Staying or Leaving?

a literature review of factors affecting the take-up of post-16 options

Rachel Brooks

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the review

The end of compulsory schooling is an important time for young people, as they decide whether to continue with their academic education, enter the world of work or follow vocational courses and training. It is also perceived as a crucial transitional point by policy makers. Over recent decades, many government initiatives have been targeted at influencing the destinations of young people at the end of compulsory schooling, hoping to increase the proportion staying on in education or following vocational education or training. To a large extent, these goals have been pursued for economic reasons: namely, to increase the skills profile of the workforce to a level comparable with Britain's European competitors, and to reduce the level of youth unemployment.

Questions about who chooses what at the end of compulsory schooling are thus, obviously, of central importance to policy makers and a wide range of professionals in the fields of education and work, including careers advisers, teachers and employers. Understanding the ways in which young people perceive the options open to them and, ultimately, make their choices at the end of compulsory schooling is crucial if policy at the national, local and school levels is to operate effectively. Research in this area is essential if policy makers are to be able to discern the impact of specific initiatives. Such questions about post-16 choice are also important for young people themselves, as they have a direct impact upon their future options in both education and employment as well as the sense of identity they develop.

This review presents and discusses research which has attempted to identify the impact of education and economic systems on young people's choices and also that which has explored the influences of more localised factors such as schools and regional economies. It also examines to what extent individual characteristics such as class, gender and ethnicity determine the destinations of young people at 16.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Sources of information

The data collection for the literature review was carried out by searching relevant CD-ROM databases for keywords related to post-16 education choices and the factors which underpin these decisions. Searches were carried out on the following databases using the keywords given in Appendix A: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts, ChildData and International ERIC.

Other relevant research was identified by following up references in the books and articles obtained in the initial stages of the project.

1.2.2 Parameters of the review

Due to the large body of research on this topic, it was necessary to set parameters for the literature review. It was decided to focus solely on decisions made about post-16 destinations in the UK and thus exclude research on factors affecting choices in other countries in the world. Furthermore, only research published between 1988 and 1997 was included in the review. This decision was made in light of the considerable changes made to the educational system in England and Wales since 1988 when the Educational Reform Act was implemented.

The literature relating to the factors which affect choices at the end of compulsory schooling spans a very broad range of ages. Studies have focused on:

- young children in primary school or lower secondary school, for example, to ascertain at what age decisions about careers are made, and what influences these decisions;
- students making choices towards the end of compulsory schooling;
- young people and adults over the age of 16, reflecting on the choices they made at the end of compulsory schooling;
- parents, teachers and other professionals who are involved with young people as they make their decisions at 16.

This review draws on research in all of these areas, although it has focused mainly on evidence from young people in secondary education and those who had recently completed their compulsory schooling.

Many researchers have evaluated the various academic and vocational qualifications open to young people at 16. These studies have not been included in the literature review unless they have explored the reasons why young people choose particular options.

A decision was also taken to restrict the review to published articles and books, and to exclude opinion pieces and student theses and dissertations. Again, this was informed by a desire to limit the body of literature to a size manageable within the duration of the project. Studies using quantitative, qualitative or mixed methodologies were all included in the review. None was excluded because of the type of methodology used, sample size or lack of representativeness and ranged from large-scale quantitative surveys, such as the Youth Cohort Study, to in-depth qualitative studies examining the dynamics of a particular school or group of pupils. Details about the qualitative studies are given in the text while further information about some of the key quantitative research is provided in Appendix B.

1.3 Decision-making processes

Researchers have, historically, documented enduring patterns of inequality in levels of participation in post-16 education, training and employment influenced by class, gender and ethnicity, implying that young people's destinations are largely determined by their individual characteristics. However, it is also clear that, within gender/ethnic/class cultures and subcultures, individuals do make different decisions and that their destinations cannot be determined entirely by their gender, class and ethnicity. Indeed, much government policy in the 1990s has been predicated on the assumption that young people have free choice and responsibility for themselves as individuals.

In recent years, there have been some attempts to mediate between these two approaches to post-16 destinations. For example, Hodkinson *et al.* (1996) argued that young people make their choices about post-16 options through a process of 'pragmatic decision making'. By this, they mean that although a young person's beliefs, ideas and preferences are individually subjective, they are also inevitably influenced by the objective social structures and the cultural and subcultural traditions in which they live. This report discusses research that has explored large-scale social structures, subcultures, local influences such as schools, as well as the decisions of individuals within particular cultures and schools. However, the wider psychological and sociological literature on models of choice has not been a major focus of the review.

1.4 Academic attainment

It is widely recognised that academic attainment at age 16 is the best predictor of subsequent destination. For example, Gray *et al.* (1993) argued that:

> *the formal qualifications young people obtain in the examinations they sit at the end of their period of compulsory schooling are overwhelmingly the most powerful predictors of further educational participation. In general, we have found the relationships to be linear ones. The better their qualifications the more likely a person is to stay on* (p.4).

In addition to predicting the likelihood of students leaving full-time education or staying, it is clear that attainment is strongly correlated with destinations within each of these two routes. Payne (1995) concluded that:

> *GCSE results are the biggest single influence on staying on rates. In full-time education after 16, they are closely related to the courses followed and to the chances of leaving after one year. In the labour market, they affect the chances of getting an apprenticeship, a full-time job or a non-apprenticeship place on YT, and there is a clear hierarchy between these three routes in terms of the average GCSE results of young people on each* (p. v).

Given these relationships, some of the reported research has focused primarily on the factors which influence attainment at 16, in addition to the choice of options amongst young people with similar levels of attainment.

1.5 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 describes the options available to young people as they reach the end of their compulsory schooling and how these have changed over the period covered by the literature review (1988–1997). It provides evidence of the take-up of these different options and trends in participation over time.

The report then focuses on a number of different factors which have influenced the take-up of post-16 options. In particular, the review examines the impact of:

- education and economic systems on young people's choices (Chapters 3 and 4);
- local-level influences such as the school young people attend (Chapter 5); and
- individual characteristics such as class, ethnicity and gender (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

However, there is not always a simplistic distinction between system-wide influences and those operating at a more local level. For example, economic influences may differ from region to region but, ultimately, be dependent on the same national economic policy. Similarly, it may sometimes be difficult to differentiate between the influence of individual schools and that of the wider education system.

Much of the research reported in this review explored more than one of these factors, reflecting the strong interrelationships between the different characteristics of young people. For example, a number of studies have explored the experiences of young black women at the end of their compulsory schooling, discussing the impact of gender and ethnicity but also examining the influence of individual schools and the wider economic situation. Such studies are reported or cross-referenced wherever relevant and, although this has led to repetition in some parts of the review, at the same time it allows a fuller picture of the research in any one area. It also helps to emphasise the complexity and interdependence of many of the factors.

1.6 References

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HODKINSON, P., SPARKES, A. and HODKINSON, H. (1996). *Triumphs and Tears: Young People, Markets and the Transition form School to Work.* London: David Fulton.

PAYNE, J. (1995). *England and Wales Youth Cohort Study: Routes Beyond Compulsory Schooling* (ED Research Series — Youth Cohort Report No.31). Sheffield: Employment Department.

2. POST-16 OPTIONS

2.1 Different options available to young people at 16

After completing their compulsory education, young people are able to choose from a range of options. They can:

- continue to study in the school they attended up to the age of 16, if it has a sixth form;
- transfer to another school with a sixth form, to study;
- transfer to a sixth-form college or further education college, to study;
- take up a 'Modern Apprenticeship' with an employer, which will include some education and training up to at least National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3;
- use a 'Youth Credit' to purchase education and training of their own choice (such as Youth Training or a Modern Apprenticeship);
- enter the labour market, which may include some off-the-job education or training.

A 'triple-track' framework of post-compulsory education and training was formalised in the 1991 White Paper *Education and Training for the 21st Century* (GB.Parliament.House of Commons, 1991) and is summarised in Table 2.1. However, many of the qualifications within this framework were introduced in the 1990s and not, therefore, available to young people throughout the whole of the period covered by this literature review (1988–97).

If young people wish to continue their general education they are able to follow courses for General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels (A-levels), Advanced Supplementary Levels (AS-levels) or General Certificate of Secondary Education qualifications (GCSEs). Alternatively, or in conjunction with the above, they can study for general vocational education qualifications, which can lead to work or further and higher education. General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were piloted in five subject areas in 1992, and then, in 1993, introduced in an additional eight subjects. The qualifications cover the theory and practice of different vocational areas, and coursework and written tests are used to test young people's understanding, knowledge and skills. They are available at various levels, none of which require any previous qualifications, and are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Table 2.1 Levels of post-compulsory education and training

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Levels 4 & 5
General education	4 or more GCSEs at grades D to G	4 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C	2 or more GCE A-levels (or 1 A-level and 2 AS-levels or 4 AS)	a degree a Higher National Diploma (HND)
General vocational education	a Foundation GNVQ	an Intermediate GNVQ	an Advanced GNVQ	
Occupational training	an NVQ level 1	an NVQ level 2	an NVQ level 3 (mainly available through Modern Apprenticeships)	higher professional qualifications (NVQ levels 4 & 5)

Source: *Choice and Opportunity: a Learning Future for 14–19 Year Olds* (GB. DFEE, 1996)

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) were also introduced during this period and they can be studied full-time or part-time in conjunction with a job, GNVQs or GCSEs. These qualifications comprise units which can be studied by the young person at their own pace, and assessment is carried out in working conditions. Their equivalence to GNVQs, GCSEs and A-levels is shown in Table 2.1. Young people, whether in school, college, training or employment are also able to study for other types of job-related qualification such as those awarded by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), City and Guilds and the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Examinations Board.

Another route to gaining a vocational qualification is through Modern Apprenticeships. These are open to young people between the ages of 16 and 24, lead to a minimum of a NVQ level 3 in a specific area of industry or business, and include training in core skills such as team work, communication and problem solving. These were first offered in 14 sectors, in 1994 and, by 1997, were offered in over 50. Each industrial sector has its own entry requirements and has developed its own Modern Apprenticeships. These qualifications differ from the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and Youth Training (YT) which preceded them in that they offer young people a broader apprenticeship curriculum and aim to integrate college and workplace learning more fully. Furthermore, apprenticeships are not time-restricted, although they normally take at least two years to complete.

A number of studies published between 1988 and 1997 refer to YTS or YT as an option available to young people on completion of their compulsory schooling. These qualifications were available from 1983, until the schemes ended in the early 1990s. A one-year YTS was launched in 1983 with the aim of providing government-funded, employer-based training. In 1986, this was transformed into a two-year scheme of higher-quality training with the opportunity to gain vocational qualifications. YTS underwent a change of name, to Youth Training (YT), from 1990 onwards, when responsibility for the scheme was transferred from the central Training Agency to local Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs).

Youth Credits were introduced in pilot areas in 1991 and on a national basis from April 1995. These allow young people to choose and pay for their own training and/or education as the Credit is a voucher with a financial value, often around £1,000. It was hoped that the Credits would encourage young people to take greater responsibility for their own learning, increase the involvement of employers in training and also stimulate the market in education and training. All TECs in England and Wales offer Youth Credits as the access mechanism for government-sponsored youth training, such as YT and Modern Apprenticeships.

New vocational qualifications were also introduced in Scotland in this period. From 1984, young people were able to choose between academic 'Highers' (Higher grade of the Scottish Certificate of Education) and National Certificate modules, which provided an advanced vocational education. Scottish equivalents to the NVQ and GNVQ (Scottish Vocational Qualifications and General Scottish Vocational Qualifications) were also introduced, in 1990 and 1992, respectively.

Studies examining the impact of many of these changes are explored in Chapter 3.

2.2 Take-up of the different options

2.2.1 Young people in education and training

During the 1980s, the post-16 education and training in England was characterised as a 'low participation/low achievement' system in comparison with other European systems and had the highest level of economically active 16–19-year-olds of any OECD country (Hodgson and Spours, 1997). However, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, participation in full-time post-16 education and training increased significantly, from under 50 per cent of 16-year-olds in 1987 to around 70 per cent by 1994 (Hodgson and Spours, op.cit.). Nevertheless, compared to the majority of European countries which had achieved participation rates of 85–90 per cent by the early 1990s, participation in post-16 education and training in England remained low (Hodgson and Spours, op.cit.).

As Table 2.2 indicates, the proportion of young people in full time *education* increased during the early 1990s, but levelled off more recently with a decrease of one per cent between 1995 and 1996 to 64 per cent (GB. DFEE, 1997b). Evidence from the Youth Cohort Study published in 1997 suggested that the recent fall in participation in full-time education and training has mainly been among those with lower GCSEs and no qualifications while participation among those with GCSEs at grades A*–C was relatively unchanged (GB. DFEE, 1997a).

Participation in training and part-time education had declined over the period from 26 per cent at the end of 1990 to 18 per cent by the end of 1995 (see Table 2.2). Most of this decrease was due to a decline in participation

in government-supported training such as Youth Training and Modern Apprenticeships and the increase in full-time education (GB. DFEE, 1997b).

Table 2.2 Activity of 16–17-year-olds in England 1990–96 (percentage of cohort)

	end 1990	end 1991	end 1992	end 1993	end 1994 [1]	end 1994 [2]	end 1995	end 1996 [3]
Students in cohort (thousands)	1,240	1,180	1,130	1,090	1,086	1,086	1,153	1,223
Full time education	51	57	62	65	65	65	65	64
Training and part-time education	26	23	20	19	19	19	18	18
Not in education or training	23	19	18	16	16	16	17	17

Source: school, college and trainee records, Labour Force Survey, quoted in GB. DFEE, 1997b

[1] up to 1994 includes Further Education Statistical Record data

[2] from 1994 onwards includes Individualised Student Record data

[3] provisional

2.2.2 *Young people not in education or training*

The period 1990–95 also saw a decline in the proportion of 16-year-olds who were in neither education nor training (see Table 2.2). However, a rise of one per cent between 1994 and 1996 reflected increases in both the proportion of young people who were unemployed and those in employment without training.

2.3 Future changes

It is likely that the options open to young people at 16 will change again in the late 1990s. In England and Wales, a number of the recommendations of Sir Ron Dearing's *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds* (1996) are due to be implemented in 1998 (see Appendix C). Additionally, *Qualifying for Success: a Consultation Paper on the Future of Post-16 Qualifications* (GB. DFEE, 1997c) has indicated the priorities of the Labour Government in this area, drawing on both the Dearing review and responses by teachers and others to Dearing's recommendations.

Local initiatives to tackle disaffection among 14–17-year-olds, and to increase participation and motivation levels in learning, have been funded through the Government's 'New Start' programme, which began in September 1997. These have yet to be evaluated but are intended to encourage young people to pursue education and/or training after the age of 16.

In Scotland, a new unified system, embracing all post-16 provision below higher education (with the exception of Scottish Vocational Qualifications and the work-based sector) was outlined in *Higher Still: Opportunity for All* (GB.Scottish Office, 1994) and is due to be introduced in 1998 (for a discussion of this see Raffe (1997)).

It is also likely that changes to the options open to unemployed young people between the ages of 18 and 24 may have an impact on choices made by those in the final year of their compulsory education. For example, the 'New Deal' for 18–24-year-olds was introduced in early 1998. This offered young people who have been unemployed for six months individual help from a personal adviser and the option of a subsidised job, work in the voluntary sector or in an environmental task force, or full-time education and training.

2.4 References

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3. EDUCATION SYSTEM

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the influence of the education system on the choices made by young people at the end of their compulsory schooling. In particular, it explores the ways in which specific educational reforms have influenced take-up of post-16 options. As discussed in Chapter 2, the period covered by this literature review (1988–97) has witnessed considerable changes to the education system at all levels: new vocational qualifications were introduced, the number of places in higher education increased considerably, providers of further education became independent of their LEA and the first cohort to sit the GCSE exam did so at the beginning of this period.

3.2 Introduction of the GCSE in England and Wales

Analysis of data from the Youth Cohort Study indicated that the post-GCSE cohort were significantly 'better qualified', in terms of the number gaining high grade passes, than previous cohorts (Ashford *et al.*, 1993). Thirty per cent of the cohort who completed their compulsory schooling in 1986 gained four or more higher grade passes at O-level or CSE, while the comparable figure for the first cohort who sat GCSE was 40 per cent (Gray *et al.*, 1993). Furthermore, studies have shown that during this period students' attitudes to school generally improved (Courtenay and McAleese, 1993; GB. DFEE, 1996; Gray *et al.*, op.cit.). A number of researchers have attributed the improvement in results to, what they judged to be, fairer and more motivating methods of assessment, such as coursework, which were introduced with the GCSE (for example, Bishop *et al.*, 1997).

Sizeable increases in participation rates in post-compulsory education were also evident in the late 1980s. Prior to the introduction of the GCSE, participation rates had usually risen by one per cent a year. However, the Youth Cohort Study showed an increase of eight per cent over four years, from 41 per cent in the pre-GCSE cohort of 1987 to 58 per cent post-GCSE in 1991 (Courtenay and McAleese, op.cit.). This increase in participation in post-compulsory education is unsurprising, given the higher attainment levels discussed above and the strong association between level of qualification obtained and post-16 destination (Gray *et al.*, op.cit.).

There is evidence, however, that increased participation in this period was not linked solely to a proportional increase in level of qualification: increases in participation rates were identified in all qualification groups, pointing to the influence of other factors such as the more positive attitudes to school referred to earlier (Ashford *et al.*, op.cit.; Gray *et al.*, op.cit.;

Jesson *et al.*, 1991). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that rates of staying on in full-time education increased particularly for those with average and below-average GCSE results. Youth Cohort data showed that between 1989 and 1991 growth in participation in full-time education was strongest amongst those with one to four GCSEs at grades A–C but between 1991 and 1994 growth was strongest amongst those with lower level qualifications (GB. DFEE, 1996; Payne, 1995), possibly as a result of the prevailing economic climate (see Chapter 4).

In Scotland, however, there was no evidence that the introduction of the analogous Standard Grade in Scotland had a similar impact to the GCSE on staying-on rates (Paterson and Raffe, 1995). However, Paterson and Raffe have argued that other Scottish educational reforms had a positive influence on post-16 participation in education:

> *in Scotland innovations in curriculum and pedagogy have been more pervasive than any single education reform, and their influence is consequently hard to measure...[However] The fact that more stayers-on have offered intrinsically educational reasons for staying on...suggests that reforms designed to improve attitudes to education had some influence* (p. 20).

3.3 Expansion of vocational education and training

As discussed in Chapter 2, the growth of vocational education and training has had a significant impact on the choices available to young people at the end of their compulsory schooling, offering them alternative routes to both higher education and employment. In 1992, the first five General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were piloted, and then introduced more widely the following year in an additional eight subjects. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Modern Apprenticeships were also introduced in the 1990s for those young people who wished to combine work experience and training with continued education.

Courtenay and McAleese (op.cit.) attributed some of the increase in staying on rates to the growth of vocational qualifications such as GNVQs and NVQs in schools and colleges. Other researchers (such as Gray *et al.*, op.cit.) found further evidence that vocational qualifications had affected the routes taken at 16: for example, repeating fifth year qualifications became less popular when vocational alternatives were introduced.

However, despite the growing popularity of vocational courses and the intentions of both the Conservative and Labour Governments to ensure parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications, research has demonstrated a clear imbalance in the relative attraction of the two routes. Foskett and Hesketh's (1997) study of eight different further education markets revealed that social class remained a strong determinant of the route students took through post-compulsory education. Middle-class students were almost twice as likely to opt for academic courses as

their working-class counterparts, and appeared to view vocational qualifications with less enthusiasm (see Section 6.2). Foskett and Hesketh concluded that:

> *Such feelings appear to stem primarily from the distrust shown by young people in the capacity of vocational qualifications to deliver what most sixth form students today aspire to: higher education.*
> (p. 316)

These sentiments have been echoed in other studies (for example, White *et al.*, 1996).

There have also been government-initiated changes to the way young people access post-16 training. As described in Chapter 2, Youth Credits were introduced into a small number of TEC areas in 1991 and nationally in 1995, channelling funding for training through the trainee rather than the provider. Croxford *et al.* (1997) used Youth Cohort Study data to examine the destinations of young people in the TEC areas where Youth Credits were available, during the pilot phase. They compared them with the destinations of young people who had not been able to use Youth Credits, either because they finished their compulsory schooling before the Credits were introduced, or because they were not in a TEC area which piloted the Credits. The tentative conclusion of the research was that, in the pilot year, Youth Credits did not increase the overall proportion of young people who participated in training, nor did they reduce the proportion unemployed at the end of compulsory schooling. However, they did affect the type of training young people pursued: there was an increase in employment-based training and also in government-sponsored training.

During the period covered by this literature review, the situation in Scotland differed slightly from that in England with respect to vocational qualifications. The Scottish equivalent of the GNVQ, the General Scottish Vocational Qualification (GSVQ), was introduced four years later than its English counterpart. Furthermore, it has been suggested that there will be less demand for GSVQs in Scotland than there was for GNVQs in England and Wales, given that participation rates in 16–18 education were already higher in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK (Connor *et al.*, 1996).

3.4 Impact of the work-related curriculum

Since the late 1980s there have been several attempts to introduce a more vocationally relevant curriculum within schools to make schooling more relevant to adult and working life, reflect changes in the economy and also address some of the concerns of employers about the skills of young people on leaving school. These have included the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), the Compact initiative, periods of work experience and the involvement of business and industrial leaders in school mentoring schemes. There have also been nationally instigated changes to the provision of careers education and guidance in schools, which are discussed in Chapter 5.

While several studies of these initiatives have outlined some weaknesses of the work-related curriculum (Saunders *et al.*, 1996; Saunders *et al.*, 1997), and some have revealed the positive impact they have had on school leavers, particularly on their attitudes to education and training and in some job-related skills (for example: Callear, 1992; Saunders, 1995; Saunders *et al.*, 1996).

Furthermore, Weston *et al.*'s (1995) longitudinal study of TVEI Extension students from 1991–94 demonstrated that some elements of the work-related curriculum did influence the choices young people made at the end of their compulsory schooling:

- for low attainers, the breadth of TVEI provision had a positive impact on their attitudes towards, and participation in, post-16 courses;
- TVEI was also shown to have had a positive effect on middle attainers, in terms of their attitudes towards post-compulsory learning and qualifications.

Similarly, evaluations of the Compact initiative, established in 1988 to address the low aspirations and low levels of attainment of many young people in depressed urban areas, have indicated that the goals and incentives which young people were offered had some impact on their destinations at 16. Saunders *et al.* (1995) conducted a large-scale national evaluation of Compacts between 1990 and 1994 and found that for successive cohorts there appeared to be improvements in, amongst other things, young people's self-reported motivation and progression into full-time training and/or education. However, although young people from schools which had received a high degree of resourcing under the Compact initiative were more likely than their peers in other schools to continue in education and/or training after the age of 16, the dominant factor in determining their post-16 destination was attainment in terms of their GCSE grades.

3.5 Targets for education and training

In the early 1990s, national targets were set for various stages of education and training, many of which impacted upon post-16 provision. In particular, Foundation Target 3 aimed to ensure that at least 60 per cent of young people achieved two A-levels, an Advanced GNVQ, or an NVQ level 3 by the age of 21. As only 44 per cent of young people had reached the specified level when the targets were set in 1995, average annual increases of about 3.1 per cent were required to meet this target by the turn of the century (NACETT, 1995). Hodgson and Spours (1997) claimed that these targets, in conjunction with the new funding mechanisms for further education (see Section 3.6), signalled a shift in the reform process 'from being largely reactive to increasing post-16 participation rates, to being actively designed to stimulate participation growth and to raise levels of achievement, albeit at lower unit costs' (p.7).

3.6 Competition between further education institutions

The provision of post-16 education altered radically with the introduction of the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992. The Act required further education colleges, tertiary colleges and sixth-form colleges to act independently of their LEA, with responsibility for their own corporate and educational strategies and resource management (Foskett and Hesketh, op.cit.). Funding mechanisms were also changed: while schools received a capitation allowance for all the sixth-formers on their roll in May, college funding was partially linked to examination outcomes. As a result of the 1992 Act, no single body had overall responsibility for planning and rationalising post-16 education in any one locality, and thus tough competition for post-16 students emerged in many areas (Higham *et al.*, 1996).

Foskett and Hesketh (op.cit.) demonstrated how explicit competition between educational providers had engendered 'a growing consumerist approach to post-16 education by the contemporary school leaver' (p. 311). For example, they argued that, when choosing an institution at which to pursue post-16 education, young people were increasing likely to be influenced by 'formal' factors such as published examination results rather than 'informal' factors such as impressions of institutions gained from initial visits. This, claimed Foskett and Hesketh, was evidence of 'a growing market ideology among school leavers in which dogma of academic performance and perceptions of institutional type predominate' (p.313), suggesting that the 1992 Act had had a significant impact on the marketing strategies employed by educational providers and, thus, young people's decision-making processes.

Furthermore, Schagen *et al.*'s (1996) study of sixth forms in maintained schools provided further evidence of increasing competition between post-16 providers. They found that schools had developed a range of strategies either to recruit students from outside the school or to limit 'poaching' of their students by other post-16 providers. While staff felt that competition was undesirable, they acknowledged that it was also increasingly inevitable if they wanted to retain students. It is likely that such competitive pressures will have influenced the types and levels of post-16 courses offered to young people. For example, Schagen *et al.* (1996) reported the case of a GNVQ applicant who had attended one of the schools they visited. She had obtained F and G grades at GCSE and been placed on a *Foundation* level course by the school. However:

> *After four weeks in the sixth form, the student left school to attend a college which had offered her a place on an GNVQ Advanced Health and Social Care course. She had subsequently dropped out of college and was working in a low paid job with limited progression opportunities* (p.43-4).

3. 7 Expansion of higher education

It is likely that increased participation rates in post-16 education have also been influenced by reforms to the higher education system. In the early 1990s, the Government encouraged expansion through a number of different strategies including the provision of increased funds to higher education institutions, the abolition of the binary divide between universities and polytechnics and the development of more vocationally relevant higher education courses. It was hoped that these would offer more people from different sectors of society the opportunity to enter higher education and thus provide greater numbers of highly educated people to meet the demands of the economy (Connor *et al.*, 1996).

Between 1988 and 1992, among the peak years for expansion in the United Kingdom, the number of students enrolled on higher education courses increased by 42 per cent (see Table 3.1), thus giving those who chose to remain in full-time education at the age of 16 an increased chance of moving into higher education. However, it is unlikely that these influences have operated uniformly across all parts of the UK, given the differences in expansion rates. For example, the increase in total number of students enrolled on higher education courses was substantially smaller in Scotland than in other parts of the UK (Table 3.1), although, due to a much higher starting point, participation rates remained higher in Scotland than in England and Wales throughout this period (Parry, 1997).

Furthermore, there had also been a certain amount of 'spare capacity' in higher education over the same period, as the size of the relevant cohort had fallen (Hillman, 1994), again increasing the opportunities for young people to enter higher education.

Table 3.1 Increases in participation in higher education in the United Kingdom between 1988 and 1992 (excluding the Open University) by country and by level of study

	Total number of full-time and part-time students in 1988 (thousands)	Total number of full-time and part-time students in 1992 (thousands)	Percentage increase
ENGLAND			
Postgraduate	109.2	173.8	59
First degree	400.6	621.5	55
Other HE	239.1	272.2	15
Total	748.9	1,070.4	43
SCOTLAND			
Postgraduate	14.7	21.7	48
First degree	64.4	91.5	42
Other HE	46.3	54.0	17
Total	125.4	167.2	33

Source: Parry (1997, p.11)

3.8 Local patterns of educational provision

There is some evidence of a relationship between the type of post-16 educational provision available in an area, and the choices made by young people at the end of their compulsory schooling. However, the direction of causality is not clear. Cheng (1995), for example, demonstrated that low staying-on rates were found in LEAs with relatively high proportions of those who chose to continue their education in further education or tertiary colleges, but acknowledged herself that it was unclear whether the provision was a response to local demand or had exerted an independent influence on choices made at 16.

Gray *et al.* (1993) also found differences in participation rates between LEAs, and explored the possibility that different strategies for organising post-16 provision had affected participation rates. They attempted to capture the dominant patterns of provision in each LEA and then compared the staying-on rates for young people with different levels of qualification in each of the different types of system, but found no evidence of any significant influence.

3.9 Summary

Despite differences between individuals and individual schools, it is inevitable that young people's choices at 16 will be influenced to some extent by the education system they have experienced and the routes available to them at 16. The rapid pace of educational change in the late 1980s and early 1990s had a significant impact both on young people's aspirations while at school and their subsequent destinations.

- The introduction of a new method of assessment in England (the GCSE examination) increased levels of attainment at 16. Higher levels of qualifications enabled more young people in England to progress to further education.
- New vocational qualifications were introduced, offering those who wished to remain in full-time education an alternative to traditional A-levels, and those who were keen to embark upon a particular career greater opportunities to pursue work-related courses.
- Evidence suggested that the increased emphasis on making the school curriculum more relevant to working life, through a number of government initiatives such as TVEI and Compacts, had influenced the attitudes, motivation and post-16 destinations of some young people.
- Changes to the structure of further education institutions had some impact on the decision-making processes of young people at 16. Increased competition between institutions led to more aggressive marketing strategies in some areas, targeting young people in a variety of different ways.

- A substantial increase in the number of places available in universities and colleges made higher education a possibility for many more young people, and it is likely that this increased opportunity had some bearing on decisions about whether to remain in full-time education at 16 and longer-term aspirations.

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4. ECONOMIC SITUATION

4.1 Introduction

Research has demonstrated that participation in post-16 education, training and employment has varied according to the buoyancy of both national and local economies. Numerous studies have investigated the reasons for these relationships, exploring the characteristics of local labour markets as well as wider national influences. In particular, research has examined:

- the impact of national and local rates of unemployment;
- aspects of the local labour market, such as type of work available and local traditions of employment;
- differences between rural and urban areas.

4.2 National picture

4.2.1 Effect of national levels of unemployment

Research has indicated that national levels of employment may not have a direct impact on young people's *aspirations*:

> *The persistence of large-scale unemployment has had only a limited impact on the eagerness with which working class school leavers have sought to enter waged labour at the first moment.*
>
> (Mizen, 1995, pp. 69-70)

However, national levels of employment have certainly influenced the post-16 *destinations* of young people, particularly those who were keen to enter the labour market at the end of their compulsory schooling. The study, by Mizen, of young people's experiences of youth training in Coventry concluded that those who entered YTS did so only reluctantly after it became clear that 'finding a real job was nearly impossible' (p. 90), given high levels of national unemployment and repeated unsuccessful applications for jobs.

Hodgson and Spours (1997) suggested that the rise in participation in full-time post-compulsory education in the late 1980s (discussed in Chapter 2) was primarily a response to the collapse of the youth labour market, rather than to the introduction of new vocational qualifications or any other specific educational reform.

It is clear that improving economic conditions in the early 1990s had an impact on the destinations chosen by young people at 16. As discussed previously (see Chapter 2), although participation rates in post-compulsory education rose rapidly in the early 1990s, statistics for 1995 and 1996 showed a slight decline in this rate of increase (GB. DFEE, 1997). It is possible that this may signal the end of the upward trend in participation

rates, as Connor *et al.* (1996) suggested:

> *improvements in the labour market may be providing alternative opportunities to young people who would have stayed on in education in preference to unemployment. If this is the case, and the labour market shows further improvements, participation may continue to fall* (p.82).

Similarly, Sime's (1991) analysis of data from the Youth Cohort Study concluded that a revived British economy, combined with reforms in the education system, served to increase opportunities for employment and reduce demand for YTS. Despite evidence that there was some improvement in young people's attitudes to YTS, particularly among those who had been trainees (Raffe, 1989), it is clear that the scheme became vulnerable in the face of the rising labour demands of an improving economy:

> *It began life as a low status scheme, and was liable to become an even lower status programme if and when employers felt a need to offer straight employment to attract better qualified school leavers* (Roberts and Chadwick, 1991, p. iv).

4.2.2 Removal of benefit

In 1988, income support was withdrawn for 16–18-year-olds who were out of work and replaced by a bridging allowance and a guaranteed YTS place. The aim of this policy was to deter young people from declining opportunities for jobs or training (Gray *et al.*, 1993). Sime (op.cit.) argued that this had a significant impact on the destinations of young people at 16, effectively limiting the options available to them. The risk of unemployment with no financial support seemed to have deterred many young people from job-seeking and, consequently, the number who 'refused' a YTS place fell from one in 12, in 1984, to one in 30, in 1988. Sime's analysis of data from the Youth Cohort Study for the young people leaving school between 1984 and 1988 revealed interesting patterns.

- Amongst those whom he considered most at risk of unemployment, fewer were out of work in cohort four (who left school in 1988, after entitlement to benefit was withdrawn) than in previous cohorts, and there was a corresponding increase in uptake of YTS, from 42 per cent in 1986 to 52 per cent in 1988.
- However, amongst those considered to be the next-most likely to be out of work a different pattern emerged, with fewer out of work than in the previous cohort; more in full-time employment; more in full-time education and fewer on YTS.

4.2.3 Changing patterns of work

It has also been claimed that the increasing availability of part-time work in the 1990s had an impact on young people's destinations at 16 and contributed to higher staying-on rates. Unwin (1997) suggested that the possibility of combining part-time work with full-time study may have helped young people to 'ignore the temptations of the labour market' and '[put] into practice a dual system of post-16 experience' (p. 82).

4.3 Local variations

In his evidence to the National Commission on Education, in 1994, Brighouse highlighted the variations in staying-on rates at school across the United Kingdom. In Leek, North Staffordshire, 65 per cent of young people stayed on in full-time education at the end of compulsory schooling, whereas only eight miles away, in Stoke-on-Trent, the comparable figure was 25 per cent (Brighouse, 1994). Regional variations were also identified in Scotland:

> *Pupils in Lothian and Highland were the most likely to gain three or more Higher Grades, while those in Glasgow and Lanark divisions of Strathclyde were the most likely to leave school with no SCE qualifications. Fife and Highland were...the regions where leavers were most likely to have gained SCOTVEC modules.*
>
> (Lynn, 1996, p. 4)

Similar disparities have been found between English LEAs (Gray *et al.*, 1993; Smith and Noble, 1995). In some, participation rates in post-compulsory education were ten per cent higher than in others. This can be partially explained by the difference in the socio-economic backgrounds and academic achievements of the young people but, even when these variables had been controlled for, some variation between LEAs persisted. Gray *et al.* (1993) explored the possibility that different strategies for organising post-16 provision had affected participation rates but was able to find little evidence of any significant influence.

4.3.1 Local rates of unemployment

In contrast to the effect of national employment rates (reported in Section 4.2.1), evidence suggests that local levels of employment have varied in their impact on post-16 participation, both geographically and over time.

Discouraged worker effect

In the late 1980s, Raffe and Willms (1989) attempted to explain some of the local variations in post-16 participation by way of what they termed the 'discouraged worker effect'. They hypothesised that, other things being equal, the higher the local unemployment rate, the more likely young people were to stay on at school. Analysis of the 1985 Scottish Young People's Survey (Raffe and Willms, op.cit.) provided strong evidence that:

> *participation in full-time education beyond 16 is inversely related to the 'pull' of the labour market, and that this affects the more general (rather than occupationally specific) types of education* (p. 576).

Garner *et al.*'s (1988) comparison of youth labour markets in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow revealed substantial variation between cities in the education and employment chances of comparable school leavers which they, also, attributed to the differential 'pulls' of the local labour markets. They found that school leavers in Glasgow and Dundee were more likely to opt for further education as they had fewer opportunities

for employment and concluded that 'inequalities between labour markets are at least in part attributable to the spatial dimension and to the differences in access and opportunity that this represents' (p. 143).

However, the discouraged worker effect was not shown to affect all young people equally. It was strongest for those with academic attainments that were just above average who were on the margins of decisions whether to stay or leave. It was also found to be negatively correlated with entry to further education (Raffe and Willms, 1989).

Similar effects do not seem to have been replicated in England. Indeed, Jesson *et al.* (1991) found that a ten percentage point increase in local unemployment rates was associated with a *reduction* of four percentage points in staying on (p. 25). Studies by Gray *et al.* (1993) and Cheng (1995) also failed to find evidence of a comparable discouraged worker effect operating in local labour markets in England and Wales. They speculated that this was because of the differences between the education systems and qualifications in Scotland and England and Wales. In Scotland, in the late 1980s it was possible to take Highers after only one year of post-compulsory study, and in varying numbers of subjects, while in England and Wales A-levels required two years of post-compulsory study and were usually studied in twos or threes. The Scottish Higher also had a high market value for those wishing to enter full-time employment at the age of 17 and offered a lower risk of failure than A-levels. Thus, staying on was a more difficult choice for less able students in England than for their counterparts in Scotland (Cheng, 1995; Jesson *et al.*, 1991).

Evidence suggested that by the early 1990s the discouraged worker effect in Scotland, itself, had lessened. Paterson and Raffe (1995) used data from the Scottish Young People's Survey from 1984/85 to 1990/91 to examine the changing patterns of participation in full-time post-compulsory education. They found that staying-on rates varied widely across local labour markets, but that very little of this variation could be explained by the local unemployment rate, especially amongst the later cohorts. Two possible explanations for the decline in the discouraged worker effect were suggested:

- firstly, the incentives to stay on for 'marginal' 16-year-olds may have been eroded by the tendency in Scotland to require less academic 16-year-olds to take Highers over two years, rather than one; and
- secondly, the scarcity of employment at 16 may have had less influence as, with the growth of vocational courses and training schemes, options at 16 had become less of a straight choice between full-time education and employment.

Similarly, Emler and St. James (1990) explored three different types of labour market within the district of Kirkcaldy in Scotland but found no inclination amongst students to stay longer in school in a poor market. On the basis of this, they suggested that it was unlikely that the decision to stay on in full-time education was prompted by the local shortage of jobs.

A pervasive 'discouraged worker effect' has also been disputed by Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996) in their discussion of various theoretical approaches to the social construction of masculinity. They argued that the main limitation of the discouraged worker effect was its failure to engage with the 'complex interrelationship between subjectivity and local economic context' (p. 24) and thus the historical specificity of any one labour market. They claimed that:

> *a more adequate account of the 'discouraged worker' needs to include a discussion of the range of masculinities that are made available and inhabited within particular state rites, such as further education institutions, training schemes and workplaces* (p. 25).

Influence of the local rate of unemployment on participation in YTS

Although local employment rates did not appear to affect participation in full-time education in England, they did show a positive correlation with the take up of YTS places (Jesson *et al.*, 1991; Roberts and Chadwick, 1991). Furthermore, a number of studies have indicated that local economic conditions have had an impact on participation in different *types* of YTS scheme (Bynner, 1991; Roberts and Parsell, 1990 and 1992). Bynner's exploration of young people's experience of, and attitudes to, YTS in four different labour markets (Kirkcaldy, Liverpool, Sheffield and Swindon) found different rates of uptake in the four areas. In Swindon, for example, where jobs were relatively plentiful, only the 'firm-based' YTS had much appeal. In contrast to other types of YTS such as 'training workshops' and 'community projects', firm-based schemes were perceived as offering the most effective training and had the highest rates of employment on completion of the scheme. The other types of YTS often compared unfavourably with real employment in the eyes of many young people and thus, in areas where jobs were available, school leavers were more likely to be attracted by full-time employment than youth training (Bynner, 1991).

Different patterns of participation, again, were identified in the south-west of England in a study of 16–19 year olds conducted by Wallace *et al.* (1993) in 1989–90 (see Section 4.3.3). This area of England had a largely rural labour market, one of the highest rates of self-employment in the country and, consequently, few of the large-scale employers for whom YTS often formed an important part of their recruitment and induction strategies. The small-scale nature of local businesses led to youth training:

> *being absorbed into the informal recruitment and training practices of employers who were able to use it for their own purposes, to some extent undermining more formalised attempts at universal training which national agencies attempted to impose* (p. 25).

In such markets, it was difficult for managing agents of youth training to evaluate and impose equal opportunities policies, leaving scope for 'the assumptions of employers to form an implicit part of the training situation

which it is difficult to notice or challenge' (p. 33). However, the authors also found evidence that in some cases the small size of firms allowed young people to acquire responsibilities that would not have been possible in the larger organisations located in urban areas.

4.3.2 Local employment structures and traditions of work

Other studies have revealed local labour market effects less directly related to the level of employment but which influenced the post-16 destinations of young people, nevertheless. Gray *et al.* (1993) revealed that, after controlling for the individual characteristics of young people, 'there were still differences in their propensities to stay on according to the local labour market within which they were located' (p. 19).

It has been suggested that these variations in participation in post-compulsory education between local labour markets were influenced by the local industrial structure (Cheng, 1995; Gray *et al.*, 1993). Cheng's analysis of Youth Cohort data revealed that rates of staying on were higher in areas with higher proportions of people employed in banking and other service industries. This was to be expected, given that a larger proportion of jobs in the service sector than in other employment sectors required post-16 qualifications and that type of vocational qualifications required in local service industries could be more readily obtained through full-time education than through work-based training. Furthermore, the service sector offered fewer alternatives than other employment sectors to remaining in education, such as apprenticeships or training.

Brighouse (1994) suggested that local employment traditions have also played some part in influencing participation rates in post-compulsory education, arguing that the dependence on unskilled and semi-skilled labour in heavy industry made schooling seem relatively unimportant in some areas: a legacy which endured, despite changes in the types of jobs available to young people.

There is also evidence of a change in the influence of the local labour market on post-16 destinations over time. In their study of participation rates at the end of the 1980s, Gray *et al.* (1994) found evidence of a positive correlation between local employment rates and participation in post-compulsory education. However, they concluded that:

> *Perhaps the most striking finding to emerge from the various analyses...was how small the differences in staying on across different local labour markets had become (once rising qualification levels and other significant factors had been taken into account)...by the end of the decade the independent influence of local labour markets on post-16 participation rates seems to have diminished substantially.*
> (pp. 28-29)

4.3.3 *Urban and rural differences*

Researchers have examined the differences in the education, training and initial entry into the labour market of young people from inner city areas compared with their peers from other areas (Gray *et al.*, 1989). The majority of the differences Gray *et al.* found were 'tied up with a variety of other factors that seemed to influence staying-on rates and YTS take-up wherever young people were located' such as academic attainment and socio-economic background (p. 25). However, they concluded that amongst labour market entrants, 'being in the inner city did appear to matter with respect to the likelihood of gaining a full-time job or being unemployed' (p.25). Some of these differences are shown in the tables below.

Table 4.1 Percentage of labour market entrants (who left school in 1985) in a *full-time job* in September 1985

characteristics	young people from inner cities (%)	young people from 'non-inner cities' (%)
high-attaining, non-manual white men living in the south of England	50	57

Source: Gray *et al.* (1989, p.25)

Table 4.2 Percentage of labour market entrants (who left school in 1985) who were *unemployed* in September 1985

characteristics	young people from inner cities (%)	young people from 'non-inner cities' (%)
high-attaining, non-manual black women	13	10

Source: Gray *et al.* (1989, p.25)

Sime *et al.*'s (1990) study of different points of entry to the labour market also revealed disparities between urban and rural school leavers, particularly in take-up of youth training schemes. Forty-seven per cent of the young people entering the labour market at 19 in inner cities had followed only the YTS route, while the comparable figure for other areas was 36 per cent.

Wallace *et al.* (1993) outlined a number of issues which impacted specifically on young people in rural areas, drawing on research amongst school leavers, employers and the managing agents of youth training in the south-west of England. They claimed that young people in rural areas were more likely than their peers in urban areas to enter a full-time job or YTS and much less likely than other young people to stay on at school and study for academic qualifications (see Table 4.3). They suggested that this may have been as a result of employers' low opinion of qualifications and the predominance given to manual work in the region. The authors also cited

transport as a key problem for many in sparsely populated rural areas, which, in some cases, limited access to education, employment and training.

Table 4.3 Comparison of career trajectories of young people living in urban and rural areas within the south west of England

	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
Academic trajectory	53	24
Vocational trajectory	9	16
From school to job	19	24
From school to Youth Training	9	17
No career	11	19
N	180	408

Source: Wallace *et al.* (1993, p.38)

Research has also suggested that the density of settlements in an area and, therefore, the post-16 educational provision, can affect young people's decision-making processes. Foskett and Hesketh (1997) distinguished between contiguous and parallel markets in their study of post-16 choices. The former:

> *are characterised by high levels of competition between FEIs [further education institutions] with a multiplicity of providers serving a large indigenous population. Competition within a contiguous market place is highly aggressive and takes place in terms of both student recruitment and academic positioning* (p.314).

Parallel or distinct markets were, however, 'characterised by the spatial isolation of FEIs and by low levels of competition between providers' (p. 314). Foskett and Hesketh found that, in the two different types of market, young people intending to stay on in education used different criteria for choosing their institution. In contiguous markets, where young people had a considerable choice between local institutions, academic reputation was a more important criterion than in parallel markets. In the latter, 'proximity to home' was found to be more important.

4.4 Summary

It can be seen that student destinations at the end of their compulsory schooling have been influenced by the health of the national economy, particularly in the case of those young people who were keen to enter the labour market at 16. However, influences have also been found which relate more directly to local labour markets. These have included the following.

- **Differences between urban and rural areas**: although living in an 'inner city' area was not found to have an influence on staying-on rates in full-time education, it did impact upon the likelihood of gaining a full-time job or becoming unemployed. The evidence also suggested that young people living in rural areas were less likely to follow academic routes at the end of their compulsory schooling than their peers in other areas.
- **The structure of local employment sectors and the traditions of work which are perpetuated in any one area**: staying-on rates were found to be higher in those areas with high proportions of people employed in service industries. It has also been suggested that work traditions and perceptions of the value of qualifications have endured, despite changes in the types of jobs available and the skills required.
- **The impact of local rates of unemployment**: evidence suggested that in England the unemployment rate had an impact on the take-up of YTS and the types of training schemes favoured by young people. In Scotland, in the mid-1980s it appeared that high rates of local unemployment encouraged young people to remain in full-time education at the age of 16. However, this effect was not found in England and, even in Scotland, had declined by the late 1980s.

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5. SCHOOL ISSUES AND CAREERS ADVICE

5.1 Introduction

The strong links between attainment at 16 and subsequent destination have been referred to throughout this review. It is interesting to note that until the 1980s few quantitative studies had examined the effect of individual schools on the academic attainment of young people, instead focusing on dimensions such as gender, ethnicity and social class.

More recently, however, research has explored the contribution of individual schools to the qualifications achieved by young people at the end of their compulsory schooling and, thus, their destinations at 16. In part, this seems inextricably linked to the school effectiveness and improvement debate, which largely came about in reaction to the view that home background had a far greater influence on a student's development than their school. Over the last ten years, a considerable body of research has accumulated which indicates that although the family background and ability of students are major determinants of achievement levels, and thus post-16 destinations, schools in similar social circumstances can achieve very different levels of educational progress.

This relatively new tradition of examining the structures, school processes and styles of management that contribute to success has been facilitated by the introduction of statistical methods such as multilevel modelling. These have made it possible to compare schools that are widely different in terms of the attainment and social background of the children entering them, and to indicate how far an individual's progress is dependent on the school which he or she attended.

Schools can also influence the post-16 destinations of their students through the careers education and guidance they provide although, in practice, they collaborate extensively with outside agencies, particularly the Careers Service. The sources of advice used by young people, the quality of this advice, and differences in provision between individual schools are discussed in Section 5.7.

5.2 Differences between schools

An indication of the extent to which individual schools contributed to the attainment of young people, and thus the options available to them at 16, was provided in Smith and Tomlinson's (1989) longitudinal quantitative study of 3,000 children in 20 multiracial comprehensive schools. The

researchers found that students with the same characteristics and ability would be likely to get a CSE grade 3 in English at one school, but a substantially higher grade (an O-level grade B) in English in another, pointing out that 'for a long time, the importance of such differences has been obscured by inappropriately comparing them [the differences between schools] with the much larger differences between individuals' (p. 301). In contrast to many of the studies discussed in Chapter 7, Smith and Tomlinson argued that:

> *The differences in exam results attributable to ethnic group are very much smaller than those attributable to the school. In other words, what school a child goes to makes far more difference (in terms of exam results) than what ethnic group he or she belongs to* (p. 305).

However, Nuttall *et al.* (1989) found that school effectiveness varied substantially in terms of the relative performance of different ethnic minority groups.

Research has also shown that differences between individual schools can have an impact on the attainment, and thus the post-16 destinations, of disadvantaged students. Mortimore *et al.* (1997) stated that:

> *although no schools overcame the social class difference in attainment between working- and middle-class pupils, our School Matters study revealed that, because they made greater progress over three years, working-class pupils in the most effective schools attained more highly than middle-class pupils in the least effective ones. In terms of further education and life chances, such differences are highly significant — especially for disadvantaged groups* (p. 133).

While numerous studies have documented such school effects (for example: Cheng, 1995; Creemers, 1994; Fergusson and Unwin, 1996; Gray *et al.*, 1993; Mortimore *et al.*, 1988; Nuttall *et al.*, 1989; Smith and Tomlinson, 1989), few have been able to explain all the variation between schools. The most Smith and Tomlinson (op.cit.) were able to suggest was that 'explanations of school success cannot be confined to management or organisational factors that involve the whole school, but must take account of management at the departmental level' (p. 303).

Gray *et al.*'s (1993) study of participation in post-16 full time education also revealed significant differences between schools. Amongst students with similar qualification levels, some schools were found to 'boost' participation and others to 'depress' it, amounting to a variance of ten per cent. However, the authors were not able to establish why these differences had occurred. Similarly, Paterson and Raffe's (1995) study of those who stayed on in full-time education in Scotland found that the propensity to stay on, of both high and low achievers, depended on which school they had attended. Interestingly, this tendency to stay on was found to have depended on the school attended to a greater extent for middle-class males than for females or for working-class males, but no explanation was given for these differences.

However, not all recent research has located such school effects. Although variations between schools were revealed in Emler and St James' (1990) study of ten secondary schools, these were found to be closely related to differences in the social class composition of the different schools. Once the occupation of the students' fathers had been taken into consideration, no significant relationship emerged between school and staying-on rates. Emler and St James concluded that:

> *It seems therefore that schools are as yet having very little independent effect on the decisions young people make to stay or leave. This may be because school policies, procedures and curricula are relatively standardised in this education district* (p. 65).

Similarly, in their study of the career aspirations of Year 11 students in three Rochdale comprehensives, Penn and Scattergood (1992) demonstrated that school effects were largely explicable in terms of the varying significance of other factors such as social class and ethnicity. However, the validity of these studies is questionable, given the relatively small size of their samples (see Appendix B). Those that have shown significant school effects have generally drawn on a larger number of schools. Cheng (1995), for example, drew on data from the Youth Cohort Study and was able to demonstrate that, when other factors were taken into account, staying-on rates continued to vary between schools.

5.3 School type

Research has indicated that a relationship exists between the status of a school and the attainment and post-16 destinations of its students. Jesson *et al.*'s (1991) analysis of data from the Youth Cohort Study showed substantial discrepancies between the independent and state sectors. In the former, 93 per cent of young people continued in full-time education at the age of 16, while in the state-maintained sector the comparable figure was 39 per cent. However, these patterns are obviously largely influenced by the differences in social class and academic attainment of young people in the two types of school. Nevertheless, even within the state sector, differences in staying-on rates between different types of school have been revealed. More young people continued their education in voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools (70 per cent) than in LEA-maintained schools (58 per cent) (Cheng, 1995). However, Cheng offered no suggestions as to the factors underlying these patterns.

As discussed in Chapter 3, whether or not a school has a sixth form can also influence the choices made by young people. In some cases this may be by attempting to limit the information to which students have access. For example, Schagen *et al.* (1996) found evidence that schools with sixth forms were becoming less welcoming to representatives from local colleges, who were perceived as competing for the same students.

5.4 Single-sex and mixed schools

Staying on rates have been shown to be higher in single-sex schools than in mixed schools, and higher in girls' schools than boys' (Cheng, 1995). However, once the type of school (see Section 5.3) had been controlled for, no such differences were apparent.

A number of studies have also highlighted a relationship between school type and subject choice amongst those who chose to remain in full time education (Lawrie and Brown, 1992; Sharp *et al.*, 1996), and these are discussed in Chapter 8. Girls in single-sex schools were more likely than girls in mixed schools to have chosen mathematics and/or science at A-level but less likely than their peers in mixed schools to have chosen English. Similar patterns were documented amongst boys: those attending single-sex schools were more likely to have chosen languages A-levels than boys at mixed schools. Lawrie and Brown (1992) maintained that this was evidence of more sex-stereotypical behaviour at mixed schools. A study by Colley *et al.* (1994) found evidence of a similar pattern of subject preference amongst students in the first year of secondary school, but not amongst older students in the upper years of secondary school. By this age, school differences had been replaced by gender differences.

5.5 Organisational and management issues

In their review of the literature on 'school effectiveness', Sammons *et al.* (1997) described 11 'key characteristics' of effective schools drawn from the relevant research evidence. These ranged from 'professional leadership' and 'shared visions and goals' to 'purposeful teaching' and an emphasis on 'pupil rights and responsibilities' (p. 92). Smith and Tomlinson (1989), however, attributed some of the school effects in their study, particularly the different rates of progress of students in English and in mathematics, to differences in departmental management. The authors also suggested that different methods of grouping students may have led to some of the variation in school effect:

> *There are wide variations between the schools in the extent to which they make the allocation on the basis of attainment, rather than on the basis of other (generally irrelevant) factors. This seems an important difference, in principle, in school policy* (p.303).

This theme was explored further by Troyna (1991) and the Commission for Racial Equality (1992). As discussed in Chapter 7, they explored the processes in one particular school whereby students were classified and differentiated during the formative years of their secondary school experience. They revealed that, on entry to the school, Asians, for whom English was an additional language, were assigned to sets in English and mathematics that were below their ability levels as assessed by their primary schools. This, the authors claimed, was because teachers were

concerned about their ability to cope with the level of linguistic complexity needed in the higher ability sets. As mobility between the sets was rare, many Asians who had, in the researchers' opinion, been incorrectly allocated, were prevented from entering GCSE examinations when they reached their final year. On the basis of this, Troyna and the Commission for Racial Equality highlighted the need to look closely at the processes operating within individual schools to determine whether any particular groups of students were being systematically disadvantaged.

Cheng (1995) explored the rate of teacher turnover in schools and found a positive correlation with the staying-on rate in schools. However, it seems likely that teacher turnover is determined by wider factors such as the location, catchment area and culture of individual schools, and Cheng herself suggested that high teacher turnover may be associated with the economic and cultural deprivation characteristic of many inner city areas.

Factors such as the experience of teaching staff and student-to-teacher ratios have been shown not to have any significant effect on students' decisions as to whether to stay on in education at 16 (Cheng, 1995).

5.6 Cultural influences within schools

Amongst the research that has sought to explain some of the reasons why schools may have a direct impact on the post-16 destinations of young people, the cultural influences of the school have been emphasised. In a study of the destination of Year 11 leavers in 59 Derbyshire secondary schools, Fergusson and Unwin (1996) revealed significant disparities between schools in the proportion of young people who stayed on in education. In one school, for example, the number of students who continued in full time education was 15 times greater than the number actually qualified for advanced study. Although this could be partially explained by local economic conditions, interviews with some of the students convinced Fergusson and Unwin that a distinct culture of staying on operated in some of the schools.

A similar culture, operating throughout an LEA, was documented by Taylor (1992) in her survey of attitudes to different post-16 options. She found that the value of continuing in full-time education was taken for granted by the majority of young people she interviewed and was accompanied by a widespread ignorance of vocational training opportunities.

As discussed in previous chapters, ethnographic studies have explored the cultures of individual schools, and the influence these have on particular groups of students, affecting not only attitude to and motivation in school, but also choices made at the end of compulsory schooling. Several authors have emphasised the *localised* nature of such cultures. For example, in his study of the construction of masculinity within a secondary school, Mac an Ghaill (1994) concluded that:

> *Misogyny, homophobia, heterosexism and racism are not passively inhibited in any unitary or total way. Located within local gender and sexual peer group cultures, they actively select from a range of socially oppressive constructs and in this process make their own individual and collective meanings* (p. 179).

Authors of these studies would maintain, presumably, that different localised cultures could contribute to the explanation of different school effects and variations in the post-16 destinations chosen by young people in different schools.

5.7 Careers advice

5.7.1 Sources of guidance

Historically, careers education and guidance was funded and managed through LEAs. However, in the late 1980s and 1990s, a number of changes were introduced on a national level. The Careers Service was restructured, with local consortia, rather than LEAs, providing advice and guidance to young people. Careers education and guidance was defined as one of five cross-curricular themes in the 1988 Education Act. Furthermore, it became an important part of the TVEI which emphasised the action-planning and decision-making abilities necessary to make informed choices about post-16 destinations (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the impact of TVEI and other elements of the work-related curriculum).

In addition to schools and the careers service, family and friends also provide young people with advice about post-16 choices. Witherspoon's (1995) study indicated that more young people received advice from these informal sources (two-thirds of respondents) than from careers advisers and careers teachers (one-third of respondents each). Furthermore, young people considered family advice and support to be more important than that provided by careers professionals.

However, a possible change in recent years was highlighted by Foskett and Hesketh (1997), who found that the students in their study appeared to trust the advice of careers teachers and other teachers more than that of their parents, and they suggested that this was evidence of a growing consumerist approach amongst young people in which 'formal' advice was valued more highly than 'informal' (p. 311).

Some studies have shown differences between ethnic groups and social classes in the sources of advice on which young people rely. For example, Hagell and Shaw (1996) suggested that Bangladeshis were less likely to rely on informal careers advice from friends and family than young people from other ethnic groups, while Siann and Knox (1992) found that the Muslim girls in their study were more likely than their non-Muslim peers to involve their parents in their decision making and to consider their views important. (For a discussion of studies exploring racial discrimination in the Careers Service, see Section 7.5.)

When the process of initiating career choice was studied by Foskett and Hesketh (1996), careers interviews were found to be more important for young people from working-class backgrounds than for their middle-class peers, who relied to a greater extent on informal sources.

5.7.2 Impact of careers advice on post-16 destinations

Witherspoon (1995) revealed that being given advice to stay on by family or careers professionals was correlated with a higher propensity to remain in full-time education, and having careers guidance classes was positively associated with being in a full-time job rather than being unemployed. However, these correlations do not imply causality and, in fact, in the same study, when background factors were controlled for, there was no evidence that careers guidance had any direct effect on young peopleÆs destinations.

While Howieson and Croxford (1996) maintained that careers education and guidance had only a very limited effect on post-16 destination, they claimed that for some young people it did have a positive impact. For example, having careers education and guidance increased the likelihood of those entering the labour market at 16 or 17 to:

- study for a vocational course at 18 or 19;
- achieve a qualification above NVQ level 2;
- be in a job or training scheme with quality training;
- be satisfied with their job or training scheme.

Furthermore, while studies have not demonstrated that careers education and guidance has had a direct impact on the actual destinations of young people at the end of their compulsory schooling, recent research has indicated that good careers education and guidance gave students increased confidence in their decision-making abilities (Courtenay and McAleese, 1993), a high level of careers-related skills (Morris *et al.*, 1995) and an increased sense of satisfaction with their post-16 choices (Saunders *et al.*, 1997).

5.7.3 Diversity of provision

Many studies have documented divergent provision and practice both between LEAs and between schools, which would be likely to have had some impact on the decision-making processes of young people in different LEAs and schools. For example, Witherspoon (1995) revealed that a major determinant of whether students were likely to have had a careers interview was the LEA in which the school was located, while Taylor's (1992) study of ten schools within one LEA found that careers education and guidance differed between types of school (such as whether the school was independent or state-maintained and whether or not the school had a sixth form). Students in schools without sixth forms were more positive than their peers in other schools about the careers education they had received (Taylor, op.cit.) and were:

significantly more likely than those in schools with sixth forms to have had a wide range of careers-related experiences and to have undertaken, for instance, visits to local colleges or employers. They were also significantly more likely to have developed transition skills and to have a greater degree of opportunity awareness than students from 11–18 schools (Morris *et al.*, 1995, p. 81).

5.7.4 Quality of advice

Research which has focused primarily on the quality of advice given has also highlighted variations between schools and between LEAs. A survey conducted by OFSTED (1995) found that a third of the schools that were visited provided good or very good careers education and guidance for their students. However, in another third the provision was deemed to be poor, providing only limited benefits to students (p. 3). The report also found that careers *guidance* was generally better than careers *education.*

Witherspoon's (1995) analysis of data from the Youth Cohort Study concluded that careers advisers appeared to be impartial in the advice they gave: neither the backgrounds nor the personal characteristics of the respondents were associated with being given advice by careers guidance professionals to stay on, once GCSE results had been taken into account.

However, other studies have indicated a more partial approach (see Section 7.5). Hagell and Shaw (1996) suggested that advice provided by schools tended to concentrate on staying on at school rather than going to college. Similarly, several studies have revealed that students had a much better knowledge of the post-16 courses in schools and colleges than of other training opportunities and the labour market (Morris *et al.*, 1995; Shaw and Bloomer, 1993; Taylor, 1992).

A large proportion of young people in Taylor's (op.cit.) study had negative attitudes about YTS, despite the fact that half had favourable attitudes to vocational training, generally.

Taylor considered that their schools and, specifically, their teachers were among the sources of such attitudes. The disparities between students' knowledge of academic and other routes was particularly a problem in the schools with sixth forms. Taylor concluded that the 'impartiality of school-based guidance and counselling is called into question by the lack of attention given to presenting alternatives to full time, post-16 academic study to students in one or two of the 12–18 schools in the research' (p.332), and questioned whether an impartial approach was indeed possible, within the competitive climate of further education.

Evidence from employers also highlighted this view of careers education and guidance in schools. For example, Morris *et al.* (1995) found that:

While training providers generally believed that the careers education and guidance that students received helped them to know about and understand the importance of qualifications and training, they were

more critical of young people's knowledge of careers options and job-seeking strategies. Employers expressed similar opinions... .
(p. 81)

In addition to questions of impartiality, research has also examined the timing of careers education and guidance. A number of studies have suggested that young people had not received advice at an early enough stage in their schooling so that, by the beginning of their final year of compulsory education, many 'lacked a precise awareness of what was necessary to translate their post-16 intentions into either short-term or long-term career prospects' (Taylor, 1992, p. 333). OFSTED (1995) found that most students in its survey 'had left serious consideration of their 16+ alternatives until the latter part of Year 11 and for some their actions amounted to too little, too late' (p. 4).

5.8 Summary

From the studies reported in this chapter, it seems clear that schools do have a considerable impact on the attainment of their students at the age of 16 and the careers advice they receive and, thus, on their subsequent destinations. Although some researchers have argued that these can be explained by the social class composition of the school population, a majority of recent, large-scale studies have indicated a definite 'school effect', acting independently of the effects of individual and group characteristics such as ethnicity and class.

However, the studies have been relatively unsuccessful in explaining the reasons for these effects and more research is needed in this area to explore the factors which underpin the different staying-on rates between schools. Nevertheless, the studies discussed in this chapter have suggested that the following may be useful starting points in exploring these differences between schools:

- **the type of school**: whether it is voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, LEA- maintained or independent, and whether it is single-sex or mixed;
- **the organisation and management of the school and rate of teacher turnover**;
- **the local culture of schools**: how they are constructed and maintained.

There is also evidence of considerable disparities in the careers advice available to, and used by, young people.

- Studies have suggested that different social classes and different ethnic groups used different sources of careers guidance. There is conflicting evidence as to the impartiality of this advice.
- Provision differed between LEAs and between the independent and state sectors.

- Careers advice in schools with sixth forms was qualitatively different from that in 11–16 schools, with pupils attending the latter more positive than their peers in other schools about the careers education they had received.

While studies have not demonstrated that careers education and guidance has had a direct impact on the post-16 destinations of young people, recent research has indicated that good careers education and guidance has given young people more confidence in their decision-making abilities, a high level of careers-related skills and an increased sense of satisfaction with their post-16 choices.

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6. SOCIAL CLASS

6.1 Introduction

A recurrent theme in educational research throughout the second half of the twentieth century has been the relationship between social class (or socio-economic status) and educational achievement. Various initiatives have attempted to address underachievement amongst young people from working-class backgrounds, including the Educational Priority Areas established in the 1970s (Burwood, 1992) which, in some respects, foreshadowed the Educational Action Zones announced in *Excellence in Schools* two decades later (GB.Parliament.House of Commons, 1997).

For the purposes of this review, a loose definition of 'social class' has been adopted, reflecting the variety of meanings attributed to it by educational researchers. In the majority of cases, this definition is based on the father's occupational status, with 'middle-class' referring to managerial, professional and non-manual jobs, and 'working-class' referring to skilled manual, semi-skilled manual and unskilled manual jobs. However, mother's occupational status, parents' education and housing tenure have also been used as indicators of social class in some studies.

This chapter examines both the evidence for the influence of social class on post-16 destination and the studies which have sought to explain such influences.

6.2 Post-16 destination

Many studies have highlighted the strong correlation between a young person's social class and his or her destination on completion of compulsory schooling. Historically, young people from middle-class backgrounds have been much more likely than their working-class counterparts to continue in full-time education after the age of 16 and less likely to enter the labour market at the age of 16 (for example, Sime *et al.*, 1990). In their study of the post-16 destinations of young people, Emler and St. James (1990) found a linear relationship between father's occupation and the three post-16 categories they used: the higher the father's socio-economic group, the more likely the young person was to remain in full-time education.

There is some evidence of a lessening of these class differences in recent years. Foskett and Hesketh (1997) pointed to a growing convergence in post-16 routes with 85 per cent of young people from middle-class backgrounds and 72 per cent of their peers from working-class backgrounds choosing to participate in full-time further education, in their study. This

trend is also evident from the Youth Cohort Study data (GB.DFEE, 1997) shown in Table 6.1, which shows the biggest increase in staying-on rates amongst students whose parents were in unskilled manual occupations.

Table 6.1 Percentage of 16-year-olds by parents' socio-economic group in full-time education: 1989–1996

	1989	1991	1992	1994	1996
Managerial/ professional	68	80	84	85	86
Other non-manual	60	71	77	83	81
Skilled manual	39	51	61	68	64
Semi-skilled manual	35	44	54	61	61
Unskilled manual	27	37	42	56	61
Other	36	47	54	61	62

Source: Youth Cohort Study (GB.DFEE, 1997, p. 21)

Class differences were also apparent amongst those choosing broadly similar post-16 destinations. Foskett and Hesketh (1997) revealed that, of the young people remaining in full-time education, those from middle-class backgrounds were almost twice as likely to opt for academic courses as their working-class counterparts, and the former appeared to view vocational qualifications with less enthusiasm (see Section 3.3).

6.3 Differences explicable by attainment

As discussed above (and in Chapter 1), attainment at 16 has been shown to be the strongest predictor of post-16 destination in both England (Gray *et al.*, 1993) and Scotland (Emler and St. James, 1990; Lynn, 1996). Given that other research, discussed below, has shown the correlation between levels of attainment and social class (that is, the higher the social class, the higher the level of attainment), it is reasonable to use social class as a reliable indicator of staying on rates.

Drew's analysis of the Youth Cohort Study data (1995) revealed that a student's socio-economic group was more important than gender or ethnicity in predicting attainment at 16. Similarly, from the study of fifth-year examination results carried out by Drew and Gray (1990), it emerged that socio-economic group accounted for the largest part of the variance in exam performance. These findings were replicated in Scotland: Lynn's (1996) study of the young people who completed their compulsory education in 1994 found that:

> *Parents' education, social class, housing tenure and employment status were again seen to be highly correlated with qualifications gained at school* (p. 4).

6.4 Differences independent of attainment

A number of studies have controlled for students' academic attainment and demonstrated that social class was strongly correlated with post-16 destination, even amongst students with very similar levels of qualifications, and that social class was the strongest predictor of post-16 destination, after academic attainment.

Cheng's (1995) analysis of the Youth Cohort Study, for those who completed their compulsory schooling in 1989–90, revealed that amongst students with similar GCSE results, those with parents in high-status jobs and good qualifications were more likely to stay on in full-time education than their peers. Similarly, McWhirter *et al.*'s (1988) study of the transition from school to work in Northern Ireland found that home background did have a significant impact on young people's choices, independent of their academic qualifications, although other factors including gender and religious denomination had similar influences.

6.5 Career aspirations

During their early teenage years, many students begin the process of trying to 'locate' themselves within wider society:

> *As their ideas about their academic potential develop, their occupational aspirations become more refined: certain sections of the labour market come to be seen as outside their reach or requiring too much effort to attain, while other jobs come to be seen as lacking in prestige and falling below a level which they find acceptable.*
>
> (Furlong and Cartmel, 1995, pp. 362-3)

As the quotation above correctly identifies, academic ability and perceptions of likely attainment levels are central to this process and thus social class, as the most reliable indicator of attainment at 16, is likely to show a strong correlation with aspirations.

Several authors have examined the impact of social class on the process of role exploration and on the aspirations of students prior to leaving school. Furlong and Cartmel's research (1995) examined the differences between the jobs *considered* by 13-year-olds in Scotland and those that they *expected* to obtain. They found that the differences between their aspirations and expectations were largely explained by the socio-economic location of their families. Young people from 'Steeltown', which had particularly high levels of unemployment, were less likely than their counterparts in other areas to have considered attending either college or university or participating in any post-compulsory education. Furthermore, the range of occupations they considered was considerably more restricted.

Similarly, Penn and Scattergood (1992) found that among the 376 fifth-formers in Rochdale comprehensives who completed questionnaires in their study, clear differences emerged between working-class and middle-class respondents, with the exception of the Asian students. (For a discussion of ethnic differences see Section 6.8 and Chapter 7.) Middle-class respondents were much more likely to seek professional jobs and higher education than their peers from working-class backgrounds, regardless of which schools they attended, and students with fathers in manual jobs had a greater likelihood of aiming for manual jobs themselves.

However, in neither study did the authors link the relative levels of achievement of the students in their sample with their expectations. It is possible, therefore, that the differences could be explained, or certainly strongly influenced, by realistic expectations of different levels of attainment at the end of compulsory schooling.

6.6 Influence of parental occupation and education

Other studies have explored the ways in which social class may affect post-16 destination, independent of level of achievement. Wilkinson's qualitative study in Sunderland (1995) found that young people with both parents unemployed were more likely to drop out of training than those with parents in work, and suggested that the family work tradition may play a significant role in determining the training and work status of children, contributing to what he terms a 'vicious circle of alienation'.

Furlong's (1988) study of unemployment and work ethics amongst young people in Scotland explored the occupations of those who had left school in 1983–84 and who had been identified as unemployed by a survey in 1986. He revealed that those who had remained unemployed between 1986 and 1988 were generally socially and educationally disadvantaged; less likely than others of the same age to have a father in a professional or managerial occupation; and more likely to have a father who was unemployed or worked part-time. In an attempt to explain these patterns, Furlong suggested two main reasons why unemployment may often run in families:

- it is more difficult for young people with unemployed parents to access the social networks of the employed; and
- parents without jobs are less likely to have benefited from a post-compulsory education and, therefore, are not in a position to advise their children on the advantages of staying on in full-time education.

On the other hand, studies have also suggested that young people from working-class backgrounds, with parents in employment, are brought up in a culture where work is assigned a central significance. Mizen (1995) claimed that working-class young people:

> *grow up in working communities, they must work to survive and they themselves express a desire to work; and through child working many gain immediate and direct experience of work before they reach the minimum school leaving age* (p. 90).

This, he maintained, contributed to their desire for real jobs at the age of 16 and accounted for some of the differences in destination between them and their middle-class peers.

Studies have indicated that there are also differences, attributable to parental education, amongst those who choose the same post-16 destination. For example, Fiddy (1997) conducted research amongst students who were the first in their families to stay on in post-compulsory education. He found considerable differences between them and their peers whose parents had remained in education after the age of 16. They were generally less qualified, taking fewer A-levels, less likely to have considered alternative places to study and were more likely to work part time as well as study.

As discussed in Section 6.2, Foskett and Hesketh's (1997) study of student decision making and the post-16 marketplace found considerable differences in the types of courses chosen by working- and middle-class students at 16, with the former more likely to opt for vocational courses and the latter for academic courses. Although the expected attainment levels of these students were not made clear in the report, the authors suggested that these different choices could be partially explained by pervasive family influences including 'the latent attitudes and expectations borne from educational predispositions culturally inherited from parents' (pp. 23-4).

6.7 Perceived relevance of education

Students' attitudes to school are likely to affect both their academic performance and their desire to stay on in full-time education after the age of 16. In turn, these attitudes may be strongly influenced by social class. Although he did not address explicitly the mechanisms by which social class affects post-16 destination in his review of the evidence of 'underachievement' amongst working-class students, Burwood (1992) argued that many teachers and other educationalists had failed to convince working-class students of the relevance of experiences within the classroom to those outside, and concluded that:

> *the means of redressing working-class underachievement in the National Curriculum must lie ultimately with individual teachers and their ability to present the National Curriculum in relevant forms to all children. In any mass education process there will be those for whom the given curriculum is removed from everyday experience. This does not invalidate the idea of 'worthwhile' knowledge but it means that we must be constantly questioning how we can transmit the curriculum while, as far as is possible reducing the gap between everyday experiences and classroom experience.* (p. 320)

The theme of the potential alienation of working-class students is also alluded to in several small-scale studies. Hughes (1992), for example, maintained that some working-class students may feel excluded because of their own accents and dialects, and used anecdotal evidence to argue that:

> *it is when pupils feel unable to express themselves in school, or feel a wide gap between the values of the home and those of the school, that disenchantment and alienation are likely to set in* (p. 17).

He also suggested that a strong emphasis on homework may have a discriminatory effect on those without the time, space and quiet environment available to them at home, and presented a range of practical solutions which his own school had implemented to address these potential problems.

Wilkinson (1995) investigated the nature and causes of dropping out of education, training and employment through case studies of 16–25-year-olds, living on three Sunderland estates, who seemed to be untouched by existing training programmes. His questionnaires and in-depth interviews required respondents to reflect back upon their family background and experiences at school. Confirming the theses of both Burwood and Hughes, he found that a large number of respondents judged the education system to be of little value to them. Boredom and poor student/teacher relations were cited as the main reasons why the widespread truancy that he discovered had taken place.

6.8 Differences by ethnic group

Research has also highlighted differences in aspirations and post-16 destinations of young people from different ethnic groups within the same social class. Basit's (1996) small-scale study of the career aspirations of British Muslim girls, for example, revealed that her respondents had very high ambitions, regardless of the occupations of their parents or their socio-economic background. She argued that their aspirations were motivated by a desire to avoid some of the experiences their parents had faced and that the girls had internalised their parents' ethos that education and a successful career were the keys to upward social mobility.

Penn and Scattergood's (1992) exploration of the aspirations of fifth-formers in Rochdale found similar results among their Asian respondents. Although many of the Asian families in the sample were living in severe economic hardship, which Penn and Scattergood characterised as the unemployed 'underclass' or the lower section of the working class, the majority of the Asian respondents wanted to continue in education post-16, and few contemplated entry into an apprenticeship, YTS or a full-time job. They concluded that 'many Asians had aspirations more like middle-class non-Asians than working-class non-Asians' (p. 95). The reasons for these differences between ethnic groups will be explored further in Chapter 7, but in the discussion of social class serve to indicate a potential danger in assuming a simplistic relationship between class and post-16 aspirations.

6.9 Summary

The evidence demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between different aspects of a young person's social class and their post-16 destination, although recent figures suggest that this relationship has weakened over recent years. In part, this correlation can be explained by differences in the attainment at 16 of young people from working- and middle-class backgrounds. However, researchers have also demonstrated that, even among young people with similar levels of qualifications, destinations at the end of compulsory schooling were associated with social class: those from middle-class backgrounds were more likely to remain in full-time education than their working-class peers.

In seeking to explain these differences, researchers have highlighted the role of:

- career choice and the influence of a young person's family in this process;
- parental occupation: specifically the different working cultures young people are brought up in and the work networks available to them;
- parental education: the advice parents are able to offer, drawing on their own educational experiences, and their attitudes towards different post-16 destinations;
- the education system and the extent to which young people from different social backgrounds perceive it as relevant to their needs.

Research has also emphasised the fluidity of these influences. Not only do recent studies indicate a growing convergence of the post-16 destinations of different social classes, but it is evident that not all ethnic groups conform to the behaviour characteristic of particular socio-economic groups.

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7. ETHNICITY AND RELIGION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the ways in which ethnicity, race and religion impact upon choices made by young people at the end of their compulsory schooling. The evidence for ethnically related differences in both attainment and post-compulsory education is presented first, drawing predominantly on large-scale quantitative surveys. The chapter then focuses on literature which has explored the influence of schools and careers, the impact of the labour market and the contribution of students' home background and culture to the choices of young people from ethnic minorities. It also engages with some of the theoretical debates in this area of research, discussed below in Section 7.2.

A potential point of confusion is the categorisation of the ethnicity of young people, which, in several cases, differed between studies. For the purposes of this literature review, the categorisation used by the authors of each study is used, with an explanatory note where necessary. In general, however, the main differences were as follows:

- The broad category 'Asians' was used in a number of studies such as the Youth Cohort Study. Other research distinguished between the young people in this group, categorising them as of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin.
- Some researchers distinguished between young people of African Caribbean (who were also called 'Afro-Caribbean' and 'West Indian' in some of the earlier studies in this period) and African origin, while others have used the generic term 'black' for this group.
- Some studies have categorised young people of Chinese origin separately, whereas in others they have been included in an 'other' group.

7.2 Theoretical debate

Research into the educational experiences of ethnic minorities in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century, and much policy aimed at developing equality of opportunity, have been underpinned by a number of different philosophies. Firstly, those adopting an 'assimilationist perspective' believed that ethnic minorities should be enabled to fit into British society. They argued that equality of opportunity would be achieved if organisations treated all individuals as the same. Gillborn (1997) has argued that it was this 'colour-blind' approach which underpinned the educational reforms of the Conservative administrations under Thatcher and Major, and which resulted in increasing inequalities for ethnic minorities:

> *matters of ethnic diversity have been removed from the agenda, leading to a situation where key data are not gathered and questions about racial inequalities are simply not considered...even where ethnicity is not deployed as a significant factor in policy discourse, reforms can have effects that are disproportionately felt by certain ethnic groups* (p. 83).

Gillborn concluded that over this period, black students had suffered disproportionately from the reforms as in some areas inequalities between blacks and whites had not merely persisted but actually increased, and that benefit had, instead, accrued to those 'schools, communities and ethnic groups that already had access to high-status knowledge, cultural capital and resources' (p. 83).

A second approach adopted by educationalists has been that of 'multiculturalism', which provided a framework within which the cultural beliefs and practices of ethnic minorities were all given equal recognition and validation. However, this perspective has been criticised by a number of researchers and policy makers for not paying sufficient attention to structural inequalities in society (Avis, 1988; Mac an Ghaill, 1989; Wrench, 1990).

An attempt to explore and address these structural inequalities constitutes the third approach to ethnic relations, which 'recognises institutional racism as evidence of unequal power' and seeks to develop 'policies and procedures to address discriminatory practices directly, including systems to monitor effectiveness' (Meijers and Piggot, 1995, p. 54). This is commonly called the 'anti-racist' paradigm and includes a large number of ethnographic studies (for example: Mac an Ghaill, 1989; Sewell, 1997; Troyna, 1991). Researchers adopting this stance have been attacked for imbuing data with their ideological convictions (see Gomm, 1993), while others have argued that there are no irreconcilable differences between the multicultural and anti-racist paradigms (for example, Lynch, 1991).

While these theoretical debates are obviously not specific to research on post-16 destinations, they have a direct bearing on the framing of the issues explored by researchers and thereby, in many cases, on the methodologies they have employed.

7.3 Attainment

Once academic attainment and social class have been taken into consideration, ethnicity has been found to be one of the strongest predictors of post-16 destination (Drew *et al.*, 1992; Drew, 1995). Differences between ethnic groups have been demonstrated both in academic attainment at 16 (Drew, 1995) and, amongst young people of similar qualifications, in subsequent destination.

7.3.1 Academic attainment at 16

Differential patterns of attainment between ethnic groups have been demonstrated by a number of researchers (Drew and Gray, 1990; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Jones, 1993). Drew and Gray (1990) found that, in all of their measures of fifth-year exam results (the average number of 'high grade' passes, the average number of passes at any grade and the average exam score), a similar pattern emerged. In all three analyses, whites had the highest results, closely followed by Asians, with African Caribbeans scoring significantly lower. Although, in the study, socio-economic group accounted for the largest part of the variance in exam scores, ethnicity was also shown to be statistically associated with attainment. More recent data showed little change in this pattern. In 1996, about 45 per cent of white young people and those from 'other' ethnic groups had obtained at least five grade A*–C GCSEs, whereas under 40 per cent of Asians and under a quarter of blacks (Africans and African Caribbeans) reached the same level (GB. DFEE, 1997).

Other studies have explored differences within the broad ethnic groups discussed above (for example: Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Kysel, 1988; Whitmarsh and Harris, 1996). Gillborn and Gipps' review of research of the achievements of ethnic minority students concluded that Indians achieved more highly than students from other South Asian backgrounds and that, in some urban areas, they achieved higher rates of success than their white counterparts. They also found that the achievements of Bangladeshis were often lower than those of other ethnic groups, while no single pattern of achievement could be identified for Pakistani students. Similarly, Whitmarsh and Harris (op.cit.) found that amongst those who completed their compulsory education in 1993:

- blacks were the least successful, with only 21 per cent gaining five or more grade A–C GCSEs, followed by Bangladeshis and Pakistanis;
- the results of whites and Indians were similar, with 45 per cent gaining five or more grade A–C GCSEs;
- the highest achievers were Other Asians, of whom 51 per cent gained five or more high grade GCSEs.

As academic achievement has been shown to be highly correlated with post-16 choices, differences in O-level and GCSE results between ethnic groups are likely to have led to similar differences in destination at the end of post-compulsory schooling.

Trends over time

As discussed above, the most recent data from the Youth Cohort Study (GB. DFEE, 1997) indicated that a rise in the proportion of young people gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C occurred in all ethnic groups. However, significant differences between ethnic groups remained. Similar results were found by Gillborn and Gipps (1996) in their exploration of data from 34 English LEAs. They revealed that students from many different ethnic backgrounds had achieved improved performance in GCSE results

between 1992 and 1994, in line with national trends. However, within this overall picture, the gap between the most and least successful groups had widened, with the average achievements of black and/or Caribbean students having fallen in some areas (p. 23).

7.3.2 Post-compulsory education

Several analyses of data from the Youth Cohort Study, for the second and third cohorts (1985/6–1988/9), indicated that both African Caribbeans and Asians had higher participation rates than whites in their first year of post-compulsory education, and these differences had widened significantly by their third post-compulsory year (Drew, 1995; Drew *et al.*, 1992). Similar patterns emerged from Jones' (1993) analysis of the 1988–90 Labour Force Survey:

- 11 per cent of whites between the ages of 16 and 18 were in full-time education;
- the comparable figure for ethnic minorities was 24 per cent, ranging from 8 per cent for Bangladeshi students to 32 per cent for Africans.

Routes within post-compulsory education were also found to differ with ethnic group. For example, whites were more likely to be taking traditional academic routes, and African Caribbeans, vocational courses (Drew *et al.*, 1992; Drew, 1995; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Jones, 1993). However, to a large extent these differences were related to the qualifications the young people achieved at 16. Drew's study, for example, revealed that the proportion of African Caribbeans pursuing A-levels at 16 was comparatively small, but this was in large part due to the small proportion who had achieved five or more O-level passes.

Ethnic differences have also been found amongst young people who chose to resit O-level or GCSE examinations. Amongst young people who finished their compulsory schooling in 1985 or 1986, twice as many African Caribbeans as whites, and four times as many Asians, retook four O-level courses in their first post-compulsory year (Drew *et al.*, 1992). The O-level results of these young people show that it was largely the 'middle attainers' who chose this option, possibly perceiving it as 'a reasonable alternative to YTS or direct labour market entry, either as a means of improving their general academic profile to make themselves more attractive to employers, or in order to obtain sufficient qualifications to move on to A-levels or other (higher) courses' (Drew *et al.*, 1992, p. 20).

7.3.3 Gender differences

The review of research on the academic performance of ethnic minority students carried out by Gillborn and Gipps (1996) concluded that, regardless of ethnic origin, girls tended to do better than boys from the same social class background. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. However, some disparities between ethnic groups have been identified within this general pattern:

- Africans and African Caribbeans had the widest differentials in qualifications by gender, with black girls achieving at almost twice the level of black boys (Rasekoala, 1997).
- Female further education students from African Caribbean and white ethnic groups were more likely than their male counterparts to be taking academic courses, while the pattern was reversed amongst Bangladeshi and Chinese students (Whitmarsh and Harris, 1996).

7.4 School issues

7.4.1 Maintenance of inequality during schooling

Schools themselves have been shown to have a profound impact on the educational experiences, and consequently the post-16 destinations, of young people from ethnic minorities (Gillborn, 1997). A number of studies have demonstrated how ethnic inequalities were often widened during compulsory schooling. For example, Rasekoala's (1997) analysis of data from three LEAs indicated that:

- on entry to primary school, African Caribbean students were at a similar level to their peers in the core subjects but they did not progress at an appropriate rate to ensure compatibility at GCSE level and beyond;
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi students were well behind the African Caribbeans on entry and at the end of KS1, but by the time they took their GCSEs they were well ahead;
- Indians were slightly ahead of the African Caribbeans at entry and at the end of KS1 but when they took their GCSEs, were far ahead;
- African, Chinese and white students had a more consistent pattern of achievement: high at both KS1 and GCSEs.

In their review of research on the achievements of ethnic minority students, Gillborn and Gipps (1996) found that whites tended to make greater progress than ethnic minority students in primary schools, but in secondary schools Asian students made greater progress than whites of the same social class, with the performance of African Caribbeans less consistent (p. 3).

Not all studies have replicated these findings, however. Smith and Tomlinson (1989) identified fairly large differences between schools, concluding that 'what school a child goes to makes far more difference (in terms of exam results) than what ethnic group he or she belongs to' (p.305); while Nuttall *et al.*'s (1989) analysis of over 30,000 students in 140 secondary schools concluded that school effectiveness varied in terms of the relative performance of different ethnic groups. These school-related differences are explored further in Chapter 5.

7.4.2 Curriculum

It has been argued that an Anglo- or Euro-centric curriculum may have had the effect of excluding ethnic minority students from the educational process (Bailey and Shan, 1991; Walkling and Brannigan, 1992). Interviews carried out with African Caribbean young people in Leicester revealed that a high proportion did not enjoy school, citing the lack of material about black culture and history as one of the main reasons for their disaffection (Lyle *et al.*, 1996). Furthermore, in Wrench *et al.*'s (1996) study, a considerable number of African Caribbean young men who were interviewed 'mentioned the absence of subjects of particular relevance to black people in the school curriculum' (p. 60) and for some this formed part of their alienation from school.

7.4.3 Expectations, behaviour and exclusions

Another proposed explanation for the relative underperformance of young people from some ethnic group has focused on teachers' difficulty in distinguishing between students' learning difficulties and their problems grappling with English as an additional language, at the beginning of secondary school. A study by the Commission for Racial Equality (1992) revealed that many students with English as an additional language were incorrectly assigned to non-examination sets in their first year of secondary schooling and remained there, as their teachers doubted whether they would be able to cope with the level of linguistic complexity needed in the higher ability sets. This had the effect of preventing them being entered for some GCSEs and, ultimately, restricting the options available to them at 16.

It has also been claimed that the underperformance of African Caribbean students can be explained by the low expectations of their teachers (Walkling and Brannigan, 1992; Mac an Ghaill, 1988). Mac an Ghaill's (1988) ethnographic study of 'Kilby School' found that African Caribbean boys 'tended to be seen as having "low ability" and potential discipline problems' (p. 64) which he traced to the ideological legacy the staff had inherited from previous teachers. Although students were not defined exclusively in terms of these stereotypes, Mac an Ghaill believed that they were of central significance in understanding the relationships between black youths and white teachers in the school.

Research has suggested that teachers' expectations of students' behaviour may have succeeded in alienating ethnic minorities, particularly African Caribbeans, from the education system or encouraged then to conform to certain racial stereotypes (Sewell, 1997; Wrench *et al.*, 1996). Gillborn and Gipps (1996) documented an unusually high degree of conflict in schools between white teachers and African Caribbean students, while the black young people in Mac an Ghaill's (1989) ethnographic study claimed that their teachers systematically responded to them on the basis of their age, with the older students seen as a threat to social control.

Furthermore, rates of permanent exclusion from school have been found to be significantly higher for blacks than for whites (Gillborn, 1997; Lyle *et*

al., 1996). A considerable number of ethnographic studies (for example, Mirza, 1992) have argued that white teachers have tended to assume that black students present 'a more frequent and severe challenge to their authority, leading them to act against African Caribbean students more often and for "offences" that might go unpunished were the student white or South Asian' (Gillborn, 1997, p. 77). The absence of ethnic minority role models on the staff of many schools has also been alluded to by researchers (Mirza; 1992; Rasekoala, 1997).

While some researchers have criticised the validity of such qualitative studies (for example, Hammersley, 1992), Gillborn and Gipps (1996) have pointed out that by concentrating on the *consequences* of interaction in this way, 'qualitative research has begun to explore how racism might operate in ways that are more subtle and widespread than the crude, often violent, attitudes associated with notions of discrimination and prejudice' (p. 56).

7.4.4 Parental involvement

Rasekoala's (1997) study of three LEAs found differential rates of parental participation in school activities, by ethnic group. For example, African Caribbean parents had the worst rates of attendance at parents' evenings, followed by Pakistanis, then whites. The reasons given by the African Caribbean parents for their non-attendance included:

- lack of confidence in approaching schools and teachers;
- confusion by educational jargon;
- their own lack of educational achievement; and
- pessimism about their children's educational outcomes.

Rasekoala also found that black parents were the least involved in school of all parent groups. Again, lines of causality are not clear, but it seems likely that young people of any ethnic group will effectively be disadvantaged if their parents feel alienated from their school.

7.4.5 Survival strategies

Recent ethnographic studies have sought to explain the choices and behaviour of young black people in terms of active decision making, rather than passive accommodation to racial discrimination, in both the education and employment sectors (for example: Mac an Ghaill, 1989; Mirza, 1992; Sewell, 1997). Mac an Ghaill documented the strategies used by blacks for 'survival' at secondary school: conforming to the technical demands of teachers, but not their social demands; and perceiving teachers as means of acquiring qualifications, rather than 'significant others'. Other black students attempted to make friends with some teachers, so that the latter could effectively 'sponsor' them through the school system; Mac an Ghaill saw this as evidence that they were 'consciously creating their own material culture...rejecting the model of white society presented by teachers' (p. 285). Similarly, Mirza identified a range of strategies used by black young women to negotiate employment opportunities, and these are discussed in Section 7.6.4, below.

7.5 Careers guidance

When seeking to explain the reasons why, amongst young people with similar qualifications, the post-16 destinations of ethnic minorities are significantly different from those of their white peers, a number of researchers have focused on careers guidance within schools and the role of the Careers Service. (See Chapter 5 for a more general discussion of careers education and guidance.)

7.5.1 Structural and organisational issues

Several studies have commented on the impediments to achieving racial equality in the advice provided to young people by the Careers Service (Meijers and Piggot, 1995; Rahme, 1995; Sykes, 1990; Wrench, 1990). Wrench, for example, argued that as the Careers Service was composed of autonomous local units, each having its own priorities, it was difficult to ensure a commitment to equal opportunities across the country. Furthermore, as careers officers themselves often worked very much as individuals, in one-to-one relationships, it was often difficult to determine whether or not young people from ethnic minorities were being disadvantaged by stereotyped judgements.

It has also been argued that the increasing 'marketisation' of youth training, in which employers have come to yield considerable influence in their choice of their trainees, has disadvantaged ethnic minorities. In selecting trainees:

> *companies preferred to either devise their own recruitment methods or more commonly to utilise established ones...A consequence of this has been the translation of discriminatory selection criteria inherent in some employers' recruitment methods onto YTS. The result has been that young blacks have experienced considerable difficulty in entering some sectors of the YTS scheme...* (Freathy, 1991, p. 94).

Careers guidance within school was explored by Mirza (1992) in her ethnographic study of young black women in two London schools. Only 39 per cent of the black young women she interviewed had found the school careers programme useful, in contrast to 70 per cent of their white peers. Mirza concluded that both the school's own careers education programme and the Careers Service were 'confused in their role, poorly resourced and under-developed' (p. 115), restricting the range of options young black women were able to explore and, thus, contributing 'substantially to the reproduction of inequalities' (p. 115).

7.5.2 Perceptions of careers officers

As discussed above, in Section 7.3, Asian young people generally performed well at school when compared with other ethnic groups. However, Cross *et al.* (1990) contended that many careers officers perceived the ambitions of Asians as unrealistic, although white students with the same qualifications were not perceived in this way. On the basis of interviews with careers

officers from nine careers services, Cross *et al.* suggested a number of explanations for these problematic perceptions of 'over-aspiration' among Asians. These included the ethnocentric judgements of careers officers and an awareness by careers staff of the restrictions in the labour market for ethnic minorities.

7.5.3 Placement on YTS

A number of studies identified elements of racial discrimination in the allocation of YTS places by both prospective employers and the Careers Service (Cross and Wrench, 1991; Cross *et al.*, 1990). Interviews with careers officers, conducted by Cross and Wrench, uncovered examples of 'covert resistance and blatant racism' (p. 19) on the part of many employers. Furthermore, the authors suggested that careers officers themselves were exacerbating the situation by remaining passive in the face of suspicions of racism, and by the 'protective channelling' of young people from ethnic minorities away from employers suspected of racism. Cross and Wrench argued that, while this may have avoided potential racial discrimination for the young people involved, it did nothing to challenge the opinions of employers, and remarked that it could 'look suspiciously like an excuse for doing nothing' (p.21).

However, another study of careers officers, conducted by Freathy (1991), did not find similarly stereotyped judgements but, instead, revealed feelings of powerlessness amongst the staff, especially with regards to matching individuals to suitable youth training schemes. Freathy commented that:

> *The power relationship between the suppliers of labour and those who were demanding it were not symmetric...employers were able to apply considerable pressure in dictating the type of trainees that were put forward to them* (p. 95).

7.6 Employment and training

7.6.1 Youth labour market

Studies have indicated that whites were more likely than other ethnic groups to move directly into employment at the age of 16. Drew *et al.* (1992) revealed that 19 per cent of white school leavers gained a full-time job at the end of their compulsory schooling, compared with five per cent of their Asian peers and eight per cent of African Caribbeans.

Participation on YTS also differed considerably between ethnic groups. Asian young people were generally under-represented and, when other factors were taken into account, including attainment at 16, African Caribbeans were the most likely to take up YTS places (Drew, 1995).

Research has revealed disparities between ethnic groups in the type of YTS on which young people enrolled. Freathy's (1991) study of trainees in the

Greater Manchester area concluded that young black workers were over-represented on the low-status schemes run by local authorities and voluntary agencies. Consequently, they experienced unequal access to the labour market on completion of their training when required to compete against others who had participated in the higher-status, firm-based schemes.

Differences in the post-16 destinations of young people may also be attributable to religious differences, operating within the same ethnic group. For example, in Northern Ireland, McWhirter *et al.* (1988) revealed an imbalance between Catholics and Protestants with regard to the employment opportunities open to young people. Their longitudinal study of almost 3,000 young people between 1984 and 1987 concluded that

- Protestants were obtaining jobs more quickly after leaving school than their Catholic counterparts;
- one year after the end of compulsory schooling, a greater proportion of Protestants than Catholics were in full-time jobs while more Catholics than Protestants were unemployed or on YTS;
- more Catholics than Protestants remained in full-time education.

These patterns emerged despite the absence of any significant differences in attitude to work amongst the two groups in the final year of compulsory schooling, and only slight differences in their post-16 preferences. However, this particular sectarian pattern of participation would be unlikely to be replicated in other parts of the United Kingdom.

7.6.2 Unemployment

Ethnicity also affected the likelihood of a young person being unemployed at the end of his or her compulsory schooling. Drew (1995) stated that:

> *whatever the level of educational attainment, there were barriers to progress for ethnic minority young people; African Caribbeans and Asians were more likely to become unemployed and less likely to find full-time jobs* (p. 187).

This is borne out in other studies (Roberts *et al.* 1992; The Runnymede Trust, 1996; Whitmarsh and Harris, 1996). Whitmarsh and Harris found that, age-for-age, unemployment was higher in all ethnic minority groups than in the white group, citing the pattern amongst their sample in spring 1995 when the unemployment rate amongst young Bangladeshis and Pakistanis was around 40 per cent, almost three times the rate for whites of a comparable age.

Drew (1995) has suggested that the higher participation rates in post-compulsory education by ethnic minorities may be, in part, due to a desire to avoid unemployment by postponing entry to the labour market or by improving their level of qualification, in preparation for seeking employment.

7.6.3 Influence of TECs and employers

Just as increasing marketisation has been judged by some to have had an adverse effect on Careers Service provision (Freathy, 1991, discussed above), so the funding mechanisms within TECs have been perceived as having had an adverse effect on the training offered to ethnic minorities (Boddy, 1995). Although he found that TECs had developed a wide range of activities relevant to ethnic minorities including research and action with employers, Boddy also came to the conclusion that:

> *The performance and output-based funding regime within which providers operate discourages effective provision for ethnic minorities where those from ethnic minorities are perceived as requiring additional resource inputs, and are further perceived as less likely to complete programmes or less likely to achieve positive outcomes* (p. vii).

Research by Roberts *et al.* (1992) indicated that although only five per cent of the black young people in Liverpool whom they interviewed reported unfair discrimination when seeking training or jobs, their job-seeking strategies were limited by the discrimination they experienced in other areas of life which, in many cases, kept them out of contact with the services that might have linked them to the wider labour market (p. 227). In effect, their job-seeking was inhibited by anticipation of discrimination and rejection.

7.6.4 Job-seeking strategies

More recently, research has focused on the positive strategies employed by ethnic minorities within what was argued to be a racially (and sexually) segregated labour market. Mirza's (1997) study of the choices made by black women at the end of their compulsory schooling revealed that many chose 'realistic careers' that they knew to be accessible but which would also give them an opportunity to enrol on a college course. These included social work, nursing and office work.

> *Thus while it may appear that young black women were reproducing stereotypes of black women's work, they were in effect expressing their meritocratic values within the limits of opportunities allowed to them in a racially and sexually divisive educational and economic system* (p. 4).

7.7 Cultural factors

Research cannot yet offer any conclusive explanations for the differences in post-16 destinations discussed above nor for the different patterns of academic achievement (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996). However, various researchers have argued that young people from ethnic minorities may value post-compulsory education more highly than their white peers and have attributed this to cultural differences.

7.7.1 Education as a means of social advancement

A number of studies have demonstrated that the relationship between social class and post-16 destination is considerably weaker for young people from ethnic minorities than for whites (for example, Jones, 1993) (see Chapter 6). Basit's (1996) investigation into the career aspirations of British Muslim girls came to similar conclusions, finding that girls from working-class backgrounds did not want to go through the experiences their parents had, and had internalised their parents' ethos that education and a career were the keys to upward social mobility. As Basit's research was relatively small-scale, there is no indication of how prevalent these attitudes were nor whether they were replicated amongst girls in other ethnic groups. However, it may help to illuminate some of the reasons why young people with similar qualifications chose different routes at the end of compulsory schooling and, in particular, why the proportion of Asians remaining in full-time education is higher than that of whites or African Caribbeans.

Lightbody *et al.* (1997) also investigated the factors which influenced young Asians' choice of career. They found that the social position of a job was much more important to the Asians than to the whites in their sample, whereas the opportunities for personal growth that a job offered were more important to whites. They speculated that:

> *perhaps it is the experiences of parents, the majority of whom were first-generation immigrants, that we should be investigating. It may well be that it is the parents' experience of discrimination, both within the labour market and in the community at large, which prompts them to strive for 'something better' for their children.* (p. 77)

Although Siann and Knox (1992) found little evidence that Muslim girls were more aspirational than non-Muslims, they did suggest that:

> *one of the major determinants of their sense of self-worth and self-esteem is the extent to which they contribute to their family's standing in the community. Consequently, they will seek careers that are in accordance with this* (p. 203).

Penn and Scattergood (1992) came to slightly different conclusions from their examination of the career aspirations of fifth-formers in Rochdale. As in the studies discussed above, they found that the majority of their Asian respondents wanted to remain in education after the age of 16 and few had contemplated entry into an apprenticeship, YTS or full-time job. However, although Penn and Scattergood attributed this partially to high ambitions, they also considered it due to 'a lack of comprehensive knowledge of occupational possibilities outside higher education amongst Asians' (p. 94).

Cross and Wrench (1991) postulated that these explanations could also be used to explain the under-representation of Asians on YTS, compared with their peers from other ethnic groups. Since Asians were more likely to

remain in full-time education, those who participated in YTS generally had lower-level qualifications than their peers from other ethnic groups and were consequently less likely to secure a traineeship on the higher-level schemes. They concluded that 'a definite tendency exists for ethnic minorities to be only interested in YTS when they are performing badly in educational terms' (p. 11), explaining both the under-representation of Asians and the over-representation of African Caribbeans, who have tended to achieve lower results than their peers from other ethnic groups.

7.7.2 Cultural dissonance

Some authors have sought to explain the relatively poor academic performance of African Caribbeans, and thus the limitations on their post-16 options, by reflecting on experiences of cultural dissonance. Morgan (1996) argued that:

> *children of African Caribbean heritage in Britain are caught up between two cultures, one which they see devalued and the other with which they do not fully identify but which is seen as superior by society* (p. 39).

This view was supported by Mac an Ghaill's (1989) ethnographic study of young black people, which, he claimed, provided evidence 'that the education system is part of a wider system of constraints which, often unwittingly, serves to maintain black people in a position of structural subordination' (p. 284). This theme is explored more fully in Section 7.4, above, which examines the cultures of schools and colleges.

It is possible that experience of other educational systems and different cultures of education may influence choice of destination at 16. Jones (1993) suggested that this might explain differences in the take-up rates of apprenticeships and higher education between ethnic groups. For example, in his analysis of the Labour Force Survey, African Caribbeans had the highest proportion of young people who had completed apprenticeships, possibly reflecting 'the education system in the West Indies which followed traditional schooling to age 15 with a well-developed apprenticeship system, but with little higher education in the British sense' (p. 43). Indians had the lowest participation rate, which, Jones suggested, reflected the developed higher education sector in India and the relative rarity of apprenticeships.

7.8 Summary

Quantitative research has outlined the continuing inequalities in attainment and post-16 destinations between young people from different ethnic groups.

- Some differences in post-16 destination were explained largely by differences in attainment, with a greater proportion of whites and those from 'other' ethnic groups than Asians gaining at least five grade A*–C GCSEs, and a considerably smaller proportion of African Caribbeans.
- Differences within these broad ethnic groups have also been highlighted. For example, Indians have been shown to have achieved more highly than other young people of South Asian origin, and more highly than whites in some areas.
- Over recent years, although the proportion of young people gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C has risen in all ethnic groups, the gaps between groups has remained and, in some cases, widened.
- Differences in the attainment and post-16 destinations of boys and girls have also varied between ethnic groups, with Africans and African Caribbeans having the widest differentials in qualifications by gender.

Substantial differences between ethnic groups were also apparent in their post-16 destinations and cannot be explained, solely, by differences in attainment levels. Both Asians and African Caribbeans have had higher participation rates than whites in post-compulsory education. Routes within post-compulsory education were also shown to differ with ethnic group, with whites more likely to be following academic routes and African Caribbeans, vocational courses. However, these differences were largely related to differential attainment at 16.

Attempts to explain these patterns have focused on the values and aspirations of the young people, some of which have been attributed to a specific ethnic background, and also on the influences of the wider society in which they make their decisions, particularly in schools and training organisations. Although many of these studies are qualitative in nature, often based on a small number of organisations, and are not necessarily generalisable to the population as a whole, they do engage with the complexity of some of the subtler forms of racism that young people have experienced during their education and those that they perceive to be operating in the world of work.

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8. GENDER

8.1 Introduction

In the 1970s, the educational establishment was concerned about the underachievement of young women, relative to young men. Strategies were developed to encourage a greater proportion of them to stay on at school and study traditionally 'male' subjects such as mathematics and science. By the 1990s, young women had made substantial gains in their academic attainment and were staying on in full-time education in increasing numbers. Attention, instead, turned to young men, who were doing less well than young women at GCSEs and who were more likely to leave full-time education at 16.

This chapter explores the impact of gender on the post-16 destinations of young people and also on their attainment at 16. It discusses the reasons for the gender differentials in post-16 routes, exploring methods of assessment, socialisation processes within schools and youth training schemes, and stereotypical perceptions of both school subjects and jobs.

Many studies on differences in academic performance between boys and girls have focused on biological explanations. However, these have been excluded from this literature review on the basis that social rather than physiological explanations are more helpful in understanding and responding to the differences. As Stobart *et al.* (1992) commented:

> *Telling support comes from the relative changes in performances over the past century which are likely to reflect changing social structures and expectations rather than rapid evolution of the female brain and nervous system* (p. 266).

8.2 Differences in post-16 destinations

Numerous studies have highlighted the differences in the choices made by young men and women at the end of their compulsory schooling. The eight Youth Cohort Studies, conducted between 1985 and 1996, have all shown that a greater proportion of young women than young men chose to stay in full-time education at the age of 16 (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1 Percentage of young people who remained in full-time education at the age of 16

	1985	1986	1987	1989	1991	1992	1994	1996
Men	31	34	37	43	53	61	69	68
Women	42	43	45	53	64	71	75	75

Source: Youth Cohort Study (GB.DFEE, 1997, p.21)

These findings were replicated in McWhirter *et al.*'s research (1988) on the transition from school to work in Northern Ireland. Additionally, McWhirter *et al.* concluded that although young men were more likely than young women to enter the labour market at 16, a larger proportion of young men than young women were unemployed on leaving school. The study also showed that more young men than women joined youth training programmes at 16, although men had a faster dropout rate than women. Gendered patterns of participation in post-16 education and training have also been identified in Scotland in Raffe *et al.*'s (1994) study of take-up of vocational education.

It has been suggested that differences in the post-16 destinations of young men and women may be determined at an early age: Keys *et al.* (1995) asked pupils in the final year of primary school and first year of secondary school whether or not they thought they would remain at school or college after the age of 16. Girls, in both phases of schooling, were more likely than the boys to intend to remain in education and were less likely to intend to leave school as soon as possible.

These differences can be explained to some extent by the differences in academic attainment of young men and young women at 16 and will be discussed further in Section 8.3, below. However, Cheng's (1995) analysis of the Youth Cohort Study found that girls had higher staying-on rates than boys, even when their attainment in GCSE had been taken into consideration.

8.3 Academic attainment

In seeking to explain the gender differences in post-16 destination, it is important to consider those which address attainment, as well as choice of destination, given that attainment has been found to be the strongest predictor of destination, as discussed below.

8.3.1 Gender-related differences

The choices that are made at the end of compulsory schooling are closely related to the performance and attitudes of the young people prior to reaching the age of 16, as discussed in Chapter 1: those with higher grades at GCSE are more likely than those with lower grades to remain in full-time education (Gray *et al.*, 1993; Payne, 1995).

Studies have shown substantial differences between the GCSE results of young men and women (see Table 8.2) (see also: Arnot *et al.*, 1996; Stobart *et al.*, 1992), and it is likely that these help to explain the differences in their post-16 destinations. Furthermore, the study of behaviour and performance at school conducted by OFSTED and the Equal Opportunities Commission (1996) concluded that:

> *Girls are more successful than boys (in terms of achieving GCSE grades A* to C), or broadly as successful, in almost all major subjects. They are even achieving success in subjects traditionally*

considered "boys' subjects" (design and technology, computer studies, mathematics, chemistry and combined science), though their performance is usually relatively less good in these subjects than in others (p.6).

Table 8.2 Percentage of young men and women gaining five or more GCSE grades A*–C in Year 11 by gender: 1989–1996

	1989	1991	1992	1994	1996
Men	28	31	33	37	40
Women	31	38	40	46	49

Source: Youth Cohort Study (GB.DFEE, 1997, p.16)

Numerous studies have also documented the differential performance of boys and girls at younger ages, at both primary and secondary school (for example: Stobart *et al.*, 1992; Elwood, 1995; Warrington and Younger, 1996; Murphy and Elwood, 1997).

There is evidence that similar differences in the attainment of boys and girls are apparent in most ethnic groups. Drew and Gray's study (1990) of the achievements of black young people in the fifth year of school found considerable differences in attainment between boys and girls, which were potentially more influential than ethnic group (p. 116). Furthermore, the review of recent research on the achievements of ethnic minority students carried out by Gillborn and Gipps (1996) concluded that, regardless of ethnic origin, girls tended to do better than boys from the same social class background. (For a further discussion of ethnic differences, see Chapter 7.)

8.3.2 Examinations and assessment

It has been argued that one of the reasons why boys have under-performed, relative to girls, at GCSE is because of its methods of assessment, particularly the emphasis on coursework. However, Elwood's (1995) statistical analysis of GCSE examination results in English concluded that coursework had a limited effect in boosting girls' overall subject marks. She pointed out that prior to 1994, the gender gap was most pronounced for syllabuses that were *not* assessed by 100 per cent coursework and that even when coursework was reduced to 40 per cent of the total mark, the gap between boys' and girls' performance remained as wide.

It is also clear that girls were already improving their performance prior to the introduction of the GCSE (OFSTED and EOC, 1996). Furthermore, when over 2,000 students were asked for their own perceptions of the place of coursework in GCSE courses, the majority perceived it to be:

> *an essential part of the GCSE, they find it representative of life beyond school, they find it motivating, they think it provides a challenge for students of all abilities and they believe that it represents a fair measure of their level of achievement.*
>
> (Bishop *et al.*, 1997, p. 308)

8.4 Socialisation at school

8.4.1 School cultures

A number of studies have explored patterns of socialisation specifically within the education system and their effect on the attainment of boys and girls. Pervasive 'macho' male cultures operating within schools were explored by Mac an Ghaill (1994) in his ethnographic study of the social construction and regulation of masculinity in a mixed comprehensive school. He argued that 'schools do not merely reflect the dominant sexual ideology of the wider society, but actively produce gender and heterosexual divisions' (p. 9), and identified four typologies of boys within the school. One of the four, the 'macho lads', overtly rejected much school work as inappropriate for them as men. Mac an Ghaill viewed them as the pivotal group in the school in creating a general ethos in which the academic/non-academic distinction was associated with a feminine/masculine division for the wider group of ordinary male students (p. 59). A similar picture of macho versions of masculinity in schools was constructed by Epstein (1997), who maintained that these were fed by the explicit homophobia and implicit heterosexism found in schools.

Other researchers have argued that such cultures operated more widely, effectively alienating many boys from the education system. Graham's (1994) study of the performance and attitudes of students in five Hampshire schools in the early 1990s revealed substantial differences between the young men and women in terms of their satisfaction with their school, commitment and attitude to their teachers.

8.4.2 Role models

The presence or absence of appropriate role models has also been argued to have an impact on socialisation and the development of attitudes to education and work. The study on differences in performance by boys and girls carried out by OFSTED and the Equal Opportunities Commission (1996) stated that:

> *Primary school pupils are likely to see women or mothers providing general classroom support and men or fathers coming into lessons to talk about their jobs. This may have the effect of influencing pupils' notions about adult roles and the world of work* (p. 21).

However, other studies have suggested that, at secondary level, role models had little effect on gender stereotypes (Graham, 1994; Sharp *et al.*, 1996).

8.4.3 Teacher expectations

Elwood (1995) demonstrated how different expectations of boys and girls could affect student attainment, and thus the choices they were likely to make at 16. She argued that there was a dissonance between teachers'

anxieties about girls under-performing in examinations and what actually happened. In relatively few cases were girls' worries about examinations translated into poor results. However, she found that girls had often been entered for lower-grade exams as a result of teachers' continued belief that girls were distressed by examinations.

It has also been claimed that there is still a strong residual expectation that young women are less likely than young men to need a qualification in mathematics for their future careers and that they will not do as well (Stobart *et al.*, 1992). Considerably more girls than boys were entered for the 'intermediate' grades C–F in mathematics GCSE between 1988 and 1990, which Stobart *et al.* suggested was indicative of different attitudes to mathematics for girls and boys amongst teachers or amongst students themselves.

There is obviously no simple divide between the gender stereotypes, discussed above, and teacher expectations. Mac an Ghaill (1994) argued that, as a result of the new vocationalist curriculum that had been introduced into the mixed school where he carried out his research, many girls were directed into low-level courses that focused on caring, while the information technology classes were dominated by boys. The senior management team in the school justified this effective segregation in terms of the students' future domestic and occupational roles, which Mac an Ghaill judged to be evidence of the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes. (See Section 8.6 for a discussion of work experience and vocational training.)

8.5 Perceptions of subjects and jobs

There is evidence that, despite changes in the relative performance of boys and girls over the past 20 years, there has been less variation in the subjects young people have chosen to study in full-time post-compulsory education and in the types of vocational courses on which young people enrol. In their study of the take-up of mathematics and science in post-compulsory education, Cheng *et al.* (1995) revealed pronounced gender differences: young men were more likely than young women to be studying mathematics or the physical sciences, and young women more likely to be studying the life sciences. Furthermore, young women were considerably less likely than men to take *any* science or mathematics at A-level.

Arnot *et al.*'s (1996) analysis of a number of studies revealed similar differences in young people's choice of vocational qualifications. They found that gender gaps were wider for vocational qualifications than for academic qualifications, with young people tending to choose training in stereotypically gendered occupational areas. Similarly gender-stereotypical choices were found by Raffe *et al.* (1994) in their study of the take-up of the vocational National Certificate modules in Scotland.

8.5.1 Gender-specific stereotypes of academic subjects

Several studies have attempted to explain the differentials in take-up rates of academic subjects in terms of gender stereotypes. Although several of these primarily concentrate on attitudes and choices prior to the age of 16, they obviously have considerable impact on subject choice in post-compulsory education.

Archer's (1992) summary of his own studies into gender stereotyping of school subjects suggested that there has been an overall lessening of stereotyping in recent years, and that some previously stereotyped subjects had come to be seen as suitable for both sexes. However, research he conducted with Macrae (Archer and Macrae, 1991) highlighted some enduring gender differences in students' perceptions of subjects. For example, boys tended to view traditionally 'masculine' subjects as interesting and traditionally 'feminine' ones as boring, whereas girls perceived the 'feminine' subjects as easy, and the 'masculine' ones as difficult.

Evidence of gender stereotyping of subjects has been found by many other researchers (Colley *et al.*, 1994a and 1994b; Sharp *et al.*, 1996; Whitehead, 1996). Colley *et al.* (1994b) argued that degree of stereotyping increases with age. In their study of boys and girls at both mixed- and single-sex schools, they found that amongst younger students (aged 11–12) there was a strong school effect, with girls in single-sex schools showing much stronger preferences for science and mathematics than the girls at the mixed schools, and boys in single-sex schools favouring music and art more than their peers in mixed schools. However, by the age of 15–16, the school effect had diminished. Boys, in all schools, showed strong preferences for physical education, mathematics and science, and girls showed similar attitudes towards art. Colley *et al.* suggested that these changes were likely to be a function of either an increasing identification with adult gender roles, or different stages of the educational process (i.e. the younger children in the study had encountered a timetable differentiated by subject relatively recently and so had not had sufficient time to become fully aware of the associated stereotypes).

While most researchers recognised that perceptions of school subjects reflect, to some extent, general cultural stereotypes, Culley (1988) suggested that stereotypical subject choices may be encouraged by teachers and school policy. She cited the example of schools which operated a block system of option choices and required students to choose between stereotypically 'feminine' subjects (such as arts subjects and languages) and those traditionally popular with boys, such as computing. Similarly, an HMI report (GB.DFE.HMI, 1992) on the preparation schools offered girls for adult and working life concluded that there were several areas in which schools could do more to:

> *challenge girls to acknowledge what being young women means to them; and help girls to envisage their future roles and occupations on the basis of sound knowledge and self-awareness* (p. 2).

The survey suggested that improvements needed to be made in the areas of classroom management, curriculum policy and counselling and guidance, if more progress was to be made towards these goals. Boys' schools, in particular, were criticised for not taking enough account of 'the implications for curriculum, school ethos and teaching approaches of a world where the domestic and paid employment roles of men and women are changing' (p. 2).

OFSTED and the Equal Opportunities Commission (1996) also emphasised areas in which they felt schools could do more to challenge gender stereotyping of subject and career choice. The report indicated that only about half of secondary schools had initiatives in place which were intended to broaden students' thinking about subject choices and careers and few schools had developed a coordinated approach which aimed to educate students about gender. (See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the influence of careers education and guidance on post-16 destinations.)

Gender stereotyping of subjects can influence post-16 destination in a variety of ways, affecting both the route taken at the end of compulsory schooling and the choices of subjects or areas of work within each route. The OFSTED and Equal Opportunities Commission report (1996) noted that, amongst those who chose to stay on in full time education:

> *The most troubling aspect of the gender pattern of 6th form study is that, despite their success in these subjects at GCSE, relatively few young women are taking A-level courses which are wholly mathematical, scientific or technological, thereby denying themselves some career opportunities in science, engineering and technology* (p.13).

Similarly, Whitehead (1996) found evidence of strongly gendered choices of A-level subjects. She also explored differences between boys and girls in the extent to which they made gender-stereotypical subject choices. Her research revealed that boys showed much more bias in their subject choices than girls, and those boys who chose only stereotypically masculine subjects at A-level were much more likely to support traditional sex roles (and to conform to traditional notions of masculinity) than girls who chose stereotypically feminine subjects. In common with some of the research discussed above addressing the processes of socialisation in schools, Whitehead suggested that boys may have chosen 'sex-appropriate' subjects in order to conform to traditional notions of masculinity. By implication, it would seem that a traditional notion of femininity was less pervasive amongst girls.

8.5.2 Gender-specific stereotypes of jobs

A number of studies have documented the differences between the attitudes of boys and girls to both future careers and specific post-16 options (for example, Culley, 1988). It is evident that these differences were apparent even in primary school: Keys *et al.*, 1995 found that girls in Years 6 and 7

were more likely than boys to aspire to jobs as teachers and hairdressers whereas boys of a similar age were more likely to favour the occupation of footballer or policeman.

The importance of tackling students' gender stereotypes of occupations through careers education was emphasised by Pilcher *et al.* (1989), as a result of a study of the impact of 'women's training roadshows' on girls at secondary school. On the basis of interviews with 500 of the girls, four months after they had attended the roadshow, the authors found that the roadshow appeared to have been successful in widening the girls' *awareness* of the options available to them, but not in encouraging them to move into stereotypically 'male' occupations. They concluded that:

> *Initiatives aimed at cultural interruption can be successful in challenging stereotypes and widening awareness of options, but it is necessary to incorporate them into routine careers provision in order that traditional ideas that young people have acquired about themselves and their future roles in the labour market are challenged earlier and on a more systematic and frequent basis* (pp.66-7).

However, other research has emphasised the strong links between gender stereotyping of jobs by students and the actual proportion of men and women who hold those particular jobs in wider society. Taber's (1992) study of the perceptions of students in the first three years of their secondary schooling concluded that 'not unreasonably—pupils' views of the suitability of a job for men and women are based on their perceptions of the representation of the two sexes in the jobs' (p.113). Furthermore, on the basis of his findings, Taber suggested that secondary school had little impact on such gender stereotypes, claiming that ideas that some jobs are more suitable for men and others for women seem 'already present when pupils arrive at secondary school and remain stable over the first three years of secondary education' (p. 111).

A different argument about gendered career choice is put forward by Mirza (1992). On the basis of her research with 198 students in two schools in deprived parts of London, she argued that although girls often made traditionally gendered choices at the age of 16, they did so for purely pragmatic reasons, recognising the constraints of a sexually (and racially) segregated labour market. For example, Mirza maintained that girls chose 'caring professions' not so much because of the qualities inherent in the job but more as a means of obtaining occupational mobility through educational qualifications which could be gained within the confines of 'acceptable' work. While she did not dispute the gendered nature of the labour market, Mirza perceived girls as active agents who did not conform to stereotypical behaviour but who made realistic choices within the restricted options available to them. Jowett (1995) indicated that the girls in her research certainly were aware of the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the workplace. Two-thirds of the girls in Years 8 and 10 in her study in Newham believed that sexism would impede their chances of employment.

8.5.3 Types of school

In seeking to explain gender stereotyping, researchers have pointed to the effect of school type on subject choices. Sharp *et al.* (1996) found a strong relationship between a school's characteristics and the take-up of mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology A-levels. Single-sex schooling, in particular, was significantly related to take-up for all four subjects, with young women in single-sex schools more likely to have chosen to pursue these subjects than their peers in mixed schools. Lawrie and Brown (1992) also revealed differences between students at single-sex and mixed schools. Students in the latter were more stereotyped in their intended A-level choices and also in their desired careers than students in the former.

However, as OFSTED and the Equal Opportunities Commission (1996) emphasised, a comparison of single-sex and mixed schooling is both contentious and complex as many variables are associated with the choice of single-sex schooling. For example, in some areas students may be selected on the basis of their academic attainment for single-sex schools but not for mixed schools. In these cases, it may be difficult to differentiate between the type of school and the attainment levels of its students. Furthermore, there is also conflicting evidence about the impact of single-sex schooling: on the basis of its school inspections, OFSTED and the Equal Opportunities Commission (op.cit.) suggested that 'girls' schools in average and disadvantaged areas, and boys' schools, more generally, do relatively little to try to broaden pupils' horizons beyond traditional and often stereotypical expectations' (p. 26), thus conflicting with the findings of Lawrie and Brown, discussed above.

8.6 Work experience and vocational training

In addition to exploring the gender stereotypes which operate within schools, research has also investigated gender differences in work experience and vocational training and the impact of workplace stereotypes on young people's destinations at the end of compulsory schooling.

As part of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), students were required to complete a period of work experience during their time at school. It was intended that placements would be arranged by individual schools, with the relevant LEA's careers service responsible for ensuring the quality of the experience. However, despite the explicit commitment to equal opportunities within the TVEI, Heath (1995) and Rikowski (1992) argued that as the work experience placements they examined were explicitly allied to the needs of the local labour market, it was often difficult for school coordinators to find placements for girls in traditionally male areas:

> *The injustices of the labour market were obvious to work experience coordinators struggling to promote equal opportunities in their*

> *schools, yet by integrating the world of work into the curriculum and exposing young people directly and often uncritically to the discriminatory practices and assumptions of the labour market, TVEI further reinforced these practices and assumptions by association* (Heath, 1995, p.28).

Various researchers have argued that the Youth Training Scheme imposed similar restrictions on the type of training available to young men and women, and thus the careers open to them on completion of their training (for example, Mizen, 1995). Bates (1990) explored the experiences of a group of working-class girls following a Youth Training Scheme in institutional care for the elderly. She argued that the YTS served to reproduce traditional gender divisions through the initial screening process of potential trainees. Tutors and trainers perceived working-class girls as particularly suited to 'caring' roles and, once selected, Bates maintained that the lack of transferable training and segregation from other YTS trainees discouraged the girls from exploring alternative options.

Similarly, Mirza (1992) described a vocational programme run in the fifth year of one of the schools which participated in her research. The programme was intended for non-academic students and led directly into YTS. She maintained that it did not attempt to expand girls' experiences or develop their prospects concerning what jobs could be available:

> *Failing to inform or encourage them to take up any other type of work, the course succeeded in reinforcing traditional ideas of what unskilled or semi-skilled women's work should be* (p.96).

8.7 Summary

Research indicates strong gender differences in post-16 destination, even amongst young people with very similar levels of qualification. A greater proportion of young women than young men chose to stay in full-time education at the age of 16. This is explained, to some extent, by the higher attainment levels amongst girls than boys at GCSE. However, even when attainment has been taken into consideration, girls have been shown to be more likely than boys to stay on in post-compulsory education.

Few studies have explored the reasons why young men and women with similar GCSE results, specifically, made different decisions at the end of their compulsory schooling. Instead, they have largely concentrated on identifying the factors which contributed to differential attainment at 16, including:

- **school cultures**: ethnographic studies have documented 'macho' male cultures operating within schools which perpetuate the view of masculinity as essentially non-academic, effectively alienating many boys from education;
- **teacher expectations**: researchers have claimed that the gender-stereotypical expectations of some teachers have served to reinforce particular subject choices and entry levels within subjects amongst boys and girls.

Despite changes in the relative performance of boys and girls over the past 20 years, there has been less change in the choice of subject or occupational area within broadly similar post-16 destinations. For example:

- young women were more likely than young men to be studying mathematics or the physical sciences in post-compulsory education; whereas young women were more likely than young men to be studying the life sciences;
- gender gaps were also evident among young people studying for vocational qualifications: young men and women tended to choose courses in stereotypically gendered occupational areas.

Explanations of these choices have focused on the ways in which academic subjects and jobs are gender-stereotyped by both teachers and students; the influence of school type on post-16 destination; and the effect of employers' gender stereotypes on vocational training and work experience.

From this evidence it would seem that although the attainment of young women has improved markedly over the past 20 years, to the extent at which policy makers were focusing on methods to address the relative under-performance of young men, the choices of both men and women are still considerably constrained by gender stereotypes of subjects, jobs and training. Evidence suggests that these have endured amongst some teachers and employers, as well as amongst young people themselves.

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9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Summary and areas for future research

The literature reviewed for this report has covered a wide range of topics, all of which are relevant to the issue of young people's choices at 16. It has examined system-wide influences which define many of the destinations open to young people at 16, such as the education system and the prevailing national economic climate. It has also explored local-level influences such as the ways in which individual schools and local economies impact upon young people's choices. Finally, the review has examined the ways in which the individual characteristics of young people (their gender, class and ethnic group) influence their destination at the end of compulsory schooling. The sections below summarise the data presented and discussed in the main chapters and attempt to look forward.

9.1.1 System-level influences

Education system

Despite the differences between individuals and between schools, it is inevitable that the education system as a whole will have a substantial impact on the nature of young people's choices at 16, effectively defining the options open to them. In the period covered by this literature review, there was considerable change in the post-16 marketplace. Research has suggested that the increased levels of participation in post-compulsory education in the 1990s can be attributed to the higher attainment levels of young people, associated with the introduction of the GCSE in 1988, and the vocational qualifications introduced in the early 1990s which offered an alternative to A-levels. Evidence has also indicated that the increased emphasis on making the school curriculum more relevant to working life, through a number of specific government initiatives such as TVEI and Compacts, influenced the attitudes, motivation and post-16 destinations of some young people.

Changes to the further and higher education sectors have also had an impact on the options available to young people. Increased competition between further education institutions led to more aggressive recruitment strategies, while the expansion of the higher education sector during this period provided an incentive for young people to remain in education at 16. Future research could usefully examine the impact of changes to the higher education system which are planned for 1998, such as the introduction of tuition fees, on the choices young people make at 16.

Economic situation

The impact of the health of the national economy has been difficult to discern because of the way in which education and training reforms have

tended to mediate its influence. However, it is clear that local economic conditions have had some impact on the decisions taken by young people at 16. Studies have shown differences in post-16 destinations in inner city and rural areas, and also between areas with different types and traditions of employment. Young people in rural areas were found to be less likely than their peers in other areas to follow academic routes after 16. Amongst young people who chose to leave education at 16, those from inner cities were less likely to find a job than their counterparts in other areas. Areas with high proportions of people employed in the service industries had higher staying-on rates than other areas, because of the types of qualification required by these industries, and the relative scarcity of alternatives to remaining in education such as apprenticeships or training. There is also some evidence that local employment rates had an impact on the decisions of young people in Scotland, although a similar effect was not found in England.

9.1.2 Local-level influences

School issues

In reaction to the view that home background had a far greater influence on a student's development than their school, there has been a growth in the number of studies which have explored the impact of individual schools on attainment and, thus, post-16 destination. These have demonstrated a definite 'school effect', acting independently of the effects of individual and group characteristics such as ethnicity and class. Research has suggested that the type of school (whether it is voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, LEA-maintained or independent) has had some impact on the post-16 destinations of students, as have the way schools are organised and managed, the rate of teacher turnover and the local culture of schools.

Furthermore, recent research has indicated that the careers advice young people receive in school has had an impact on their post-16 destinations. Good careers education and guidance has given young people more confidence in their decision-making abilities, a high level of careers-related skills and an increased sense of satisfaction with their post-16 choices.

However, studies in this area have been relatively unsuccessful in explaining the reasons for variations in staying-on rates between schools, once background characteristics have been taken into consideration. Both qualitative and quantitative studies are needed in this area, to explore how the 'staying-on' cultures of some schools are constructed.

9.1.3 Individual-level influences

Social class

Recent figures suggested a lessening in the influence of social class on post-16 destination. However, further research is needed to explore the areas in which the relationship is weakening and whether it will be sustained over time. Despite these recent trends, young people from middle-class

backgrounds were still more likely than their working-class peers to remain in full-time education at the age of 16; and, among those choosing to remain in full-time education, more likely to follow academic rather than vocational courses. In seeking to explain these differences, researchers have highlighted the role of the different working cultures young people are brought up in; the educational experiences, and attitudes to education, of their parents; and the extent to which young people from different backgrounds perceive education as relevant to their needs. Although research has clearly demonstrated the correlation between social class and post-16 destination, further work is needed to clarify the mechanisms by which parents' views and experiences of education and work are transmitted to their children.

Ethnicity

Many quantitative studies have outlined the continuing inequalities between the post-16 destinations of young people from different ethnic groups which relate not only to whether young people remained in full-time education or not, but also the routes taken within full-time education and the types of training pursued. Both Asians and African Caribbeans were more likely than whites to participate in post-compulsory education while routes within post-compulsory education also differed with ethnic group. Whites were more likely to be following academic routes and African Caribbeans, vocational courses, although these were largely related to the differences in attainment between the two groups.

Differences in the attainment and post-16 destinations of young men and young women have also been shown to differ between ethnic groups, with Africans and African Caribbeans having the widest differentials in qualification by gender.

Attempts to explain these patterns have focused on the values and aspirations of the young people and their families and also on the influences of the wider society in which they make their decisions, particularly the cultures of schools, the Careers Service and employers. However, as these were generally small-scale qualitative studies, further research on a larger scale into these proposed explanations would be useful, to determine whether they are replicated nationally. A longitudinal study of issues concerning cultural dissonance may also be useful, to compare the experiences of young people from successive generations of ethnic minority groups.

Gender

Numerous studies have indicated the substantial differences between the post-16 destinations chosen by young men and young women at the end of their compulsory schooling. Throughout the period covered by this literature review, both attainment at GCSE and subsequent staying-on rates have been higher amongst women than men. Research has largely concentrated on identifying the factors which contributed to differential attainment at 16, such as teacher expectations and 'macho' male cultures. A fruitful area for future research may be to explore the reasons why young men and women with similar levels of qualifications make different decisions at the end of their compulsory schooling.

Studies have also focused on the choices of subject or occupational area of those who chose broadly similar post-16 destinations: the reasons for gender-stereotypical choices of A-level subjects amongst those who choose to remain in education, and the ways in which some gender-stereotypical patterns of employment and training have been perpetuated amongst school leavers.

Subcultures

Much of the literature which addresses individual characteristics also explores the choices of young people within different subgroups. For example: how the choices of young black women differ from their white peers, and how the post-16 destinations of working class Asian young men may differ substantially from those of their white male peers from the same social class.

9.2 Interaction of levels of influence

Although the sociological and psychological literature on choice and theories of career decision-making has not been a focus of this review, it is clear that an exploration of how the various types of influence interact is essential both to understanding how young people make their decisions at 16, and to forming effective policy. There has been little theory published in this area during the period covered by this review (1988–1997). However, Hodkinson *et al.* (1996) have described a model of 'pragmatic decision making' in which the range of available post-16 options (the system-level influences) interacts with what young people perceive as desirable or suitable for themselves. These perceptions are rooted in the identity of the young person and are influenced by their social and cultural and background (the individual-level characteristics) as well as their life histories and the interactions they have with other people. Hodkinson *et al.* thus claim that:

> *In practice, these two sides of horizons for action are linked, because what is available affects what we perceive to be possible and what we perceive as desirable can alter the available options as when young people or their parents arrange placements with local employers they already know.* (p.3)

9.3 Implications for government policy

From the evidence summarised above, it seems likely that governments will be most successful in their efforts to affect the post-16 destinations of young people if their policies are aimed at more than one level. Although the mechanisms by which system-, local- and individual-level influences interact are not clear, the research indicates that all three play some part in defining the parameters within which young people make their choices towards the end of compulsory schooling. Therefore, a coherent government policy needs not only to address the wider economic and education systems in which young people make their choices, but also the inequality in education and training experienced by young people from different ethnic groups, from different social classes and of different genders. Empowering the individual to take responsibility for his or her own learning and training needs to be accompanied by a commitment to tackle the structural inequalities in society. Without this, the horizons of opportunity of many disadvantaged young people will remain extremely limited.

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Appendix A

Keywords used in literature searches

16–19 education/further education/tertiary education/sixth form/ educational choices

Underachievement/academic failure/failure

Career education/career awareness/career development/career choice

Vocational education/vocational training/vocational qualifications

School leavers/school to work transition/transition education

Staying-on rates

Youth unemployment

Employment opportunities/employment expectations/careers/ occupations

Dropout attitudes

Teacher expectations

Pupil attitudes/aspirations/motivation

Youth training/youth training scheme

Appendix B

Details of key quantitative studies referred to in the review

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Ashford *et al.* (1993)	Described the experiences of young people in the first GCSE cohort who decided to remain in full-time education and compared them with the experiences of pre-GCSE students.	Analysed Youth Cohort Study data. Compared the third and fourth cohorts, who sat their Year 11 examinations in 1986 and 1988, respectively. The third cohort was composed of 9,328 young people, and the fourth, 8,189.	Found sizeable increases in post-16 participation rates in the late 1980s with more young people staying on in the post-GCSE cohort. This was not only a result of increased levels of qualifications: increases in staying-on rates were apparent amongst those who had gained lower-grade GCSEs as well as those who had gained higher grades.
Bishop *et al.* (1997)	Explored students' perceptions of coursework.	Surveyed 2,000 current and post-GCSE students about their perceptions of coursework and analysed results according to the attainment of the students.	Found that the majority of the students were favourably disposed towards coursework. More young women than men were consistently in favour of coursework, and more lower-attaining students than higher-attaining students.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Bynner (1991)	Amongst other issues, explored whether there were variations in attitudes to, and experiences of, YTS from one region to another.	Analysed data from ESRC's '16–19' Initiative. Young people in four UK labour market areas (Swindon, Sheffield, Liverpool and Kirkcaldy) completed questionnaires in 1987, 1988 and 1989. In each area, two groups of young people (600 who were 15–16 in 1987 and 600 who were 17–18 in 1987) were followed up over two years.	Found different patterns of training from region to region. Training in Swindon and Kirkcaldy was largely in firms. Liverpool had the largest proportion of young people in training workshops and Sheffield and Liverpool also had larger proportions than other areas in college-based schemes.
Cheng (1995)	Used multilevel modelling to examine influences on staying on associated with individuals, schools and LEAs.	Analysed data from the Youth Cohort Study for the cohort who were in their last year of compulsory schooling in 1989/90. Sample included 11,470 pupils from 586 schools in 107 LEAs.	Found variation due to individual school characteristics, LEA provision, local labour markets and wards of residence.
Cheng *et al.* (1995)	Explored patterns of subject choice at 16.	Used Youth Cohort Study data to explore the choices of all Year 12 students who were 16–17 in Spring 1991, in England and Wales.	Found that gender differences in subject choice were very pronounced, with young men more likely to be studying mathematics or science and young women, the life sciences. Young women were considerably less likely than men to take any science or mathematics. Gender differences were less marked for those who had attended single-sex schools in Year 11.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Courtenay and McAleese (1993)	Examined the qualifications and post-16 destinations of young people and the careers guidance they had received.	Used Youth Cohort Study data from cohort 5 (those who were 16–17 in 1991).	Revealed an increase in staying-on rates compared to previous cohorts and more positive attitudes towards school.
Cross and Wrench (1991)	Explored the experiences of young people from ethnic minorities during their selection for YTS and during their placements.	Gathered data on almost 3,000 young people from Careers Service files in nine different multi-ethnic locations. Also used careers officers' assessments of 896 young people, and interviewed 88 careers officers.	Amongst other findings, revealed that young people from ethnic minorities suffered structured disadvantage when compared with their white peers. For Asians, but not for African Caribbeans, YTS seemed to be a choice of last resort.
Cross *et al.* (1990)	Aimed to examine extent to which careers officers were biased in the assessment of their clients.	Gained data from nine careers services and 900 students. Questionnaires were also sent to the 70 careers officers who had counselled the students.	Found that many careers officers perceived the ambitions of Asian young people as unrealistic, even when they had the same qualifications as white young people who were not perceived as such. Also revealed a reluctance of officers to confront racial discrimination in the labour market.
Drew (1995)	Explored the post-16 destinations of young people from different ethnic groups.	Analysed information on 28,000 students, provided by the second and third cohorts of the Youth Cohort Study.	Found that social class was more important than gender or ethnicity in predicting attainment at 16. Outlined the different qualification levels between ethnic groups. In post-compulsory education, once attainment was taken into account, ethnicity was the single most important factor in determining staying-on rates.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Drew *et al.* (1992)	Traced the education and labour market experiences of young people from ethnic minorities.	Analysed data from the second and third cohorts of the Youth Cohort Study (young people who finished their compulsory education in 1995 or 1996). Data were gained from 28,000 young people, of whom 900 were Asian and 500 African Caribbean.	Amongst other findings, revealed that young people from ethnic minorities were not as successful as white young people with similar qualifications in entering the labour market. They had a higher rate of participation than white young people in post-compulsory education.
Emler and St James (1990)	Examined the characteristics of those who stayed on in full-time education but did not pursue academic qualifications. Investigated the influence of social class, policies of individual schools, the local labour market and attitudes to school and YTS.	Used data on the Kirkcaldy district of Fife which formed part of the ESRC's '16–19' Initiative. 594 young people aged 18, who had been in the final year of their compulsory education in 1984–85, responded to a questionnaire sent in the spring of 1987.	Concluded that social background was important, but not the area in which pupils live, the local labour market or the schools the students attended. Found that students' attitudes and beliefs were stronger predictors of their post-16 destinations than demographic variables.
Fergusson and Unwin (1996)	Explored the post-16 destinations of young people in an English shire county.	Studied the destinations of Year 11 school leavers in 59 of the 61 secondary schools in Derbyshire. Used multiple regression analysis to examine associations between destinations and: academic performance, low income and local unemployment rates.	Found that the school a young person attended exerted a powerful influence on post-16 destination.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Foskett and Hesketh (1997)	Aimed to understand how students make their decisions about their post-16 education and how this is affected by and interacts with institutional and market strategy.	Sent questionnaires to all students in two Year 11 tutor groups in 29 schools. Interviewed the chief policy maker and the person responsible for marketing in each further education institution.	Found that students were active decision makers within the further education market but that there was a disparity between institutional perceptions and actual timing of choice-making processes of students. Revealed a continuing academic/ vocational divide, and a generally negative disposition towards the vocational. The promotional strategies of institutions played an important part in the decision-making process.
Furlong and Cartmel (1995)	Examined some of the ways in which the occupational and educational aspirations of 13-year-olds were influenced by local opportunity structures.	389 students, in the first year of secondary schooling in 1991/ 92, were interviewed in 1991/ 92, 1993/94 and 1994/5. Pupils attended schools in four different areas of Scotland.	Concluded that differences in the students' aspirations and expectations could largely be explained by their socio-economic status rather than by the structure of the local labour market. However, some area affects were found.
Gray *et al.* (1989)	Addressed question of whether young people from 'inner city' backgrounds had different experiences when they finished their period of compulsory education from young people located elsewhere. Used logit modelling to compare the experiences of young people with similar sorts of backgrounds and attainment from inner cities and from other areas.	Analysed data from Youth Cohort Study. Covered 18-month period from the summer of 1985 to February 1987 and included data on over 14,000 young people.	Found that with respect to full-time education and YTS, being in an inner city was not a unique dimension of young people's experience. However, being in an inner city did seem to matter with respect to the likelihood of young people gaining a full-time job or being unemployed.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Gray *et al.* (1993)	Aimed to explain the characteristics of young people choosing different destinations at 16+; the operation of local labour markets; the effects of different forms of educational provision and the consequences of deliberate efforts to change the nature and influence of the various factors.	Used data from the Youth Cohort Study. The research drew on the third, fourth and fifth cohorts, which completed their compulsory schooling in 1986, 1988 and 1990, respectively. No indication of sample size was given in the report.	Failed to find the 'discouraged worker' effect amongst middle-qualified young people. Did, however, find that there were differences among the young people's propensities to stay on according to the labour market within which they were located.
Gray *et al.* (1994)	Aimed to explore the variations between local labour markets in post-16 participation at the end of the 1980s.	Used third, fourth and fifth cohorts of the Youth Cohort Study: young people who completed their compulsory schooling in 1986, 1988 and 1990, respectively. The National Online Manpower Information System was also used to provide data on 'Travel to Work Areas'.	Found that the influence of the local labour market on post-16 participation rates had declined over the 1980s.
Howieson and Croxford (1996)	Aimed to analyse the outcomes of careers education and guidance.	Used data from the sixth Youth Cohort Study (young people who completed their compulsory schooling in 1991). Data covered the experiences from 1992 to 1994.	Found that the personal and social characteristics were the major influences on young people's destinations after 16 and that careers education and guidance had only a limited effect.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Jesson *et al.* (1991)	Attempted to determine some of the characteristics of those who chose to remain in full-time education.	Youth Cohort Study data used, mainly from the third cohort (young people who completed their compulsory schooling in 1986). Study covered their experiences in the period to spring 1989.	Amongst other conclusions, found that the post-16 destinations were not influenced by the 'discouraged worker' effect. Higher rates of local unemployment were associated with lower staying-on rates.
Jowett (1995)	Aimed to determine what was important or worrying to young people, to enable local services to respond more effectively.	Collected information by questionnaire from students in Years 8 and 10 in four secondary schools in Newham (a total of 1,160 students).	Found that aspirations for post-16 education were high, with a large number wanting to go on to higher education. Many said they had decided what kind of job they wanted and most reported needing qualifications for this work. Were some concerns about the supply of appropriate jobs.
Keys *et al.* (1995)	Explored the attitudes to school of top primary and first-year secondary pupils.	1,265 top primary pupils (from 38 schools) and 1,009 first-year secondary pupils (from 41 schools) completed questionnaires. The heads in each of the schools also completed a questionnaire.	When asked about their own post-16 destinations, 14 per cent of primary pupils and 12 per cent of their secondary counterparts intended to leave school as soon as possible. A third of primary pupils, and slightly fewer secondary students, had not yet decided on their post-16 destination. Found that girls were more likely than boys to intend to remain in education and less likely to intend to leave school as soon as possible.
Lynn (1996)	Explored the post-16 destinations of Scottish school leavers.	Survey conducted amongst ten per cent of those who had left school in 1994 and compared results with those from previous three cohorts.	Amongst other findings, revealed that qualification levels were continuing to increase gradually, as was the proportion who chose to remain in full-time education. Young people were increasingly positive about their school experiences.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
McWhirter *et al.* (1988)	Aimed to identify the factors which influenced the choices young people made at end of their compulsory schooling in Northern Ireland. Investigated four variables: gender, religious denomination, home background and academic qualifications.	Analysed data from Youth Training Programme Cohort Study. Collected longitudinal data from students on four occasions between 1984 and 1987. The initial sample was composed of 2,890 students aged 15–16.	All four variables were found to contribute significantly and independently to main activities at the end of compulsory schooling. However, gender was not influential in determining type of economic activity once labour market had been entered. Concluded that a social and religious imbalance seemed to exist with regard to the employment opportunities for young people within Northern Ireland.
Morris *et al.* (1995)	Aimed to explore the impact of careers education and guidance on young people as part of a wider project examining the role of the Careers Service.	Conducted a postal survey of 1,661 students in Years 10 and 11 asking about their careers-related experiences and attitudes. Held group discussions with an additional 361 young people in Years 10–12.	Amongst other findings, revealed that relatively few students knew a great deal about local job opportunities or Youth Training. Training providers and employers felt that, although students knew about and understood the importance of qualifications and training, they knew less about different career options and the world of work. Also revealed that young people in 11–16 schools were more likely to have had a wide-ranging careers programme than their peers in schools with sixth forms.
OFSTED (1995)	Aimed to evaluate the careers education and guidance provided in schools.	Survey conducted in schools in ten LEAs between May 1994 and June 1995.	Provision was variable, with a third of schools providing good or very good careers education and guidance but another third offering only poor provision. Careers guidance was generally better than careers education. Most students had left serious consideration of their post-16 options until Year 11 and, for some, this was too late.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Paterson and Raffe (1995)	Analysed the changing level and distribution of participation in post-compulsory education in Scotland.	Used data from the Scottish Young People's Survey across four cohorts, from 1984/85 to 1990/91. Biennially, a ten per cent sample of students from the previous year's fourth year was surveyed by post. The young people were surveyed at age 16/17, approximately nine months after they had completed their compulsory schooling. The sample sizes ranged from 6,326 in 1987 to 4,302 in 1991.	During 1985–1991 staying-on rates rose significantly in Scotland especially amongst those with lowest attainment in compulsory schooling. The 'discouraged worker' effect appeared to have declined over the period. The school attended was also influential: for middle-class males more so than for females or working-class males. Concluded that main driving forces for staying on in this period were the 'pull' factors from education and the labour market.
Payne (1995). (Youth Cohort Report No.31)	Explored the post-16 destinations of young people.	Research was based on data from cohorts 4, 5 and 6 of the Youth Cohort Study (young people who finished their compulsory schooling in 1988, 1990 and 1991, respectively).	Amongst other findings, revealed increases in staying on rates, especially amongst those with average and below average GCSE results; growth in take-up of vocational qualifications; and gender and ethnic differences. Found that GCSE results were the strongest predictor of post-16 destination.
Penn and Scattergood (1992)	Aimed to explore the separate effects of social class, gender, ethnicity and school on career aspirations.	Gained data from 376 students in the final year of their compulsory education, from three Rochdale comprehensive schools in December 1989.	Revealed high aspirations among Asian respondents and clear differences between working- and middle-class respondents. Found fewer differences according to gender or school.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Pilcher *et al.* (1989)	Evaluated the effects of a Women's Training Roadshow on some of the students who had attended.	Conducted a survey of 500 students who had attended a roadshow in Cardiff.	Concluded that the roadshow had increased the students' occupational awareness but had had little effect on their occupational aspirations.
Raffe and Willms (1989)	Aimed to test the hypothesis of a 'discouraged worker' effect.	Used data from the 1985 Scottish Young People's Survey. Questionnaires were sent to ten per cent of all young people who had been in their final year of compulsory education in the previous academic year.	Analysis of Scottish Young People's Survey found evidence to support 'discouraged worker' hypothesis although it did not affect all young people equally.
Roberts and Parsell (1992)	Explored characteristics of those entering youth training, their experiences during training and subsequent destinations.	Used data from ESRC's '16–19' Initiative. Analysis was based on survey in 1988 among 4,247 16–19 year olds in four areas of Britain (Kirkcaldy, Liverpool, Sheffield and Swindon) of whom 1,562 had had some experience of youth training.	Found that recruitment to YT depended primarily on the person's qualifications and where they lived. Trainees' chances of being kept on by firms depended mainly on the type of scheme and their performance during their training. Three strata emerged: 'sponsorship' models — where firms who had jobs to fill recruited the most attractive leavers; 'contest' sector — trainees competed with one another for experience, skills and qualifications; 'sink' schemes — mainly training workshops and community programmes.
Shaw and Bloomer (1993)	Explored the major sources of information available to students, their views on what was offered to assist them towards successful transition at 16, and their views of their own post-16 futures.	Interviewed 50 students in their final year of compulsory education.	Concluded that guidance at KS4 should no longer be based on the assumption that schooling leads directly to work. Instead, it should be oriented towards personal development and wider conceptions of education.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Smith and Tomlinson 1989)	Examined the progress of young people from different ethnic groups during their secondary schooling.	Followed a group of 3,000 students in 20 multiracial comprehensive schools. Collected a wide range of information from the young people and conducted a survey of their parents.	Found that the differences in attainment attributable to ethnic group were much smaller than those attributable to school.
Taylor (1992)	Investigated awareness of, and attitudes to, post-16 options of young people reaching the age of 16.	Questionnaire data collected from 1,355 students, from ten schools in one LEA. Followed these up with interviews with 392 students.	Found that provision and practice was diverse and that young people had differential access to provision according to their gender and attainment levels. Found a strong association between young people's knowledge of a post-16 option and their attitude towards it.
Wallace *et al.* (1993)	Explored the impact of youth training schemes on the rural labour market and described aspects of the rural labour market in the South West which were distinctive in the transition from school to work.	Used quantitative data from the ESRC's '16–19' Initiative. 1,280 young people in a rural labour market in the South West completed questionnaires in 1989 and 1990, and these were supplemented with 69 qualitative interviews in 1989/90. Employers and managing agents in the same area were also approached between 1988 and 1990.	Found that the small-scale nature of local businesses led to YTS being absorbed into the informal recruitment and training of employers who were able to use it for their own purposes, to some extent undermining more formalised attempts at universal training which national agencies attempted to impose. Other factors such as access to transportation and housing affected the way in which young people shape their careers.

Reference	Description of research	Sample	Findings
Witherspoon (1995)	Examined the trends in careers advice over time.	Analysed data from six cohorts of the Youth Cohort Study.	Amongst other findings, revealed that an individual's characteristics were not associated with being given advice by careers guidance professionals to stay on, once attainment was taken into account. Found no evidence that careers guidance had any direct effect on post-16 destinations, once background factors were controlled for.

Appendix C

Recommendations of the Dearing Review, to be implemented in 1998

These included:

- The introduction of National Traineeships, providing training to NVQ level 2, based on the design features of Modern Apprenticeships.
- Strategies, on a pilot basis, to tackle disaffection from learning amongst young people, pre-16.
- The introduction of New Start strategies, to help raise young people's motivation and participation in learning. These will be based on local partnerships and multi-agency working.
- The introduction of nationally accredited qualifications at a new Entry Level, for learners not yet able to achieve qualifications at Foundation Level.
- Creation of a new National Framework of Qualifications supported by the development of common quality assurance measures across all qualifications.

Source: *Qualifying for Success: a Consultation Paper on the Future of Post-16 Qualifications* (GB. DFEE, 1997, p.4).

Other recent NFER reports

The NFER has also conducted a one-year study of the factors that affect young people's decisions about post-16 education. The research was carried out as part of the NFER's Membership Programme of research, which is funded mainly through local authority contributions. The project focused on two key aspects: the decision to stay on or leave full-time education at the age of 16; and, if staying on, the choice of course and institution. Concerning the second of these, the further Education Development Agency (FEDA) worked collaboratively with the NFER and contributed towards the funding of this part of the research. Two report have arisen from the research which have been written to provide complimentary information. Those with an interest in young people's decisions about post-16 education and the factors that affect young people's choices will find much to interest them in both reports.

The first report is about young people who intended to leave full-time education at the age of 16.

It begins by focusing on who these young people were in terms of their gender, social class and expected educational achievement. The report then moves on to examine the reasons for their decision to leave full-time education and the factors that may have influenced them, including their attitudes towards school and their views on careers education and guidance. The report's main emphasis is on exploring the factors that can be influenced by changes in policy and practice. As such it will be of particular interest to all those who are keen to further young people's post-16 opportunities, in particular those working in schools, LEAs and Careers Services, as well as parents.

The second report is about young people who had decided to stay on in full-time education after the age of 16.

It is based on findings from students already in different types of post-16 education: school sixth forms; sixth form colleges; and FE colleges. It focuses on their reasons for deciding to stay on in full-time education, the factors that affected their choice of course and institution, the careers education and guidance they received and their early impressions of whether the course was matching their expectations. It provides hard evidence of the factors that influence students' choices about post-16 provision and will therefore be of particular interest to everyone involved with young people around this crucial transition point in their lives.

Enquiries about these reports should be addressed to:

Dissemination Unit, NFER, The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2DQ.

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Staying or Leaving?

As young people reach the age of 16, they have to make important decisions about whether to continue with their academic education, follow vocational courses and training or enter the labour market. This transitional point is also perceived as crucial by policy makers and many recent government initiatives have attempted to influence the decisions young people make at the end of their compulsory schooling.

This report reviews a large number of studies which have explored factors which influence the destinations of young people at 16. In particular, it examines the impact of:

- national education and economic systems;
- more localised factors such as schools and regional economies;
- young people's individual characteristics, such as their social class, gender and ethnicity.

The review will be of interest to teachers, post-16 advisers and others with an interest in the destinations of young people at the end of their compulsory schooling.

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