THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL AS A SOCIALIZING AGENT

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Studies of the post primary schools' involvement in the socialization of adolescents provide little evidence of an independent influence in socialization It is suggested that the main contribution of the school is to reinforce existing attitudes and values, be they occupational, political, social or religious Differences between schools account for only a small amount of variation in attainment, the effects of particular aspects of the school on attainment remain unclear The relevance of the findings to the issue of separate religious schooling and to education in working class and in rural areas is considered

During the past three decades the socialization of adolescents has been the subject of numerous studies and much comment In the early post-war years a dominant issue was whether or not such phenomena as a 'generation gap' or a 'youth culture' existed These issues conditioned the perspective of much of the research and consequently the agents of socialization mainly studied were parents and peer group (80) By comparison the school received little attention as an independent socializing agent Nevertheless, social reformers, apparently finding the educational system more amenable to control than other socializing agents, depended to an increasing degree on the school to promote social change In Europe this involved plans for the re-organization of the post-primary sector, for the addition of new subjects and for the raising of the school leaving age The success of these innovations depended to a large extent on the socializing power of the school, yet Floud and Halsey (29) observed that by 1958 this topic had 'barely been touched upon' and Himmelweit and Swift (48) were still able to complain in 1969 that researchers 'neglect to consider seriously school as an active socializing agent'

In this paper it is proposed to examine the role of the school as a socializing agent during second-level education, the period of schooling roughly corresponding to adolescence Despite recent interest in this topic relevant research is sparse It will thus be necessary to refer to studies which deal with the response to education in different types of schools and among the different social classes, though these were only incidentally concerned with the school as a socializing agent Generally, studies on racial issues in American education will be omitted since they introduce too many extra variables and are unlikely to have more than theoretical importance for Western Europe and particularly for Ireland Because it is

likely to be more relevant to Irish conditions, preference will be given to British and Irish research where it exists These limitations need to be kept in mind throughout the paper

Both Durkheim (23) and Parsons (81) view the school's socializing efforts as falling into two main categories—preparation for the type of society in which one lives and for one's specific position in that society Our classification of research findings is somewhat similar, we consider the influence of the school in three areas—occupational role, political behaviour and social and personal relations, this final area seeming to straddle the categories of Durkheim and Parsons

OCCUPATIONAL ROLE

In considering the relationship between education and occupational role it is possible to view the school both as a selective and a socializing agent (81) Though we are concerned in this paper with the latter function, the relationship between selection and socialization for occupational role is such that it will be necessary, to set our analysis in context, to examine briefly the manner in which the school allocates individuals to different occupational levels

Data from America (8) and Europe (51, 55) reveal a strong relationship between educational level attained and occupational status in adult life For instance, in Ireland, the 1966 Census of Population demonstrated that the boy who leaves school at the age of fourteen has to wait longer for employment and is eventually more likely to be left unemployed than boys who stay on longer at school Less than ten per cent of labourers had attended any form of post-primary school while a similar percentage of administrative, executive and managerial workers had received *only* a primary education Manual workers were more likely to have attended a vocational school while those in non-manual occupations tended to have been educated in the academic secondary schools Two-thirds of those in professional and technical occupations had been to university (55) At every educational level variations occur both in salary and occupational level attained, which in American (8) and Swedish (51) studies have been accounted for by such factors as intelligence, social class background and racial preferences of employers Where the total working force is studied (e g 8, 55) a further source of variation can be traced to the fact that changing entrance requirements over the years has led to the relationship between educational and occupational levels being more pronounced in the younger age groups It seems reasonable to assume that according as educational qualifications continue to become prerequisites for entry into

an increasing number of occupations and courses of training, such varia-
tion will be limited and the role of the school as a selective agent for the
occupational hierarchy of society will be further enhanced

Analysis of the school as a socializing agent for occupational roles is
not so straightforward It can be approached at two levels, one relating
education directly to occupation, the other concentrating on the criteria
used in the selection process At the first level we will consider the influence
of the school on occupational aspirations A central issue which we will be
unable to consider through lack of research is the effectiveness of the
school in teaching the social and technical skills needed in the occupations
which the pupils qualify to enter (84) At the second level we will analyse
the impact of the school on academic attainment and school leaving age
which, as we observed, play a major part in allocating pupils to different
occupational levels

Occupational Aspirations

In Ireland the relationship between educational level and occupational
aspirations is illustrated in striking fashion by the difference in migratory
intentions among pupils with elementary, vocational and secondary
education in provincial areas (42, 56, 57, 104) It appears that the
occupational aspirations of the secondary pupils are such that they are
more likely than those with either elementary or vocational education to
feel they have to migrate to the larger cities to attain their ambitions One
such study observed that the secondary educated almost exclusively
aspired to non-manual occupations, those with only an elementary
schooling would in the main be contented with manual work, while the
vocationally educated group held intermediate aspirations Income
aspirations varied accordingly (42) It would be reasonable to assume that
the opportunities provided by the different levels of education contributed
to these aspirations Yet the predominant social group in each type of
school was such that pupils would be predisposed to entertaining aspira-
tions appropriate to their educational level

The English tripartite system has also given rise to a number of studies
which outlined differences in occupational aspirations according to school
type Mary Wilson in her study of secondary modern pupils in one county
borough found that 'less than 5 per cent chose occupations unsuited to
their educational standing as pupils of the secondary modern schools' (105)
Jahoda in a similar study of secondary-modern school leavers concluded
'A deep sense of working-class loyalty pervades the boys' remarks They
intend to stay with "the lads" Boys from semi or unskilled parents wish
to become skilled workers Sons of craftsmen are content to stay where they

are and the group ideal is accepted at least verbally, even by those whose parents are higher in the social scale' (59) To what extent are these aspirations conditioned by school type ?

Himmelweit *et al* (46) found that grammar school boys in London were more likely than secondary modern boys to aim at high status occupations Furthermore, this tendency continues to persist when the aspirations of middle-class boys in secondary modern schools and grammar school boys of working-class origin are contrasted, despite the fact that within each type of school middle-class boys were more ambitious than their working-class schoolmates This may well indicate as the authors suggest 'the greater importance of school compared with social class in determining vocational aspirations' (46) There is reason, however, to suggest that the working-class boy who is selected for grammar school is, IQ score apart, not typical of working-class children in general Individual surveys have noted that his parents tend to be 'sunken middle class' (58) and possess above average occupational aspirations for their children (94)

Research on school types which do not incorporate selective examinations has not clarified the relationship between a pupil's occupational aspirations and the school he attends Analysis of the vocational aspirations of the comprehensive school pupils in Ford's study (31) indicates that differences between school types persist between upper and lower-stream pupils, with the selective device for stream allocation apparently performing the same function as the 11+ battery of tests A study of a number of American high schools which accepted pupils by catchment area found that the aspirations of pupils varied according to the social composition of the schools they attended (103) While the study avoided the social differentiation effected by a selective test it failed to consider the influence of the neighbourhood which would be similar in social composition to the school

A number of studies have commented on the insignificance of the school as a source of career information Veness (98) in her study of school leavers found the home rather than the school to be the main source of occupational information In a study of secondary modern pupils in Sheffield, Carter (10) claimed they had received little help from the school in choosing a career and were generally unaware of the range of occupations open to them A study of grammar and comprehensive schools in Merseyside (96) suggested that the introduction of careers' teachers might remedy the ignorance about available occupations Yet in their informal and guidance capacity the careers' teachers in the Merseyside survey and in an earlier study of grammar school boys (45) were found to have little influence It may have been too early, at the time of these surveys, to

assess the careers' teacher's influence though it must be remembered that when he ceases to be a disseminator of information and involves himself in the pupils' career decisions the careers' teacher is necessarily confined to a range of occupations that is socially acceptable to both pupil and parents Of course, careers' masters may intentionally avoid influencing a pupil's choice of career in the belief that it is the pupil himself who must make the decision The pupil s perception of the competence of the various sources of advice and information available to him is also likely to be important McQuail *et al* (69) found that upwardly-mobile grammar-school boys considered the teacher to be the best person to ask for advice on occupations while public school boys who were simply hoping to retain their high social position, had more recourse to their fathers

It would appear that informal school influences such as the career traditions of a particular school type and the ambitions and expectations of fellow pupils can be more instrumental in forming occupational aspirations than such formal influences as career guidance What influence the school actually exerts, however, seems to take the form of reinforcing aspirations which pupils were already predisposed to holding by virtue of their social class background or mobility-conscious parents

Attainment

Analysis of the school's impact on attainment touches on a number of educational controversies In Ireland current discussion on school size, co-education and the amalgamation of vocational and secondary schools on comprehensive lines inevitably leads to speculation as to the effects of such factors on attainment At the international level the underachieve-ment of working-class pupils continues to raise temperatures Numerous studies have commented on the school's ineffectiveness in bringing working-class pupils to the same level of attainment as middle-calss pupils of similar ability In Britain the Robbins Report (39) demonstrated that a professional man's child in the lowest third of the ability range in grammar schools was more likely to stay at school and obtain five or more 'O' level passes than a lower-working-class pupil in the top third of the ability range Douglas *et al's* analysis of 'O' level examination results in their national longitudinal survey revealed that the inferior performance of working class pupils could not be adequately explained by differences in intelligence between the social classes (21) Traditionally the underachieve-ment of working-class pupils was explained in terms of social and motivational factors in the home background Yet there have been sugges-tions that certain aspects of the school inhibit the educational progress of working-class pupils Though we will consider the effects of different

aspects of the school on pupils of different ability, sex and social class, it appears that the response of working-class pupils to school demands special consideration

In America the Coleman Report (13) observed that when the socio-economic background of pupils was taken into consideration differences between schools accounted for only a slight variation in pupil achievement School facilities and curriculum provision appeared to be less important than the verbal skills and educational background of teachers and the aspirations and social and ethnic background of other pupils in the school The survey has been faulted on methodological and statistical grounds (19, 24, 60, 102) Yet subsequent analyses of Coleman *et al's* data appear to have validated the report's general conclusion on the school's influence on attainment (34) A number of small-scale studies (97, 103) have noted the association between educational aspirations and the social composition of the school, though in attempting to establish a casual link it would be necessary to consider also the influence of age-peers and 'normative climate' in the catchment areas (25, 85) Nor does it seem likely that the Coleman Report has over-emphasized the relative importance of the teacher considering his central position in the learning situation However, what personal qualities contribute to effective teaching or indeed the superiority of one type of method over another is too wide an issue to be considered here In relating the Coleman Report's findings to European schools it is necessary to consider school variables that were not examined by the report, for instance, differences in the sex-composition and selective/ non-selective nature of schools would be largely irrelevant in the American context

With regard to school size the Coleman Report (13) concluded that when facilities and curriculum provision were allowed for, school size as such had no significant influence on attainment Lynn (67) studied the examination achievements of British schools of varying sizes, the majority having between 300-800 pupils He found that small schools did not get as good results as large schools, this tendency being strongest at higher levels of academic attainment such as gaining University awards, but less striking in pass and failure rates at 'O' and 'A' level examinations Evison (27) noted that pupils in small comprehensive schools scored higher on average in reading and mathematics tests than pupils in large comprehensive schools and the difference just about reached significance level when schools were divided into those with 600 or less pupils and the rest In a further study of twelve comprehensive schools ranging in size from just under 300 to over 1,800 pupils, Ross (87) found that a greater proportion of pupils wished to stay on and sit examinations in small schools than in large ones

Since the smaller schools tend to be in rural areas and the larger ones in towns and cities, Ross explained the superior aspirations in smaller schools not in terms of school size but by the greater intake of brighter and middle-class children in rural schools and by the lack of employment prospects in rural areas It is likely that similar factors could have accounted for the superior performance of pupils in small schools in Evison's (27) study It needs to be stressed of course that what would be regarded as a small school in British surveys would be quite large by Irish standards

In Britain the principal sources of evidence on the academic consequences of co-education differ greatly in their conclusions Dale (15) mentions a number of local studies which conclude that boys attending co-educational schools perform better in external examinations than do boys educated at boys' schools Among girls this trend was reversed except in the case of mathematics where girls performed better in co-educational than in single-sex grammar schools Douglas *et al's* national longitudinal survey, however, concluded that middle-class girls in co-educational grammar and secondary modern schools stayed on longer at school, got better 'O' level results and were more likely to wish to continue with their studies after leaving school than were middle-class girls in single-sex schools Middle-class boys and manual working-class boys and girls benefited more in single-sex than in co-educational grammar schools though in the case of secondary modern schools the sex composition did not appear to have any academic significance (21) Clearly, variations in attainment have been associated with differences in the sex-composition of schools Yet the conflict in the direction of these variations leads one to suspect that, as in the case of school size, other influences are at work

Husen (52) on the basis of the IEA study of achievement in mathematics in twelve countries claimed that educational systems organized according to comprehensive principles retained their pupils longer in school and involved less social bias in early leaving Douglas *et al's* (21) national longitudinal study in Britain found that while middle-class pupils differed little in their leaving patterns, working-class pupils of average ability stayed on longer in comprehensive schools than in other maintained schools Yet this study by Douglas *et al* together with some others (14, 72) refers to the general lack of interest among comprehensive school pupils in further education Studies in England (41) and Sweden (93) suggest that the academic performance of able pupils is little affected by changes in the selective/non-selective nature of school structure though able working-class pupils probably benefit more from selective education in the junior cycle of post-primary school (20, 53) The suggestion has been also made that girls considered 'borderline' in the 11+ selection process

benefit more in a comprehensive than in a secondary-modern school (41). While most of these studies are limited by either size (e.g. 20, 41, 72), sample (cf. 99) or achievement tests that were unsuited to the educational level studied (cf. 3), there does appear to be sufficient evidence to suggest that changes in school structure can influence to some extent the retention and performance of pupils of different ability, sex and social class. It is likely, however, that differences between schools of the same type may be even more important (71).

The tendency for working-class pupils to be more affected than middle-class ones by the selective/non-selective nature of post-primary schools would seem to indicate that such factors as the intellectual qualities of fellow pupils and a school's ethos and traditions have a greater influence on working-class pupils than on middle-class ones. According to the Coleman Report (13), minority pupils are more influenced than are majority ones by the school and especially by the social and ethnic composition of the student bodies. A recent study by Jensen (60) in an elementary school district suggests that the impact of school facilities on minority pupils may have been underestimated by the Coleman Report. It is unlikely however that peer influence would be as strong in elementary schools as it would be at high school level.

A number of writers have suggested the influence of 'more subtle and less tangible factors' (60) such as school values and teacher expectations on the attainment of working-class pupils. Davis (18), for instance, described the school culture as 'a narrow selection of a few highly traditional activities and skills arbitrarily taken from middle-class culture (p. 90)', which he claimed made it difficult for the working-class pupil to excel. The Early Leaving report (36) used the 'cultural clash' theory to explain the early termination of schooling among working-class pupils. Recent studies in secondary modern schools (43, 82) and a grammar school (64) have claimed that anti-academic and anti-school attitudes are reinforced by the segregation of 'failures' in lower streams. While there is evidence that working-class pupils are over-represented in the lower streams (17, 31, 50) there is little to suggest that this anti-school sub-culture is peculiarly working-class in origin.

There is some evidence to suggest that if a 'cultural clash' occurs, the teacher-pupil relationship will be a central area of conflict (63). Furthermore, teachers in Ireland (54) and England (30) are accorded middle-class status and the majority of those teaching at post-primary level are themselves of a middle and upper-class background. The finding that junior-school teachers in working-class areas experience more role conflict than their counterparts in middle-class areas would seem to indicate that this

group of teachers at least are aware of the disparity between their own school-related values and those of working-class pupils and their parents (76). How teachers reconcile this conflict and its subsequent effect on pupil attitudes and progress is not clear though the higher turnover of teachers in working-class than in middle-class districts (38), their lower morale and greater resistance to innovation (43, 44) would seem to suggest that few teachers in these areas have successfully adapted their classroom approach to the working-class culture of their pupils.

The impact of teacher expectation on pupil performance has been put on a more experimental basis. It had been claimed that teachers were conditioned to holding low expectations of working-class pupils by descriptions of working-class sub-cultures conveyed during their teacher-training course; and that such expectations had the effect of a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' on attainment (e.g. 75, 91). The claim by Rosenthal and Jacobson (86) that the expectations of elementary school teachers can lead to changes in the intellectual performance of pupils is often cited in support of this criticism (89). However, the study has been severely criticised, mainly on the grounds that the tests used were unsuited to the age group for which the most significant changes were recorded (95) and in fact a number of attempts at replication have failed (11, 28). Yet the difficulty of experimentally controlling an American teacher's expectation of a particular pupil's attainment needs to be acknowledged in the light of the numerous sources of assessment available to him throughout the school system.

From the studies we have reviewed it would seem that the impact of particular aspects of the school on a pupil's educational progress is still unclear. So many aspects of school organization are interrelated that it is difficult to isolate any one single facet in the studies under review. For instance, size is related to the range of educational facilities and subjects available and to the urban/rural location of the school; the majority of British comprehensive schools are co-educational (6) and co-educational schools in turn tend to be more predominant in rural areas (21). One feels, however, that whatever effects such formal aspects of school organiza-tion as size, sex composition and selective/non-selective structure might have on attainment, they could be largely explained in terms of the fellow pupils and teachers they bring the adolescent into contact with. Attempts to assess the contribution of school and teacher characteristics to the low attainment of working-class pupils are hampered by a scarcity of attempts to examine empirically many of the hypotheses that have been advanced. The few suggestions we examined seem plausible and are supported by circumstantial evidence; but a great deal of research is needed before we

can ascertain what influence a particular aspect of the school might have on an individual pupil

POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

A number of striking examples exist in history of school systems apparently manipulating the political ideologies of youth, the Spartan, Nazi and Soviet systems being the most obvious To accept these as evidence of the school's influence in the political socialization of youth, however, is to ignore the fact that in these countries the educational system was one of a number of state agents such as mass media and youth groups all proclaiming a common ideology While the general success of the socializing efforts of these countries must be admitted, their regimes were such that the exceptions—the unsocialized—were unlikely to become known and have been further obscured by the passage of time There is for instance some impressionistic evidence to suggest that ideological commitment among Russian youth is not as high as one might be expected to believe Grant (35) reports that many students in higher education regard the obligatory courses in Marxist-Leninist political theory 'as something to be learned for the examination and forgotten once the graduation requirements have been fulfilled' (p 123)

Similarly, in democratic countries the transmission of socio-political information, attitudes and values in the form of civics courses has not been associated with marked success Langton and Jennings' (66) study of almost one hundred American high schools reveals few differences in sense of political efficiency, defined as the feeling that one can influence political affairs, in adherence to democratic principles or in political information or cynicism, between those pupils who had taken a civics course and those who had not Nor did the different types of civics courses in use appear to have any advantage over one another A study in Scotland (74) suggests that the ineffectiveness of civics courses might be partly explained by our relative ignorance of the most appropriate content and sequence of topics to be employed There is also likely to be some truth in Waller's (101) assertion that 'the school must serve as a museum of virtue' (p 34), and as such must seek to avoid the more unpleasant aspects of society If this practice were to apply in the teaching of civics it would certainly add to the unreality of the subject especially when the obnoxious elements being avoided are highlighted daily by the mass media Indeed there is some recent evidence from Britain (90) and America (70) which suggests that civics courses which utilize discovery methods in the examination of controversial issues may well increase adherence to democratic principles

Research in Ireland casts doubt on the school s success in developing
some fundamental skills necessary for effective participation in a democracy
The interim report (77) of the National Adult Education Survey estimated,
on the basis of evidence from the trade unions, that standards of functional
literacy, defined as the ability to cope with the activities of everyday life
which demand a knowledge of reading and writing, are 'a good deal worse
than is generally believed' (p 20) While the post-primary school is likely
to have the final opportunity for improving functional literacy, the
cumulative effect of educational retardation with its origins in the elemen-
tary school limits the possibility of success A study of the Irish Leaving
Certificate examination (68) revealed that it was possible to obtain full
marks in any of nine subjects without having to exercise the skill of
evaluation as defined in Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives
Synthesis, defined as the combination of elements to form a new structure,
was almost totally confined to the better examples of Irish and English
essay-writing, while analysis, the breaking down of material into its
constituent parts, was essential for a sizeable proportion of marks in
Latin and to a lesser extent, Mathematics It may well be that these skills
are developed in school despite examination pressures but the authors of
this study greatly doubt it

Despite the apparent ineffectiveness to date of formal teaching in the
realm of political attitudes, values and skills, a number of American studies
have linked an individual's educational level with his political interest and
values Agger *et al* (2), for instance, in a community study found cynicism
towards politics to be associated with educational level Rush and Althoff
(88), however, in reference to a similar finding comment 'There is no
reason to believe that the connection is spurious but the problem of
ascertaining the exact relationship is a different one' (p 43) For instance,
the relationship between political values and participation in education
could be either partly or totally explained by both being influenced by
social class In fact the intervention of social class as an important variable
has been frequently noted in both American and British research

Murphy and Morris (73) suggested that the high school is less likely
than the college to diminish the relationship between social class and
political affiliation In a study carried out in Britain, grammar school
pupils of all social classes were found to be more interested in politics than
similar pupils in secondary modern schools Within the grammar school,
however, middle-class pupils were more interested in politics than working-
class pupils (22) A similar small scale survey in Essex (92) found public
school pupils more likely to choose political figures among those whom they
wished to emulate, followed by secondary modern, grammar and finally

comprehensive pupils The high position of secondary modern pupils was largely accounted for by their attachment to the Royal Family, this identification with royalty was found to be a feature of working-class pupils' choices

A number of attempts have been made to define more clearly the relationship between differences in attitude to the democratic system, party preference, sense of political efficacy, political cynicism and non-selective, selective and public schools in England One such study, a comparison of senior pupils in grammar and public schools, found that 'type of education received does not to any large extent influence political values' (69) A nation-wide survey felt it fair to conclude 'that the main role of the English system of education is to reinforce other agents of socialization' (1) Such results hardly justify the claim that these surveys 'have demonstrated the independent effect of the school as an agency of political socialization in British society' (92)

The location and size of schools has been associated with a person s willingness to become involved in the democratic process at the level of voluntary and community organizations Brothers (7) found that pupils who attend a central grammar school in Liverpool were unlikely to become involved in community organizations in their own locality Two American studies (4, 5) suggest that amalgamated high schools may be less likely to facilitate community involvement than small schools in small communities

In the American context, an attempt has been made to describe the manner in which the interaction of social class and the social system of the high school contributes to the formation of political attitudes (106) Its conclusion can be summarized by the following causal chain high parental occupation leads to frequent participation in extra-curricular activities which leads to a greater feeling of integration into the school s status system, which leads to greater social trust, which, in turn, leads to more positive attitudes to politics Despite the simplistic nature of the conclusion, research along these lines, concentrating on the interaction of variables, should demonstrate more clearly the contribution of the school to political socialization

SOCIAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONS

Social Class

In Europe social class divisions in post-primary education are a source of concern and during the 'comprehensive debate' in Sweden (83) and after the 1947 Langevin Wallon Plan in France (32) the ideals of mutual tolerance, social cohesion and community spirit were frequently discussed

There is evidence from a number of European countries, Ireland and

Britain included, that working-class children are under-represented in academic post-primary schools (9, 37, 62) There is also some evidence from England which suggests that the pupils in the various types of post-primary schools differ in their awareness of the class system of society Miller (71) found grammar and secondary modern school pupils to differ in both their actual and ideal rating of manual occupations, the secondary modern pupils tending to ascribe higher status to manual work Himmelweit *et al* (46) noted that 49 per cent of grammar school pupils did not understand the meaning of social class as opposed to 73 per cent of the secondary modern pupils Within each type of school, however, class awareness was lowest among the working-class pupils and unrelated to intelligence, suggesting perhaps that differential class awareness between schools was partly an artifact of their social class composition Indeed a much more representative sample of British youth revealed that apart from public school boys, those in selective schools did not differ from age-peers elsewhere in their attitudes towards the present class system of society (1)

The impact of school on friendship choices is even more complex In a further study of the grammar schools in Himmelweit *et al's* survey, Oppenheim (79) found no evidence of a social bias in friendship choices Ford (31) in her study of three London schools also pointed to the relative classlessness of friendship choices in the grammar school by comparison with the comprehensive school This finding is likely to surprise many, yet research in American high schools (33, 49), which are like English comprehensive schools in their social composition, has also found friendship choices and class of origin to be related This contrast between friendship choices in English grammar schools on the one hand and those in English comprehensive and American high schools on the other may well originate in the function performed for society by each type of school In grammar school the pupils have already been selected as having high scholastic aptitude, they are destined in the normal event for middle-class occupations and as such have more in common than pupils in comprehensive and high schools who are more heterogeneous in background and, probably a more important consideration, are more heterogeneous in destination It may be, as Turner (97) suggests, that class aspiration as much as class origin influences ones choice of friends Further support for this interpretation is provided by Neugarten's (78) finding that, due to the selective effect of high drop-out rates on lower-class pupils, those who remain at school until the higher grades are less likely to be rejected as friends than pupils of a similar social background in the lower grades

In English comprehensive schools the contribution of streaming to class bias in friendship choices also needs to be considered in the light of some

small-scale research which points to two related tendencies Firstly, friendship groups continue to be formed on the basis of streams despite the introduction of 'houses' and year groups (31, 61), and secondly, working-class pupils are under-represented in higher streams and over-represented in lower streams (31, 50) While these tendencies are also common in streamed grammar schools, Ford (31) found that within streams class bias is less in evidence in friendship choices than in comprehensive schools, considering the size of Ford's study—only three schools in all—this finding must remain very tentative

Generally speaking therefore the principal involvement of the school in friendship choices is that it brings together in senior grades and in different types of school pupils who are predisposed to becoming friends and that it achieves this by the socially differentiating effect of selective tests and early leaving Such social mixing however is unlikely to have much impact on the stratification system of society or on the relations between members of different strata since it simply means that the members of tomorrow s middle class mix together today

Religion
The possible divisive effects of separate Catholic schooling and speculation regarding the social cohesive value of integration have been an issue for some time in America and quite recently have received attention in Ireland This 'divisive theory' was one of the issues studied by Greeley and Rossi (40) in a national survey of American Catholics The analysis of the adults' responses indicates that at the age of seventeen, interaction between Catholics and non-Catholics was greater in the public school than in the Catholic school Even in the public school, however, the incidence of Catholics choosing one another as best friends was high, 49 per cent of ex-public school Catholics reporting that at the age of seventeen over half of their friends were Catholics In adult life the relationship between Catholic high school education and friendship choice is also in evidence Nevertheless, Catholic education did not seem to influence ones choice of neighbours, co-workers or visitors to ones home, nor did Catholic high school education account for any variation in attitude to Jews, Negroes and Protestants

The influence of Catholic education on religious behaviour was found to be greater among high school adolescents than among adults, even among those in their twenties no trace was found of this strong association in the adolescents' sample A possible reason is that the impact of Catholic education is of a very temporary nature though it could simply mean that Catholic education has become more effective in recent years In general

the home appeared to be the most important influence on adult religious behaviour Consequently those Catholics who had not attended a Catholic high school or indeed any level of Catholic education were not greatly harmed by their non-attendance The high school did, however, appear to have some slight influence on the formation of doctrinal attitudes

The fact that racial and religious attitudes and religious behaviour are both sensitive and personal must be taken into account when considering Greeley and Rossi's findings There is always the danger when dealing with such topics that one may be measuring a respondent's forthrightness rather than his true attitudes and behaviour This would have been a greater consideration were the effects of school influence more obvious, as it is, it casts further doubt on the distinctive influence of Catholic post-primary education

Sex

Support for co-education has followed much the same pattern as proposals for religious and social integration in the school, a major hypothesis being that the bringing together of the sexes would facilitate contact during adolescence and promote a better understanding and healthier relationship between them Some American studies question the reality of social contact between the sexes in high school (49) and the beneficial influence of co-education on social adjustment (12) Dale (16), however, has produced findings supportive of many of the proclaimed merits of co-education In an extensive sample of English and Welsh student-teachers he found that those who had attended both single-sex and co-educational schools felt that the mixing of the sexes improved behaviour and pupil relations within the school Boys in co-educational schools were more careful of their appearance, they worked harder and bullying was less frequent while the girls' interests widened Both male and female respondents felt that the attitude towards sex was healthier in the co-educational school, in fact this difference in attitude 'was greater than for any other topic explored' (16, p 298) More ex-pupils of co-educational schools felt that their schooling had helped them in their relationship with the opposite sex, indeed the male students who had attended co-educational schools found it easier to work under the direction of a woman Dale also quotes an unpublished study by one of his research students to the effect that those who had been to co-educational schools were more likely to claim that the type of school they attended had helped them in their marriage This was supported by results from a self-rating attitude scale on marital happiness

The generality of Dale's findings must be limited by the omission of

ex-pupils of secondary modern schools and by the under-representation of Catholics Furthermore the choice of student-teachers who would have been professionally interested in the topic, though not without its advantages, introduced possible hazards Such respondents would also be more typical of successful students than of the general pupil population Nevertheless the findings do indicate that some pupils perceive themselves as deriving social and personal benefits from co-education

CONCLUSION

It must be obvious from the fragmentary evidence available to us that our conclusions will of necessity be so tentative as to be commonplace Nor would the inclusion of American findings on racial issues in education have deepened our understanding In the preparation of adolescents for society we found little indication of a unique or independent educational influence on values and attitudes be they occupational, political, religious or social, rather did we note a tendency for the school to support other agents of socialization and to reinforce existing attitudes School factors would seem to have but slight influence on attainment, especially by comparison with the effects of home background, though working-class pupils are probably more influenced by the school than are middle-class ones Considering that it should be easier to change the school than to improve home background, what little influence the school exerts is of social significance It needs to be stressed of course that we have not examined the school s *absolute* effectiveness in developing the talent, academic and otherwise, made available to it What we have said is that schools, in their impact on attainment, are of a broadly similar quality, we have not said whether this quality is good, bad or indifferent

There is an obvious need for further research to validate what is after all mere suggestive evidence This is likely to take either of two approaches One approach might utilize some form of national evaluation survey to assess the effectiveness of the school in satisfying the demands of the various social and occupational situations in which the pupil might become involved as an adult It would be unfortunate, however, if the immediate usefulness of this approach were to preclude interest in more fundamental interaction studies As Spencer (90) quite rightly put it in relation to attempts at determining the school's socializing role, 'the social survey can only be the beginning of such a model building exercise, not its main tool' The second approach would concentrate on the social dynamics within the school and attempt to discover how individual aspects of the school interact with one another and with the pupil's background and predispositions to develop different kinds of values and skills Among

recent research along these lines can be listed two studies (65, 100) of English boarding schools which explored among other topics the pupil s adaptation to the school Experimentation with attempts to harness the informal influence of peers on occupational aspirations should also prove rewarding (26)

On the more practical level the findings reported in this paper focus attention on a number of fundamental issues in modern Irish education which illustrate the inherent conflict between the demands made on the school by society at large and by specific social positions The provision of separate schools for the various religious groups is probably the most topical and controversial example Does the present system over-emphasize religious education at the expense of social cohesion? On the other hand would integrated education foster harmonious relations to the detriment of religious formation? It is not possible for us to discuss the morality of these questions but it does appear, from a sociological point of view, that they contain a number of assumptions about the impact of schooling for which there is little evidence There is little to suggest that segregated education divides society though it may institutionalize and reinforce existing divisions Nor are the hopes and fears concerning integrated education justified Simply bringing pupils of different religions together in the same school will not ameliorate intolerance and bias Yet neither is it likely to cause widespread defections from the religions involved In fact we need to know a great deal more about the origins and development of prejudice before the school can begin to combat it effectively

The failure of the school to overcome the inhibiting effects of a working-class background will continue to trouble educators in the years ahead We can offer nothing approaching conclusive evidence to support reform in one area rather than in another though there appears to be sufficient indication to merit experimentation with method, curriculum, pupil-pupil and teacher-pupil relationships

While it is understandable that intelligent pupils who perform below their potential and leave school early should be a cause for concern, it is quite possible that the disadvantages for society, implicit in such phrases as 'wastage of talent' have been over-estimated Without wishing to halt social mobility it must be obvious that intelligent and talented manual workers can play such important roles as spokesman, leader or trade-unionist, in this manner the so-called 'wasted talent' could well be an asset to society Whether a society that can benefit in this fashion from an individual's talents is wise or indeed has the right to prescribe different conditions of employment for manual and professional occupations is an issue that cannot be discussed here

Of greater immediacy, however, is the dilemma faced by the teacher in a working-class area when he attempts to define his aim and function Is he to proceed as if he were in a middle-class area where the values of home and school concur, or does he adapt to suit his environment and reward skills and values not normally prized in school? Traditionally the teacher in such a situation continued to reward middle-class virtues such as competitiveness, ambition, deferred gratification, verbal ability and in so doing facilitated the academic success and upward mobility of a section of working-class pupils Since the school cannot hope to make all pupils upwardly mobile it must become more than a negative influence for those who remain It should be possible even for pupils who have few ambitions to succeed In short, there must be an education based on their own way of life for those working-class boys who have no other ambition than to follow in their fathers' footsteps How this can be achieved within the context of a middle-class institution is, as Neugarten observed, 'one of the crucial problems facing the school' (78)

Academic post-primary education in rural areas involves a somewhat similar difficulty since it is tailored to the needs of those who wish to break with their background Though one can speculate as to whether or not rural areas are losing their 'best brains', it is unlikely that the final solution lies within the educational system If we must accept that high migration rates from rural areas are outside the control of educators, then we need to be especially careful about the community attitudes and social skills that are developed among those who remain Consequently, educational planners might need to reconsider policies such as that of school centralization which may well inhibit a pupil's loyalty to his own locality and render him less likely to become involved in its community organizations In rural areas also there is a need to consider those who are either unwilling or unable to use education as a passport to another way of life

These comments, limited as they are by a scarcity of research, are offered as mere suggestions to administrators and teachers who will be forced to make decisions irrespective of the quality of research For the researcher they represent fruitful areas of study which, if investigated, will hopefully lead to more enlightened planning and more humane teaching

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