Cornish College, all Jugglers)

Another source of income for these young people at Cornish College was pocket
money from their parents: Dave and Sally admitted that they were subsidised from
their parents, although many of the others received money from parents indirectly,
such as them paying for their bus fares. The other main source of income for many of
those interviewed was the EMA, or in the case of Tony, the old college grant system.
The amounts received ranged from £10 a week to the maximum £30 per week, and all
those questioned felt it was a good idea, although Julie had a few reservations:

"I get my grant, well I'm the last one to get the old system of grants, so I get

£520 a year, and I've been getting that for the three years I've been

coming." (Tony, GNVQ, Cornish College, Worker)

Although none of those interviewed felt the EMA had persuaded them to remain in
education, as with students elsewhere, the end of term bonuses affected their
attendance in classes. The effect of the EMA might also have been more subtle, with
parents who would have struggled to support their child through college without such
a grant, being more positive about the idea of remaining in education, and therefore
indirectly influencing the child to go to college. If this was the case it would have
been below the conscious level however, with students not necessarily being aware of
it, and thus impossible to find out in an interview. There was little evidence in this
college that the EMA had stopped students wanting to work part time, which was one
of the aims of the allowance, as many of those claiming an EMA also had jobs

throughout the college term. More research needs to be carried out in this area, once the scheme goes nationwide, to determine whether the number of hours worked by those receiving an EMA is less than by those not receiving an award.

Despite students in London also qualifying for an Educational Maintenance Allowance, the majority also worked throughout term time, and were much more likely to claim their employment interfered with their studies. At Urban College, for example, all the students interviewed had part time jobs, ranging from eight hours a week (Hema, although she was about to start an additional job) to over twenty hours a week (Christopher) with an average of 13 hours a week. The amounts earned per hour ranged from £3.60 (Hema) to £7 (Chester) with an average of £4.75. This is both a lot more time, and a lot more money than students in Cornwall, fitting in with the accepted working practices according to the local habitus.

Christopher's (a Player) job in a local supermarket tended to interfere with his studies, as he was a supervisor, and frequently received phone calls asking him to come in and work when he should be in college, or when he had decided to do studying at home. Suzy (a Player) cited getting a job as the most important thing to have happened to her in the past year: *"although it's not a great job, it brings in a bit of money - it's better than getting money off my mum."* This seemed to be very important to her, as they had several trips connected with their course, and her mum was on benefits, and could not afford to pay for them. She would not have considered doing her job (working in a café in a Leisure Centre) full time however, and looked down on those who enjoyed working there; for her it was just a way to get money. She thought her job interfered with her studying at times, as she worked 15 hours a week, and by the time she got

home from work, she was too tired to do any studying.

The results from City School were similar, with a large number of the students interviewed (five out of eight) having part time jobs, ranging from nine hours (Ryan) to 21 hours (Arisa) a week. Liz, Nick and Dave (all Jugglers) all worked between ten and 15 hours a week, with all the students working longer hours in their holidays. The type of job varied, from working in a shop, to labouring on a building site, to teaching gymnastics to young children. Their wages varied from £3-61 to £7 an hour, with an average of £5.05 per hour. This was again more than students in Cornwall were receiving. Arisa (a Juggler), at 21 hours a week, worked the greatest number of hours, at weekends and some weekday afternoons, when she did not have lessons. She claimed it did not interfere with her studying, as she did most of her studying at school, although she did get a little tired at times. She was also expected to do a lot of housework when she returned home. Liz earned the most money from her job, but as she had to train and pass qualifications in teaching gymnastics, she felt she earned her £7 an hour.

Of the 22 students interviewed at Urban School, 14 had part-time jobs, with one of the remainder currently looking, and a further three having recently given up their jobs. Few of the students reported increasing their hours in the holidays, in sharp contrast to the students at Clifftop School, who tended to work solely in the vacations. The majority of those with jobs worked just at weekends, although five worked either only or additionally during the week as well. The average number of hours worked per week was 11.25, with the most common employment being in shops, babysitting, or in MacDonald's. Eden worked the most hours at 20 hours a week in MacDonald's,

and in contrast with Clifftop School, where only two students were working over ten hours a week, eight Urban School students worked ten hours a week or more. Several students remarked that their job interfered with their studying, and some had given up their jobs, or reduced their hours for that reason:

"I work in a shop, and I do about 18 hours a week, at weekends. I used to work in the evenings as well, but I stopped because of my school work and it's much better." (Gary, GNVQ, Urban School, Juggler)

Only one student, Jon (a Player), worked for the family business, compared to at least four from Clifftop School; nepotism was obviously not such an important way into part time employment in London as it was in Cornwall.

Money did not seem to be a problem for many of the students at Urban School, possibly because the majority had part-time jobs and worked quite long hours. Those who did not work received an allowance from their parents, and although they would have liked more, felt this was enough for what they needed and did not feel the benefits of getting a job would outweigh the disadvantages:

"I've never had one. Partially because I do need the time to recuperate, at weekends and just relax. And also I get pocket money from my parents who said they'll carry on while I'm at school. As it is I get quite a lot of support from them - I don't need money enough to sacrifice my free time to get some. I've got enough money for what I need - occasionally it would be nice to have some more, but that's always the way." (Ben, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

None of the students interviewed at Urban School received a grant or EMA money,

suggesting that students at this school were from more financially secure backgrounds. As the area around the school rated above the national average on measures of poverty such as free school meals and the number of overcrowded households however, this was unlikely to be the case. One possibility is that students from middle class backgrounds were more likely to remain at the school and move into the sixth form than those from poorer families.

Only five students interviewed at City College did not have a part-time job: Leonard (Player), Dwayne (Worker), Pancho (Player), Liko (Player) and Dwight (Worker). Of these five, only Liko was not looking for a job, as his father gave him money if he needed it, so he did not see the need to work. As some of the interviews took place in November and December, Tina (Worker) said her job in a shop was only temporary, and she was only employed in the run-up to Christmas. The other students all had permanent, part-time jobs, or in the case of Isobella, two part-time jobs. The number of hours worked ranged from five a week (Emma) to 25+ (Tracy) with the average being 14 hours a week, although most of those interviewed claimed they often worked more hours than they were contracted to do, and also worked more during the holidays, with Tracy, for example, working 70-80 hours a week over the Christmas period. Fourteen students were working ten hours or more a week on a regular basis, compared to the eight students at Urban School and the two students at Clifftop School who were working that number of hours. Nine of the City College students worked solely or additionally during the week, with the remainder working only at weekends. The main types of employment were shops and fast-food outlets, with one student, Susan working in a hotel as a waitress. None of the interviewees worked for a family business, in contrast with students at Clifftop School; as suggested with Urban

School, nepotism was not as important in London as it was in Cornwall when it came to securing part-time employment. Not surprisingly, given the number of hours worked, several students complained that their jobs interfered with their college work:

> *"[I work] In Macdonald's. I don't enjoy it - it's not really what I would choose, but I have to get money from somewhere. I work 23 hours minimum a week. ...I wish I could work less. I think it does [interfere], yes."* (Murray, GNVQ, City College, Juggler)

Several more students had had jobs which they felt were interfering with their studies, so they had handed in their notice, or made an effort to work fewer hours. The others felt their jobs were not interfering with their studies, and they refused to let them do so; some, such as Tracy, Holly and Isobella took their college work to their jobs with them, to do in quiet moments or in their breaks. Habib was especially vehement that her job would not interfere with her studies:

> *"If it had [interfered] I would quit, because it's not on, for me to be working. I know I need the money, but I still think my studies are much more important."* (Habib, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

Working was obviously important to some of these students, however, especially as some were financing themselves through college, or at least contributing to the family income in some way. Those who were working for money for themselves felt it was necessary to have their own income as a means of asserting and maintaining their independence. It was common for the students with jobs to feel pressurised by their employers to work more hours, although most seemed to be understanding about their college lives to some extent:

"Our manager always says your college has got to come first and then in the next sentence, he's saying you've got to come here instead!" (Charles, A levels, City College, Worker)

Tracy was the most extreme example of a student caught between her studies and her part-time employment; when asked what the most important thing in her life was at that moment, she replied:

"At the moment there are two - there is gaining my qualifications to get to Cambridge, and also where I work at Woolworth's, they want me to be a manager and go on to be an area manager, so I'm trying to balance the two. So if I do well at Woolworth's, if all else fails at college, or get into Cambridge and I can leave Woolworth's or come back later." (Tracy, A levels, City College, Juggler)

Throughout the interview with Tracy, the division of her life between these two goals, getting into Cambridge University, and becoming an area manager in Woolworth's, was apparent, although she seemed to have been managing to juggle the two quite conflicting roles quite well up until that point, at least:

"I normally work about 25 hours a week. But I mean over Christmas I was working 70-80 hours a week, from six in the morning until eight or nine at night. ...I can go in in the afternoon, or I can go in in the morning and then come to college. And it's like I go through my work, because I get such long breaks you can do your work there. ... And I work Saturday and then Sunday as well ... Sometimes I do half a day, sometimes I do a whole day. But I get all my work done, and I still do extra work, like research. ...It's not difficult to balance it. If you organise stuff and get your work done, go to college and

go to work, and have a boyfriend and go out with your friends as well. I

manage it somehow!" (Tracy, A levels, City College, Juggler)

Although Tracy claimed her job did not interfere with her studies, she did feel it would be nice to have more free time:

"Because if you just went to college and did your A levels, you'd have loads

of spare time - God, it would be like a holiday! You'd have loads of time."

This was a fairly common response when asked about work interfering with their studies, with several students saying that it did not interfere directly, as they probably would not do college work during the times they were working, but it did have an indirect effect, as it meant they were often tired, as they had little or no free time just for relaxing. This was particularly true for those students who were expected to help with the housework as well as their other commitments (see section on extra-curricular activities and social life).

There was little concern at City College over finances, with only one student mentioning EMAs or Hardship funds:

"I applied for an EMA but I haven't heard anything. And I applied for the

hardship fund at the college, but I haven't heard from them either." (Dwight,

GNVQ, City College, Worker)

Leonard also mentioned that he received *"a grant thing"*, although was not more specific than this. Those who expressed a desire to go to university were not worried about the financial implications, although it was mentioned by one or two students that they would prefer to stay in London to go to university so they could keep their jobs. These findings were very similar to those at Urban School, and suggested it was a regional attitude to finances and university, as those students from Clifftop School

and Rural School did worry about the financial side of going to university. One possible explanation for this is that students in Cornwall would almost certainly have had to have moved away from home to have continued into Higher Education, as there was no local university, increasing the cost of such a move.

Fourteen of the students interviewed at St. Joseph's College had part-time jobs, with the most popular places to work being shops in the local shopping centre (n=7). Another student had recently given up his job in MacDonald's, and one more student, Sarah, had worked during her summer holidays, but not during term time. The remaining six students were not working, and not looking for work. Some of those with employment worked at weekends, but a number (n=4) also worked on weekday evenings. The number of hours worked ranged from four hours a week (Annabel, a Worker) to 15 hours a week (Christopher and Keenan, both Jugglers), with the mean calculated at 9.8 hours. This was a lot lower than at City College, where students were working an average of 14 hours a week. Five students at St. Joseph's were working ten or more hours a week, compared to 14 students at City College and eight students at Urban School. As at City College, when students felt their jobs were interfering too much with their studies, they either left, changed jobs, or tried to cut down their hours, as there was a general feeling that studying should come before everything else. Helen, for example, used to work in Iceland, and took a photograph of the shop in her photo diary, but by the time the follow-up interview took place, she had left that job and started elsewhere:

"I was there [Iceland] for four months, but I work in MVC now, I do

Saturdays and Sundays. At Iceland I was doing nearly every night and with

my A levels as well it was quite tough - two hours each night and Saturday

and Sunday. So I stuck with it for four months, but it was really affecting my

A levels, so I had to get out. I asked them numerous times if I could cut down

and they kept saying next week, next week. So I found another job and left."

(Helen, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

Others had not managed to cut down their hours, and felt some interference between their jobs and their college work:

"I do like it, but now we've got this new manager ... I keep telling him I'm a

full time student and I need to keep time for my school work, but he doesn't

seem to understand that." (Joanne, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Player)

The idea that college work, or 'school work' as Joanne put it, was more important than earning money was very strongly felt by all the students interviewed at St. Joseph's College, more so than at City College. None of the students interviewed were supporting themselves, however, unlike several students at City College, and therefore their need for money was not as urgent. Several times students complained that although they would not normally be studying during their working hours, their jobs meant they had little or no free time in which to relax, so their lives revolved around studying and working for money. Another indirect way that their course suffered at the hands of part time employment, was that if they had been working late the night before they often felt tired in class the next day, or too tired after college to do homework when they got home.

Three of those at St. Joseph's College who did not work received money from their parents, and were relatively happy in that situation, although they would have liked

more money. Aaron thought it was particularly unfair that his parents did not still give him money, because he had a job:

"Mine don't give me any cos I'm working. They think I'm getting money now so I'll be able to get my own stuff, you know. I think I should still be getting a certain amount of money weekly though." (Aaron, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Player)

The fact that all those who received money from their parents were workers suggests that their parents were making a good investment in their futures; giving money to players, such as Aaron, might not have had such a positive effect.

The main way in which financial worry impacted on these students' lives, was when they thought about going to university; even those who did not have a job whilst studying were preparing to get a job in the months before they went to university, as they anticipated it would not be easy financially. Although the idea of leaving home was an attractive one, reality meant many students chose to remain at home while at university as it was cheaper, and there was also the option of retaining a part-time job if they remained in the same area:

"I want to stay at home. I think partly because of money - you need a lot of money for uni." (Lola, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

The marked difference between rural and urban students and their attitudes towards the financial problems they expected to suffer when at university can be explained by the absence of Higher Education Institutions in Cornwall: those living in London were surrounded by higher education students, and possibly worked alongside several in their part-time jobs, and therefore were more likely to hear tales of financial hardship.

As mentioned above, students in Cornwall who wanted to go into Higher Education would almost certainly have to move out of the area, and did not have the cheaper option of remaining at home for the duration of their studies, which their urban peers seemed keen to take. Cornish students were also more likely to talk about their EMA awards and grants, whereas those in London rarely mentioned them, despite living in a pilot area for the scheme. It is suggested that because fewer students in further education in Cornwall were able to find employment, their EMA made more of a difference to their lives than it did to urban students, who were more likely to have jobs. More students worked over the recommended maximum of ten hours a week during term-time in London than in Cornwall, and more in FE colleges than in schools.

Conclusions

There were significant differences in the experiences of students in rural and urban areas, as exemplified in this study by Cornwall and South East London. The main differences could be traced to the poor transport in Cornwall, which had an effect on the students' social lives, choice of institution and part-time employment and finances. The culture of the school or college was different in many rural areas where transport links were poor, as students were forced to remain in the institution all day, regardless of whether or not they had free periods, often encouraging a more close-knit community within the institution. Because students often did not live near to their friends, they found it difficult to socialise in the evenings, therefore tended to save their studying for the evenings and weekends, and spent their free periods socialising within the school or college. This led to more friendships within the institution being formed, and more students to comment on a friendly atmosphere within rural

establishments. In rural areas there were also fewer part-time employment opportunities for students, who therefore had more free time to spend on their studies and also on socialising.

The most common complaint among those urban students who were working over ten hours a week was that although it did not interfere directly with their studying, as they would not be studying during the hours they worked, it did so indirectly, as they were too tired to concentrate in lessons or on home study. The introduction of EMAs did not seem to affect the number of hours worked among urban students as much as rural students; this bears further analysis when the scheme goes national in 2003/4.

When policies are made concerning further education, therefore, these differences need to be borne in mind, and research carried out in further education institutions, should not assume all such institutions to be uniform throughout the country. As Atkins (2003) states:

"the notion of a 'one size fits all' policy must be reconsidered. Largely rural communities have seen an urban agenda for post-compulsory education rolled out across the countryside, with issues of equity and access, rather than appropriateness, dominating the discourse. It is as if rural society is judged in terms of a deficit discourse (dominated by a desire to make then like us) rather than a diversity discourse (recognition and value of difference)." (Atkins, 2003, p.515)

McDonald and Lucas (2001) also found that rural colleges did not benefit as much as urban colleges from the new funding initiatives, which had been developed,

apparently, with urban colleges in mind. The new system to encourage widening participation in FE rewards colleges for recruiting students from postcode areas which coincide with wards with high indices of social deprivation. Inner-city colleges in the McDonald and Lucas study tended to approve strongly of the system, but those in rural areas felt it was not a useful way of identifying those students who might be educationally disadvantaged, with the postcodes being out of date as indicators of deprivation. Also, in rural areas, deprivation is often less visible, and in small pockets among more affluent areas, and hence not able to be picked up by postcode analysis. Rural colleges also tended to have few designated postcodes within their catchment areas, despite having some areas of relatively high deprivation, and thus found the system 'insignificant' and an incentive, and 'frustrating' in terms of targeting real needs (p.222). The alternatives raised by rural college principals in their study included weighted funding for educational provision in multi-site colleges in rural districts.

The following chapter looks at the differences between the experiences of students on vocational and academic courses, although this is also affected by the contrast between urban and rural areas. For example, both London and Cornwall are areas of high tourism, thus GNVQs in Travel and Tourism were likely to be considered more relevant by students in these areas. London-based students were also more likely to have come into close contact with large businesses, and therefore business related courses would be seen as more significant. So, despite comparisons along the main axes of course, institution type and area of the country individually, it must be borne in mind that there are also interactions between them.

Chapter 7

Results: Comparing academic and vocational courses

Whilst the previous chapter looked in more detail at the experiences of students in different locations throughout England, this chapter focuses on the courses taken by those same young people, discussing the experiences of students on different courses, and asking whether the type of course affects the student experience beyond as well as within the classroom. The courses examined are A levels and Advanced GNVQs: a variety of subjects is included in both cases, including business studies, health and social care, and construction GNVQs, and a full range of A levels. Even at the time of interviewing, GNVQs were becoming more like A levels, and since Curriculum 2000 have become even more so, with GNVQ Advanced courses remodelled as AVCEs, with more written tests, and with Key Skills examinations for all students. It is acknowledged, therefore, that there are other vocational courses which might have proved more of a contrast to A levels, but as many other vocational courses tend to be part-time, this would have introduced too many extra variables to the present study. Also, all the schools visited provided at least a small number of GNVQs, but did not offer other vocational qualifications, compared to colleges, allowing direct comparisons to be made between institutions.

At the time of the interviews, only one institution, Rural School, offered a combination of A levels and GNVQs, with a small number of students selecting a 'half-value' GNVQ in place of one A level subject. At all other institutions, however, the two streams, academic and vocational, were kept separate. With the advent of

Curriculum 2000 and the standardisation of A levels and GNVQs, or 'Vocational A levels' as they were re-named, this might have changed in some institutions, but it is unlikely that the underlying culture and attitudes of the students and staff will have changed drastically in such a short time.

As with the previous chapter, this chapter is split into sections comprising the main topics discussed during the interviews which were affected by the students' courses. These include: reasons for choosing the course; attitudes to GNVQs and A levels; attitudes to studying and teaching methods, and informal learning. It was thought, from previous research (for example, Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, 1997) that students taking GNVQs and A levels would give different reasons for their choices, and might include reasons such as the assessment methods used in the two types of course. With A levels becoming more modular in recent years, the differences between the two courses are narrowing somewhat, but at the time of the interviews, A levels were still associated with examinations, and GNVQs with continuous assessment. The subject areas covered by the two types of course were quite different in some cases, although in subjects such as Business Studies and Art and Design, students had the choice of whether to take A levels or a GNVQ in the subject: the influence of subject type was also expected to have a large effect on students' choices.

With regard to students' attitudes to studying and teaching methods, it was anticipated that students following the traditional A level route would prefer teaching methods such as dictation and lecture-style sessions, whereas GNVQ students would prefer more practical, hands-on learning opportunities. It was also anticipated that the teaching styles used on the two course types would differ substantially, with more

teacher centred learning in A level classes, and more student-centred learning in GNVQ lessons. Bearing in mind these expectations, it was also hypothesised that students on the two types of course would develop different skills throughout the course of their studies – their informal learning experiences would be very different. It was thought that A level students would cite note-taking and essay writing as skills they thought they had learnt through their course, whereas GNVQ students would mention skills such as managing their own learning and giving presentations.

Finally, through all the questions asked in this area, the question of how the students themselves saw their own and other courses was examined: for example, did A level students see GNVQs as equal in difficulty to their own courses, and vice versa? The general press have not always supported GNVQs since their introduction, and it was hypothesised that this negative attitude would have rubbed off on to the students, with few of the A level students expected to see GNVQ courses as equal to their own.

Reasons for choice of course

The reasons given for choosing their courses differed significantly between A level and GNVQ students: although there were small differences between institutions, the same overall patterns of response were seen across rural and urban schools and colleges. Some of the students from both courses had thought a great deal about their choice of course before enrolling, whereas others seem to have stumbled upon their course almost by accident, and many students, mainly those taking A levels, had been seemingly led into their courses by the school or college, or less frequently, by parental expectation. Those who had considered their options most carefully tended to

be workers and jugglers, whereas those who had not researched the courses available to such an extent tended to be players.

Those following a three A level course were more likely to say that they chose the course in order to get into university, or that they had enjoyed those subjects at GCSE level. Others, mainly players, were not as sure of their destination, with Jon, for example, only deciding on his three A level subjects when his results came through from his GCSEs:

"Before I got my results I didn't really know what I wanted to do, cos I didn't get predicted these results, cos I'd been a bit lazy ... there weren't that many A levels that I wanted to do, like in the end I got an A and a B for English so I thought I'd do English. Then I quite like geography, so I thought I'd do geography, and then I thought history's alright, so I'll do that. " (Jon, A levels, Urban School, Player).

Jennifer at Urban School expressed some regret over her choice of subjects, wishing she could have taken music A level:

"I loved it at GCSE and I wished they had done the A level here, cos I wasn't confident enough to go to another school for music. But if I was doing it now I would do. [Nearby School] I think do music. I just wasn't ready for that though. It would be different if you were starting over again, but if you just go for one lessons a week you don't really get to know anyone, it would be a bit strange. " (Jennifer, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

This was a very important point, as more schools are seeing consortium arrangements as one way of offering more courses whilst keeping class sizes realistic. The message from this student however, was that although the course was offered in another nearby school, and she could have gone to do that subject for a few lessons a week, that would have been intimidating, and she did not feel ready to do that at the end of Year 11. Not all students felt this way, of course, and Ben (a Juggler) claimed that if they had not offered the courses he wanted to do at Urban School, or any close alternatives he *"would probably do some subjects here and some somewhere else."*

Bianca was the only student interviewed who changed her courses after completing a year; she had to repeat Year 12 as all three of her subjects changed, but as she had decided on a career in marine biology she felt it was worth it to do so. As is well known in psychology, having a goal increases motivation (for example: Hall, and Kerr, 2001; and Locke, 2002) and once Bianca had an idea of why she was doing her A levels and what they would lead to, her enthusiasm had increased, and she was performing better:

> *"Well I started off doing business studies, geography and English literature.*
> *And then I went for a complete ... I want to do marine biology. ... Now I'm*
> *much happier. Biology is very hard but it gets me going cos I know that's*
> *what I want to do. Geology is absolutely amazing. I find it really, really*
> *exciting and interesting."* (Bianca, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

For two of the students, both jugglers, their time at school was just an addition to the qualifications they were taking outside of school, and on which they were concentrating most heavily. Tom, for example, wanted to be a diving instructor, but

he could not take some of the necessary courses before the age of 18, so had filled in this time with doing firstly, an Intermediate, and then an Advanced, GNVQ in Leisure and Tourism:

> *"I thought I'd better get my qualifications really, cos GCSEs aren't going to get you anywhere. ... There were dive courses I could have done full time, but for most of them you can't do them until you're 18, so there would have been a two year gap. And I couldn't have got any more hours in the swimming pool than I've got now, so I'm doing all that and I'm getting my qualifications."* (Tom, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

He was happy with this situation, as he had his qualifications to fall back on, and as he was working about 32 hours a week as a lifeguard in a local swimming pool, he had plenty of money. Similarly, Jenny wanted to be a choreographer and dance teacher, and was concentrating on getting her dance qualifications as well as her A levels:

> *"I've actually done an AS level in Dance, and I got a grade B for that, so I've got a few qualifications, and I've actually got two more exams in ballet, and then I can actually teach it - I'm almost there- I've just got to get a few more exams."* (Jenny, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

It is obvious from these comments that both Jenny and Tom were juggling two quite separate lives – their school and their outside interests.

Jason was a good example of a student who was not sure about what he wanted: during the course of the interview, he changed his mind several times about which qualifications he wanted to be doing at that moment, although his long term goal - to

go to university and study computing and IT - did not change. Firstly he expressed doubt over whether he would remain at the school for his second year:

"I'm in a bit of a dilemma at the moment, 'cos I think I may go to the [FE College in Devon] - at the end of the year. I'm a bit worried that if I do this, and then go on to university, and do computing, and then I don't like it, I'll be a bit stuck, so if I do a GNVQ in computing I'll see what it's like. But I think 80% of my mates are here. ...First I'll see what course I want to do at university, and see if a GNVQ could get me in. If not, I'll just have to stay here." (Jason, A levels, Rural School, Player)

This is a good example of how a player thinks: although Jason had a long-term goal of university, he had done little research into the best route into his chosen course, and was heavily influenced by his friendships. A little later he revealed he would like to combine a GNVQ at the college, with maths at the school:

"What I want to do is do a GNVQ in computing, and stay here and do my maths. That way, I'll still get to see all my friends, on Thursdays and Fridays. Like GNVQ's for three days, so hopefully that will be Monday Tuesday, Wednesday, so I could get the best of both worlds."

And later still, he talked about wanting to just do two A levels:

"I've talked to [Head of Sixth Form] about dropping an A level, 'cos I don't think I can do three A levels ...cos I wanted to do history, maths and IT, but they don't do IT A level, so I did politics instead."

He was obviously very confused, and was torn between his friends and going somewhere new to do a course he thought he might have preferred. Although he claimed to be interested in doing a GNVQ, at first he had thought they were 'drop-out' subjects, as all the teachers said that if you did not get the grades to do A levels,

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you could always do a GNVQ. By the time of the interview, however he thought differently:

"But now I think GNVQs, well it might be my thing actually, because I don't like exams, 'cos some people can cram at the end of the year and get it all right, but if I want to get a good grade I've got to work really, really hard for it. ... I reckon you've got to learn more in the GNVQs than in the A levels."

This was a good example of a student being pushed down a particular pathway without really considering their options at the end of their compulsory schooling; for many people, a sixth form education equates to A levels, and other options are thought of as 'second best' or as Jason put it a 'drop-out' option. In many cases, however, the less traditional, more vocational route would be a lot better for some students, and it is unfortunate they have been put off alternative qualifications by their perceived second class status.

At Rural College, again many students felt they had been pushed into their choice of subjects, mainly by the teachers at their school:

"When I was at [my old school], towards the end, just before I took my GCSEs, I was given a college application form, and they automatically assumed you would be doing A levels, and I never got asked, what are you doing in college, it was always, 'What A levels are doing?' so it was almost like, you just filled it in, and automatically didn't think about it." (Janet, A levels, Rural College, Worker)

Although she thought she would have ended up doing A levels in the end, Janet wished she had known more about the alternatives before deciding to do her A levels, as she was not informed about GNVQs or other vocational alternatives at school.

Barika, at City College, had also considered a vocational course, but as he could not fit it in with the academic courses he had chosen, he felt he should concentrate on the academic route:

> *"I did actually do performing arts at St. Joseph's, and I did want to do it here, but if I had done it here, it would have to have been a full time course, I wouldn't have time to do law or business studies - three or four days a week I would have been doing performing arts, and I thought it wasn't that academic, and so I thought I'd rather do something which uses my brain, you know. Even though I did enjoy it."* (Barika, A levels, City College, Juggler)

Curriculum 2000 was developed for students like Barika, who wanted to combine a vocational course with an academic course, although in Barika's case, as performing arts is not available as a GNVQ but only as a BTEC, there would be no difference under the new system; this is one of the areas in which the format falls down.

When stating their reasons for choosing a GNVQ, students gave very different answers from the A level students: none of the A level students claimed they had 'settled' for A levels in general (although as seen above, some students compromised on the choice of their third subject), but in contrast, many students taking GNVQs, especially those in colleges, were doing so only because they had not achieved the necessary grades to enrol on an A level course. This was in line with the findings from the study by FEDA et al (1997), which found that GNVQs were seen as a 'second chance route' for students who had not achieved high enough grades in their GCSEs to progress to A levels. Many of the students in the present research had had

to take the Intermediate GNVQ first, and then progressed to the Advanced level GNVQ. Emily (a Worker) at Rural College, for example, had thought about doing A levels, but her grades weren't good enough, and she thought the GNVQ would keep her options open, and leave her able to do either teaching or nursing.

At City College in particular, a large number of students had been put onto GNVQ courses, as their grades were not high enough for A level courses. The majority of those on the GNVQ Advanced in Science, for example, had wanted to take A levels, but had been told they didn't have high enough grades and the only alternative available to them was the GNVQ; Murray, for instance, had told the admissions tutor he wanted to do a medicine degree:

> *"When I came, I left my country after my exams, and I came here and I had*
> *an interview and I said I wanted to do any qualification which would lead me*
> *to medicine. And she told me I could do GNVQ Science. I didn't really want*
> *to do GNVQ, I wanted to do A level, but that was what they let me do."*

(Murray, GNVQ, City College, Juggler)

By the time of the interview, Murray was aware that he could not do a medicine degree with a GNVQ Advanced, and so had decided to do a biochemical science degree, which did accept GNVQs, and then apply for a medicine degree: as he had seven GCSEs at A*-C, it is difficult to understand why Murray was not allowed to follow an A level course, as the admissions tutor must have been aware that a GNVQ Science would not allow him to apply for a medicine degree, and City College offered the necessary science A levels.

The predominance of negative reasons and lack of positive reasons for choosing a GNVQ reflects a problem in the way the course is 'marketed' by schools as well as by the college, as most students received their information on post-16 qualifications from their old school teachers. For overseas students, the relatively recent qualification has not yet joined, let alone replaced, the old A level as a full time course for 16-19 year old school leavers, and it is unlikely that it will now do so now as the term is being dropped to be replaced by 'Vocational A level'. Although there are many who argue that changing the name of a qualification will have no effect on take-up rate, in a college such as City College where there are a great number of overseas students who will not have heard of GNVQs, but will have heard of A levels, the effect could be noticeable; as seen with British students, there is little desire to follow a course of which one knows little or nothing, and students go for the courses they have heard of. The real test of the scheme, however, will be whether universities are as happy to accept applied A levels as they are general A levels; if overseas students such as Murray were aware they could not study medicine, for example, with a vocational A level, they would be less likely to accept them as alternative qualifications to the traditional A level subjects.

Once the students who had taken the Intermediate GNVQ course due to their poor GCSE results had passed their Intermediate GNVQ, they would have had the necessary entry qualifications to have allowed them to pursue their chosen course of A levels, but the vast majority of those continuing in education at this stage preferred to take the Advanced GNVQ in the same subject, rather than switching to an academic course. Possible reasons for this include that once on the GNVQ courses, students realised that they were better suited to this form of assessment, and they

preferred to continue with this rather than swap to the more exam-based A levels. They also got to know the teachers and built a relationship with them during their Intermediate qualification, and may have preferred to remain with lecturers they knew, for example:

"I done a GNVQ for my intermediate, which was like a GCSE, Health and Social Care, and I really enjoyed that, cos I love doing assignments. I find that I'm better if I find the information myself and do coursework, than if I actually take an exam, cos I just go to pieces in the exam. I find it easier to do a GNVQ." (Catherine, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

Colleges and schools themselves may have encouraged students not to move from one type of course to another, or may have felt that an Intermediate GNVQ was not adequate preparation for A levels, despite it being equivalent to five GCSEs. Curriculum 2000 should have made it easier for students to move from one track (general) to another (applied) as they should be able to choose a combination of subjects, including academic and general vocational areas. Results from early studies into the effects of Curriculum 2000, however, show relatively few students combining vocational and general qualifications, or moving from one route to another (for example, Savory et al, 2001 and Tait et al, 2001).

Some of the others who had originally wanted to do A levels were glad that they had done a GNVQ instead, although this could have been due to cognitive dissonance as they rationalised their decision after the event (see previous chapter for more details):

"I know some people who are doing A levels, and they just go into the class and do the lessons from the text book and things, but we do presentations

and projects and things, so I'm glad I'm doing it now." (Halima, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

There were, however, many students, mainly in schools, rather than colleges, who had positively chosen to complete a GNVQ rather than take A levels, for a number of reasons, as shown below:

"I like to see myself as some sort of manager of a retail store or something like that. I was going to do A levels, but I know some people who did A levels last year, and they said it was really hard with all the essays, and I thought if I did a GNVQ it's just one subject and I didn't have to choose anything else, and I thought it was going to be easier as well." (Phillip, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

Sometimes the choices made were to avoid limiting options at an early stage, or to provide a good start to the chosen career area. With art and design in particular, students often expressed a desire to study art in a general way, rather than the more formal approach used in A level art. Taking a GNVQ in the subject also meant that the students could concentrate on this subject exclusively, whereas if they had chosen three A levels, they would have had to combine their love of art with two other subjects of which they were not so fond.

Others, often jugglers and players, seemed to fall into their GNVQ course by accident, or by default, sometimes due to a obvious lack of careers advice:

Sol   I expected engineering to be mostly to do with cars and stuff like that, and electronics,

Keenan - but it's all about metals.

Sol - Yeah, I'm not interested in the metal properties and stuff like that. It wasn't what I was expecting at all.

Keenan - Yeah it was, I wanted to do more mechanics. I didn't want to do all cars, cos at the end of the course all you could do was cars, but I can say like I did want to do electronics and cars and things. (Sol and Keenan, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Jugglers)

Most of those who had not been able to pursue their first choice course due to low GCSE grades seemed happy with the courses they had chosen instead, and the most dissatisfied students were those who did not feel the course covered the areas they had expected it to, such as Sol and Keenan on GNVQ Advanced Engineering. This is an example of careers advice being vital, as it would have been simple to have explained the content of the course to them before they registered, and would have ensured they enrolled on more suitable courses.

Although few GNVQ students expressed dissatisfaction with their courses once they had started, a small number wished they had chosen A levels:

"I wish I had gone for A levels instead of a GNVQ, partly because I've fallen behind and partly because I don't really like the work that we do, I'm not that interested in it." (David, GNVQ, Urban School, Player)

David's player attitude, however, probably would have seen him regretting whichever course he had chosen, and seeing the other options as easier and less work than he was doing. These students who were not enjoying their courses were in the minority,

however, and the vast majority enjoyed the courses they had enrolled upon, even if they had not been their first choices.

The results discussed here can be compared with other research on the choice of GNVQs over A levels, such as that by Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon (1997). When she asked GNVQ students why they chose that course rather than A levels, the most common response was 'because the course sounded more interesting' (85%), followed by a preference for continuous assessment over examinations (52%); following advice (44%); an inability to do the subject at A level (24%); not having enough GCSEs to do A levels (21%) and the fact that their friends did the course (12%). The sample used here is qualitative, and involved in depth interviews with students, whereas Taylor Fitz-Gibbon used questionnaires, which do not produce as great a quality and depth of information. In this study, few students claimed the course looked interesting, and the most common reasons for selecting it were a preference for continuous assessment and the lack of grades to be able to do A level. Taylor Fitz-Gibbon also found that those who had already taken a vocational qualification were more likely to do a GNVQ than A levels, a finding that was echoed in this study: none of the A level students interviewed in this study had completed a vocational qualification, either in year 11, or in year 12, whereas five of the GNVQ students had done so. There are several confounding variables here however, as those who are likely to do a vocational qualification in place of GCSEs in year 11 are likely to be those who are less academically successful, and may have anticipated the fact that they would do a GNVQ in the sixth form.

To summarise the findings in this area, students gave varying responses when asked why they had chosen their course, but there were clear differences between A level and GNVQ students, with GNVQ students often taking their courses by default when they did not have high enough grades to take A levels. More A level than GNVQ students discussed their course as a route to Higher Education, and several expressed the opinion that they felt A levels were still by far the most recognised route onto a degree. It appeared from these responses that the students did not feel the two courses were of equal standing, and their attitudes to A levels and GNVQs were examined in more detail (see below).

Attitudes to GNVQs and A levels

This section compares the views of students in different institutions and on different courses on the differences and similarities between A levels and GNVQs and their perceptions of them. It was originally hypothesised that A level students who had remained at school would have had a more positive opinion of GNVQs than their college counterparts, as they would be more likely to mix with students on different courses to themselves. By contrast, it was supposed that those A level students who were attending colleges would, in the main, be mixing mainly with other A level students, especially in those colleges with 'Academic Centres' and therefore have less of an idea of the work involved with a vocational qualification. It was assumed this ignorance would have had a negative effect on the judgement of such courses. In only one school [Rural School], however, was the same timetable used for both GNVQ and A level students, with the other schools tending to keep the two streams of students separate, and even in one case [City School], giving GNVQ students their own library and common room away from the 'main' A level common room. The

differences in the organisation of the two streams, between schools and colleges, were therefore not as extensive as first imagined, and opinions and attitudes were also surprisingly similar between institutions, although differing widely between students on different types of course.

There was some feeling among A level students in all institutions, that A levels were harder than GNVQs. For example, Stewart from Clifftop School expressed a desire to go into the media in some form, possibly as a presenter on television or radio, and commented on why he had chosen to do A levels as opposed to a GNVQ in Media:

> "I can specialise afterwards, and I've got a wide range, a science, the art and a bit of both. It just shows I'm quite flexible. So I'm quite happy with that, specialising afterwards, rather than specialise now, with a GNVQ course, Going Nowhere Very Quickly. ... I haven't got a clue about GNVQs whatsoever. I wouldn't like to say, but I've heard a lot of people say it's easier. Generally Not Very Qualified is another one." (Stewart, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

GNVQ students tended to be aware of these negative attitudes, but denied them vigorously, claiming they worked at least as hard as A level students:

> "Because they're doing A levels they think theirs is better, more harder than our work. Which I don't think it is, cos all they do is make notes, whereas I think mine is harder." (Catherine, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

Tony, who, after completing the Intermediate, was in his second year of an Advanced GNVQ in Art and Design at Cornish College, was also taking an A level in 3D

Design, after taking the AS level the previous year. He actually did better in the AS level than the GNVQ Intermediate, gaining a grade A in the former and a Merit in the latter, questioning the idea that the 'academic' qualification is more difficult. He also noted how similar the teaching styles in the two courses were, and how he could even use the same work twice.

Although most of the negative comments about GNVQs focussed on them being easier, or not as established for university entrance as A levels, one student also claimed they would not be as well recognised in the workplace - the market for which they were originally designed:

> *"From what I heard, A levels would be accepted more by people. Well, my dad, I was talking to my dad, and he said if someone came to you with a GNVQ or A levels, he said he would choose the A levels, cos he's heard of them, and he's not sure about GNVQs. So that gave me a bit towards it, cos he's a middle manager for a finance company."* (Mark, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

In one of the group interviews with three students at Clifftop School, Tanya, Stephen and Dale, an argument broke out, with Tanya, the only GNVQ student, being subjected to the others (both A level students) claiming her course was easy:

> **Would you say most of your friends are on the same course as you?**
>
> *Tanya - Yeah. I mean some are in year 12 as well, cos they did an intermediate course. I have got some A levels friends though.*
>
> *Dale   It seems that all the GNVQ people are friends together - you get the GNVQ group in one corner, that's how it seems to me.*

Stephen - Yeah it is - there's like two sixth forms, an A level sixth form and a GNVQ sixth form.

Tanya - Yeah.

Dale- GNVQs seems very separate, it's like A levels and GNVQs, there's no in between.

How do you feel about that?

Tanya   I suppose they're right really, but I don't really notice it, cos I just mix with my friends. But I suppose, yeah, there is a GNVQ thing.

Stephen - It's not so much friends, but definitely courses, it's very separate. If you're friends with somebody it doesn't really matter what you do.

Do you think, Tanya, that the A level people look down on GNVQs at all?

Tanya - I don't think so. I don't think there's any need to really.

[Stephen and Dale were making faces at this point]

Okay Stephen and Dale, do you look down on GNVQs?

Dale - Yeah.

Stephen - Yeah.

Tanya - Why though?

Dale - In A level we make jokes about doing GNVQ dot-to-dot and things.

Stephen - I suppose, it just seems like, not being nasty to anyone, but the people who do the GNVQs seem to be the people that don't do very well at school. ... It just seems like the more intelligent people went straight to A levels. There was a big split.

Tanya - I chose GNVQ cos I thought A levels would be - I'm not the sort of person who can sit down and write loads of essays. And I'd rather just go out and interview people and -

Dale - It's not an academic subject is it?

Tanya - Yeah, it's not the fact that we thought we were failing! Or at least I didn't.

Stephen - It's the very straight academic route, isn't it, A levels. And the people who didn't like working, not like that, but, the people who sort of couldn't...

Tanya - bear sitting down and writing five pages of an essay.

Stephen Yeah, who didn't like exams, or didn't do very well in exams, and that sort of thing, did GNVQs. But if you didn't like doing sort of cuddling animals or kissing trees or whatever you do

Tanya - Cuddling animals! We don't do that!

So what do you actually do in class then? See if there's a difference in what you actually do in lessons.

Tanya - We work on the computers.

Dale - Work!

Tanya - We have to involve a lot of maths as well, cos we have to cover the key skills, numeracy, communications, and IT, to cover the course, and to pass the course. To begin with, when we have assignments set we have them explain the theory, and then we have to go and research it. We do a lot of work on our own.

And you?

Dale - In geography we just mess about.

What's the way do you think you learn best?

Dale - Dictation

Stephen - I don't like straight dictation. I like Mr. Smith's way of teaching, cos he like dictates, but writes it on the board, and then explains it, rather than reading it out of a book and you have to copy it down, which seems totally pointless. You might as well get a photocopy of it. But you've written it down so you've got the notes when revision comes, but he actually goes through and explains why and what it is. I prefer that way of doing it. I don't like group work and when you have to find out the information, cos I never actually get the information that I need.

Tanya - I don't like dictation. I just prefer to find out for myself, to know what I've got to do and find it out for myself.

Stephen - I think that's - like GNVQ people don't like strict learning.

Tanya - What like dictation and writing it all down?

Stephen - Yeah, they like the project work and more hands-on learning

Tanya - Yeah.

Stephen - Whereas A levels is you get taught it and you learn it, that's it... DT at the moment is more like a GNVQ, cos we've got a project and we're doing that and left to do it. I like that in DT, cos I just think it's appropriate, but I wouldn't like it in my other subjects. It depends on what you're doing really. (Stephen (Worker) and Dale (Player), A levels, and Tanya (Juggler), GNVQ, Clifftop School).

Several issues are raised by this exchange, not least of which is the methodological point that a group interview can often get data which would not have been elicited by an individual interview or questionnaire method. The interaction between the three students was interesting, with the two male A level students attacking the female

GNVQ student, but then backing down slightly as they feared they may have over-stepped the mark. Eventually Stephen even acknowledged that one of his subjects adopted an approach similar to that used in GNVQs, although qualified this by adding *"but I wouldn't like it in my other subjects"*.

Other points raised by this exchange include: the social divide between students taking GNVQs and those taking A levels; parity of esteem between A levels and GNVQs – the belief that they are equivalent in volume but not in level; the belief that less intelligent students choose GNVQs, and more intelligent students choose A levels; the teaching methods employed by the two types of course are very different (see later section on teaching methods).

Analysing each of the main points raised in turn, all three students acknowledged there was a social divide between students on different types of courses, although Tanya argued that some of her friends were doing A levels. This seemed to be more true for the males: of the males who talked about this point, almost all of them said their friends came from the same type of course as themselves, whereas the females were more likely to say the course was less important.

> *"I've only got one close friend who's doing my course with me, all my other friends are doing A levels, so I still mix with them a lot."* (Sarah, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

> *"All the A level people usually sit together in the common room. But we've got a couple of people in our group that are doing A levels as well."* (Tom, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

Interestingly, the A level students accused the GNVQ students of sitting in their own little group (e.g. Dale) whereas the GNVQ students accused the A levels students of forming their own little group (e.g. Tom); it seemed both felt excluded from groups predominantly made up of the other type of student, and shifted the blame onto others for their actions. It was difficult to know how much of the social divide was in place before the sixth form, and how much was a product of how the sixth form was set up, timetabling etc.: it was likely that those friendships forged before the sixth form would have continued regardless of course chosen, but new friendships would have been unlikely to form between students on different courses, either because of differences in timetables, or a lack of respect and understanding for each other's courses.

This phenomenon was not peculiar to Clifftop School, with nearly all of the other institutions studied having a similar dichotomy between A level and GNVQ students; at Urban School, for example:

> *"I still mix with people who are in my tutor group from lower down the school and in my tutor group now, who are doing GNVQs, but there does tend to be a split between A level people and GNVQ."* (Sarah, A levels, Urban School, Worker)

Similarly at St. Joseph's College, there were several students who felt there was a split between those taking GNVQs and A levels, with the terms 'A level people' and 'GNVQ people' (Ainley and Bailey, 1997 p.91) used frequently, despite the interviewer taking care not to use them. The split was not helped by the fact that the two sets of students were kept separate for tutorials, as Sol commented:

"The tutor groups used to be everyone in together, but now they split them

into GNVQ and A levels, so you don't get to meet as many people- you're

restricted to just GNVQ people." (Sol, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College,

Juggler)

Others reinforced the fact that students from different courses did not interact very

often:

Kerry - I've never seen any GNVQ people.

Owen   That's true, are there any here? (Kerry (Juggler) and Owen

(Worker), A levels, St. Joseph's College)

At Cornish College, there was some mixing between students on different courses,

although this was limited, with most students socialising exclusively with those on

similar courses to themselves. The main reason for this seemed to be that academic

and vocational qualifications were taught in different buildings; however the common

rooms were not course specific, and students from all types of course and subject used

the same rooms. Some students did not seem to notice this, however, and stated that

they did not get to see those on other courses:

"My mate from school, we were best mates for like three or four years, but I

never see him, and he always hangs around with people in his GNVQ

group." (Seb, A levels, Cornish College, Player)

Celine (a Juggler GNVQ student) also noted that they had breaks at different times to

the A level students, so were in the common rooms at different times; this could be

one of the reasons for students not mentioning they shared the same common rooms.

Of course, with the greater degree of flexibility of Curriculum 2000, timetables would

have had to have been aligned, which would presumably have led to more of a crossover in free periods.

At City School, the experiences of the A level and GNVQ students were quite different with respect to the facilities available to them: there was a common room specifically for the GNVQ Leisure and Tourism class, and an individual computer room for their use. The school library did not have many useful books for them, and both Catrin and Arisa noted that it had a lot of A level-oriented books, but that *"GNVQs are new for most schools, aren't they? Colleges have been doing them for ages, so they've probably got better resources."* Catrin and Arisa used the general sixth form common room sometimes, but as they spent a lot of their free time working anyway, they preferred to stay in the GNVQ area, and although all students claimed that there were no divisions between different courses, the fact that the GNVQ students tended to use their own common room and IT facilities did not help communication between the two groups of students. Arisa stressed the fact that she was friends with people from different courses, but that this was not always easy:

"All my old friends are doing A levels, and because of the time schedule it's

hard. But we do still see each other." (Arisa, GNVQ, City School, Juggler)

Staff attitude at City School was also different towards the two groups, with A level students using surnames to refer to their teachers, and GNVQ students using first names. Although a small point, this is indicative of the general attitude to the students, with the vocational students being given more responsibility and treated in a slightly more mature fashion. This gives a more of a 'college experience' for the GNVQ students than for the A level students, although colleges also made the distinction

between the two types of students quite apparent. At City College for example, A level students were kept separate, physically and psychologically, from the rest of the college, in the 'Academic Centre', which offered GCSEs, A levels and Access courses. Consequently, unless they were already friends with students doing other courses, they did not get to meet any students from GNVQ courses. Even if they already knew students on other courses, it was not easy for them to meet each other regularly. One of the students, Susan, who was taking A levels, commented on the fact that there was little mixing between those on different courses:

> *"Maybe we should have an assembly. Well, not a weekly thing, but every so often we should get the A level people together and the GNVQ people together and brief them on what's happening around the college."* (Susan, A levels, City College, Juggler)

Again, the use of the terms 'A level people' and 'GNVQ people' as in Ainley and Bailey (1997, op cit), reinforced the fact that the two groups of students saw themselves as separate entities, or at least the A level students saw themselves as separate and different from the GNVQ students.

Rural School, in only the first year of its sixth form, seemed to have the least social divide between A level and GNVQ students, possibly because they were trying the new 'Single Award GNVQ' and allowed students to integrate vocational and academic courses on their timetables. There were problems associated with this, however, as Jacquie pointed out: she was pleased with her choice of subjects, and said she would never have considered just doing a GNVQ, but liked the combination of GNVQ and A-levels, however:

"They haven't really done the timetables that well, for if you're doing an A level with a GNVQ, you're supposed to have a whole day to do work experience ... but I haven't got a whole day to do it. So I can't really do work experience which is annoying, because if I do want to do it I've got to do it on a Saturday." (Jacquie, A levels (and single award GNVQ), Rural School, Juggler)

Curriculum 2000 would have had to have taken this into account, and it is likely that a popular solution would be to reduce the amount of work experience needed in the Applied A levels, bringing them more into line with the old A level timetable and awards.

The second point raised by the exchange between Dale, Stephen and Tanya, the idea that GNVQs were equivalent in volume but not in LEVEL to A levels is not a new one, and was a problem addressed by Sir Ron Dearing in his report (1996): one of the main problems was trying to ensure parity of esteem for A levels and GNVQs, whilst remaining true to the brief given by the Conservative government, to retain the 'gold standard' of A levels. According to Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon (1997) *"the esteem in which a qualification is held ... also depends on the kinds of student it is believed to attract - their social origins, ability and likely occupational destinations."* Thus far, students choosing the GNVQ route tended to have slightly lower GCSE grades than those choosing A levels, as seen in this study, and also in Taylor Fitz-Gibbon's study the parents of A levels students tended to be in higher status jobs than parents of GNVQ students (ibid.). If this continues to be the case, then it will be a long time before parity of esteem is achieved between the two routes, despite the attempts to do so by changing the name of GNVQs to Vocational A levels (incidentally, the name by

which they were referred as far back as 1993 by the Department of Education in their brief guide to the then new qualifications, before being changed again).

One large discrepancy which was obvious when comparing courses was the number of taught hours on the two types of course: although GNVQs were designed to be the equivalent to two A levels, in City School, for example, A levels had five hours of taught lessons a week each, with GNVQs having a total of twelve hours of lessons a week; if they were truly compatible, the latter figure should be ten hours.

One other way by which the perception of parity could be improved, is by teachers treating the two types of course as equal in status: it was usual for A levels to require higher entrance qualifications than GNVQs, and teachers tended to make known to students their opinions on the relative worth of the two routes. According to some of the students at Clifftop School, for example, the A level/GNVQ divide extended to staff perceptions as well as students:

> *"They tend to concentrate more on A levels here, that's how it seems. If you do GNVQs you are looked down on, that's how it feels, by the other students and the teachers. ... Like when we're having talks they always add 'and GNVQ students' making it seem like we're a bit thick."* (Nicola, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

Perhaps student opinion of GNVQs was influenced by the teachers, therefore, but if, as Nicola suggested, teachers had treated the sixth form as a whole, rather than adding on post-scripts for GNVQ students, the social divide in the common room would not have been as great.

"I really want to get a distinction   I only have to get a merit as well. So basically this year I'm focussing on doing that." (Eden, GNVQ, Urban School, Juggler)

"I go and read things around the subject, cos the syllabus is fairly basic, and we need to go further than that, to get a proper understanding." (Owen, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

Unsurprisingly, those who had already taken a course after leaving school and had not done very well, such as Eden, above, were typically keener to study the second time around, and felt they had learnt from their mistakes:

"I do a fair bit, actually. I got quite organised since I left Cathedral College. It was quite a large decision ... I would say I do about two hours a week for each lecture, so about eight hours a week. I get a fair amount done in the class. ... I used to find it really hard to go home and do homework, but this year I go home and I do the homework and that's it - it doesn't bother me any more. I dunno if it's because I'm older." (Edward, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

Apart from the differences in the actual hours spent studying, which has been explained above, on average, there were no discernible differences between A level and GNVQ students in their attitudes to study: regardless of course, students either put their studies first (Workers), or wished they could manage to do so (Jugglers), or were content to prioritise other things in their lives, and do the minimum work required to pass their courses (Players).

As students taking GNVQs were encouraged to work in groups, whereas A level students tended to work individually, it was hypothesised that students on the former course would be more likely than the latter to remain in school or college during their free periods to study, as they would be working together. However, very few students liked to work with others, even those taking vocational courses, and when A level students were forced to work in groups they claimed they each did their own thing, working autonomously as much as possible.

> *"I learn best if they're talking like being lectured. I don't learn best from*
>
> *working in a group."* (Tracy, A levels, City College, Juggler)

Dwight did not mind working in groups, but as an A level student he was an exception, rather than the norm:

> *"Like they put us in groups, but then they tell us to do the end thing on our*
>
> *own. ... Yeah, it's fine cos then you get different views and stuff."* (Dwight, A
>
> levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

As a Worker, however, Dwight was likely to have worked hard whatever the teaching and learning activities involved.

In line with the small (insignificant) quantitative differences seen in the numbers of Jugglers, Workers and Players across the two course types, the qualitative data shows few differences in the students' attitudes to studying, and it is likely therefore that the trends seen were due to sampling bias. There were more differences within courses than between them, with student type having a bigger effect on the student's attitude to studying than the course he or she was taking. The majority of students felt their studying was their priority at the time of the interview, although Players often qualified this by saying they wished that was not the case. The differences in time

spent studying between students on the two courses can be explained by the fact that GNVQs are equivalent to two and not three A levels, and therefore students taking a GNVQ with no additional A levels would be expected to be doing less work both within and outside of the classroom.

Teaching Methods

Past research (for example Hodkinson and Bloomer, 1997) has found little difference in terms of learning activities between GNVQ and A level students, despite the supposed different aims and ethos of the two types of course. It would have been expected to find more 'receptive learning activities'[1] among A level classes, and more 'interactive learning activities'[2] among GNVQ classes, but this was not the case in either Hodkinson and Bloomer's research or the present study. Despite the actual types of teaching methods used, it was hypothesised that GNVQ students would be more likely to prefer coursework, group work, individual investigations and practical work (interactive learning), whereas A level students would prefer to be lectured, learn from text books and take exams (receptive learning). In the main, this is what was found, although there were exceptions to this, with some GNVQ students claiming they preferred examinations to coursework, and some A level students enjoying practical work more than didactic teaching methods.

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[1] Activities *"where course tasks were relatively tightly prescribed, where teachers and printed materials provided the main sources of course knowledge and where learning depended on the flow of information from these sources to the learner."* (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1997, p.95)

[2] Activities *"where students 'acted upon' a wider range of knowledge sources in the generation of new knowledge and understanding and assumed a greater responsibility for more widely prescribed activities and assignments."* (Ibid., p.95)

At Urban School, several students talked about how they preferred to learn, and what they did in the classroom. There was, as expected, a difference between those who were doing GNVQ courses and those doing A level courses, with the former mentioning independent study more often:

> *"You have like three theory lessons per unit, and then you're given a month*
>
> *to hand in the work, so for a month you don't have lessons, you just get on*
>
> *with the work. So it's different from A level. I suppose we have to learn how*
>
> *to manage your time when you're not being told what to do, which I haven't*
>
> *done very well!"* (David, GNVQ, Urban School, Player)

Interestingly, David then went on to say how he was *"really lazy - I don't like finding stuff out for myself - I'd rather get it from a text book or something."* However, Nick, an A level student, with whom he was interviewed, claimed: *"I like finding things out for myself ... I think if the teacher opens the door for you and you just do your own thing at your own pace. "* There was a similar instance in Clifftop school, with Tom, a GNVQ student claiming he did not like finding things out for himself, but preferred to get information from the teacher or the text book. The majority of students doing GNVQs did prefer the continuous assessment model, however, and also enjoyed the independent aspect of the course. One student who was doing both a GNVQ in Art and Design and an A level in Business Studies, Thajoray, could compare the two styles of teaching and learning directly:

> *"It's really different. Cos you do more practical things in art, whereas in*
>
> *business you sit down and write off the board and do essays. I prefer the*
>
> *practical stuff."* (Thajoray, GNVQ (and one A level), Urban School,
>
> Worker)

At first glance, therefore, it would appear that the two courses are taught in different ways, but the two subjects Thajoray was doing would have added to the differences in teaching methods; it is anticipated that there would be fewer differences between art A level and art and design GNVQ, and similarly between business studies A level and GNVQ. This was supported by Tony at Cornish College, who, as mentioned above claimed that art and design GNVQ and A level 3-D studies were very similar. Within A levels there was also often a coursework component, for example, which was enjoyed by many of those interviewed:

> *"I like doing the personal study. ... I've done all my basic research and just got to give out my questionnaire now. And we're doing a personal study in history as well. ... It's nice when you get to do your own thing and get to go and go to the library to research."* (Jennifer, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

The students at Rural College supported the idea that it was the subject which determined the type of activities used within the classroom, rather than the type of course, with two A level students reporting different experiences in different A level subjects. In lessons, Lauren reported that they tended to read and make notes from books in history and English, and had discussions in politics, and added that it made a change to do art and photography, as they were not classroom based, and left much more up to the individual student:

> *"Art ... she sets us a project brief, and we go off ...we learn through researching for ourselves. ... So you kind of learn through the teacher and through the odd video and slide, and through your own experience."* (Lauren, A levels, Rural College, Worker)

There seemed little, if any, difference between A level and GNVQ teaching at Rural College, from the students interviewed, as the only GNVQ student, Emily (a Worker) said that the teachers read things to them, showed them a video, gave handouts or sometimes used props to start a discussion. Emily herself preferred having something concrete to concentrate on, and enjoyed using props or watching videos, but the majority of her time in the classroom was spent doing similar activities to the A level students.

Again, at Rural School, the subjects were more important than the course type when determining classroom activities, with those studying sciences, such as Joanne, reporting more practical work than students of subjects such as maths and history:

> *"At the beginning of physics it was a lot of dictation, but now it's more practical now, like make your own experiments up, sort of thing. Biology, well, mainly experiments, and then you make your own notes from the experiment."* (Joanne, A levels, Rural School, Juggler)

Simon, on the other hand, preferred the more passive, receptive, methods of teaching and learning:

> *"Well, in maths it's just straight from textbooks. They'll go through the questions, explain it to us, and we get set some work. If we don't understand it then they go through it with us again, and keep going like that. In history and politics it's mostly notes, and everyone else gets a bit bored of it, but that's the preferred way of working for me."* (Simon, A levels, Rural School, Worker)

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At St. Joseph's College, GNVQ students stated several times that they preferred practical to theory lessons, and preferred to learn from experience, rather from lecturers or text books. Those who had progressed from the Intermediate to the Advanced level courses tended to complain that the Advanced level course had more theory than the previous course, and found it quite boring as a result:

"I did the intermediate course first and that was fun. ... And then it came to the second year and it started off alright and then I thought it was getting boring - it was just getting the same old same old theory work all the time. ... we started the practical but there's a lot of theory work behind that as well, and I can't cope with that." (Sol, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

At Cornish College, when asking about classroom activities, there were differences between students on different courses, but they were not straightforward. The expected differences such as going into the community for research purposes were mentioned by GNVQ students but not A level students, but several of the latter did some sort of work experience in the Enrichment time:

"Especially with research, you've got to be out and about ... we might go to the council, and we interviewed health and safety people last year   you go out and meet loads of people." (Sally, GNVQ, Cornish College, Player)

"I go to a primary school for work experience." (Ruth, A level, Cornish College, Worker)

For students taking subjects such as drama at A level, lessons were practical, in contrast to many of the other academic courses, which tended to involve mainly copying from boards and making notes. English lessons tended to include discussions,

and the science subjects often included practicals, but the majority of classroom activities seemed to be passive, rather than active:

"In biology it's mostly on sheets, and it's quite boring. He sits there, he reads the sheets, and then we got through it, and because it's all there we don't need to take it in really, and because he reads it himself, he doesn't pick anyone to read, it's really boring." (Bianca, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

"I prefer being taught and going away and doing homework and practising. That's what we do in maths." (Laurie, A levels, Cornish College, Worker)

Laurie was similar to Simon at Rural School, and both were reminiscent of Chris Figgitt from Bloomer and Hodkinson's (1997) 'Voice of the Learner', who did not like to find things out for himself, but liked to be presented with the information and go away and learn it: receptive or passive learning. This passive learning seemed to be favoured by those taking maths and science subjects, whereas those taking arts subjects liked discussions and group-work as well as traditional classroom activities, also as found by Bloomer and Hodkinson.

At Clifftop School, teaching methods varied according to course, but again also within courses, with most students having more than one teacher for each subject. When asked about how they liked to learn, and which way thought they learned most effectively, more of the GNVQ students said they preferred independent working, and more of the A levels students preferred teacher-led activities:

"I prefer working by myself, and I like not being pressured. But I do like the teachers helping sometimes" (Phillip, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

"I'd say from the teacher. That works nicely, then going away and looking it
up in the textbook, and writing it up. That's how I do it." (Stewart, A levels,
Clifftop School, Juggler)

The above quotations show A level students preferring independent study and teacher-centred learning, whereas GNVQ students tending to enjoy practical and independent learning. There were some exceptions to this however:

"It's a bit boring - it's all like case studies and stuff, and I'd rather just do
work out of text books than going to visit a company and asking them
questions. ... I'd rather just go and do it from the textbook. ... I'd rather be
told." (Tom, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

One possibility is that Tom, a Juggler, had so many things happening in his life at that time, including working an average of 32 hours a week, that he felt he did not have enough time to do the research himself, and it was the time constraint which put him off student-centred learning.

At City School, unlike many other institutions, teaching seemed to vary a great deal between courses and between subjects, with the A level - GNVQ divide being very apparent: A levels were more often teacher led, whereas GNVQs were very much student led, often with the teacher not even being present. The students did not necessarily see this as a problem, however:

"Sometimes teachers aren't there, but it teaches you to be independent   a
useful skill for later - you are less reliant on others. You have to set your own
targets." (Catrin, GNVQ, City School, Juggler)

Similarly, Arisa appreciated the amount of time they were left alone, as she saw it as an opportunity to develop skills such as organisation and independence. By contrast A

level students were much more 'spoon-fed', with activities such as lectures, dictation, questions and reading and note taking. One teacher was reported as trying to initiate discussions, but the students did not like this way of learning; they much preferred taking notes from a lecture, or having a lecture and a handout summarising the main points. Liz stated that her English lessons were very formal, and no different to lower school lessons, but objectively could nevertheless see that she still needed to be treated as a child in order for her to do the work expected of her. Despite their formal nature, however, English lessons did contain a lot of group work and pair work, whereas the sociology classes which students described as 'more relaxed' employed more didactic methods, such as note taking from 'lectures'.

At City College, students tended to interpret the questions of how they liked to learn in a slightly different way, with the most common reply being that they like to be treated as adults in the classroom, and as equals by the lecturers (n=4):

> "In an informal way. When the teacher's not really looking down on you. I'll admit that is the best way in school, in secondary school. But here, as we're getting older, we're getting more independent and we need to feel the teachers can see us as individuals and as their equals. And I think that's the best way that I can learn." (Habib, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

This contrasted with what some of them had said about needing to be pushed more, and not being treated in quite so much of an adult way (see next chapter for more on this). Being a Worker, however, Habib would be likely to work hard however she was treated, whereas Players, such as Emma, below, often felt they needed more instruction, and to be treated more strictly in order to study hard.

There appeared to be no difference between the preferred teaching and learning styles of students on different courses, with two students, one A level, one GNVQ, saying they liked to be lectured, or told what to do, for example:

"Someone telling us really I think." (Emma, GNVQ, City College, Player)

As a Player, however, this could be seen as the easy option for students like Emma, and as they prefer the path of least effort concerning their studies, a teacher-led approach would be seen as the most useful learning method.

To summarise this section, preferred teaching and learning styles varied according to course, with the majority of A level students preferring teacher led, didactic methods, and the majority of GNVQ students preferring a more student-centred and practical approach. This was not always the case however, with several students voicing their preferences for the opposite methods. Although some students on both types of course enjoyed discussions and group work, the general feeling of A level students was that this was not an effective way of learning, and instead they preferred to be told the facts they needed, rather than have to find them out for themselves. Conversely, in the main, GNVQ students enjoyed practical experiences more and also thought they remembered things better from such experiences, rather than from simply being told facts. Actual teaching methods used varied widely, and were more dependent on subject than on course, with GNVQs often using similar methods to A levels, and vice-versa, with some A level subjects such as sciences and drama having appropriate practical exercises. The dissatisfaction some students felt with their GNVQ courses (for example, Sol at St. Joseph's College, and most of the GNVQ Business Studies students at City College) could stem from this issue: students taking A levels would normally have studied those, or similar, subjects at GCSE and would therefore have

some idea of how they were going to be taught at A level. GNVQ students would not have studied the subject before, and it is likely that they would have been informed that the GNVQ course used more student-centred learning methods. Indeed, when looking at why students chose their courses, in a previous section, GNVQ students often mentioned the practical aspects of the course, and more independent study opportunities. If, as was shown in this study, teaching methods on GNVQs did not vary considerably from A level subjects, the students hoping for a different approach to learning would have been disappointed, as was the case with a number of students in this study.

Informal learning

Although the main aim of remaining at school after the age of 16 is to gain qualifications, there are supposedly many other important 'functions' of this time:

"post-secondary study is very much concerned with acquiring intellectual resources, with gaining advantage by virtue of knowledge, with exercising self-determination or control over actions, and with developing an independence of mind. It also has possible outcomes on the socially integrative side. There may be opportunities in the student group for forming friendships or for participating in social causes." (Evans and Poole, 1991).

More recently, Coffield (2000) commented on the importance of informal learning, claiming,

"If all learning were to be represented by an iceberg, then the section above the surface of the water would be sufficient to cover formal learning, but the submerged two thirds of the structure would be needed to convey the much greater importance of informal learning."

The scope of the informal learning experienced by students on different courses and in different types of institution was therefore of obvious importance.

One of the questions which most of the interviewees were asked was what they felt they had learnt, apart from their actual subjects, since they had been in the sixth form/college. Given that GNVQ students were learning Key Skills as part of their courses, it was thought they might mention some of these skills in response to this line of questioning, with particular reference to the 'hard' key skills of literacy, numeracy and IT skills. With the advent of Curriculum 2000, all 16 to 18 year old students are now theoretically able to take a Key Skills qualification, so this was an opportunity to see if students already taking this course perceived themselves to be learning anything from those areas. One possible problem with the way the question was phrased, was that GNVQ students might class Key Skills as part of their course, and therefore fail to mention them for that reason, rather than because they did not feel they had learnt anything. As several of the respondents did mention those skills, however, particularly IT skills, this was judged not to be the case.

City College students showed the largest disparity between GNVQ and A level students, with quite different results obtained from each group of students: the most common answer was 'nothing' (n=5) and came mainly from A level students:

"Nothing really. Nothing I didn't get at school anyway." (Charles, A levels, City College, Worker)

The other answers given came mainly from GNVQ students, and included the key skills they study as part of their course:

"IT is so good, we've learnt a lot on that, 'cos before we did that I knew nothing - not even how to turn the computer on. But now I use Excel now and everything." (Rina, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

IT was the most popular of the key skills with the GNVQ students, with Halima adding, *"A level students don't get taught things like that."*

Hayley added however:

"But really, we just work from the book, we just read each chapter and do it. So it's not really like, learning, it's copying that's all." (Hayley, GNVQ, City College, Player)

Rina and Murray also mentioned presentation skills, as they had to give presentations as part of their course. This in turn had led to an increase in confidence for Murray:

"And when I came here I was a very shy person, very shy. The course helps so much cos most of the time we have to do presentations and being very shy and having to do presentations in a class with 90% girls, you have to you can't be shy too long, and it isn't really a problem now." (Murray, GNVQ, City College, Juggler)

The A level students were less likely to believe they had learnt any additional skills since starting at college, although Susan felt she had learnt several things:

"Well, time management, and being responsible for yourself, doing your own work, I suppose...and we go through things like essay writing and note-taking." (Susan, A levels, City College, Juggler)

This is the type of informal learning that would be expected from A level students, but only one other A level student at City College, Rafalek, mentioned these skills.

Elsewhere other, mainly A level students, also mentioned skills such as time management skills, listening and note taking, which were rarely mentioned by GNVQ students:

> *"I think I've learnt how to organise my time and my studies."* (Helen, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

> *"Note taking ... you sort of have to develop your own shorthand which you understand, which you can transfer later. Also, listening, especially in law, you've got to listen 'cos it's very quick, and there's so much to do, and you haven't got a lot of time."* (Janet, A levels, Rural College, Worker)

As several of the students interviewed at City College were overseas students who had come over to London without their families, it would have been expected for more comments to have been made about them becoming independent and learning to live without their families. Only one person mentioned this however, Dwayne, who felt he had become more independent as a result of his coming to this country at the age of 16:

> *"I've learnt that in this world it's every man for himself. Back home I lived with my parents and I never paid any rent and things. Now I'm independent."* (Dwayne, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

One thing which was mentioned in the college Students' Handbook, but which was only mentioned by one of the students, was a Key Skills programme for A level students in the Academic Centre, and which was an accredited course. Tracy talked about this:

"You don't have a tutorial time when you all come together...Well, we have

a HEPA thing, which is an access to university extra points thing, but that's

about it. And people don't always go, 'cos you don't want to be doing it

when you could have Friday off." (Tracy, A levels, City College, Juggler)

This was obviously not very popular, with no other A level students mentioning it,
and even Tracy did not sound very enthusiastic about the idea. When asked about
what else they thought they had learnt since they had been at the college, none of the
students interviewed mentioned the key skills sessions, indicating that either they did
not attend the lessons, as intimated by Tracy, or that they attended but did not feel
they had learnt anything from these lessons; either way, the programme did not seem
to be successful. The GNVQ students, on the other hand, gave quite positive remarks
about their key skills lessons, with Halima commenting *"they make it relevant."*
Perhaps if the lessons for A level students had been made more relevant, rather than a
stand-alone subject, it would have been more popular and more informative for the
students. With the advent of Curriculum 2000, key skills have been introduced for all
16-19 year old students, but in a similar way to the A level student provision at City
College, rather than the GNVQ student provision; from the interviews carried out at
City College it would appear this was a mistake, as stand-alone key skills lessons
seemed to have little interest or relevance for students, and unless they were
integrated into their subjects thoroughly, the students received little or no benefit
from the scheme.

In the other institutions, the differences between A level and GNVQ students were not
as wide, with the majority of students from all courses giving communication skills
and/or social skills as the main thing they felt they had learned since being in school

sixth form or college. At Clifftop School, for example, by far the most common answers were that they had learned social skills (n=6) and communication skills (n=3); the terms were often used to mean the same thing, i.e. they had learnt how to talk to people, either their peers or other people outside school; for example:

"How to meet new people and get on with them." (Nicola, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

"How to treat people, I suppose." (Rachel, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

It could be that such skills as talking to other people and communicating ideas effectively came with maturity and it was not specifically the school environment that had promoted these changes. It was hypothesised that GNVQ students would have claimed more of a development in communication skills, as these are covered both directly by their syllabuses, as well as indirectly by the need to work in groups, prepare presentations and interview members of the general public as part of their assignments. As seen above, however, although GNVQ students did mention these skills, it was not more frequently than A level students at Clifftop School or any other institution (below):

"It's not just like maths learning 1+1=2 and stuff, it's more communications skills with everybody. It's learning to be able to work in a group... Even out of classes, you do a lot of group work, just being with people, learning when to say something and when you shouldn't say something, and just behaving, and being in different places, and learning how you are meant to act in that place" (Bianca, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

"You have to learn how to communicate, cos you're going to have to do a lot

of group work. You're also going to do things outside school, so we had to

learn how to interview people from outside school." (Eden, GNVQ, Urban

School, Juggler)

When trying to explain the fact that both A level and GNVQ students claim their

communication and social skills had improved, one possible explanation is that

although GNVQ syllabuses had these skills integrated directly and indirectly into the

syllabus, A level students had to develop these skills for themselves, as taking three or

more different subject classes they were much more likely to be meeting a wider

group of people. Also, several A level students mentioned giving presentations or

having discussions in class, as seen in the previous section, so the activities previously

thought of as being more typical of a GNVQ class were not exclusive to that course.

Another possible reason is that the Key Skills often received little formal training, in

most cases with no separate lessons, and existing skills were simply ticked off on each

assignment, with little or no new knowledge being gained. Laura, from Cornish

College, for example, when asked about Key Skills, claimed:

"I don't think I've learnt much from them, cos like some of them are IT, and

I did GCSE IT, so I kind of like knew it already, so it was just refreshing it

for me. But it's just a matter of ticking them off anyway." (Laura, GNVQ,

Cornish College, Worker)

Laura was taking A level maths for a short while, however, and as she mentioned

above, had passed her GCSE in IT: as the idea of key skills was to bring all students

up to the same minimum standard in the three key areas, as Laura was comfortable

with these subjects she had little work to do. Someone who had struggled with

numeracy, however, might have had more trouble with the key skills and hence noticed them more. From this sample, however, no one mentioned numeracy, even those who had struggled or failed at GCSE maths.

There were a few small differences between GNVQ and A level students, however, with GNVQ students being more likely to mention IT skills than their A level counterparts, although there were a very small number of exceptions to this, for example:

> *"IT - we're doing an IT course, which has helped me improve my IT literacy*
>
> *and stuff like that. "* (Simon, A levels, Rural School, Worker)

Students at Rural School, however, were taking an IT half award GNVQ along with their A level studies, which was not seen in any other institution.

Confidence was another common answer, although this may have been a sign of maturity, rather than being in the school sixth form or college per se. With the amount of emphasis placed on presentations, group work, and interactions with the general public, it was expected that GNVQ students would have been more likely to have developed confidence than A level students: this was found, with slightly more GNVQ students giving that as their answer than A level students, although A level students did occasionally mention confidence, for example:

> *"I'm more confident now - I used to be really shy and now I've got a lot*
>
> *more confidence now. I think it might be because of the drama that I do. "*
>
> (Julie, A levels, Cornish College, Player)
>
> *"Since the day I started school until the day I left school, I was picked on,*
>
> *and I was scared of everybody. But since I've come to college it has built my*

confidence up so much, I've made all my own friends, and I've learnt I've got to stick up for myself." (Kylie, A levels, Cornish College, Worker)

Whereas Julie's new-found confidence seemed to be linked to her choice of subjects, Kylie's was more personal, and was more likely to be based on events outside the classroom; it was unlikely that if she had remained at school and followed the course she had chosen, her confidence levels would have increased to the same extent. There were also other reasons for increases in confidence:

Catherine   My confidence. My confidence has gone up. I'm much more confident than I was in secondary school.

Hannah   That's the main one. As soon as the GCSEs went, I thought there was nothing for me to do, but then when I started the intermediate course I realised that there is something to do. (Hannah and Catherine, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Workers)

For Hannah at least, the raising of her confidence levels was not so much a direct effect from the course, such as having to do presentations, or dealing with members of the public, but the realisation that there was something she was good at, which had not happened at school. One of the great benefits of more vocational courses was that students who did not necessarily flourish at school with academic courses could enjoy success in an educational atmosphere. However, as the GNVQs have moved further and further towards A levels, it is hoped that this advantage will not decrease.

A general maturity was also mentioned by several students, regardless of course, often combined with an increased ability to work independently or at least take more responsibility for their learning.

"I think I've matured a lot. I don't think we've learnt any skills really in school though. I don't know if it's the result of the sixth form or just growing up and getting older. Probably both really." (Liam, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

As Liam stated, it was difficult to know which of the skills the students felt they had developed since they started college or sixth form were a direct result of their experiences at the institution, and which would have come with age and maturity regardless of them being at college or remaining at school. One way of decoupling the two factors would be to interview a similar aged group of young people who had not continued in education, or had done so on a part time basis only, and analyse the answers they gave to similar questions.

From the responses given by the interviewees, it appears that there were small differences in the type of informal learning experienced by students on different types of course, with A level students more likely to learn note-taking, listening and time-management skills, and GNVQ students more likely to report IT, communication skills and confidence. Some of the responses given regardless of course included a greater sense of self-responsibility, maturity and improved social skills. It was conjectured that although some of those elements were built into the GNVQ programme, either directly or indirectly, the experience of taking A levels indirectly fostered such skills, and they were just as well recognised when learnt indirectly as directly.

Chapter Summary

To summarise the section on the experiences of students on GNVQ and A level courses, there appeared to be more differences between subjects and between institutions than between courses. In A levels particularly, the subjects studied had a great effect on the type of learning activities used, with arts and humanities subjects using more student-centred, independent learner approaches, and with maths and sciences using more didactic, teacher-led classroom activities. This was reflected in GNVQ subjects, with practical subjects such as Art and Design consisting of mainly practical activities, but many courses, such as Business Studies and Health and Social Care also involving much teacher-led learning. The main difference between the two groups of students, therefore, was not the type of teaching and learning to which they were exposed, but rather their preferences for learning: GNVQ students were more likely to prefer independent and practical learning methods, whereas A level students were more likely to prefer the didactic, teacher-led methods.

As regards course choice, there were differences between the two groups of students, with GNVQ students being likely to mention assessment procedures and an inability to do A levels due to their GCSE grades. Although the majority of GNVQ students said they were happy with their course once they had started it, this could have been post-hoc rationalisation, as discussed in the previous chapter with relation to A level subject choice.

Students who were following an A level course often held negative views about GNVQs, equating them with easier work, less intelligent students and not seeing them as a viable route to a good university. GNVQ students were aware of these views,

although disputed their claims, believing their courses were just as hard as A levels, and that, in some cases, their learning was more valuable and useful for university, as they had to find information out for themselves, rather than receive information from the teacher. GNVQ students were also more likely to give 'hard' skills such as IT and communication skills when asked what they had learnt apart from their studies, since they started their courses. A level students reported different types of skills, including note-taking and essay writing, although all students, regardless of course type also claimed to have matured, to have improved their social skills, and to have learnt to manage their time more effectively.

The social divisions between students on GNVQs and A levels was apparent in all but Rural School, who had integrated half-award GNVQs into the A level curriculum, and who therefore had several students taking both types of course. The development of Curriculum 2000 and the anticipated ease of moving between and within the two streams would therefore be expected to mirror the situation at Rural School on a greater scale, with the divide between the two groups of students gradually reducing. In a number of institutions it was also clear that the teachers or lecturers themselves had a negative attitude towards GNVQs, and until this ends, it will inevitably rub off on students.

Chapter 8

Results: Comparing Schools and Colleges

This chapter discusses the experiences of students in different types of institution (school sixth forms, further education colleges and a sixth form college) and looks in more detail to what extent the experience depends upon the type of establishment attended. During the course of the study, nine institutions were examined, as discussed in Chapter 5: four school sixth forms; four Colleges of Further Education, and one Catholic Sixth Form College. These were split between rural and urban areas, and also included students from both academic (A levels) and vocational (GNVQs) courses. The differences in the student experiences due to those factors have already been discussed, and this section investigates the other main cause of differences in the student experience - the type of institution attended. It is not possible to completely separate the different factors involved with creating the student experience, as there are interactions even between these three categories, but this investigation attempted to single out the effects of each factor as much as possible, as well as the interactions between them.

Again Bourdieu's work on habitus will be used as a general guide underlying the analysis in this chapter. As seen in Chapter 6, habitus does not necessarily have to be unique to an individual, and institutions and organisations as well as whole communities can have their own habitus. Bourdieu himself was a little vague on whether educational establishments could be said to have their own habitus, but noted that 'organisations continually construct and re-construct themselves under the

ecological influence of individual students' habituses and those of the social institutions in the external environment' (Smith, 2003, p.463). It is more usual in the literature about educational institutions to see the word 'ethos' rather than 'habitus' but as Smith (2003) argues, the two words have very similar meanings:

"... *etymology of ethos and habitus are very close (Greek and Latin respectively) and ethos may be regarded as a special case of habitus, 'the aspects of school culture(s), climate, and philosophy that impinge directly upon pupils' affective and cognitive learning'.* " (ibid. p.466)

Other researchers, such as Reay (1998) showed that schools and colleges had identifiable habituses, and used the idea to show how the organisational cultures of schools and colleges are linked to wider socio-economic cultures, whereby schools and their catchment areas mutually shape and reshape each other. Earlier work by Bernstein (1975) identified the institutional habitus as being made up of: the educational status of the institution; its curriculum offer; organisational practices, and other, less tangible cultural and expressive characteristics. These he termed the 'expressive order' of the school or college, which included expectations, conduct, character and manners. In the present study, the educational status of each institution differed, with some (for example, Urban School) preparing students for the highest levels of university entry, and others (for example, City College) focussing more on entry to employment or less prestigious Institutes of Higher Education. This would undoubtedly have had an effect on the atmosphere at each of the institutions, in terms of expectations and norms. Each institution also offered a slightly different curriculum, with the schools focussing mainly, but not exclusively, on A levels, the sixth form college having mainly A levels and GNVQ courses, and the FE colleges offering a plethora of academic and vocational qualifications. Again, it is obvious this

would have an effect on the habitus of the institution, as to study in an environment in which almost everyone is undertaking A levels would lead to a very different set of expectations and beliefs for the student than if they were mixing with students from diverse vocational courses. Organisational practices also differed between institutions in this study, with some schools, for example, not allowing students to leave the site during free periods. St. Josephs' College was particularly strict about lateness and attendance, whereas the FE colleges tended not to feel these were as important. As Bernstein himself commented (op. cit.), other cultural practices were less tangible, but issues such as teachers' expectations of students, and the way in which lecturers and teachers treated their students did differ between institutions, as will be discussed below.

As with the two previous chapters, the areas relevant to institution type have been extracted from the interviews with the students, and the results collated and analysed.

The first area to be explored in this chapter is that of institution choice. When considering why students chose their institution, it was anticipated that answers would vary considerably between institution type. In Chapter 6 it was reported that there were differences in terms of rural and urban locations, as transport and accessibility were important deciding factors for many students, but a distinct institution effect was also expected, with students who remained in schools more likely to use familiarity discourses, and to be more passive in their institution choice. On the other hand it was hypothesised that college students, both FE and sixth form, would be more likely to have considered other options, and to speak negatively about their old schools.

The second area of discussion is that of students' attitudes to studying. It was hypothesised that the institutional habitus would influence students' attitudes to study, with schools and the sixth form college fostering a more scholastic atmosphere, and more visibly supporting students' learning, and the FE colleges allowing students more freedom and encouraging internal motivation rather than extrinsic pressure. The larger proportions of Players in FE establishments, as discussed in Chapter 5, supports this hypothesis quantitatively, but as previously mentioned, it is impossible to determine a direction of causality from the figures alone, and the qualitative data is needed to establish whether students of different types seek certain institutions, or if attending the institutions affects the students.

Tutorials are also examined, with provision at the three institution types reviewed with reference to both the official policies and the experiences of the students. It was thought that schools and the sixth form college would have more frequent tutorials, with more emphasis on pastoral care, than the FE colleges. In a small school, usually with one staffroom, it is possible for all the teachers to communicate frequently, and thus any problems with a student's attendance or submission of work can be brought to a tutor's attention easily, and hence discussed with the student. The perceived ethos of school sixth forms is thus supportive and caring, wherein students are monitored closely and tutors have a large role to play in the students' lives. In an FE college, by contrast, lecturers would not necessarily share the same staffroom, and there would be fewer chances for communicating with other lecturers. With so many more students than a school sixth form, the perception is that students have much more freedom, with less pressure from a tutor for regular attendance and submission of work.

The next topic covered by this chapter is a comparison of students' informal learning in different institution types. The hypothesis being tested was that students who had left school to attend a college would report more informal learning experiences than those who remained at their school. The reason for this was that students who had changed institutions at the age of 16 would have experienced many small changes, such as travelling to a new building, or even a new town, meeting new people, including lecturers, and being treated in a more adult fashion. These small achievements could have led to increased feelings of confidence, an improvement in social skills, or higher levels of personal responsibility.

Although students' social lives and extra-curricular activities have been discussed with respect to location, in Chapter 6, it was felt that there were also huge differences in the experiences of students in different institution types to warrant a further exploration of this data. As seen earlier, Cornish students tended to base their social lives more around their school or college than London-based students, but it was also thought that school students would take part in more activities within the institution than college students. On a purely practical note, in a school sixth form, the majority of students will have been together for several years, and therefore know each other much better than college students who would have probably only known each other for up to two years. Although college students often cited 'meeting new people' as one of the reasons for moving to a college, it was felt that friendships between school students would be deeper and wider-ranging than those between most college students. It was therefore hypothesised that school students would spend more of their free time socialising with other students in their school, both in and out of school, than college students would with their college friends. The school community would

also have had many years to develop, with students feeling more of a sense of belonging to the institution, as they would have been there for a longer time. This would also allow students to have become involved with clubs and activities within the school environment, and therefore it was hypothesised that school students would take part in more extra-curricular activities within the institution than college students.

The final section of this chapter examines students' attitudes to their school or college. Students were asked what they liked most and least about their institution, and what they would change if they could. The dominant institutional habitus was thought to be very important here: school students who remained in the same school for their sixth form would have had no other experiences, and therefore were hypothesised to be more positive about the institution, accepting it as the norm. College students, on the other hand, would have experienced both a school and their college (and in some cases, more than one post-16 provider) and would have had more grounds for a comparison: the habitus of their current institution would have had less of an effect on them, and they would have therefore been less likely to accept this as the norm, and more likely to question and raise negative issues about it.

Reasons for choice of institution

The great majority of students interviewed at the school sixth forms had attended the school before the age of 16, and were simply continuing their education in the same institution, whereas all those interviewed at colleges had had to change institutions. It was therefore predicted that the reasons given for choosing the establishment would have been quite different for different institution types, with those at colleges giving more positive reasons for actively choosing the college, and those in schools being

more passive in their choice. This was the case to a certain extent, with many students who remained at their school sixth form claiming not to have seriously considered any alternatives, and the most common reason specified for remaining at the school sixth form was familiarity. Of all the students interviewed in school sixth forms, only two had moved from other schools which had their own sixth forms: Gary, from Urban School, whose old school did not offer the course he wanted, and Liz at City School, who had not been happy at her previous, single sex, school. Three additional students had started courses elsewhere, but returned to their school sixth forms, Phillip and Samuel at Clifftop School and Eden at Urban School.

Many of the reasons given by school students for their choice of institution were positive, with very few negative comments about alternatives: just one student, Tom at Clifftop School, mentioned the fact that he did not think a college environment would be motivating enough:

> *"I don't really fancy going to college, cos I don't think I'd do any work, cos*
> *they don't motivate you at all there, do they? That's what I hear anyway."*

(Tom, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler).

As discussed in Chapter Six, the location had an effect on the reasons for the students' choices, with ten of the students from Clifftop School and nearly all of those from Rural School, but none of those from Urban school or City School claiming that travelling and the costs associated with it were a large part of the decision-making process. Apart from this discrepancy, however, the other answers given were common to all the school sixth form students: issues of familiarity, whether of the teachers, the

school environment, or friends, were uppermost in their minds, with most students mentioning at least one aspect of familiarity, for example:

"I wasn't going to go to College, cos I wanted to stay here cos I knew the surroundings, and I knew everyone here." (Catherine, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

"You know the teachers, so you've got the benefit of knowing how they work. You have got the support of your friends if they do decide to come here." (Joanne, A levels, Rural School, Juggler)

Just one student, Arisa at City School, had had her decision made for her by her parents: she had not wanted to remain at school, and instead had wanted to go to college in a neighbouring borough, but her parents insisted that she remained at school, even though it did not offer the course she wanted to do (GNVQ Advanced in Business Studies). She eventually agreed, and instead took GNVQ Advanced in Leisure and Tourism at the school. All the other students were happy with their choices, although a small number at Clifftop School had experienced some minor regrets at not trying a college:

"You get a fresh chance, you are judged on performance, they are going to look back on your grades and your performance ... Whereas here they already know what you're like. It's not bad though. I didn't do badly in my GCSEs; I'm not a disruptive pupil or anything like that. But it would be nice to make a break." (Stewart, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

This suggested that Stewart saw FE as being somewhere that disruptive pupils go to make a fresh start, whereas those who had good academic records remained at school for the sixth form. This could be seen as a reflection the perceived ethos of these

institutions, or of Stewart's personal habitus: he may have been brought up to think of schools as superior to colleges. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, none of the students interviewed at FE colleges mentioned the fact that they had wanted to leave their school because they had had a bad reputation among their teachers there.

Whereas with the school students the vast majority were taking their first post-compulsory course at the institution, and had not previously studied elsewhere, a surprisingly large number of students from FE colleges were not taking their first post-16 course, either having completed another course, at the college or elsewhere, before embarking on their present course. In many cases, especially at City College, the previous course was an Intermediate level GNVQ before taking an Advanced GNVQ in the same subject. Slightly more unusually, Chester completed three A levels in social sciences at Urban College, before returning to take A levels in sciences. Other students had studied elsewhere before starting at their current college, and therefore were able to compare different institutions based on their own experiences rather than relying on the testimonies of others, and also in some cases had rather different reasons for choosing the institution.

There were several anti-school reasons given by college students, although not as many as was expected, and many of those claiming a dislike of school also gave positive reasons for choosing their colleges, such as a desire for more freedom and responsibility, or as a stepping-stone to university:

"I kind of wanted to leave the school, because it's easier to cope going from

college to university, ... you just sort of want to meet more people and meet

new people which I wouldn't really do at [my old school], and I just kind of

wanted change. " (Lauren, A levels, Rural College, Worker)

A further interesting point was that a small number of students who had been bullied at school had decided to leave that environment and start afresh at a college:

> *"I was actually bullied in secondary school, and all the bullies were actually*
>
> *going to [the school sixth form]. And I didn't think I would be strong enough*
>
> *to go, and I thought I had mates here, and it was offering better courses, so I*
>
> *went. "* (Bianca, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

This contrasts with the idea Stewart put forward earlier, that FE colleges were where disruptive pupils went for a fresh start: it is unlikely pupils being bullied would have been disruptive themselves, and instead they were given a chance to start again and make new friends, away from the bullies. Even those who had not been bullied at school often said that wanting to meet new people was one of the main motivating factors when deciding to attend a college. For some this included the opportunity to mix with older students:

> *"You get to learn all different stuff cos college is mixed with like older*
>
> *people and stuff, but sixth form is just everyone is 16 to 19. "* (Halima,
>
> GNVQ, City College, Worker)

By far the biggest factor which the college students considered when choosing their colleges, however, was distance and transport, regardless of area, as discussed in Chapter Six. Fifteen students at Cornish College, eight at City College, several at Rural College, and almost all of those at Urban College, gave transport or proximity based answers when asked about their reasons for choosing their institution:

"I think it was partly to do with the convenience of it, cos I only live about a quarter of an hours walk away." (Debbie, A levels, Cornish College, Worker)

Dwayne, at City College was the only student who had not chosen the college himself; his parents had arranged it from Nigeria before he had arrived in England. There were other students who had not actively chosen their college, however, but were attending it by default, as their first choice application had not been successful, or in the case of many Cornish College students, because there were few, if any, viable alternatives, with the surrounding schools not having sixth forms. This can be compared with the number of students at schools who had not considered alternative institutions, indicating a certain amount of apathy shown by several students regardless of institution type, when it comes to choosing a post-16 educational establishment, with a sizeable number being content to settle for the path of least resistance.

Finally, looking at St. Joseph's College, the only sixth form college in the sample, it can be seen that apathy was also present in the choice of that institution, with eight students going to the college because they attended a feeder school, and it was therefore easy to continue their studies there:

"I came here cos our school was, like, joint. We came over here on, like, a taster day." (Sol, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

The majority of St. Joseph's students were studying their first course at the college, but several students had previously taken another course within the same institution. These were either at a lower level (for example Natya) or they had chosen to repeat a

course taken at the same level after a poor start to their course (for example, Ryan). One student, Stephen, had had very little choice as he had been expelled from his own school sixth form, and had to find an alternative very quickly. Apart from Stephen, only Lola had attended another post-16 institution, as she had completed a GNVQ Intermediate at her school sixth form, and then gone to St. Joseph's to continue on to the Advanced course. The fact that the college was the closest to them was also a common reason given for their choices, with six students claiming this was the case, and six stating that the college's good reputation had been one of their main motivating factors.

St. Joseph's was the only religious institution studied, as well as being the only sixth form college, thus slightly different answers were expected from the students here as compared to students in FE colleges and school sixth forms. This was not really the case, however, with ease and transportation issues being the main factors discussed, and only one student mentioned the fact that they wanted to go to a Catholic establishment. The only other answer that was deemed distinct to a sixth form college was that given by Hannah:

> *"I wanted to go to a sixth form college. I didn't want to be in a class with*
>
> *older people, I wanted to be in a class with people my own age, so I thought*
>
> *sixth form."* (Hannah, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

Hannah had been to a school without a sixth form, and felt that the atmosphere at an FE college would not be suitable for her, leaving her with the option of another school sixth form, or the sixth form college. It is perhaps more difficult to move into an institution where the great majority of students have known each other for several

years, than to go to a college where everyone is starting afresh, so it is unsurprising that she chose to attend St. Joseph's.

To conclude this section, similar responses were given by students in all types of institution when asked why they had decided upon that establishment, with a certain amount of apathy being shown: students in schools often had not considered alternatives, and were happy to continue with the familiar, and those in colleges had also not always considered alternatives and had instead chosen the college nearest to them. Of those who gave reasoned responses, school students were more likely to cite familiarity, as hypothesised, and college students more likely to want to meet new people and have more freedom. In the case of the sixth form college, many students had attended feeder schools and felt it was easier to follow the path of least resistance when moving on at the age of 16. There were obviously exceptions to this, with some students having considered other options and making an informed choice, but overall there were few differences between students at each institution.

Attitudes to Studying

Chapters Five and Seven have already discussed some aspects of the students' attitudes to their work, but this section looks in more detail at how the type of institution attended affected the importance students attached to their studies. As seen in Chapter Five, the biggest differences in the distribution of jugglers, workers and players were seen when comparing institution types, with schools containing many more jugglers and fewer workers and players than either FE or sixth form colleges. In FE colleges there was a more even spread among the student types, with a small majority of workers, and almost equal percentages of jugglers and players. In the one

sixth form college studied, the proportion of jugglers and players fell between that of schools and FE colleges, with a slightly higher proportion of workers than the other categories of institution. [See figure 8.1, below]. These differences between institutions were highly significant (using the actual figures rather than the percentages, χ^2=15.05 (2d.p.), d.f.=4, p=0.005 (3d.p.)) but as mentioned above, whether the institution type was the cause or the effect of the differences cannot be established from these figures.

	Jugglers	Workers	Players
FE Colleges	32	39	29
School Sixth Forms	67	20	13
Sixth Form College	41	41	18
Total	49	31	20

Table 8.1: Percentage of students in each category by institution type.

For example, one explanation for the greater numbers of jugglers in schools is that schools offered more opportunities for students to be involved in extra-curricular activities, but an alternative explanation is that jugglers sought out the school environment, knowing that if they went to an FE college they would not receive the external discipline they needed to ensure they concentrated on their studies. Workers, on the other hand, were safe enough in the knowledge that they would not be distracted from their work and could discipline themselves to study hard, regardless of external pressure, and so did not need the more restrictive atmosphere of the school sixth form. The atmosphere of the institution, whether perceived or in reality, could therefore have attracted student types in varying proportions.

An alternative explanation is that of effect: the dominant habitus of the institution could have influenced the students' attitudes to studying, and thus helped determine each student's type. A school, for example, by virtue of offering education to pupils aged 11 to 18, fosters an atmosphere of sheltered support, with less emphasis on individual subjects, and more of a focus on pastoral care and non-examined courses, such as PSHE and P.E.. Within the school habitus, therefore, students would feel that extra-curricular activities were normal and part of their life within the institution, and thus a school environment encourages students to 'juggle'. A college, on the other hand, is an institution associated both with obtaining a particular qualification, and also with a step towards adulthood. For this reason, students could pick up on either of these themes, and either become more likely to study for their qualification, or more likely to take advantage of the freedom and become players: juggling is not seen as part of the dominant college habitus. Within a sixth form college, such as St. Joseph's, the dominant habitus is more centred around studying, with an academic atmosphere encouraged by the lecturers, thus fewer Players are created or encouraged.

After examining the students' reasons for choosing their institutions, a combination of cause and effect can be deduced, with some jugglers choosing to remain at school because they felt a college atmosphere would not push them enough; for example:

> "I don't really fancy going to college, 'cos I don't think I'd do any work, cos they don't motivate you at all there, do they? That's what I hear anyway."

(Tom, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

Similarly with the large proportion of players in FE colleges, one explanation is that those who did not place great importance on their studies would have chosen an

institution that would not be constantly chasing them up for work. This was supported by many players in colleges claiming they did not want to remain in school because of the 'school atmosphere'. For some of the college students, however this was clearly not the case, especially many of the overseas students at City College, who often commented that they felt privileged to be at the college, as it gave them much greater opportunities than they would have had if they had remained in their own countries:

"Like it's a chance to give me a future, much better than I am right now."

(Dwayne, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

Alternatively, a lack of external pressure on FE college students could have led them to become less concerned about their studies, converting them to players. This suggestion is supported by the large numbers of students in colleges expressing the desire to be pushed more by their teachers, and the relative lack of school students wanting more pressure to be applied. Although the great majority of students everywhere felt stressed and pressurised to do well on their courses, for college students a lot of the pressure they undoubtedly felt was internal, rather than externally applied by the college, and as Players tended to apply little if any internal pressure, they were the students whose grades suffered the most. Several of the college interviewees expressed the wish that they were pushed more by the college, as they could work harder than they were doing. This brings us to a dilemma that students at this age faced; having to choose between a college, which offered the freedom they wanted, with less pressure and often therefore poorer results, and a school which would offer more external motivation, meaning better results, but at the expense of much of the freedom they desired. College students who had chosen the freedom often regretted this decision as they fell behind with their work, and lacked the motivation to put extra effort in without someone pushing them:

"I'd like to be pushed a whole lot more. Like school. I don't mind when they

treat you like adults, but sometimes I need to be pushed." (Leonard, A levels,

City College, Player)

One further point raised by the students in FE colleges, was the pressure from the

college to achieve good results. Although this seemed to contrast with the 'non-

pressurised' work ethic which some students complained about, this was not

necessarily the case: students were not pushed into completing work on schedule, but

they were constantly reminded that league tables were important, and that they would

have to get good grades to reflect well on the college.

At St. Joseph's College, according to the majority of those interviewed, one method

of trying to motivate students was by threatening to take people off courses if they did

not perform well either throughout the year or in end of year exams, adding to the

dominant academic habitus. Joanne was an example of a student who did not work

hard, and who was asked to leave one of her subjects, and yet it did not seem to have

motivated her more:

> *"Economics was really bad, cos I just didn't do the homework. I didn't pass*
>
> *the end of year exam, ...he didn't let me stay cos of my work through the*
>
> *year... I have been threatened myself, and I haven't done anything until now.*
>
> *But now I thought I want to sort myself out, I want to get my work done, cos*
>
> *it's only me. Teachers ask me why I don't do work and I can't answer, it's*
>
> *just me."* (Joanne, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Player)
>
> *"When I first came here everywhere you looked it was like 100% pass rate,*
>
> *100% pass rate, 97% pass rate, and I've worked out the way they do it is by*

chucking out those who aren't going to pass...But it's better if it's motivation from me, not from the teachers. Like if I do badly in exams, that's when I get upset with myself, and that's when I know I have to do something to sort it out. But if the teachers tell me something, I don't think it's the threat of being thrown out that makes me work." (Sharie, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

It has been shown many times by psychologists (for example, Deci and Ryan, 1985, and Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2000) that intrinsic motivation is more effective in the long term than extrinsic motivation, and the students above appeared to recognise this, with the pressure from the college having little effect. Perhaps surprisingly, none of the students in schools mentioned feeling pressurised from their school into performing well for the sake of league tables. Instead, in schools the main motivating factors came internally, either because the students were enjoying their courses, or because they had a more developed idea of their future plans, and recognised the need to do well at this stage of their education. At all institutions, those who enjoyed their courses, or had concrete long-term goals for which to aim tended to work harder than those who were still uncertain about their career paths, but more school and sixth form college than FE college students had made long term plans, hence higher motivation levels amongst those students.

Nonetheless some interviewees were happy to be treated in what they saw as a more adult fashion at college: Tracy, for example, had completed a year of A levels at her school sixth form before coming to the college, and felt she was treated differently in the two institutions, but did not believe this affected her work:

*"If you don't do the work then you don't get the mark, it's as simple as that.
I wouldn't be tempted not to [work]. ... But the way I look at it is if you don't
work hard here you'll never going to get to university, and you're going to
have a crappy job, and that will affect you for the rest of your life."* (Tracy,
A levels, City College, Juggler)

Some of the school students also felt they were left to study independently a lot of the
time, and had mixed feelings about it:

*"I like the teacher, like leading a lot, but doing it this way it's more
independent and you get to do it on your own, which I found is good for me,
cos it's helping me become more independent. But I did like the way the
teachers used to tell you what to do, I found it easy to learn that way."*
(Sarah, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

Students at St. Joseph's College were also of mixed opinions as to being pushed or
left to work independently, with many saying they were happy to be pushed by their
teachers, or stating that others would benefit from the extra impetus:

*"I mean you get people, I've got a few in my classes, who don't do the work,
and you think, why are you here if you don't want to do it? They could have
given someone else their place, 'cos they're totally not interested."* (Kerry, A
levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

None of those in schools, but several students at FE colleges reported having missed
lessons, reflecting the prevalence of players in colleges. Janet and Ione at Rural
College, for example, both freely admitted to missing some lessons, which appeared

to be partly a factor of the timetable: at Rural College A level lessons were held in three hour blocks, the middle hour of which was used for Resource Based Learning (RBL) or independent study. Even with the break in activity for the second hour, however, the three hour sessions just seemed too long for Ione and Janet on some days, as previously mentioned, and they did not go to the classes. Ione did not mind the fact that she was not pushed by the college, however, and instead thought it had shown her she could trust herself:

"I thought if I was given the opportunity I would play the nick all the time, but I don't, so it's proved something to me, that I do want to study, so I think it's quite good, the way it's really relaxed." (Ione, A levels, Rural College, Juggler)

At St. Joseph's College, few students missed their lessons, despite having a fuller timetable than most other 16-19 year old students, with a weekly 45-minute tutorial slot and a weekly RE lesson as well as longer subject lessons. Those who commented on missing lessons tended to say they couldn't afford to do so as it would mean too much catching up. Again, this reflects the expectations and norms of this college. Lola, Matthew and David admitted missing RE lessons, claiming they were boring and that they *"just talk about stuff"*. As they had seemed keen on discussions earlier, it was perhaps surprising that they did not enjoy the RE lessons, but although some students did praise them for being interesting discussions, more claimed not to see their relevance, and tended to miss them. Although their parents were notified if the students missed too many lessons, this was not enough of a deterrent for some, as they felt their parents would understand their reluctance to attend religious education lessons.

Despite many college students feeling they were not working as hard as they could have been, the vast majority felt that education was the most important thing to them at that time. Seventeen interviewees at City College and thirteen at Cornish College felt that their course, college, or their future education was uppermost in their priorities, although this was expressed in different ways, with some, such as Dwight and Tony for example, stressing the importance of going to university after finishing at college, and others concentrating on the course they were following at that time. Those who did not put their studies high on their list of priorities often experienced guilt in not doing so, and tended not to have a concrete long-term goal motivating them to do well on their course:

"You start the year saying that you are going to work, you're going to succeed, but by the time it comes to half way round, you start thinking 'what's the point?'" (Suzy, GNVQ, Urban College, Player)

School students were just as likely as FE college students to say their education was the most important thing in their lives at that time, with similar feelings of guilt if they felt this was not the case. As the large majority of school students were jugglers, it was not surprising that more of them mentioned outside interests as being important to them, however: five Clifftop School students mentioned a sport or a hobby, and two Urban School students mentioned their friends.

Sixth form college students also claimed education was the most important thing in their life, with 15 directly citing their courses, and a further four talking about their future education prospects. At other institutions, especially at City College, students

often expressed guilt in their studies not being their priority, or annoyance that they were; none of the students interviewed at St. Joseph's expressed such sentiments however, as they were either happy to accept that for the moment their education was the most important thing in their lives, or in a small number of cases were equally as happy that something else was, with no regret or guilt that it overshadowed their course. Yet again, this was obviously part of the dominant institutional habitus, with such feelings encouraged and expected by the staff.

Despite being slightly more likely than students at other institutions to claim their education was the most important thing to them at the time, students at FE colleges spent less time on work outside lessons than students at schools or the sixth form college: the average for FE college students was just over six hours a week, compared to over nine at St. Joseph's College and just under nine in school sixth forms. Few college students worked in their free periods, preferring to socialise or to leave college, either to go home or work at their part-time jobs. Although some students did report going to the library in their free periods, they often found they could not concentrate as it was too noisy, or that their friends proved too much of a distraction. GNVQ students at City College also raised the point that they found it difficult to find somewhere where they could get together and discuss group work, as they were not allowed to talk in the learning resources centre, but found it too noisy and full of distractions in the canteen:

"And if you work in the learning centre the staff are always there around you telling you not to talk and bugging you. So if you have to do group work you come to the canteen - humph!" (Halima, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

None of the colleges visited had a single common room area for students to meet and work together if desired and, as will be discussed later in this chapter, many college students expressed the need for such a space. Cornish College had several small common rooms, but none of the other colleges had social areas that were well used by students. St. Joseph's College did not have a large common room area, which some students would have liked to have seen, but all the school sixth forms had a communal area in which students could work or socialise with others in their year. These were heavily used by the students, as shown by the photographic diaries (for example, Figures 8.2 and 8.3) and the interview data.

Figure 8.2: *"This is the common room where I spend most of my time in the sixth form."* (Laura, GNVQ, Rural School, Juggler)

Figure 8.3: *"Chatting in the common room."* (Tom, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

Although the schools had libraries or learning resources centres, when in school, students also tended to like to study among their friends. In spite of the common rooms, as with FE college students, the majority of school students preferred to study at home, believing their friends were sometimes too much of a distraction in school:

> *"If you have a free lesson in the middle of the day you'd just go into the common room and talk to people, you don't get stuff done. But if I've got the rest of the day off I'll go home and probably do some work."* (Alex, A levels, Urban School, Worker)

At St. Joseph's College, students were equally as reluctant to work during their free lessons, preferring to leave the college grounds when they did not have lessons. Those who did try to work in the LRC admitted that they did little work, and instead used the time to socialise. Students at City School and Urban School sixth forms also mentioned that they like to use their free periods to catch up on sleep, as they were

often tired. Jugglers at St. Joseph's College also mentioned that they wished they were able to spend more time on their studies, but their lives were too full:

"You wish you could do more - you wish you could spend loads and loads of time on it, but you can't, you really can't. But because there's so much going on, if you could just do college, if it was just college, then you could spend more time on it, you could, but then now I find there's not enough hours in the day, even if I wanted to be doing more work, I can't do it." (Sharie, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

None of the college students mentioned this, however, suggesting it might be a factor of juggling too many interests as well as studying which caused the fatigue. Hayward and Stott (1998) found large amounts of stress among FE college students however, and claimed the whole area of stress in young people was under-researched. Although 75% of their survey sample had a part-time job, with 35% of these working for over nine hours a week, only 6% rated having a part-time job as 'very stressful'. Instead, the areas that caused them the most stress were examinations, college workload and deadlines. Worryingly, 14 of the students they questioned felt there was 'nothing' enjoyable in their life, a further 11 reported feeling 'not at all happy with myself', and a minority resorted to self harming as a way of reducing their stress levels. These findings suggested colleges needed to address the problem of student stress as a matter of urgency. An attempt to do so was made by David Blunkett (then Secretary of State for Education) in 2000, when he promised: *"I am now also increasing the funding for pastoral support in further education colleges by £6 million over the next two years."* (Blunkett, 2000), but unfortunately, despite this measure, the introduction of Curriculum 2000 appears to have had a negative effect on student stress levels,

with more students than ever reporting feelings of stress and tiredness. The Guardian reported in March 2001 that sixth formers were typically working 50 and 60-hour weeks to keep up with the demands of the new AS and A2 levels. This was echoed by the Times Higher Education Supplement in July 2002 by Roger Bushby, who claimed that AS level pupils were under too much work pressure, citing a two-year survey of AS levels by Jacky Lumby at Leicester University. Teaching staff were also worrying that the enrichment activities were suffering, with students being forced to give up hobbies and activities, as they simply did not have enough time to fit them in to their schedule as well as studying. The problem has not yet been addressed, with more recent articles, such as The Guardian, April 2003, claiming the pressures on young people taking Curriculum 2000 courses were continuing to increase, with more students than ever before needing medication for panic attacks and depression. In both schools and colleges therefore, there is a problem with student stress, which has worsened since the advent of Curriculum 2000, and which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency by all institutions. As the present study took place before the introduction of Curriculum 2000, these issues were not explored in the interviews.

To summarise this section, schools, FE colleges and the sixth form college showed that many opinions held by the students towards their studies were similar, but held by slightly different proportions in each institution. The majority of those interviewed felt that their education was the most important thing to them at that time, regardless of establishment attended, but there were fewer students in schools and the sixth form college who felt their studies took a lesser role in their lives. FE college students felt they could be pushed a little more, as they were not working to their full potential, but they had forfeited the external motivators for the increased freedom they perceived

the college would give them. Reflecting the prevalence of players in FE colleges, the average amount of time spent on college work outside of lessons was far less than that spent by sixth form college and school sixth form students, and was in part a product of the dominant college habitus. FE students were also more likely to miss lessons than school and sixth form counterparts, partly because they knew they would not suffer consequences from doing so. Students from all institutions, but especially schools and sixth form colleges were likely to report being stressed and tired, with this likely to have increased since the interviews took place, with the introduction of Curriculum 2000.

Tutorials

Tutorials and pastoral arrangements are one of the things which prospective students, and more particularly their parents, look at when deciding where to study at the age of 16: as seen above, a large number of students mentioned the idea that they wanted to be looked after or pushed by the institution, and some felt an FE college would not provide this level of care. Many colleges, nationally, see pastoral care as something which needs to be improved, as shown in research by Martinez (2001): he surveyed 80 'improving' colleges, and found 58% had worked on their tutorial arrangements as part of their improvement policy. Other research by Simkins and Lumby (2002) also found that tutorial arrangements varied extensively between colleges, with some having fully operational, regular tutorial meetings, and others having patchy provision. The findings from this study agree with this finding, as at each institution, the term 'tutorial' was used to mean different things, and they also varied widely between course types, especially within colleges. In some cases tutorials were practically non-existent, or occurred once a term, and in others they occurred every

day, for registration purposes, or every week, incorporating a PSHE or General Studies session. Much of the pastoral care offered was informal, with students arranging appointments with their tutors if they felt it would be useful. A further interesting finding was that at all the colleges, but not the schools, tutorial times were separate for GNVQ and A level students, and usually took a very different form depending on the course studied. This made it slightly difficult to compare provision between institutions, although the data from both the photographic diaries and the interviews raised some interesting points on this topic. For example, two of the school sixth form students took photographs of their tutor and a tutorial lesson, as did one of the sixth form college students, but none of those in FE colleges took a photo of either their tutor or a tutorial session.

Figure 8.4: *"Monday morning tutor time."* (Laura, GNVQ, Rural School, Juggler)

Figure 8.5: *"My form tutor, Mr. Dickson."* (Selmar, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

Figure 8.6: *"My tutor group every morning and afternoon."* (Nick, A levels, City School, Juggler)

FE Colleges did not have regular tutorial slots as such, with students able to book an appointment to see their tutor if necessary, but apart from that, usually the sessions were limited to a termly progress review on a one-to-one basis. This was not reflected

in the colleges' prospectuses however, with most claiming they provide regular tutorial and pastoral support: for example, the Cornish College booklet, 'Information for Parents/Guardians' (1999) claimed:

"Every student has a personal tutor and we aim to ensure that the tutor is also one of the student's teachers. This means that besides a weekly tutor meeting, the student will also meet his/her tutor at other times during the week... At regular intervals students will have a formal, documented tutorial review, where they will discuss their overall progress with their tutor. "

From the comments made by the students at Cornish College, however, this was not the case; although A level students did mention the tutorial review they did not mention weekly tutor meetings, and instead appeared to confuse tutorials with Core Studies lessons. The terms 'Core Studies', 'General Studies', and 'Tutorials' were used almost interchangeably by the A level students, with very little emphasis in any term being given to pastoral care. It seemed, however, that if a student wanted to arrange more time with their tutor, if they were particularly worried about something, this would have been easy to arrange, with tutors being willing to give up time to talk to students.

"[Tutorial time is] our core studies lesson. We have a single lesson and a double lesson a week of that. On a Wednesday morning we have a lecture and then a tutorial which follows up from the lecture. Then Friday afternoons on my timetable, we have a tutorial as well, carrying on from Wednesday's lesson. And we go through assignments and things like that. ... Occasionally we'll do a tutorial review, where we'll make an appointment with her and she'll fill out forms saying how well we're getting on with each

subject, and things like that. And there's reports as well, but I don't know

how often they are. " (Kylie, A levels, Cornish College, Worker)

The concept of tutorials was slightly different for GNVQ students than it was for A level students, with further variations within GNVQ subjects: in Art and Design for example, the tutor took students aside individually, and discussed any problems, while the rest of the class sketched, whereas in business studies, the tutorial slot was a whole class activity, where any difficulties with the course were discussed as a group. For those taking GNVQs, the tutor group was the same as their class, there was no mixing of subjects or courses. A level students also tended to be in tutor groups with other A level students taking similar subjects to themselves, and to have one of their subject teachers as their tutor. Neither A level nor GNVQ students appeared to want longer or more pastoral tutorial times, however, and were happy with the current arrangements.

Similarly at City College a booklet entitled 'Tutorial Handbook' (1999-2000) stated that:

> *"Each week all students meet as a group/individually with their tutor in the*
>
> *timetabled tutorial slot. In addition to group tutorials there is one review day*
>
> *each term. On these days all teaching stops and students are allocated*
>
> *appointment times. "*

It also later claimed that the one of the roles of the tutor was:

> *"To ensure delivery of an active tutorial programme in the weekly tutorial*
>
> *slot. "*

It must be noted that this booklet was produced for students in the 'Academic Centre' of the college, and therefore applied only to A level and not GNVQ students. It was clear from the interviews however that no such weekly meetings took place in the college, and instead A level students saw their tutor once a term, and in addition could arrange one-to-one meetings as required:

"For tutorials? No, not very often. Once a term, and that's it. I have him for maths though, so I do see him, but not tutorial times. ...I'm happy - I don't mind. Once a term is enough!" (Leonard, A levels, City College, Player)

For GNVQ students the situation was slightly different, with regular weekly tutorials being held, but as the students remained in their GNVQ class for the session the tutorial lacked a pastoral aspect, instead becoming another GNVQ lesson:

"We see him once a week officially, 'cos we have a tutorial every week, but we can drop in any time to see him. ... Well [in tutorial time] right now, for the last two months we've been doing exam practice ... And we go over past assignments, things we missed out. " (Habib, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

At Rural College, all students had a tutor, usually one of their teachers, and were expected to see them once a week, or more frequently if they had a problem. As at all other colleges, GNVQ and A level students were kept separate for this time, and often work was discussed in the session, although tutors also had helped students with personal and college-related problems.

The students at the FE colleges seemed happy with the tutorial provision, as they all mentioned that they could make an appointment with their tutor if they wanted to see

them, and did not feel a more regular tutorial session would have been useful or desirable. As many of these students had wanted the freedom of a college it was not surprising they were glad to move away from the tutorial system, which was seen as a school-based arrangement. This fits in with research by Bullock and Fertig (2003) who found that students saw college tutorials as being different from school tutorials, which they liked. In their study, students particularly liked the one-to-one sessions with their tutors, and generally liked the tutorial provision. A further finding from their work, which again was echoed by the present study, was that there was evidence that if the personal tutor was also the subject tutor, they tended to see the tutorial time as an opportunity to catch up on work that had not been covered in the lessons. This tended to detract from their role as a personal tutor (ibid. p.336). This was more common with GNVQ classes in this study, as in A level tutor groups, not all students were taking the same course, but GNVQ tutorials consisted of the GNVQ class, as discussed above. Although this study had a relatively small sample of FE colleges, therefore, it appears its findings are similar to those found elsewhere.

St. Joseph's College had a very different tutorial system, although as at the other colleges, A level and GNVQ students were separated for this session, and had very different experiences of what 'tutorial time' actually meant. There was a very fixed tutorial system, with each student, regardless of course, having a 45-minute session every week in a tutor group. The groups were made up of students following similar courses, with GNVQ students remaining in their classes and A level students being grouped with others taking similar subjects. GNVQ students tended to talk more about their course in their tutorial times, whereas A level students were given sessions on topics such as stress and time-management skills.

One thing which did come across very strongly was that pastoral care was taken very seriously by the college; as seen above, in many other institutions, tutors were allotted time for tutorials but tended to prefer to operate a 'drop in' type session for those who needed it, rather than have a full tutor session every week. At St. Joseph's however, every week a full tutor group was called together: for some this was a good time, for others less so:

"I can go and talk to her if I've got any problems with my work and she's

really understanding. " (Sarah, A level, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

Despite Sarah saying she liked her tutor and felt she could go to her with any problems, she was not quite so sure that the scheduled tutorials were the best use of her time:

"It's alright. Sometimes when I've got a lot of work on it seems like a bit of a

waste of time. I mean 45 minutes ...They just sort of seem to generalise like

the problems of young people, if you know what I mean. 'You've all got

them, you all behave in exactly the same way'. " (Sarah, A level, St. Joseph's

College, Worker)

Sarah's frustration at this use of her time can be understood in part by realising she was a Worker, and thus would have preferred to have spent her time more productively, studying, perhaps. Dwight, another Worker, also did not believe they did anything useful in tutor time, although they did do more than in all the other institutions studied:

"Tutor time? We don't really do anything ...we do stress management and

stuff like that, how to cope with the exams and stuff. You've heard it all

before by the time you've reached this stage, and you're used to it and

you're sick of it. " (Dwight, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

He eventually conceded that perhaps the skills they were taught in this time might be useful for getting to university. It is noteworthy that when asked about the skills they thought they had learnt since being at the college, no one mentioned any of the topics covered by the tutorial sessions. This could be because as Dwight said, they have covered those topics many times at school already, and therefore are not being taught anything new, suggesting the sessions are not choosing the most appropriate subjects.

When the year 12 students were being interviewed, UCAS applications were uppermost in their minds, and a lot of tutorial time had been spent on that, for the A level students at least:

"We have, firstly we have information about what's going on and what needs

to be done. At the moment they're doing things on UCAS. And sometimes

we've had a couple of talks." (Owen, A levels, St. Joseph's College,

Worker)

None of the GNVQ students mentioned UCAS applications connected with tutorial time, suggesting the divide between the two groups of students was felt not just by the students but by the teachers as well, although obviously the course aim for GNVQs was not necessarily continuation into HE but also into employment.

As mentioned above, it was obvious that pastoral care was taken very seriously by St. Joseph's College, perhaps as it was seen as something which differentiated the college from nearby FE colleges, which had rather less formal tutorial arrangements. This ties in with findings from a Leicester study which found that sixth form colleges tended to

emphasise pastoral support and a tutorial system, providing 'cushioned adulthood' (Lumby *et al.*, 2002).

Students in schools tended to have registration every morning and afternoon in their tutor groups, as well as a weekly tutorial session which generally involved the tutor updating them with any information about the school, and perhaps helping them with any problems they might have been having. At all the schools visited, A level and GNVQ students were integrated for tutorial sessions, although this was likely to be due to the relatively small numbers of GNVQ students as well as, perhaps, an underlying idea of improving relations between the two groups of students. The bringing together of students on different courses had its advantages, such as hopefully reducing prejudice among A level students towards their GNVQ counterparts, but also disadvantages: for example, some topics which might have been discussed during a tutorial, such as exam preparation or coursework, would vary in significance for different types of student. At City School, a further problem was highlighted by Arisa, as her tutor had had little or no experience of GNVQ students. Although Catrin and Arisa found their tutors were very helpful whilst filling in UCAS forms and sorting out problems to do with applying to universities, as Arisa's tutor had not come into contact with GNVQ students before, and was therefore not familiar with their course, she asked questions such as "When are your exams?" This did not instil Arisa with great confidence in her tutor's abilities to deal with any course specific problems she might have had.

As with college students, by the time students reached the school sixth form, regardless of course, they seemed to find tutors and tutorials less important than they

had previously. At Rural School, for example, although the year group was split into tutor groups, they did not feel this was a useful distinction:

> *"I think, to tell you the truth, the tutor groups are more strong in that school [nodding at the main school building] than they are in here ... if there's nothing in the tutor group we just end up in the common room anyway, and just talk, unless we're doing something like personal statements."* (Jason, A levels, Rural School, Player)

Other Rural School students were also of the opinion that tutor groups were slightly redundant in the sixth form, with everyone being part of 'one big tutor group'. More important was the Sixth Form Council; each tutor group had two representatives to sit on the sixth form council. This met regularly, with the Head of Sixth form sitting in, but not interrupting the proceedings, and together they tried to sort out any problems or arrange activities for the sixth form. (See Fig 8.7 from Peter's diary). Most of the students interviewed at Rural School were members of the council and all of them seemed to think it was a good idea.

Figure 8.7: *"The council minutes."* (Peter, A levels, Rural School, Worker)

At Rural School, therefore, the distinction was seen between the sixth form and the rest of the school, and also between council and non-council members, but less so between tutor groups.

Clifftop School had taken this one step further, and although they divided Year 12 students into tutor groups, Year 13 was seen as one large tutor group, with the Head of Year as the tutor. This appeared to take some getting used to by the students, but once they got used to not having a small individual tutor group, they seemed to like this arrangement.

All students at Urban School had a tutor in the sixth form: for some this was the same tutor they had had in the lower school, but in many cases, due to numbers, in Year 13

at least, groups were merged and altered. As well as registering with their tutor every morning and afternoon, there was one lesson on personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) every two weeks, which could be equated with a tutor period in the other schools. It was interesting that when asked if they did anything in school apart from their subjects, not a single student mentioned PSHE or tutor time without prompting: it was clear that the majority did not see it as a useful time, from their later discussions. Ben for example said this about PSHE:

"I think in the sixth form we could probably do without it ... it's not really utilised very well. And it's not particularly well organised, and the tutors don't seem to take it all that seriously." (Ben, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

Others felt similarly, and Tom was particularly vociferous about tutor times:

"We have tutor for one hour every two weeks, but we don't really do anything. I don't see the point of having a tutor group - I think we should just turn up for our lessons and then go home." (Tom, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

When asked what he likes least about the school, and what he would change if he could, he then went on to say:

"Maybe getting rid of tutorials and stuff - not having a tutor and just coming to the lessons."

Notably, neither he nor Martha took any photographs of their tutor group. Just one student, Julie, had something positive to say about the tutorial system:

"It's a nice break from all the other classes. ... And my tutor at the moment is very good, and he checks that everything's going okay and that you're

347

okay. So it's nice to get a bit of reassurance from him." (Julie, A levels,

Urban School, Juggler)

Whereas the students were not fond of the tutorial system in general, several had

positive comments to make about their tutors. They also were very positive about

their head of year, who for some seemed to be taking the role of tutor:

"Our head of sixth form is lovely. She helps me set my deadlines with my

work. I go and see her every now and then to check how I'm doing." (Janie,

A levels, Urban School, Player)

There were no activities at Urban School, such as those organised by Clifftop School,

to promote a sense of group spirit, but the negative comments about them from the

students at Clifftop School suggested this was probably a good thing. Although tutor

time was almost universally disliked and thought a waste of time, it was this pastoral

system which schools used to attract students, telling them they would be looked after

better in a sixth form than they would in a college: students liked the idea of having

someone watching over them and keeping them on track, but did not like to devote

their free time to tutor activities. A lot of PSHE or tutorials seemed to be spent on

UCAS application forms, which was not applicable to all students. Apart from a few

speakers, which the students found useful, in the main, there seemed to be little else

covered, and as many of those interviewed acknowledged, they tended to spend their

form period doing homework and revision. The argument against tutor time seemed

not to be that they begrudged the time away from their studies, or that they did not

like their tutor, but that they did not see anything useful coming out of the lessons;

seeing as only a small number of students thought they had learnt study skills or time

management skills, perhaps this would be a good opportunity to introduce such competencies.

Although at first glance it might have appeared that school sixth forms and a sixth form college offered a more supportive tutorial system, on closer inspection it was apparent that this was not necessarily the case: FE colleges rarely made use of any timetabled tutorial sessions, whereas schools and the sixth form college tended to have regular tutorials, but students felt this time was not useful, and they had learnt little or nothing from it. As FE college tutors tended to teach students in their tutor group, they would have seen them regularly and been a familiar face for students who felt the need for tutorial support: in all colleges students reported that they could see their tutors whenever they wanted to do so. If schools felt the need for regular tutorial sessions they should make sure the topics discussed were relevant to the needs of the students, rather than seen as a nuisance and a chore to attend. Equally, colleges should not advertise the fact that they offer comprehensive pastoral care if they do not, in practice, adhere to their promises, as it misleads both potential students and their parents.

Informal learning

As discussed in the previous chapter, although the main aim of post-compulsory education is to achieve a qualification, there are many other objectives of this time, such as preparing students for employment or higher education. A small number of students did not feel they had learnt anything apart from their courses since they had been at their institutions, but others felt they had developed other skills and attributes, which were not always explicitly taught through the school or college. In some cases

it was difficult to determine whether these qualities were simply a matter of maturity or if the establishment had helped promote them in some way: the only way to decide would have been to have questioned young people of a similar age who had not remained in education, to ascertain if they also felt they had developed these skills at this time. That however was beyond the scope of this study, thus we must rely on the words of the students.

The assumption could be made that students who left their schools at 16 and travelled to a new institution, either an FE college or a sixth form college, would have acquired more skills than a student who had remained in the same environment for another two years. Small achievements such as meeting new people, making friends, finding one's way around a new building, or even town, and having more freedom than previously experienced could all contribute to qualities such as increased confidence or responsibility. It was therefore hypothesised that students in colleges would report more informal learning than their school counterparts. This was not found to be the case, although the types of skills reported did vary slightly between institutions. For example, two FE college students, compared with three sixth form college and none of the school students, reported having developed politeness and a respect for other peoples' opinions:

> *"To get on with people and not open my big mouth straight away, and to, I dunno, give people a chance more ... and I've learned to control myself a bit more, and be more polite and stuff."* (Ione, A levels, Rural College, Juggler)
>
> *"I've learnt about how different people have different values and views... It's opened my mind a bit more, got to see how other people think."* (Dwight, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

All three students from St. Joseph's College giving this response were studying A levels, suggesting there might have been something about the way those lessons were taught which encouraged the sharing of ideas and opinions which did not occur in GNVQ classes. They were not all from the same ethnic background, with Kerry and Owen being White and Dwight being Black African. Dwight had previously been to an all boys school, however, and the transition from this to a coeducational environment may have affected his views. It was not surprising that school sixth form students did not report similar qualities as they would still have been mixing with the same people they had been with for the last five years, and therefore would have had little opportunity to learn about new points of view. They also would have been with students of a similar age, and would have had familiar teachers, so would not have felt they had changed their perception of older people, as some of the college students obviously had. The idea of developing politeness, or 'respect' is interesting, suggesting that prior to college the students were not as polite: this could have been a case of the students being on their 'best behaviour' in a new environment as they attempted to forge new friendships and relationships with their teachers.

The most common answers overall when asked what the students had learned apart from their courses, were social skills and communication skills, although, as mentioned in Chapter Seven, these terms were often used interchangeably, primarily meaning the ability to talk to other people. Fourteen school based students, 12 FE college students and three sixth form college students claimed they had improved their ability to communicate with others and make new friends. As seen in the previous chapter, this was one of the key skills taught at that time as part of the

GNVQ course, and it was therefore surprising that more GNVQ students did not mention it, but the response was spread between students on both A levels and GNVQs:

> *"I've really improved my communication, cos you've got stuff like presentations and all that."* (Isobel, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Worker)
>
> *"Socially I've probably developed. I've got to know people in the college."*
>
> (Aaron, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Player)

Although these students were both doing the same course at the same college they had picked up on slightly different skills, with Isobel concentrating on applying communication skills to her course, and Aaron concentrating on new friendships. This is typical of their respective types: as a Worker, Isobel concentrated more on her studies and was therefore more likely to pick up skills from her work, whereas Aaron, a Player, concentrated on the social side of his life, and this was thus where he felt he had developed and learned his new skills.

As school students were remaining in the same environment with almost exactly the same students as they had spent the previous five years of their education, it was difficult to see how their social skills had developed, as there was no necessity to meet new people or make new friends. The following students offered some insights as to why it might be the case that these skills were developed in spite of the situation:

> *"Social skills ... you don't get taught it, it's just something you pick up. ... Like if we have a class with eight or nine people, you have to get on with the other people."* (Dale, A levels, Clifftop School, Player)

"I've become more friendly with people that I wouldn't have spoken to in

this year ... maybe it's because we're more isolated than in the main school.

... because when you're all in the common room, it's quite close." (Claire, A

levels, Rural School, Worker)

As classes were smaller at this level than lower down the school, getting on with one's classmates became more important to the school students; as tutor groups were also altered at this stage and students found themselves in classes with people they had not known very well before hand, new friendships developed. Perhaps less didactic teaching and learning methods, such as group discussions, also helped social skills to develop. According to Claire, the sense of self-containment that the sixth formers experienced served to make them closer as a community, with new friendships developing and social barriers breaking down. This might have been particular to Rural School, however, as it was a new sixth form and they were the first year to inhabit the sixth form block area, hence a tendency to unite and form a cohesive group.

Connected with the acquisition of social and communication skills was the development of confidence in students: two students from the sixth form college, and five each from schools and FE colleges claimed their confidence levels had increased since starting their courses.

"I've got loads more confidence than I had. I find it easier to go up and talk

to people now." (Jacquie, GNVQ, Rural School, Juggler)

Jacquie went on to discuss that her confidence had increased because more boys spoke to her since the start of the sixth form than previously. Others felt the subjects

they were taking, such as drama or languages, had helped increase their confidence levels as they regularly had to speak in front of the rest of the class.

Linked to confidence, many students reported growing in maturity since they had been on their courses, although as mentioned earlier this could have been a factor of increasing age rather than of the schools and colleges per se. Supporting this supposition is the fact that similar numbers of students from all institutions claimed to have matured (one in the sixth form college; three in school and four in FE colleges) and some of those said themselves that they did not think it was entirely due to the institution:

> *"I think I've matured a lot … I don't think we've learnt any skills really in school though. … I don't know if it's the result of the sixth form or just growing up and getting older. Probably both really."* (Liam, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

Liam, therefore, thought that his general maturity came not simply from his school, but also from generally growing up. He also went on to discuss the role his parents had in helping him mature, commenting that: *"My parents I think, they're different now. I kind of talk to them about things, have conversations with my dad about things"*. Whether his reaction to his parents and vice versa was a cause or an effect of his growing maturity, it is hard to say, but it is clear that there were several different factors at work in his maturation. This fits with Reay's (1998) work, where she claimed that although schools have institutional habituses, young people are members of many different habituses, such as family, friendship groups, neighbourhoods etc., and are therefore continually reconstructing their own habituses. Liam was adjusting his own personal habitus to fit in with the altered school habitus and the changing

family habitus, and was probably also influenced by his part-time job and that institutional habitus (see earlier section on part-time employment).

FE College students seemed to feel that being treated more as an adult by the colleges had directly affected their maturity levels, however, and also increased their sense of responsibility:

> *"We've grown up a lot. We respect people more I think, now we're at*
> *college when we were at school we just didn't care ... Like the lecturers,*
> *they treat you older, so you're going to act older, and you're going to*
> *respect them for treating you older."* (Wendy, GNVQ, Cornish College,*
> Player)

> *"I think I've grown up a lot, being in a different environment, and if you're*
> *treated like an adult you act like one."* (Harry, A levels, Rural College,
> Juggler)

This suggests that although a certain amount of maturity at this age was an inevitable part of growing up, colleges tended to foster feelings of responsibility and maturity by treating the students as the adults they were becoming. Schools, on the other hand, tended to treat the sixth form students in a similar way to how they had done so earlier in the school, as the period of transition from child to adult was not so easily identified, so any maturity which had been gained by these students was likely to have come from outside sources and/or general aging, as Liam stated. Also, although habituses are not inflexible, they change only very slowly over time, with changes which do occur tending to be elaborations rather than fundamental changes (Swartz, 1997, p.107). It is therefore unlikely that a school sixth form could develop a different

habitus to the rest of the school, and thus the dominant feeling within the school would be that of an institution for younger, less mature, pupils.

As FE colleges were perceived as allowing more freedom and independence, it was thought that their students would have learned to take responsibility for their own work and learned skills such as time management and organisational skills. Conversely, as school and sixth form college students were allowed less freedom and were pushed more by their teachers it was thought they would have been less likely to have learnt these sorts of skills. The results were opposite to this, with more school students reporting they had learned to manage their work (n=5) or had developed time management skills (n=4) than college students (n=0 and n=1 respectively). One student, Sarah, at the sixth form college also reported learning time management skills:

> *"Time management. Prioritising things."* (Tom, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

> *Bridget - You've got to learn to work yourself - they're not going to give you detentions here, so you have to discipline yourself.*

> *Becky   They've said that if you don't do the work they'll kick you off the courses though.* (Bridget and Becky, A levels, Clifftop School, Jugglers)

Becky (above) highlighted the fact that although in theory at this level students had to manage their own learning, and whether they chose to study was up to the individual, the school was always there to make sure studying was taking place. One possible reason for school students feeling they had learned to manage their time and work effectively, despite having the school to help them to do so, was that more Jugglers attended school sixth forms than any other institution. Jugglers were more likely to

have to organise their lives to fit in around their schoolwork, whereas Workers had fewer outside interests and so there was less pressure for them to use their time effectively. Likewise Players did not prioritise their academic work, so did not feel the need to manage their lives around their studies. As the jump from GCSEs to A levels or GNVQs was felt to be great in some cases, it was likely that the amount of time spent on homework had increased with the move into post-16 education, and thus Jugglers would have had to have learned quite quickly how to fit this in with their other interests. Another possible reason for school students being more likely to have reported learning time management skills is that schools tended to view 'juggling' as a positive, character building development in a young person, as mentioned above, and encouraged outside interests. In contrast, colleges did not foster outside interests to the same extent, and in general were less aware of the students' other interests.

The skills discussed thus far have been 'soft skills', not directly taught on any courses (although as seen earlier, some courses such as languages and drama indirectly fostered confidence) but some students claimed to have been directly taught 'hard skills', such as IT and numeracy. In some cases these were part of the GNVQ courses, but many A level students also reported improving their IT abilities, as discussed in the previous chapter. Other skills such as note taking, study skills and examination techniques were also mentioned, more often by school students than by FE college or sixth form college students (twelve school students compared with none of the sixth form college students and eight FE students). This could be the effect of tutorials, which although students often claimed were a waste of time since they already knew

what they were being taught in those sessions, seem to have transferred some additional skills to the students:

"At the moment we've just started revision, and we've all begun to learn that we haven't really been doing the right sort of stuff at the right time, so I suppose, with an exam course, you learn how to structure your time and stuff and learn skills like exam technique and things like that." (Nick, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

The only remaining difference between institutions was that five of the FE college students but none of the others claimed that they had not learned anything apart from their courses since being at the institution. All the students who felt they had learned nothing from their time at college were at City College, suggesting there were problems specific to that college in this area. Unfortunately this only emerged as an issue after analysis, and was not noticed at the time of the interviews, and thus could not be explored in more depth. The only explanations which could help to account for the perceived lack of informal learning at City College were the lack of regular tutorials, where study skills for example could have been taught (although this was common to all colleges in the study), and the lack of attendance at the key skills classes by A level students.

Overall, although students from all institutions felt they had learned skills and developed qualities since starting their courses, these differed slightly according to the institution type: those at FE colleges were more likely to report increased maturity and levels of responsibility, whereas school sixth form students were more likely to have learned hard skills such as note-taking or examination techniques. Students at

the sixth form college reported an increased awareness of others' opinions and a broadening of their own views. This seemed to be particular to that institution, and perhaps was a consequence of the RE lessons and tutorials which saw students taking part in discussions and debates.

Extra-curricular activities and social lives

As discussed in Chapter 7, there was a difference in the social lives of students in rural and urban areas, with London-based students relying less on their institutions for friendships, having more opportunities for varied social lives, and more likely to meet friends through part-time employment. The type of institution attended also had a large effect on the students' social lives and the take-up rate of extra-curricular activities, with school students more likely to have become involved with school-based activities than their college counterparts. The use of photographic diaries was particularly useful for examining the social lives of the students both within and independent of the institution, and the data from these along with the interviews was combined to give an overall picture of the students' lives outside of the classroom.

Students at all the FE colleges complained about the lack of facilities available for use in their free time: very few took part in any organised activities through the college, and many thought there were limited opportunities for socialising in their free periods. Students at Rural and Urban Colleges had recently returned from college trips abroad, however, with Chester (Urban College) and Rachel (Rural College) compiling photographic diaries from these trips (see, for example, Figure 6.3, above), indicating there were some events organised by the colleges. At Cornish College very few

students took part in organised extra-curricular activities: Luke used the college gym on a regular basis (see Figure 8.9) however, which helped his fitness as he played table tennis for Cornwall (see Figure 8.8).

Figure 8.8: *"Me playing table-tennis. I play for Cornwall and in the British league. I also recently got sponsored!"* (Luke, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

Figure 8.9: *"The college gym. I have to keep fit so I come here about five out of seven days a week for one to two hours each time."* (Luke, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

Similarly at City College few were involved in extra-curricular college activities, with a small number of exceptions: as mentioned in Chapter Seven, Barika, Tracy and Rafalek were all class representatives in the student union, although as they had only just been recruited they were not yet sure what this would involve:

"I'm a student rep now. You take the views ... of the people you're surrounded by, your classes ... I think it's a wonderful thing. I haven't seen all the papers yet, but I think it will be good - we can get things done. And of course it's something to put on your CV." (Tracy, A levels, City College, Juggler)

The other activity which two students, Rafalek and Tracy took part in through the college was the Millennium Volunteers scheme, where students could do work experience in the community to gain an award. Rafalek had been doing this for a while, but Tracy was just starting:

"I'm at this centre, mainly at reception, on Monday afternoons, answering calls, filling in forms, and making sure that everyone comes in is okay. And I've started doing casework with the lawyers like mock casework, but you do cases. So that's quite good." (Rafalek, A levels, City College, Juggler)

Naomi had also been involved with Black History Week, which had seen the college putting on various activities (see Figure 8.10, for example).

Figure 8.10: *"Dancing away, 'Black History Week'."* (Naomi, A levels, City College,
Worker)

At Rural College, only Lauren was involved with college activities, taking part in the
Duke of Edinburgh scheme. She had also been involved in the Student Union, but had
been fed up, as it was just her and her friends. Before they stopped however, they
organised a couple of things, as she put it:

> *"We did a few things for the college - well for the sixth form bit. We got a*
>
> *Christmas tree!"* (Lauren, A levels, Rural College, Worker)

The way in which Lauren spoke about the college showed that she felt that she
belonged in the sixth form centre (where A level courses were based) but less so to
the college as a whole: the two areas had very separate identities for her, and she only
belonged to one of them. None of the Urban College students reported doing anything
apart from their lessons at the college.

By contrast, many of those in schools had interests that they pursued in school. At Clifftop School, for example, eleven students had been, or were still, involved in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, and received much help from the school to complete their awards. At Rural School the sixth form organised a Youth Award scheme, where students could take part in activities and work experience in the community to achieve an award. There were mixed feelings towards this use of their free time, but some students such as Laura, who was organising a talent show at her local youth club as part of her award, enjoyed it. The extra-curricular activities at Urban School were slightly more academically inclined, with philosophy and 'critical thinking' classes, which were not subject to examination. Other students helped younger pupils, particularly those with special needs, with reading and other lessons and appeared to enjoy doing so. A small number of students were involved with music in the school, such as Ben who played the steel pans, also involving him with younger pupils. Janie played for the school football team and also taught younger girls football after school once a week. For these students, therefore, part of their social lives were tied up with the younger pupils in the school, which was obviously not possible in a college environment. City School was the only school in which the students interviewed did not report taking part in any extra-curricular activities, although as this was involved in the pilot study only eight students were interviewed here, so this could be a result of sampling bias.

At St. Joseph's College there were limited opportunities to take part in activities, and few students seemed to do so. Enrichment activities were timetabled into a weekly

slot, and could comprise, for example, sports, first aid classes, or work experience, but few students reported using the supposedly compulsory enrichment time:

"I don't do anything. I haven't been told I've got to do anything. If I was told I would probably do something!" (Kerry, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

"And last year we had enrichment as well, but now I've got subjects in enrichment time, so I can't do anything else besides college work." (Isobel, A level, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

From the comments made by Kerry, above, the college was not particularly strict about making sure students took part in enrichment activities, and in the case of Isobel, she was unable to do so as she had lessons clashing with the session times. This suggests that the college did not see the sessions as an important part of the student experience, and assigned them a low priority, showing a difference between espoused policy and policy in action.

Students at both of the London FE colleges and the sixth form colleges felt there were racial problems, with each racial group becoming quite insular. Phillippa and Suzy at Urban College, for example, both claimed to have friends from different ethnic backgrounds, but felt the atmosphere at the college was not conducive to mixing with different races - there were areas where the black students went, areas for Asian students, and areas for white students, and they felt uncomfortable if they crossed the boundaries. The matter of racism, or at least segregation, was also mentioned by several students at City College, who felt there was a clear divide between those of different colours: this was strikingly apparent as I observed students in the canteen several times, where individuals tended to group together with others of the same

ethnic background as themselves. Comments on this aspect of the college included the following extract from a group interview, with two Black students (Rafalek and Susan) and one White student (Charles):

Susan   I can't explain it ... you get the White people sitting there, the Black people there, the Chinese, the Indians, it's just different ethnic groups sitting in their own little department or side or whatever. Not actually mixing together.

Rafalek - You can see that even in our class.

Susan - Yeah, this side is where the White people are, and this side is where the Black people are. Except Rafalek and the mixed people. I don't know if they know it themselves, but the mixed race people, the mixed race girl, she sits here in between the two.

Would you feel funny if you sat on the other side?

Susan   I wouldn't feel funny, but I feel I've got more in common with the people sitting over this side. I feel they could understand me more than people in that side. I mean if I went on that side, I think the most that we could talk about is the lesson. Or maybe the weather.

Charles   I would feel funny. I don't know why that is - it definitely would feel strange though. In my old school it is completely different, there's loads and loads of different races. Like in the sixth form, there's only about 12 people, but there's only two people of any one race, there's all different cultures, so everyone sits together.

Susan   The bigger it gets, the worse you are divided up. (Susan (Juggler), Charles (Worker) and Rafalek (Juggler), A levels, City College)

Susan's point that the bigger the institution, the more segregated it would be, is likely to be correct, as if there are only a small number of people of any racial group, it becomes difficult for them to remain self-sufficient socially, as Charles mentioned with regard to his previous school. As institutions such as City and Urban Colleges were large, however, with large numbers of students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, they would find it relatively easy to remain within their own enclave.

At St. Joseph's College there had been attempts to alter that, with some success, but other colleges had yet to try to change the segregation.

> *"I think there is racial problem here though. I think, I mean, it is very friendly, but you get this everywhere you go. And I know we all talk about racial equality, but it's not really put into practice here is it? It's a bit of a taboo subject really."* (Kerry, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

For most students, the majority of their friends were of the same race as themselves, but the majority did not see this as a problem, and instead as an inevitable consequence of going to a college with such a broad ethnic mix:

> *"I think we do come together and mix, and we get on and all the rest of it, and there's nothing you can do about it. You can put people together and that's fine, but at the end of the day we all go home our separate ways."*
> (Owen, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

Several of those interviewed at St. Joseph's College mentioned the changes that had taken place in the canteen, which they saw as trying to reduce segregation based on colour:

> *"They've changed the diner, 'cos we had a bit of segregation in the diner - the White people used to be on one side, and the Blacks on the other. So*

they've changed it around so everyone has to mix. ... I do think it's a good thing, 'cos everyone needs to interact with each other." (Isobel, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

"When I first came here, the right side of the canteen was full of black people, and the left side full of white people. It was crazy!" (Selmar, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

At St. Joseph's College, Selmar (who was Black-African) had only one photo of a white person in his photo diary, and Hannah had none of any black people in her diary. This could also have been a factor of where they lived: Hannah lived in a mainly white area, whilst Selmar lived in a black-dominated area, and as discussed below, the majority of socialising took place with people students knew before coming to college, that is, those they lived near, or with whom they went to secondary school. It is difficult to know what, if anything could be done to alter this situation; people tend to gravitate towards those similar to themselves (for example, Griffit and Veitch, 1973; Rubin, 1973; Duck, 1992), so it was not surprising that students of the same ethnicity socialised with each other. Even within classrooms students had a tendency to sit with those from a similar background as themselves, as they felt more comfortable with them, and had more common ground about which to talk. It is only if this escalates into intolerance of other ethnicities or groups of people that this would be classed as a problem. With 49% of the student population at City College being classed as from minority ethnic groups, the college was more mixed in terms of race than most colleges, especially when compared to those from more rural areas, such as Cornwall, and was therefore more likely to suffer from segregation as a result; as Susan herself said, *"the bigger it is, the worse you are divided up."* Schools

did not have this problem, and neither did the rural institutions studied, mainly as they both had few, if any, ethnic minorities. The fact that schools had a smaller proportion of ethnic minorities was not simply a sampling factor: recent figures showed that 27% of white 16 year old were in state schools, compared to 34% in sixth form and FE colleges, while only 22% of black 16 year olds were in schools, compared to 57% in colleges (Guardian, 29 April 2003). The trend for non-white students to attend a college after their GCSEs rather than remain in a school sixth form, was very much an urban issue, however, with few ethnic minority students in rural areas. Again, this is a point to bear in mind when discussing national policy: all areas of the country do not have the same problems and issues facing them, with racial segregation being a nationwide problem, but only in selected areas of the country, i.e. urbanised towns and cities.

Another difference between students at schools, FE colleges and sixth form colleges, was the proportion of friends students had within the same institution as themselves. It would seem obvious perhaps that school students would know more of their peers, having spent up to seven years being educated alongside them, but as seen earlier in this chapter, one of the main reasons given by college students for attending a college was to make new friends and meet people. It is therefore suggested that college students would have made more of an effort to make new friends since embarking on their courses, and would therefore be as likely to have friends within the same institution. This was not the case, however, with school students having many more friends within the school than college students did within the college.

At Urban School, for example, the majority (n=12) claimed that all or most of their friends were also at their school, with a further five saying they had similar numbers of friends from in and out of school, and a minority (n=5) saying that their friends were mostly from outside school. For Gary and Eden, who both fell into the last of these groups, this was not surprising, as Eden had left school and then returned after all her peer group had left, and Gary had only been at Urban School for a few months. Similarly at Clifftop, Rural and City Schools, the majority in every school reported that most of their friends were at the same school. It was not the case that school sixth formers did not have outside friends, however, as many had other friends whom they had met through part-time employment, had been in the lower school with, or simply lived near. For example, not all of Cordelia's friends shown in her pictures remained at Clifftop School, with some of them going to Cathedral College:

"We meet up with people who are in Cathedral College and things, we were like a group of mates in Year 11, and a few of us stayed here, and a few of us went there, but we all meet up and keep in touch with each other, or we try to." (Cordelia, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Juggler)

In colleges however, the trend was reversed, with the majority of students having more friends from outside than inside the institution; this applied to both FE and sixth form colleges:

"You make friends but you just talk to them just to make conversation, but you've got your own friends outside of the class... I'm just going to come here and do my work, and have my own friends outside of college." (Emma, GNVQ, City College, Player)

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"I go out with friends from my old school. I don't really know as many people from college, cos it's not such a tight atmosphere ... I mean I make friends with people, but you don't really go out with people." (Tracy, A levels, City College, Juggler)

Helen at St. Joseph's chose a photograph to put in her diary of her friends from college but made the point that she had also gone to school with them (Figure 8.12).

Figure 8.12: *"Me and friends at St. Joseph's. All at secondary school together as well."* (Hannah, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

This revealed that even those students who had many friends within the college often brought them with them from their old schools, rather than making new friends once they had arrived at the college. As many of the students at St. Joseph's College had come from Catholic feeder schools, they had arrived with a number of students they already knew, thus the situation was more noticeable there than at the FE colleges. Although all St. Joseph's College students said they had made friends since they had

been at the college, only a small minority (n=5) socialised outside college with their college friends, with most preferring to socialise with old school friends. All five of those who socialised with their new friends more often were male, with female interviewees being less involved, on average, with their new friends than males. There were many students who restricted their friendships with fellow college students to within college time, and outside of college they met up with old friends.

To summarise the experiences of students in different types of institutions as regards their social lives, those who remained at school tended to take part in more institution-based activities, and often involved themselves with the lower school at some level, either by helping with special needs pupils, or coaching their sports teams for example. They did have outside interests and friendships from beyond their school, but the majority felt they had more friends within the school than outside. The fellow students with whom they were friends were just as likely to be from different courses to themselves as their own courses, and there were no signs of racial segregation. Conversely, in FE and the sixth form college, students were less likely to take part in any activities organised by the college, partly because there were few of these from which to choose. Apart from those who had arrived at the college with friends from their schools, few had made deep friendships with fellow college students, and tended to socialise with their old friends outside college. There were also quite rigid divisions on the basis of race apparent in the three London colleges studied, which were not apparent in the schools in the same area. Although many students had chosen to go to an FE college or a sixth form college to 'meet new people', few had done so to any great extent: those they had made friends with tended to be on the same or similar course and of the same ethnic background.

Attitudes to School/College

In this section students were questioned about how they felt about the institution in which they were studying: the best and worst things about the school or college, and what they would change if they could do so. In both colleges and schools, the same dilemma arose repeatedly, with some students enjoying extra freedom and being treated as an adult, and others wishing the institution was slightly stricter. Conversely, some students enjoyed the fact that they were chased by the institution for failure to attend lessons or hand in work, whereas others felt they should have been given more responsibility by their teachers. The tendency was for school and sixth form college students to complain about a lack of freedom, and FE college students to complain about having too much freedom, but there were exceptions to this, as will be seen below.

When asked what they liked most about their school or college, among school sixth formers the most common answer was the teachers (n=12), followed by the atmosphere (n=9) and their friends (n=8), with some students combining some or all of these in their replies:

> *"It's really friendly and there's a good atmosphere. Everybody gets on really well with everybody else ... It's just nice."* (Nicola, GNVQ, Clifftop School, Worker)

> *"The atmosphere. One of my friends who I was talking to last night said that he thinks that everyone in our school is really into it, and no-one in his school was ever like that. He said we are all like, 'our school's really good,*

we're the best', and he's never known that before. And it's true." (Jessica, A levels, Urban School, juggler)

This idea of 'owning' the school arose again in Rural School in Cornwall. This was rarely seen in any of the colleges, either FE or sixth form, and reflected something of the experiences students had at different types of institution; in some establishments, mainly school sixth forms, students were encouraged to feel an affinity with the institution, and felt as if they belonged to it, whereas other institutions did not foster this sentiment. One possible reason for this was the amount of time spent within the institution, not just in the past but whilst studying post-16, as those who had to remain on the premises even during their free periods, either because of school policy or more practical problems such as a lack of transport, would be more likely to feel a part of the institution.

Other answers given by school students as to the best thing about their institution included the results, the freedom they were given, the fact that they were treated as an adult, and the wide range of pupils in the school:

"They don't treat you like little children any more - they treat you like an adult." (Dave, A levels, City School, Juggler)

"There's a really wide range of people, from more middle class backgrounds, to people who came from the Rough Estate, which is - it's good because I think if I had gone somewhere else I wouldn't have managed to meet so many people." (Jessica, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

Although three students felt they were treated in an adult fashion, this was relative to their treatment lower down the school, and more students felt they were not being treated like adults than felt they were.

It was perhaps surprising that the results obtained by the schools in both pre- and post-16 examinations were not mentioned by more students, as all the schools visited except Rural School, which at that time had not yet had any sixth formers finish their courses, had achieved good results at both age groups. One possible reason for this was that examination results were less tangible or relevant to their everyday experience than the other factors mentioned. The two students mentioning the wide range of pupils, both came from middle class backgrounds. Eden, who came from the Rough Estate mentioned by Jessica, did not mention the diversity of students, nor did she discuss social class at all. One possible reason for this was that she did not see herself as any different from the other students because of where she lived, and might have found the attitudes of Nick and Jessica a little patronising.

Students at the FE colleges gave slightly different answers when asked what they liked the most about their college, with a slightly smaller majority (n=8) responding that they liked their teachers, with other common answers being the people (n=6), freedom (n=3) and the mix of students (n=3):

> *"It's the people, especially the teachers. [My law teacher] is so good. I don't*
> *know, it's very hard, law, and she makes it easy   she makes it sound easy.*
> *She makes you feel like you can do it. And I like my politics teacher as well.*
> *They're both good."* (Leander, A levels, City College, Juggler)

"The teachers try their best to help you they don't look at it as a job, they look at it as a way of life, I feel." (Edward, A levels, Cornish College, Juggler)

Other answers given by a small minority included the atmosphere, being treated as an adult, the facilities and the opportunity to achieve qualifications.

The answers from the FE college students differed from the school students in several ways: firstly, none of the FE students, but eight school students mentioned their friends. Also far fewer FE than school students talked about the atmosphere of the institution, with a greater proportion of school students also mentioning their teachers were one of the best things about the establishment. Surprisingly similar numbers of students from both schools and colleges cited the freedom they had, the fact they were treated as adults, and the mix of pupils: it was assumed that colleges would be more likely to offer those features than a school. As mentioned earlier however, for school students this was often in relation to their treatment lower down the school, and most felt that although they were treated more maturely in the sixth form than previously, they would like this to extend further.

At St. Joseph's College the most common response was the atmosphere/ethos, followed by the teachers, which was similar to the results found in schools. A small number of students also reported they liked being treated as an adult, in line with students at both schools and FE colleges. Once again, the sixth form college could be seen as a middle ground between the school sixth form and the FE college, where an inclusive atmosphere was cultivated, and the teachers appreciated, but the students also sometimes felt they were treated as adults.

There were fewer differences between institutions when the students were asked what they disliked most about their school or college, a large number in each organisation believing the facilities and resources were inadequate and needed updating (n=7 in schools, n=7 in FE colleges, n=4 in sixth form college). Study facilities were mentioned most often, but not exclusively, by Workers and to a lesser extent, Jugglers. as would be expected by their profiles.

There was another common answer given by school students, with nine claiming they would like to change the buildings as they were the worst thing about the school, but all nine of these respondents were from Urban School which had its own problems with buildings, and so could not be said to be representative of schools in general. Other answers given by school students included the dress code, not being treated as an adult, not being allowed home in free periods, the amount of work, and being in the same place for so long. Taken together these all relate to the issues of responsibility and freedom, with some of the students feeling that as they had the same teachers as they had had lower down the school, they found they were not being treated any differently to when they were in compulsory education, despite feeling they had matured somewhat since then:

> *"That's one way they don't treat you like an adult - you've got to get your parents in to do something. If you're late you've got to get a note from your parents, and once I was genuinely ill, and [head of sixth form] rang up my house, to make sure I was dying!"* (Jason, A levels, Rural School, Player)

Some of the students felt they were given too much freedom by their teachers once they reached the sixth form, however, and would have preferred to have been pushed a little more. Generally opinion was divided as to how strict and how informal teachers should be with sixth formers:

> *"They're more relaxed about a lot of things and they say it's your responsibility to do your work, 'cos you want to be here. ... And they treat you more on the same level, whereas before it was, the teacher-student relationship was a lot stronger and a lot more formal. I prefer it now though."* (Jessica, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

Students at other schools also discussed the level of formality and responsibility of the sixth form, with similar conclusions: those who wanted to study (i.e. Workers) were happy with the level of supervision experienced, on the whole, whereas Jugglers were sometimes happy with the arrangements, as with Jessica, above, but often expressed the wish to be pushed more by their teachers, and Players wanted more freedom.

The issue of freedom and motivation also arose time and time again with the students at the FE colleges when discussing the students' attitudes to the college, with differences of opinion occurring between the students who felt they were given the right amount of freedom, and those who felt they were not pushed enough by the college:

> *"You don't want anyone chasing you on your back, but sometimes you could just do with that little extra push. ... I like being treated as an adult, but there's some times and some days I could just do with that little extra push -*

an extra push, guidance or something." (Susan, A levels, City College,
Juggler)

*"The best thing is probably the relaxed atmosphere - the fact that you can
just get on with things. I don't know what it's like in other colleges, 'cos I've
only ever been to this one, but I just think it's so much better to be free."*
(Tony, GNVQ, Cornish College, Worker)

Again the student types were a good indicator of how a student would feel about the
amount of support and/or pressure on him or her from the college: Players tended to
be happy in the main with having more freedom, although some recognised that they
would not do well in their studies without external pressure, as they had little intrinsic
motivation. Workers, such as Tony, above, however, could enjoy the freedom they
were experiencing as they knew they would work hard anyway. Jugglers, such as
Susan, above, were often torn between wanting more freedom, and knowing they
needed an extra boost: with other things happening in their lives apart from their
studies, if they were to do well in the courses they knew they had to be pushed into
spending more time studying.

The students at City College, on average, were not as proud of their institution or did
not identify with it to the same extent as many of the students interviewed at schools.
This is not surprising, as the majority of the school sixth form students had been in
their school for over five years, whereas in some cases the college students had only
been at the college for a few months, or at the most just over two years. There was a
lot of apathy as well as negative feelings towards City College from the students, as

they saw their time there simply as a stepping stone to the next stage of their lives, whatever that might be:

> *"I don't think there's anything to be glad about   it's ok, but it's just a college. I don't hate it. "* (Barika, A levels, City College, Juggler)

> *"I couldn't care less about college   I could be here or not be here. It's not a big deal to me. "* (Hayley, GNVQ, City College, Player)

There was one student who was very positive about the college throughout the interview, Habib. She had been at the college for three years, was enjoying her course, although she found it difficult, and had made many new friends in college. She contrasted her experiences of the college with the reputation she had heard before starting her course:

> *"I have heard that this college has a bad reputation, but since I've been here, almost three years, I don't think so. The teachers are really nice, they care about the whole person instead of just the intellectual side of the person. And they are very understanding, if you have problems at home, financial problems, things like that, they offer a lot of help, which is good. "*

> (Habib, GNVQ, City College, Worker)

Again, a Worker would be more likely to be happy with the level of supervision they received at an institution such as City College: they motivated themselves, and would be more likely to seek help and guidance from a lecturer if they felt it would benefit themselves. Other students would be less likely to seek help from lecturers and to use college facilities, and would therefore not experience the college in the same way.

Students at St. Joseph's College, which was thought by several students to be a 'happy medium' between the strict atmosphere of school and the leniency of an FE college, also had differing viewpoints in terms of the freedom allowed:

> *"At school they went on about silly things, like uniform, but here's more like a workplace. "* (Ryan, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

> *"I think grammar schools are a bit too rigid, but here people go a bit too far towards the other way with punctuality and things. "* (Owen, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

One way in which St. Joseph's was perceived as being very strict by the students, was the way they refused to keep students on courses if they were not up to standard academically: there were several stories of students whose classes had diminished due to people not passing internal examinations, and other interviewees who had been threatened with expulsion, as discussed above in the 'attitude to study' section. Other comments were made which implied indirectly that the students felt they were treated a little too childishly, such as Kerry talking about the school magazine:

> *"I'd like to get involved on the school magazine, but it just gets sent to our parents through the post - we don't even see it!"* (Kerry, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

It was obvious that Kerry did not like this idea, and perhaps she felt that by her parents being involved it put her in the category of a child rather than a young adult. Schemes such as the 'late slip' for students not getting to lessons on time (students who were late had to hand a slip to the teacher, who sent it to their tutor; too many late slips, and parents were informed) were seen as a little demeaning and reminiscent of school by some:

"You get a late slip if you come in late. Which is a little bit like school but I've got used to it now." (Sarah, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

Few students spontaneously compared their time at St Joseph's with their time at school, but the majority of those who did so thought they were treated better at the college than they had been at school. A few students discussed City College, the closest post-compulsory college, and their impressions of it. For most of those interviewees City College was looked down upon and thought to be a 'rough' college, where students did not work as hard and were not pushed by lecturers:

"You're driving past [City College], and everyone's outside and you're thinking look at them! What are they doing all day?" (Sol, GNVQ, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

Overall, most students were happy with their life at the college, and were glad they had decided to go there, despite finding it a little dull and too focused on exam results. For some this was exactly why they had chosen to go there - they felt it was just a step on to the next stage, whether a job or university, and had a social life separate from the college. Others had made good friendships and had managed to build a social life around the college, but they were in the minority. There was no sense of students 'owning' the college, as they did in some school sixth forms, although there was a hint of this from Aaron and Isobel, when they tried to explain the difference between City College and St. Joseph's:

Aaron - But this is a sixth form college, City College is just a college, it ain't like a sixth form, you know.

What's the difference between them?

Aaron - Probably I don't know the difference, but the sixth form is connected

to certain secondary schools, and colleges.

Isobel - Everyone can go there. (Aaron (Player) and Isobel (Worker),

GNVQs, St. Joseph's College)

The idea that 'everyone can go there', referring to City College, implied St. Joseph's

had an air of exclusivity or selectivity, and the two students seemed proud of this

when comparing the two institutions.

As this was the only religious college investigated, it is worth looking at this aspect of

the college in more detail, and seeing how this affected the students studying there, if

at all. Not all students at St. Joseph's were religious, although many were. Of those

interviewed, ten were Catholic and twelve were not, although Isobel did discuss the

fact that she was a practising Christian, and the college chaplain supported her

Christian prayer group. No other religions were mentioned by interviewees, although

in the prospectus it claimed there were students from several different religious

backgrounds. Most of the Catholic students had been to feeder Catholic secondary

schools, and therefore arrived at the college knowing many other people. The question

of RE sessions has already been discussed but this section looks at the overall ethos of

the college, and how much of an effect the Catholic background had on the students.

Most of those interviewed thought the Catholicism of the college was not pushed

upon them, and those who had been to Catholic secondary schools often claimed their

schools were much more religious than the college:

"It's much more freer sort of Catholicism. I think it is good here, cos it is

Catholic, and you can get into that if you want, but they don't ram it down

your throat. " (Kerry, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Juggler)

"Because basically it's the opportunity, a decent, a very decent opportunity to learn to grow, and also you've got a Christian environment, so if you're religious you've got that. But just general stuff, it gives you a good start and a better chance of a decent job later on." (Dwight, A levels, St. Joseph's College, Worker)

Unless students wanted it to do so, the fact that St. Joseph's was a Catholic Sixth Form College had very little, if any, effect on the experiences of the students. This was not always recognised by students at other institutions, however, with one group interview at City College showing that misconceptions about institutions did not solely concerning FE colleges:

Pancho - I wouldn't have gone to St. Joseph's.

Hayley - That's a religious one.

Emma - Someone told me it's too strict, but I don't know. I don't want to go to a sixth form 'cos even though I'd like it 'cos I know I'd not be slacking like I am now, I think I wouldn't want them treating me like I'm a kid really. I think you still have to do RE and PE and stuff.

Hayley - They have to go to college and do RE every single day. And if you haven't got a lesson you have to stay in college anyway - that's what I've heard. So I wouldn't want to go there. RE is like the religious thing, and I'm not really into that.

Pancho I'm Catholic, but I didn't want to go there   it's rubbish. People say that. (Emma, Hayley and Pancho, GNVQ, City College, all Players)

Overall, students at FE colleges felt less as if they belonged to the institution than school students, partly because they were there for less time than school students, but as some of the students at St. Joseph's College felt similarly to the school sixth formers this was obviously not the only reason. The schools had a community atmosphere, which had developed over a period of several years, although newcomers to the school at the sixth form level, such as Liz at City School, felt part of this environment. The relative sizes of schools, sixth form colleges and FE colleges had some bearing on the community atmosphere: within the school sixth forms, most students knew each other relatively well, whereas in a college this could not be the case due to the large numbers of students. As seen in the previous section, schools tended to organise more extra-curricular activities for the students, which also helped create the inclusive atmosphere reported by some of the students:

> *"I reckon for me it's like, it sounds a bit sick, but the fact that it's not just an educational building - you've got music and you've got so many other things to do, and the teachers are so much nicer. ... It's not just education straight along the line, you know they want to get you more interested in things. It's like a rich school in terms of wanting to expose you to new stuff."* (Nick, A levels, Urban School, Juggler)

> *"It's like a really nice community it's much better than most schools, and they really encourage you to do other things."* (Rachel, A levels, Clifftop School, Juggler)

To summarise, the experiences of students in different institution types differed to quite a large extent, with school sixth formers feeling part of a shared community and FE college students feeling less of an inclusive atmosphere. Sixth form college

students had an experience somewhere between these two extremes, with some students basing their social lives around the college, and others seeing their educational experiences as a very separate part of their lives. The attitudes towards the degree of freedom exhibited by the teachers also differed both within and between institutions, with some students in all establishments wanting more freedom, some wanting less freedom, and others happy with the amount they received.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

The aims of the current research were to explore the experiences of 16 to 19 year old students in full-time further education, to determine the possible effects of course, institution and part of the country on those experiences.

As a background to the study, the development of post-compulsory education throughout the last century was examined, with particular reference to the issues such as curriculum and development of different types of institution, which are still affecting student experiences today. The move from minority to mass participation in further education was also considered, as reflected in statistical trends over recent years. The movement of students into GNVQ courses and their equivalents, at all levels, was noted, as was a small migration from school sixth forms to sixth form and FE colleges, particularly for Level 1 and 2 qualifications.

A methodology based on humanistic psychology was used, in order to research the 'whole person', rather than just aspects of their experiences as young students. To this end, a photographic diary method, combined with individual and group interviews explored these young peoples' lives, and the results arranged in chapters according to area, course and institution type. Hopefully, despite this categorising, the individual voices of the students were still heard, and a full picture of their lives developed. Bourdieu's concept of habitus was used extensively throughout the analysis, especially the idea of a rural and urban habitus, which separated the students in

Cornwall and South-east London. Additionally, students were categorised as either jugglers, workers or players, ideal types which arose form the use of photographic diaries, and which was then supported further by the interview data. It was discovered that some types were more common in different institutions and on different courses, with, for example, school sixth forms containing many more jugglers and fewer workers and players than either FE or sixth form colleges, and GNVQ students being far more likely to be players than A level students. Overall, the most common type was the juggler (49%), followed by the worker (31%) and the player (20%). Possible relationships between student types, entry qualifications and attainment in further education were discussed, with the conclusion drawn that both entry qualifications and student type had an effect on the results obtained at this level, with institutions which had relatively high proportions of players seeing their results suffer.

Chapter Six looked at the differences between the experiences of students in rural and urban areas, and found that there were major divisions between students in the two areas. It was hypothesised that students in rural areas would be more likely than urban students to cite distance and/or transport issues as their reasons for choosing a particular school or college. This was true to some extent, with 31 rural students giving these reasons for their choice, but 24 London-based students also cited transport and distance as considerations in their choice, showing that it was not exclusive to rural areas. One of the reasons for this was the dominant habitus in the two areas: although students in Cornwall had to travel much greater distances to attend the institution of their choice, they were used to the poor public transport system where they lived, and considered it part of the norm to have to travel long distances for a particular service. In contrast, in London, students were used to having

services within easy reach, with good transport links, and thus did not consider the option of travelling further afield for their studies.

Another area in which the rural-urban divide was most noticeable was that of extra-curricular activities and social life, with urban students relying much less on their institution for friendships and social lives. Transport issues were a large cause of these disparities, with students in rural areas often having to remain in school or college all day, regardless of free periods, as they had no way of getting home until the end of the day. Their lives were therefore necessarily centred on their time within the educational institution, and their experiences both within and outside of education therefore differed from students in urban areas who remained in school or college just long enough to go to lectures, and then left the institution whenever possible. Rural schools tended to provide more in terms of extra-curricular activities for the students, possibly because they were aware there was little in the surrounding area to occupy students, whereas in urban areas students had plenty of choice for socialising and interests outside of the school environment.

Transport considerations also affected part-time employment and the financial situation of the students, and students in isolated rural areas felt less independent than their urban peers, as they had to rely on others for lifts. Students in Cornwall were less likely to have part-time jobs than their London counterparts (57% compared to 71%) partly because of the economic nature of the areas, and partly because without adequate private transport, it was often impossible for students in Cornwall to reach the areas in which there were jobs available to them.

One striking finding was that EMAs which were piloted in both areas, did not affect the number of hours worked among urban students as much as it did rural students. With the EMA scheme now going national, this needs to be monitored and the possible reasons for the finding investigated in more detail. One possible explanation is again found with reference to habitus: in London, it is part of the urban student habitus to have a part-time job, with few students not working (29%). The number of hours worked by the urban students in this study were also much higher than those worked by the rural students, with working long hours considered normal by the urban students, as it is part of their habitus. By contrast, there are only a relatively small number of students working during the terms in rural areas, and many of those who do so, work for their families. It is therefore much less of a change for these students to reduce the number of hours they work, or to stop working altogether, as it is less part of the rural habitus than it is of the urban habitus. It is not impossible for a habitus to change, however, although this is usually a slow process, so although the introduction of EMAs might not have an immediate effect on students' working practices, over time it should begin to alter perceptions and practice.

Chapter Seven examined the experiences of students on different types of course, namely A levels and GNVQs. As the interviews took place before the start of Curriculum 2000, there was then a more marked difference between the two courses, with different timetables and in many cases with separate facilities for students on different courses, even within school sixth forms. Reasons given for choosing their courses differed greatly between A level and GNVQ students, with the latter giving more negative reasons than the former. A level students were also more likely to see

their qualification as a route into HE, although with more universities accepting vocational qualifications as entry requirements, this could change in the future.

Another area of interest is the renaming of GNVQs as Vocational A levels: although there is some scepticism as to the benefits of a cosmetic change to the course, in City College, for example, where there is a large proportion of international students, the re-branding of the vocational qualifications could encourage more students to take the qualification, as it a term with which they are familiar.

One other area of note was the predominance of Advanced GNVQ students, particularly in colleges, who had come through the route of GCSEs → Intermediate GNVQ → Advanced GNVQ. Although some had wanted to take A levels initially, once completing an Intermediate GNVQ in order to get on to an A level course, they changed their minds and decided to stay with the more vocational route. The possible reasons for this were discussed in more depth in Chapter Seven, but with the advent of Curriculum 2000, and even more so with Tomlinson's anticipated proposals, students will be less likely to be forced down a particular pathway because of their initial qualifications, with changing from or combining vocational and general qualifications being easier to manage.

Interestingly, the hypothesis that A level students in schools would have a better opinion of GNVQs than A level students in colleges, was not supported by the data, with A level students in every institution other than Rural School feeling that GNVQs were easier than their own courses. The reason for the difference in Rural School is probably due to the more complete integration of the two qualification pathways

within that sixth form: many students were taking both types of qualification concurrently, and all students were taking a Part GNVQ Award in IT. In addition to A level students looking down on GNVQ students less in this institution, there was also less of a social division within the year group, with friendships being made and maintained across the courses. In other institutions, both schools and colleges, a different timetable, building, library or resources room were often used to differentiate between the A level 'elite' and the other students, and thus it was hardly surprising that there was little social interaction between students on different courses. With the advent of Curriculum 2000 and Tomlinson, theoretically there would be less division between the courses, with students more able to combine their qualifications in the way seen at Rural School.

Another point which came across quite strongly from the interviews with GNVQ students was the need for more unbiased careers advice, especially when it came to 'new' subjects, such as Engineering and Health and Social Care, which would not have been studied pre-16. Many students had embarked on these courses with no real idea of what they would entail and felt that they had chosen the wrong course.

There were few differences between students taking GNVQs and A levels, with regard to teaching styles employed on the courses. There were some differences in preferred learning styles, however, with GNVQ students being more likely to prefer group work and practical work than A level students. With teaching styles, however, there were more differences between subject areas than between qualification types, with for example, A level Drama having more practical work than GNVQ Business Studies.

When asked about informal learning, some skills such as IT skills were mentioned slightly more often by GNVQ students, and others, such as time-management and note-taking skills more often by A level students, but much more informal learning was common to all students, regardless of course. It was felt that although some areas such as IT and communication skills were covered directly by the Key Skills part of the GNVQ syllabus, they were gained indirectly by A level students, which was just as, if not more, effective. In fact, when, as at City College, A level students were encouraged to take a separate key Skills award, the benefits they got from this were minimal. It is therefore more likely that skills will be picked up by students if they are integrated into the course, as with GNVQs and some A level subjects, rather than as a stand-alone qualification. This has obvious ramifications for the Key Skills Certificate, which is part of the Curriculum 2000 and Tomlinson developments.

The overall conclusion from this chapter was that there were few differences between the experiences of students on A levels and GNVQs, with those that were present likely to reduce or disappear after the onset of Curriculum 2000 and the anticipated Tomlinson reforms.

Chapter Eight looked in detail at the different experiences of students at schools, sixth form colleges and FE colleges. It was hypothesised that students in school sixth forms would have been more passive in their reasons for remaining at the school, with college students giving more positive reasons for their choice of institution. This was partly the case, with the most common reason for choosing a school sixth form being familiarity, but at FE colleges, although there were some positive reasons for

choosing the institution, such as increased freedom, the main reason was that of transport and/or proximity. The same was true at the sixth form college, with only two respondents specifically mentioning the sixth form college or a Catholic atmosphere as reasons for their choice, and others being most likely to have come from a feeder school and not considered many alternatives. The apathy seen among school students was therefore seen to a lesser extent among college students, when it came to deciding where to study.

The differences between the sectors was apparent when considering the students' attitudes to studying, where FE college students spent less time on their studies outside of the classroom than students at other types of institution, and were also less likely to remain in college studying during their free periods. Students in FE colleges also felt they would like to have been pushed a little more by their lecturers, as they considered they were not working to their full potential. School and sixth form college students, however, were more likely to report feeling tired and stressed in their interviews. Despite David Blunkett (2000) pledging to alleviate student stress, it has been reported since the advent of Curriculum 2000 that stress among students (particularly A level students) has increased rather than reduced. It must surely now be seen as a matter of urgency to reduce this amount of stress on young people, who often do not have the resources to deal with the increased pressure.

In relation to such stress, outwardly it appeared that schools had a higher rate of pastoral care for their students, implementing regular tutorial slots, whereas the FE colleges, despite advertising tutorial provision in their handbooks, rarely offered anything other than a yearly or termly meeting to discuss progress. However, tutorials

of time most students had spent at their school, they often felt part of a community, and therefore felt it was natural that their social lives should be integrated in some way with their school attendance. Students at FE colleges, however, had not had time to feel part of the community, and tended to continue their activities in which they had previously been involved, outside the institution. As in many areas, the experiences of sixth form college students fell somewhere between these two extremes, with some experiencing feelings of ownership towards the college, and others feeling it was simply a place of education.

Students in the urban colleges (both FE and sixth form) felt there were issues of racial segregation within the colleges, with young people of the same ethnicity tending to remain in their own groups, both within and beyond the classroom. Although this was not seen as a problem in itself, as it is natural for people to gravitate towards those of a similar background and with whom they have much in common, it was noted that this tendency could escalate into an intolerance of other ethnic groups or races. In the institutions studied, the bigger the institution, the larger the problem was, and in rural institutions, where there was only a very small number of non-White students, there were no reported problems of this kind. This is another example of different areas of the country having different problems and issues: although racial intolerance is a nationwide problem, it is likely to be found more often in larger towns and cities, rather than rural areas and areas in which there are few ethnic minorities. Blanket national policies are therefore not appropriate.

When asked what they liked most and least about their institutions, there were some differences between students in schools, FE colleges and the sixth form college, with,

again, the latter being seen as occupying the middle ground between the other two extremes. School students were much more likely than FE colleges students to praise 'the atmosphere', their teachers and their friends, whereas FE college students were more likely to cite the adult atmosphere, the people (note, they did not say their 'friends', but 'people', which often included teachers). Also a small minority of FE college students mentioned the opportunity to obtain qualifications as the best thing about the college: this is an example of the FE college providing 'a second chance for all', one of the reasons it was originally developed. Sixth form college students mentioned the atmosphere and the teachers, as well as the sense of being treated as an adult, combining the main responses from the other two groups of students.

When looking at the overall differences between the experiences of students on different types of course, in different types of institution, in different parts of the country, it is obvious some aspects produced more differences than others. For example, students on different courses (A levels and GNVQs in this study) did not appear to experience FE very differently, with the place in which they studied their qualifications having much more of an impact on their experiences than the qualifications themselves. On the other hand, the part of the country in which the student lived and studied had a huge effect on their experience of FE, with the process of choosing an institution, extra-curricular activities, social lives and part-time employment all being directly affected by the type of area (either rural or urban) in which the student lived. Some of these changes were as a direct consequence of the geography of the area, whereas others depended on the dominant habitus of the area, and what was therefore considered to be normal behaviour by the students within that area. Surprisingly, there were not as many differences as anticipated between students

in different types of institution, in terms of their everyday experiences of FE. The main differences were in the students' social lives, and whether they were based more around the institution (in the case of school sixth form students) or independent of the institution (in the case of college students). There were also differences in attitudes to studying by the students in each institution, but although the numbers of Juggler, Workers and Players differed between institution types, the same types of students were found in each institution, but simply in different proportions. The types of student also had an effect on how the students felt they were treated at the different institutions, with, for example, Players in schools wanting more freedom, but Workers being happy with the way in which they were treated. In rural areas the differences between institution types were even less pronounced than in urban areas, perhaps because in many cases the colleges, like the school sixth forms, were the only provider of FE within a reasonable distance, and therefore they all tended towards a comprehensive system, with the majority of local young people attending their nearest institution, rather than the hierarchical system often seen in urban areas between institutions, with school sixth forms seen as the 'best option' and FE colleges as the worst.

With the interviews for this study being completed just before the introduction of Curriculum 2000, the relative similarity between institutions is important: with schools and colleges both moving towards a similar curriculum, offering vocational and general qualifications to students on an ostensibly equal footing, a truly comprehensive system of further education could be established, with equality between the schools and colleges, as was almost the case in Cornwall in 1999. The introduction of Curriculum 2000 in more urban areas, where there are many providers

of FE within a relatively small area, could foster collaboration between institutions, with schools and colleges looking to each other for help in providing subjects which would be infeasible to offer individually in each institution. Students would then be able to choose their institution, not based on which places offered their preferred course, but rather which environment suited them the most, depending on their Juggler, Worker or Player status. Those students who were restricted in their choice of institution, due to proximity or transport issues, would also then feel they were receiving the same education regardless of the institution in which they studied.

Implications

The implications of these results are far-reaching. One of the main points to come through from the student interviews was the importance of careers advice, with many students having received little or no advice as to courses, and much of that they did receive appeared to be biased towards staying at the school sixth form wherever possible, and taking A levels. The introduction of the Connexions service with personal advisers is a step towards educating young people as to their options at 16 to 19, as they could potentially provide more unbiased advice than schools have done in the past. However, with Connexions focussed on 'those in danger of social exclusion' (Ainley, Barnes and Momen, 2002) it is unlikely that mainstream students such as most of those in this study would benefit from the new service. The students who felt they had chosen the wrong course were more likely to be Players and not to study as hard, suggesting that if students were given better careers advice before choosing a course, they would be more likely to enjoy the course and therefore to work harder, learn more, and achieve better results (see also Martinez and Monday, 1998, for the importance of course choice on retention).

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Another strong theme throughout many of the interviews was the idea of compromise between freedom and external motivation, with school sixth forms generally tending to provide little freedom but strong external motivation, and FE colleges providing the opposite, with sixth form colleges striking a balance between the two. School students, most often Players, often complained about the lack of freedom they were given, and several felt they were treated in the same way as they had been lower down the school. In contrast, FE college students, most often Jugglers, felt they would perform better if they were pushed a little more, as they were aware they were not working to their full capacity. The motivation that schools provided came at a price however, as school students were more likely to report feelings of stress and tiredness. As FE college students were the most likely to admit to missing lessons, a closer watch on attendance would also benefit those students who lacked the internal motivation to attend all their lessons. The introduction of EMAs throughout the country will perhaps go some way towards solving this issue, as regular attendance is one of the conditions of receiving the allowance, and therefore it would have to be strictly monitored in colleges and schools. This will put lecturers in the position of policing the benefit, however, which is not a role they are likely to relish.

Those students who reported missing lessons were often on college premises during the lesson, but did not go to the classroom, complaining that they 'could not face it'. This could have been a reflection of the teaching methods employed, although in most cases the main problem appeared to be that of timetabling, as long lessons in one subject were particular deterrents for students. In Rural College, for example, several students admitted to missing three-hour lessons in various subjects, as it seemed too

long to be concentrating on one topic. Schools generally had fewer problems with truancy, which can be explained by a number of factors: firstly, in order to fit the sixth form curriculum in with the rest of the school, lessons tended to be shorter in schools, which would increase the probability of students attending. Also, the schools were smaller than the colleges, so there were fewer places to go within the school if students were not in lessons, and as they were also seen as a closer community by the students, they were more aware of the possibility of being caught. Also the institutional habitus within the schools did not suggest to students that they should miss lessons, especially as lower down the school they had no free periods, and would have had to have attended lessons all day every day. The college habitus, however, was more likely to include missing lessons, as seen by the responses from students such as Ione at Cornwall College, who felt there was little wrong with her missing occasional lessons. The fostering of a closer community ethos in an FE college could therefore improve attendance figures, as could shortening the length of lessons and decreasing the class sizes in colleges: with fewer students in a class, a closer community is created within a school classroom, and absences are more noticeable.

Evaluation of the study

The research carried out was extensive, with a large number of students being interviewed intensely at several institutions in two distinct areas of the country. Both the interviews and the photographic diaries yielded much data, and analysis was thorough. An evaluation of the research methods used was given in Chapter Four, and need not be repeated. One possible criticism of the research is the number and type of institutions visited: although a relatively large number of students were interviewed for such a piece of research, only one sixth form college took part in the investigation,

and there were no specialist or tertiary colleges. This was due to circumstance: there were no tertiary colleges and only one sixth form college within the designated areas of study (Southeast London and Cornwall). In addition, there were no private schools or colleges involved with the research, although both areas had a limited number of such institutions. There is no doubt that the experiences of students in private schools, colleges and also specialist and tertiary colleges, would have been interesting and would have provided a contrast with the institutions explored in the study, but unfortunately this was not possible. It was felt that as there was a limit as to the number of students who could be interviewed (due to time and resource constraints), that it would be preferable to concentrate on the state sector, in which the vast majority of 16 to 19 year olds study, and to have a larger number of interviewees from each institution.

It would also have been desirable to have had more students within each institution compiling photographic diaries, as these provided a wealth of information. Regrettably this was not possible, again due to resource limitations, as the cost of the disposable cameras and processing was prohibitive. It was unfortunate that a small number of photographic diary volunteers were not able to meet for the second interview to choose photographs for their diaries and provide captions, which would have yielded a little more data. However, technology has developed since the field work for this thesis was carried out, and with the prevalence of digital cameras and mobile phone photo-messaging, the photographic diary method of collecting data would now be easier and cheaper, with participants unrestricted by the number of exposures on the camera film, and able to share their images with the researcher almost immediately.

The sampling methods used varied slightly between institutions, as in some cases the students to be interviewed were chosen by the school or college, and in others I was left to recruit interviewees myself. When the institution chose the students themselves, it was rarely a random selection, which would have been preferable. To achieve this, a list of all students on each course type, divided by gender and year group, would have been used, with a computer randomly selecting names. These students would then have been approached and asked if they would take part in the study: if they chose not to, a further random selection would have been made. Again, due to constraints of time and resources, this was not possible in the current study, but if further research were to be carried out then this would be attempted.

As the interviews used were semi-structured, some students were not asked about certain areas of their experiences, as they had more to say in relation to other areas. Longer interviews would have countered this in some ways, but it was felt that semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate in the circumstances. Questionnaires given to a large number of students at each institution, in addition to the interviews, would also have given more data in some areas. However, the questions would have to have been open-ended, allowing students to add comments as they saw appropriate, in order to continue the humanistic approach to some extent.

Another limitation of the current study is the restriction of rural and urban areas to Southeast London and Cornwall: these regions have their own distinct features and are not necessarily typical of all rural and urban areas. There was also a lack of suburban areas, which would have provided a further contrast. The reasons that more

areas were not used were again, regrettably, due to a limitation on time and resources, and it was decided to concentrate on providing a detailed picture of two areas rather than interview a smaller number of students from more areas. One of the aims of the study was to show that students in further education were not a homogenous mass, and could not be treated as such; by concentrating on two very different parts of the country, this aim was achieved, and although other rural and urban areas might have their own difficulties and advantages for young people, this simply supports the idea that the student experience depends, in part, on the region of the country in which they study.

Developments in post-compulsory education since the interviews

Obviously the interviews took place prior to the introduction of Curriculum 2000, and as such provide a valuable 'snapshot of a moment in time'. The developments since the fieldwork was carried out must be discussed, however, as must their implications for the results. As well as Curriculum 2000, the Learning and Skills Act (2000), implemented on 1st April 2001, has brought about many changes to the post-compulsory sector, some of which will have had an indirect effect on the students' experiences of further education. The main developments in the Learning and Skills Act were as follows: The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) were replaced with regional Leaning and Skills Councils (LSCs). These are concerned with all forms of post-16 (and in some cases, post-14) education, in all types of institution, including schools, as well as careers guidance, from the 'Connexions' Service. As mentioned previously, the unbiased nature of careers guidance likely to be given from the Connexions service is a welcome step, even if it is mainly available to the lower achieving students,

(although all 16 year olds may request and are entitled to a careers interview) as careers advice has been shown to be crucial in determining a student's satisfaction levels with his or her course, and thus their willingness to attend and study for their qualifications (for example, National Audit Office, 2001). Funding mechanisms also changed with the introduction of LSCs: previously school sixth forms were funded by the LEA, which set the rate of funding (per student) and schools were free to redistribute funds from 11 to 16 and 16 to 18 courses. From 2002, however, the funding for both school sixth forms and colleges has come from the LSC, has been uniform across the country (with London weightings) and has incorporated weightings to benefit expensive subjects and disadvantaged areas. Institutions are funded by course rather than by numbers of students, although sixth form funding has been guaranteed to remain the same if pupil numbers remain constant. Ten percent of the funding is to be paid on successful completion of the course. Although schools are still free to redistribute funds between the lower and upper school, the two separate streams of money coming in (from the LEA for the lower school and LSC for the sixth form) mean a more transparent system, in which schools might find difficult to cross-subsidise.

Another change the Learning and Skills Act has effected is that for the first time since incorporation, in 1993, LEAs will be able to create new 16 to 19 institutions. It was expected that many would choose to close several small sixth forms and open a centralised college or sixth form centre, and since the Act came into force, the vast majority of new establishments have indeed been sixth form colleges (Nash, 2003). This is obviously going to have an effect on students, as they will have less of a choice of institution, but perhaps more of a choice of courses, as one centralised

centre could afford to offer a greater choice than several small school sixth forms. Collaboration between institutions has also increased since the Act, with several smaller school sixth forms combining their resources in order to offer a wider range of courses. Research by OFSTED and the FEFC (1999) found that such collaborative arrangements were beneficial to both the institutions and the students, as they were able to broaden the curriculum available to post-16 students in an economical way. They concluded that the strengths of such an arrangement would almost always outweigh any weaknesses, although in rural areas this sort of arrangement was less feasible due to the large distances between institutions and the lack of regular public transport.

The introduction of Curriculum 2000 has had a more direct effect on the student experience than the Learning and Skills Act, with courses changing considerably in some cases, and the introduction of Key Skills Qualifications. The measures were inspired by the Dearing Report, and sought to broaden the curriculum for 16 to 19 year olds in post-compulsory education and to increase the parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications, whilst maintaining the 'gold standard' of A levels. Instead of enrolling on a course of three A level subjects, or a GNVQ course, since Curriculum 2000 students take four or five AS levels in their first year of further education, then drop one or two subjects the following year, taking A2 examinations in the remaining three or four subjects. The AS and A2 combined make up an entire A level. In addition, GNVQs were been renamed firstly, Advanced Vocational Certificates in Education (AVCEs), then 'Vocational A levels' (they are now termed 'applied' rather than 'general' qualifications) and have been divided into units in a similar way to A levels: the full GNVQ equivalent comprises of 12 units; an A level

equivalent has six units, and an AS level three units. Students may therefore combine AS, A levels and Vocational A levels, or 'general' and 'applied' courses/ programmes, in a way that was not previously possible. In addition to these qualifications, students have been encouraged to take a Key Skills Qualification, which comprises of Level 3 passes in Numeracy, Literacy and IT. Although the original certificate necessitated a pass in all three subjects, candidates are now encouraged to take single qualifications.

There is the possibility, therefore, of students taking very different courses from those they had been taking at the time of the interviews, with the new curriculum aiming to ensure 'parity of esteem' between 'general' academic and 'applied' vocational subjects. Unfortunately this has not appeared to be the case, with many institutions simply offering the same options as before, with students taking three or four AS levels in their first year, and three in their second year, and very limited combining of vocational and academic courses. Savory et al. (2001) investigated how Curriculum 2000 had been implemented in various types of institution, and found that no one institution type had fully embraced all aspects of the new programme of study. In general further education colleges, for example, although 100% of students were being entered for the Key Skills Qualification, only 12% of level 3 students were mixing vocational and academic courses, and just over 40% of students on AS programmes were taking four AS levels. The AVCE was found not to be a popular option, with most of those taking it opting for the twelve-unit model - the equivalent to the old GNVQ. The entrance of all students for the Key Skills Qualification was principally due to funding incentives, whereby colleges, but not schools, received extra funding for the qualification. Sixth form colleges have often been suggested (for

example by Duckett, 2002) as being the preferred institution type of the New Labour government, with many of the recent changes being seen as a way of increasing the number of students studying at this type of institution, so it might be expected that they have benefited most from the curriculum changes. Savory et al found that 73% of AS students were taking four or more subjects in their first year, and 100% of students were entered for the Key Skills Qualification, but only eight percent of students were mixing vocational and academic study. A common complaint by the sixth form colleges was the lack of physical space needed to administer the new qualifications, and many of them were lengthening the college day into the early evening to incorporate the lessons into the timetable. In their study, Savory et al differentiated between large, medium and small sixth forms, and linked this with levels of attainment. Perhaps counter-intuitively, they found the type of school which had adapted best to the changes was the lower attaining and predominantly smaller sixth form, with 45% of students mixing courses, 70% entering for the Key Skills Qualification, and 63% of AS students taking four or more AS levels. Middle and higher attaining schools reported higher numbers of students taking four or more AS levels, but fewer students taking vocational courses, the Key Skills Qualification, or mixing courses. The singularly most successful type of institution in the Savory et al study in adapting to the changes that Curriculum 2000 brought was the consortium of school sixth forms. They had 84% of students taking four or more AS levels; 37% students mixing vocational and academic courses, and 100% of students entered for the Key Skills Qualification. The sector with the least adaptation to the reforms was that of independent and selective schools, where although 96% of students were taking four or more AS levels, this was simply a continuation of their previous

practice, and no students were taking vocational courses or the Key Skills Qualification.

Although the Savory et al (2001) study was carried out soon after the reforms were introduced, there has been little change in most institutions since that time, with those being funded for key skills offering that qualification to students, but with many schools and colleges appearing to keep vocational/ 'applied' and academic/ 'general' courses separate, and restricting the number of AS levels Year 12 students could take. The experiences of most students then, would have changed very little, if at all, since the reforms were introduced, and presumably attitudes to vocational courses would have undergone little change among academic course students in this time: parity of esteem is still not with us.

More recent research has been carried out by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) into the introduction of Curriculum 2000 and its effects on both the institutions and students. Tait et al (2001) found that although there was a small amount of mixing courses between academic and vocational routes, this was mainly by vocational students, who were taking an AS level in addition to their AVCE, and few students on an academic route were opting for a three or six unit AVCE course alongside their other AS levels. Many institutions had also restricted the number of AS levels students could take in Year 12 to four or fewer. Tait et al did however find an increased emphasis on guidance within most institutions, as they felt students needed more help with negotiating their way through the new qualifications. Some institutions also reported that Curriculum 2000 had begun to develop an increased parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes, although this had not yet

manifested itself in more academic students choosing a vocational qualification and was not likely to do so.

Tait et al's (2002) study provided a further look at the effects of the reforms on students and institutions once their implementation had been more stabilised. They found that again many institutions were increasing the amount of student support given as 'the reforms offer greater choice through the new and unitised qualifications, students require far more guidance and support than their predecessors' (p.8). The transition from Year 12 to Year 13 was seen as being especially difficult for students, and schools and colleges attempted to ease the adjustment for students as much as possible. Tait et al also conducted focus groups with students taking the new qualifications, and found that many did not attend the tutorials and did not see the benefit of the extra guidance and support. As found in the current study, therefore, it appears that although pastoral support can be very beneficial to the students, if they do not see the benefits themselves they will simply not attend the sessions.

It is hypothesised that few students would have noticed a large change in their experiences pre- and post-Curriculum 2000, therefore, as few institutions have introduced the reforms as they were intended, and have instead opted for a more 'watered-down' approach to the developments. The one area in which there has been a change in many cases, is the number of subjects taken by students in year 12: whereas they used to take three A levels, they are now encouraged to take four or more, although in practice few take more than four. There has been a great deal of press attention on this point, with many articles stating how there is simply too much work for students taking four or more AS levels, in combination with key skills and

enrichment activities. Bushby (2002) for example supported the fact that AS students were under too much work pressure and their enrichment activities were suffering. Hoare (2002) also claimed students were rejecting vocational A levels as they were too difficult, and more students were reverting to the old BTEC qualifications. In the current study it was found that many students, in school sixth forms especially, were suffering from stress and tiredness, so if expected work levels have increased since this time, it is not surprising that many students are dropping courses or out of education altogether, as they have found the new curriculum too much for them. The lack of free time would also have had an effect on those students who have part-time employment, as they may have to choose between their course and their job. The introduction of EMAs nationally will hopefully alleviate some of the pressure on students to find part-time jobs during term-time, although, as discussed earlier, many students do not work only for financial gain, but also to meet new people and increase their work experience.

To summarise, although Curriculum 2000 was intended to be a radical reform of post-16 education, in most institutions it has been introduced in a diluted form, with few changes being noticeable to the students. The main areas of change have been increasing the workload for some students as they have chosen four subjects in Year 12 rather than the three subjects many took previously, and the combining of general and vocational courses by some students (mainly vocational students taking an additional AS level). Although the Learning and Skills Act has had a major effect on the institutions providing post-16 education, little of this will have had a direct effect on the students' experience. The main outcome from the students' point of view is that the Connexions service has taken over careers advice and guidance, and

hopefully it will offer less biased information on courses and institutions, ensuring students enrol on appropriate courses, which will result in more enjoyable experiences.

The turn of the millennium can therefore be seen as a lost opportunity to make some real differences in the lives of students continuing their education beyond the age of 16: institutions were relatively similar in many ways in the experiences they provided for students, and the altering of courses to create parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes would have taken the whole system nearer to a level playing field. Instead it appears as if the old distinctions between sectors and courses is being widened by the Curriculum 2000 reforms, with less parity of esteem than before between institutions: those considered 'good' institutions (mainly school sixth forms with good A level results and some sixth form colleges) have kept their curriculum offer almost exactly the same as it was previously, whereas those institutions with poorer track records have introduced the new curriculum more as it was intended. Thus divisions are strengthened rather than eradicated by the changes.

Suggestions for further research

An obvious way of furthering this research would be to extend the study to include more students in different types of institution, and in more areas throughout the country. Also students on different types of course could be included in a study of students' experiences, such as those taking BTECs, NNEB courses, and part-time NVQ qualifications in a variety of subjects. Comparisons between students in the work-based route and the full-time education sector would also be useful, and a way of checking if the qualities and skills students claim to have developed since their

time in further education began, were simply the product of maturation, or an effect of their institutions and courses.

Investigating student experiences post-Curriculum 2000 would also be interesting, and would provide an answer as to whether the reforms have actually changed the students' lives, and if so whether for the better or worse. It is anticipated that the relatively small differences between institution types seen in this study would be magnified by a new study post-Curriculum 2000, as discussed above.

An investigation of the effectiveness of the Connexions careers advice would also be welcome, especially as it is likely to be radically affected by the amalgamation proposed by the Children's Act of local authority education with social services, as would more detailed investigations into the EMA and its role in reducing the number of hours worked by students in full-time education.

Another interesting angle for research would be to interview school and college staff, both teachers and management, to investigate the changes in their institutions over the past ten years or more, and how they think this has effected the lives of the students passing through their doors.

A study involving students on degree programmes would also be interesting, asking them how they felt (if at all) they had been prepared for HE by their experiences in FE. Many of the students in the current study felt that going to a college rather than remaining in school was preparing them well for a subsequent move to university, and it would be worthwhile researching whether this was true.

Summary

This study has developed a classification system of three main ideal types of student: jugglers, workers and players, and investigated the experiences of these students in their chosen institutions. There remain questions to be asked and other avenues of interest to explore, but the current research has examined areas that had not previously been considered, such as the effects of the local geography on student experiences, and how the institution and course chosen affected students both within and outside of the educational environment. Some of the findings have been unexpected, and others as predicted, but all have added to the body of knowledge on education, which, as Hargreaves (1996) complained, has been lacking rigorous, relevant research. The techniques used within the study have allowed a unique insight into the lives of the young people involved, and the data have recorded an important moment in time for further education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Interview Schedule for Pilot Study

Personal Information

What do your parents do?

Do you have any brothers and sisters?

If they are older than you, what do they do?

Previous education

Amount of time at the school/college and previous institutions.

Choice of course/ institution

Why did you decide to stay in education, rather than get a job?

Why didn't you go to college/ stay at school?

Was this your first choice of institution? If not, where was your first choice, and why didn't you go there?

Was this your first choice of course? If not, what was, and why didn't you do that?

Why did you eventually decide to come/ stay here?

Why did you eventually decide to follow this course?

Who influenced your choices?

Do you have any regrets over the course or institution?

Did many of your friends choose to come here? If not, where are they, and why are they there? If so, did this influence your decision to come here?

Finances

Do you have a part-time job?

Does this job ever interfere with your studying?

Do you feel you have enough money to live comfortably (i.e. to pay bills, rent, food, transport, books and equipment)?

Do you feel you have enough money for non-essentials, such as clothes and socialising?

Would you work more hours if you could?

Transport

How do you travel to school/ college?

Do you pay for this yourself?

Social life

Would you say that you have a good social life?

Do you tend to socialise with people at your school/ college, or people from outside the school/ college?

Do you still see any friends who didn't stay at school/ go to college?

Are you involved with any clubs or societies at school/ college?

Any outside school/ college?

Do you hold any positions of responsibility at school/ college (e.g. librarian, prefect, etc.)?

Have you made any new friends since being in the school sixth form/ college?

Attitude to work

How many days a week do you come into school/ college? For how many hours a day?

Do you ever have long free periods in the middle of the day? If so, what do you do during this time?

Do you ever miss lessons intentionally? Why?

How many hours of homework do you do a week, on average?

Do you think this is enough?

Where do you do your homework?

Do you ever get together with other students to study? Does this work well?

Do you enjoy your course?

What sort of things do you do in class?

Is this different from lower down the school?

How do you learn best?

What do you think you've learnt from your course?

Apart from your subjects, what else have you learnt in the sixth form/ college?

Do the teachers treat you any differently now?

Can you ask questions in class if you don't understand?

How do you feel about the quality of teaching at the school/ college?

Are the teachers supportive?

Student Services

Have you used the school/ college careers service?

Did you find it useful?

Do you have any learning support sessions? If not, do you know if these could be available to you?

Have you ever used any of the other services, such as counselling?

Do you use the library at all? How often? Is it useful?

Do you sue the computer facilities often?

Do you have access to a computer at home?

Is there a common room which you use?

A quiet study room?

Tutorial system

How often do you see your personal tutor?

Is this on your own or with a group of students?

Would you go to your personal tutor if you had a problem (academic or personal)?

Is there anyone else in the school/ college you would go to?

Miscellaneous

What do you like most about the school/ college?

What do you like least about the school/ college?

If you could change one thing about the school/ college, what would it be?

Would you recommend this school/ college and this course to other people?

How would you market it?

Future Plans

What will you do when you finish this course?

Have you considered going to university?

What do you want to do eventually?

Appendix 2

Interview Schedule for Main Study

Personal information

What is the most important thing in your life right now? Why?

Previous education

Amount of time at the school/college and previous institutions.

Choice of course/ institution

Why did you decide to stay in education, rather than get a job?

Why didn't you go to college/ stay at school?

Was this your first choice of institution? If not, where was your first choice, and why

didn't you go there?

Was this your first choice of course? If not, what was, and why didn't you do that?

Why did you eventually decide to come/ stay here?

Why did you eventually decide to follow this course?

Who influenced your choices?

Do you have any regrets over the course or institution?

Did many of your friends choose to come here? If not, where are they, and why are they

there? If so, did this influence your decision to come here?

Finances

Do you have a part-time job?

Does this job ever interfere with your studying?

Would you work more hours if you could?

Do you ever feel pressurised by your boss to work more hours?

Do you work more in the holidays?

Transport

How do you travel to school/ college?

Do you pay for this yourself?

How long does this take?

Social life

Would you say that you have a good social life?

Do you tend to socialise with people at your school/ college, or people from outside the school/ college?

Do you still see any friends who didn't stay at school/ go to college?

Are you involved with any clubs or societies at school/ college?

Any outside school/ college?

Have you made any new friends since being in the school sixth form/ college?

Are you mainly friendly with people on your course, or on other courses?

Where do you go to socialise in your spare time?

Attitude to work

How many days a week do you come into school/ college? For how many hours a day?

Do you ever have long free periods in the middle of the day? If so, what do you do during this time?

Do you ever miss lessons intentionally? Why?

How many hours of homework do you do a week, on average?

Do you think this is enough?

Where do you do your homework?

Do you ever get together with other students to study? Does this work well?

Do you enjoy your course?

What sort of things do you do in class?

Is this different from lower down the school?

How do you learn best?

What do you think you've learnt from your course?

Apart from your subjects, what else have you learnt in the sixth form/ college?

Do the teachers treat you any differently now?

Can you ask questions in class if you don't understand?

How do you feel about the quality of teaching at the school/ college?

Are the teachers supportive?

Student Services

Have you used the school/ college careers service?

Did you find it useful?

Have you ever used any of the other services, such as counselling?

Do you use the library at all? How often? Is it useful?

Do you sue the computer facilities often?

Is there a common room which you use?

A quiet study room?

Tutorial system

How often do you see your personal tutor?

Is this on your own or with a group of students?

Would you go to your personal tutor if you had a problem (academic or personal)?

Is there anyone else in the school/ college you would go to?

Attitude to school/ college

What do you like most about the school/ college?

What do you like least about the school/ college?

If you could change one thing about the school/ college, what would it be?

Would you recommend this school/ college and this course to other people?

Appendix 3: College students Cornish College

Name	Year	Gender	Ethnicity[1]	Course[2]	Subject(s)	No. GCSEs A*-C	GNVQ Int.	Interview[3]	Student Type[4]
Kylie	12	F	W	A	English, psychology, drama, general studies (gs)	8		I	W
Laura	12	F	W	G	Health and Social Care	8		I	W
Celine	12	F	W	G	Art and Design	7		G	J
Rosie	12	F	W	G	Art and Design	11		G	J
Natasha	12	F	W	G	Art and Design	11		G	J
Ian	12	M	W	G	Construction and Built Environment	9		G	P
Ruth	12	F	W	A	English, sociology, environmental science, gs	8.5		G	W
Julie	12	F	W	A	English, drama, history	8		G	P
Seb	12	M	W	A	Physics, maths, business studies, gs	9		I	P
Lee	12	M	W	A	Graphic design, computer science	7		I	W
Dylan	13	M	W	A	Biology, chemistry, computer science, gs	10		G	J
Edward	13	M	W	A	Biology and chemistry (1 yr courses)	9		G	J
Rebecca	13	F	W	A	English, maths, history, gs	10.5		G	J
Bianca	13	F	W	A	Biology, environmental science, geology, gs	10		I	J
Tony	13	M	W	G	Art and Design & 3D studies A level	2	MERIT	I	W
Wendy	13	F	W	G	Business Studies	5		G	P
Sally	13	F	W	G	Business Studies	12		G	P
Dave	13	M	W	G	Business Studies	8		G	P
Debbie	13	F	W	A	English, drama, history, gs	10		I	W
Laurie	13	M	W	A	French, history, maths, further maths, gs	10		I	W
Luke	13	M	W	A	Maths, history, media studies, gs	12		P	J

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[1] A simple differentiation was made: W=White; B =Black; A=Asian.

Name	Year	Gender	Ethnicity	Course	Subject(s)	No. GCSEs A*-C	GNVQ Int.	Interview	Type of student
Ryan	12	M	W	A	Chemistry, biology	10		G	J
Christopher	12	M	W	A	Maths, chemistry, biology	9		G	J
Stephen	12	M	W	A	Maths, physics, computer science	8		G	J
Kerry	12	F	W	A	French, maths, economics	10		I	J
Owen	12	M	W	A	Maths, biology, chemistry, physics	10		I	W
Natya	12	F	B	G	Health and Social Care	NK[5]	MERIT	G	W
Catherine	12	F	B	G	Health and Social Care	NK	MERIT	G	W
Hannah	12	F	B	G	Health and Social Care	NK	DIST	G	W
Aaron	12	M	B	G	Business Studies	4		I	P
Isobel	12	F	B	G	Business Studies	4	MERIT	I	W
Helen	12	F	W	A	Maths, business studies, sociology	11		P	J
Dwight	13	M	B	A	English, politics, psychology	7		1	W
Sarah	13	F	W	A	English, history, politics, gs	10		I	W
Joanne	13	F	B	A	English, psychology	6		G	P
Annabel	13	F	B	A	Media, psychology, politics	9		G	W
Sharie	13	F	A	A	English, politics, psychology	10		G	J
David	13	M	W	G	Art and Design	NK		G	P
Matthew	13	M	B	G	Art and Design	NK		G	P
Lola	13	F	A	G	Art and Design	6		G	W
Sol	13	M	B	G	Engineering	7		I	J
Keenan	13	M	B	G	Engineering	5		I	J
Selmar	13	M	B	G	Engineering	3		P	J

[2] A=A levels; G=GNV Q
[3] I=individual; G=group interview; P=photographic diary
[4] W=Worker; J=Juggler; P=Player
[5] Not Known: the student declined to say.

City College

Name	Year	Gender	Ethnicity	Course	Subject(s)	No. GCSEs A*-C	GNVQ Int.	Interview	Type of student
Tracy	12	F	W	A	Law, politics, psychology	10		I	J
Leonard	12	M	B	A	Maths, psychology, IT	6		1	P
Hayley	12	F	A	G	Business Studies	5		G	P
Emma	12	F	A	G	Business Studies	5		G	P
Pancho	12	M	B	G	Business Studies	5		G	P
Dwight	12	M	B	G	Business Studies	5		I	W
Liko	12	M	A	G	Business Studies	6		I	P
Rafalek	12	M	B	A	Psychology, law	5		G	J
Charles	12	M	W	A	English, psychology, politics	10		G	W
Susan	12	F	B	A	English, psychology	5		G	J
Tina	13	F	B	G	Science	NK		G	W
Rina	13	F	B	G	Science	9		G	W
Halima	13	F	B	G	Science	9		G	W
Naomi	13	F	B	A	English, law, sociology	7		P	W
Leander	13	M	B	A	Law, politics	8		I	J
Barika	13	F	B	A	Law, business studies, GCSE IT	8		G	J
Isobella	13	F	B	A	Law and psychology (1 yr courses)	6		G	W
Holly	13	F	B	A	French, politics, law, GCSE English	NK		G	W
Murray	13	M	B	G	Science	7		I	J
Habib	13	F	A	G	Science, GCSE maths	3		I	W
Dwayne	13	M	B	A	Business studies, sociology, GCSE English	8		I	W

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Appendix 4: School students

Urban School

Name	Year	Gender	Ethnicity	Course	Subject(s)	No. GCSEs A*-C	GNVQ Int.	Interview	Type of student
Anthony	12	M	W	G	Art and Design (Intermediate)	3		I	J
Daniel	12	M	W	G	Art and Design	4		I	J
Adele	12	F	W	G	Art and Design	10		G	J
Keeleigh	12	F	W	G	Art and Design	6		G	J
Thajala	12	F	A	G	Art and Design & business A level	10		G	W
Jon	12	M	W	A	English, history, geography	7		I	P
Liam	12	M	W	A	English, drama, history	8		I	J
Jenny	12	F	W	A	English, French, drama	11		I	J
Tom	12	M	W	A	English, history, drama	10		P	J
Leigh Anne	12	F	W	G	Business Studies	7		I	J
Alex	12	M	W	A	English, sociology, business studies	9		I	W
Gary	13	M	B	G	Business Studies	9		G	J
Angela	13	F	W	A	Physics, chemistry, maths	11		G	W
Eden	13	F	A	G	Business Studies	6		G	J
Nicholas	13	M	W	A	English, French, history	10		G	J
David	13	M	W	G	Business Studies	10		G	P
Ben	13	M	W	A	English, maths, physics, history, gs	14		I	J
Jennifer	13	F	W	A	English, sociology, history	11		I	J
Janie	13	F	W	A	English, sociology, history	5		I	P
Sarah	13	F	W	A	French, history, maths	10		I	W
Jessica	13	F	W	A	Enlgish, maths, history	9		I	J
Martha	13	F	W	A	English, history, drama	11		P	J

Clifftop School

Name	Year	Gender	Ethnicity	Course	Subject(s)	No. GCSEs A*-C	GNVQ Int.	Interview	Type of student
Sarah	12	F	W	G	Leisure and Tourism	8		G	J
Yusuke	12	M	A	G	Business Studies	7	MERIT	G	J
Andy	12	M	W	G	Leisure and Tourism	2	MERIT	G	J
Anna	12	F	W	A	English, biology, geography	10		G	J
Jenny	12	F	W	A	Business, geography, drama	6		G	J
James	12	M	W	A	French, maths, graphics	11		G	J
Phillip	12	M	W	G	Business Studies	7		I	W
Catherine	12	F	W	G	Business Studies	8		I	W
Cordelia	12	F	W	G	Health and Social Care	4		P	J
Helen	12	F	W	A	English, biology, chemistry	11		I	J
Stewart	12	M	W	A	English, chemistry, graphics	11		I	J
Rachel	13	F	W	A	Biology, geography, PE, gs	10		I	J
Nicola	13	F	W	G	Health and Social Care	8		I	W
Bridget	13	F	W	A	English, social biology, history, gs	10		G	J
Becky	13	F	W	A	Maths, physics, DT, gs	10		G	J
Samuel	13	M	W	G	Business Studies	5		G	P
Tanya	13	F	W	G	Leisure and Tourism	5		G	J
Stephen	13	M	W	A	Geography, biology, DT, gs	9		G	W
Dale	13	M	W	A	Business, geography, AS politics, gs	8		G	P
Tom	13	M	W	G	Leisure and Tourism	3	MERIT	I	J
Mark	13	M	W	A	Geography, biology, chemistry	10		1	J
Luke	13	M	W	A	Geography, biology, PE	10		P	J

Appendix 5

Pilot Study Students

Rural School

Name	Year	Gender	Ethnicity	Course	Subject(s)	No. GCSEs A*-C	GNVQ Int.	Interview	Type of student
Simon	12	M	W	A	History, maths, politics	9		I	W
Laura	12	F	W	G	Leisure and Tourism	0	MERIT	P	J
Peter	12	M	W	A	Maths, history, politics	9		P	W
Joanne	12	F	B	A	Maths, biology, physics	9		I	J
Claire	12	F	W	A	English, chemistry, biology	9		I	W
Terrance	12	M	W	A	French, politics, geography	9		G	W
Jacquie	12	F	W	G+A	Health and Social Care, geography, history	5		G	J
Jason	12	M	W	A	History, politics, maths	6		G	P

City School

Name	Year	Gender	Ethnicity	Course	Subject(s)	No. GCSEs A*-C	GNVQ Int.	Interview	Type of student
Arisa	13	F	A	G	Leisure and Tourism	9		I	J
Catrin	13	F	W	G	Leisure and Tourism	2		I	J
Ishtaq	12	M	A	A	Sociology, history, law	6		G	P
Ryan	12	M	W	A	Sociology, economics, law	5		G	P
Dave	12	M	W	A	Sociology, history, law	7		G	J
Liz	12	F	W	A	English, sociology, sports science	10		I	J
Sally	12	F	W	A	English, German, sociology	8		P	J
Nick	12	M	W	A	Sociology, history, biology	7		P	J

Rural College

Name	Year	Gender	Ethnicity	Course	Subject(s)	No. GCSEs A*-C	GNVQ Int.	Interview	Type of student
Emily	12	F	W	G	Health and Social Care	4		I	W
Charlotte	12	F	W	A	English, art, sociology	9		P	W
Lauren	12	F	W	A	English, history, art, photography, gs	9		G	W
Harry	12	M	W	A	Politics, media, psychology, gs	7		G	J
Janet	12	F	W	A	History, law, gs	7		I	W
Ione	12	F	W	A	Politics, psychology, sociology	9		I	J

Urban College

Name	Year	Gender	Ethnicity	Course	Subject(s)	No. GCSEs A*-C	GNVQ Int.	Interview	Type of student
Christopher	12	M	W	A	Psychology (1 yr course)	2	MERIT	I	P
Phillippa	12	F	W	G	Leisure and Tourism (Intermediate)	1		G	P
Suzy	12	F	W	G	Leisure and Tourism (Intermediate)	2		G	P
Omar	13	M	A	G	IT	0	MERIT	I	P
Dariush	12	M	A	A	English, media studies, psychology	7		I	P
Chester	13	M	A	A	Psychology, biology, chemistry	9		P	J
Hema	13	F	A	G	IT	2	MERIT	P	W

Appendix 6

Numbers of Student Types

		Jugglers	Workers	Players	TOTALS
Gender	Male	30	14	19	63
	Female	37	29	9	75
Course	A levels	43	25	12	80
	GNVQ	24	18	16	58
Area	Urban	37	24	19	80
	Rural	30	19	9	58
Year	12	38	23	17	78
	13	29	20	11	60
Institution type	FE College	18	22	16	56
	School	40	12	8	60
	Sixth Form College	9	9	4	22
	TOTALS	67	43	28	138