A STUDY OF ~~THE~~ FACTORS AFFECTING PARENTAL CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

BY

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING PARENTAL CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

This thesis describes a research study which endeavours to determine the reasons why parents prefer one school above another when selecting a secondary school for their child. It also examined how these reasons and choices are influenced by the social status of the family and the gender of the child.

The major issues addressed in the literature review include; the range of educational choices in which parents could be involved (including choices within schools and choices between schools), the changes in legislation concerning choice of school from The 1921 Act up to the present day, how Local Education Authority policy and practices have led and followed the Central Government legislation, the reasons put forward, for and against, parental choice of schools, a summary of what authors and previous researchers have said about why parents choose particular schools and finally a summary of what the literature offers on the issue of measuring social status.

For this empirical study a detailed questionnaire was distributed to over 2000 parents and just over 1250, or 62%, were returned. The respondents were parents of children who were expected to move on to attend one of the 15 secondary schools in a town just outside London. This provided sufficient data to answer each of the following research questions concerning parents selecting a secondary school for their child:

1. What proportion of parents choose their closest secondary school?
2. To what extent do parents read school brochures and attend school open nights and to what extent are parents influenced by these and other sources of information?
3. Which characteristics of a school do parents value most?
4. Do the parents who favour each particular secondary school do so because they value the same characteristics of the school, or do the parents who favour each particular secondary school do so for a whole range of different reasons?

Each of the first three issues is further analysed to determine if the parents' responses are related to the social status of the family or the gender of the child.

Multilevel analysis is employed to analyse the data because it not only enables the above questions to be answered but also determines how the relationships between the variables vary from one school to another.

The results clearly show that a majority of parents in the area surveyed prefer their child to attend a school other than the closest one. However, this trend is significantly more common among parents in the high social status group than among parents in the lowest group. It is also evident that high social status parents read more brochures and attended more open nights and that they are influenced significantly more by talks with other parents.

The school characteristics that parents sought for their child are similar to those found in previous studies but this study shows that the proportion of parents who cited many of these characteristics varies significantly between parents of different social status levels and between parents of boys and parents of girls.

Finally, it was shown that parents discriminate between co-educational and single-sex schools and between denominational and non-denominational schools but after these two factors have been considered the best discriminators between the schools parents choose are social status variables. Educational variables only account for about 20% of the discriminatory power of parents and this suggests that efforts by schools to attract parents and students can at best be 20% effective.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Dr. Dietmar Küchemann of the Institute of Education, who was initially appointed as my supervisor, helped me settle into the Institute and encouraged me to think deeply about a number issues in the first few months. From then on I was fortunate to have Professor Harvey Goldstein as my supervisor. I admired him for his knowledge and understanding of many of the key issues in Education and for his leading role in the field of educational statistics. Despite his very heavy workload he always found time to show an interest in, and talk to me about, my work. I would also like to thank him for reading all of my draft chapters and for the comments and suggestions for improvement that he made. Most of all, however, I would like to thank him for allowing me so much independence (and the associated responsibility) in all aspects of the study.

This research would not have been possible without the tremendous help from many teachers, headteachers and officers in the schools and local education authority used for the data collection. It is not appropriate to name them all but those who assisted know who they are and can be assured that I am extremely grateful for their support.

To come to live in another country for two years is a lot to ask of one's family. So I would like to sincerely thank my wife and children for so willingly accepting the move to England and for supporting me with my studies. Thanks to Greg, David and Lorraine for their help with the collation of the questionnaires and opening the envelopes and sorting the returned questionnaires. Thanks also to my wife Daphne for all of her editing and her unending support throughout the two years. I was also lucky and very grateful to have Thelma Perso, a family friend, help with the coding of all of the responses from the questionnaires and the entry of over 100 000 pieces of data into the computer.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Study

1.1 The Rationale for the Study

The last decade has seen some significant changes in Central Government legislation affecting education in England and Wales. One of the key educational aims of the government during this time has been to give parents more choice in education, or at least in the schools their children attend. By the end of the 1980's the parents' right to express a preference for the school they wish their child to attend, was well established. This right to express a preference for a school is often referred to as 'parental choice' or as the right for parents to 'select' a school for their child. The difference between parents expressing a preference for a school and actually selecting a school is significant but, as is the case in the literature, these terms will be used interchangeably in this thesis. While the introduction and expansion of parental choice has been politically attractive, there has been a great deal of concern expressed by some parents, teachers, sociologists, local education authorities and by society in general about the effects of these new laws and policies.

Some research had been conducted, and a great deal had been written, about the characteristics that parents desire in the school they choose for their child but not much research has focussed on how these views vary from family to family. In particular, little attention has been paid to how the proportion of parents who prefer their child to attend the closest school or the proportion of parents who achieve a place for their child in their preferred school varies for parents of different social status levels and for parents of children of different sex. Also lacking is information on the extent to which parents are influenced by each of the various sources from which information about local schools can be obtained.

Most of the legislative changes have occurred at the same time as school enrolments have been falling significantly. This has placed considerable pressure on individual schools to attract sufficient students to avoid closure. However, schools have had very little

information on what it is that makes their school particularly attractive or unattractive to the parents in the area. The data collected and the results derived from this study will provide this information for the schools in the area surveyed.

A final, and personal, reason for embarking on this study is its relevance to the State in Australia in which the author normally lives and works. In the State of Western Australia, schools are obliged to find out what parents expect from them because each school's performance is measured in terms of its achievement on a set of goals set by the parents who have children in the school. Therefore this study will provide some useful research strategies and some information that may be of benefit to some Western Australian schools. Most of all it will provide the author with a fascinating comparison between the two education systems.

1.2 A Summary of the Research Design

To gain the necessary data base, a questionnaire was developed, piloted, improved, and then distributed to over 2000 parents. Since many of the questions to be answered involved looking at interactions between variables, a large number of parents were needed in the sample. One example of such an interaction is whether parents of boys are more or less likely than parents of girls to prefer their child to attend the closest school. A data base of sufficient size was achieved by distributing the questionnaires, via children, in 22 volunteering primary schools. Each of these primary schools saw almost all of their students move on to attend the 15 secondary schools in the town. This sample included an appropriate number of secondary schools, and provided a reasonable average of about 80 students per school. Hence, the data would permit the analysis to determine the effects and interactions of a variety of variables and also enable an investigation of how these interactions varied across groups of parents according to the secondary school they sought for their child.

In developing the questionnaire and selecting the sample, close attention was paid to the need for the questions to provide the data necessary to answer the established research questions. These research questions include:

1. What proportion of parents choose, for their child, the closest secondary school to their home and what proportion choose a more distant school?

2. To what extent do parents read school brochures?

3. To what extent do parents attend school open nights?

4. Which sources of information are seen by parents as the most influential in their choice of secondary school for their child?

5. Which characteristics of a school do parents value most when selecting a secondary school for their child?

6. Do the parents who favour each particular secondary school do so because they value the same characteristics of the school, or do the parents who favour each particular secondary school do so for a whole range of different reasons?

For each of the first five research questions there is a supplementary part to the question which seeks to determine whether or not the parents' responses are influenced by the sex of the child or by the social status of the family. It is the inclusion of the questions which seek to determine these interactions which are of most interest and which set this study apart from previously published studies.

The questionnaire, a copy of which is included in Appendix 2, consisted of 77 questions with a separate page for any additional comments parents wished to make. Over 62% of the questionnaires were completed and returned. The responses were then transferred onto a computer file for analysis.

There are numerous statistical packages that would adequately produce frequency tables of the responses and many that would identify the relationships between the variables. However, in this study, as indeed in most social science research, the parents belonged to groups formed according to which secondary school they preferred for their child. Within each group parents will share characteristics. Hence, multilevel analysis will be used so that the way in which the relationships vary for these groups of parents can be identified and analysed. Considering the differential effects for different schools will avoid drawing conclusions about the whole population when particular subgroups of the population do not reflect the whole group.

It will also identify individual schools where significant differences do occur even when there are no significant differences for the population as a whole. This powerful method of analysis will enable this study to answer questions in a way, until now, not attempted by other researchers.

1.3 The Format of the Thesis

The chapters in this thesis can be grouped into three larger sections;

the literature review,
the data collection and research design, and
the analysis and the results.

The literature review commences with a discussion on the broader issue of choice within schools and choice between schools, before it moves to concentrate solely on parental choice of school. Chapter 3 then traces the evolution of the English Legislation, from 1921 to the present day, as it made parental choice of schools more and more available. As a result of, and sometimes even as a forerunner to, these legislative changes, local education authorities changed their policies and practices to make parental choice a reality. These policy changes at the local education authority level are the focus of Chapter 4. The next chapter outlines many of the arguments for and against giving parents a choice of school. These arguments are sub-divided into political arguments, economic arguments and social arguments. Chapter 6 describes the factors that influence parents when choosing a school for their child. Firstly, there is a summary of what a number of writers say about the issue and then a résumé of the previous research that has been conducted in this area. The final chapter in the literature review summarizes the complex issues relating to the measurement of social status.

The second part of the thesis concerns the data collection and research design aspects of the study. It commences, in Chapter 8, with the enunciation of the six research questions. Chapter 9 describes all aspects of the research design from the general framework of the study to the development and refinement of the questionnaire. The final chapter in this section details the analysis proposed to answer each of research questions. Because multilevel analysis is to be used, and since it is relatively new, some time is devoted to giving the reader some background into the theory of this approach.

The third and final part of the thesis provides the results of the analysis. The first of these chapters, Chapter 11, shows the proportion of parents who prefer their local school compared to the proportion who prefer a more distant one and whether these proportions are affected by the sex of the child and the social status of the parents. The following chapter looks at the number of brochures read by parents, the number of open nights attended by parents and the extent to which these, and a number of other sources of information, influence the parents' choice of school. It also includes an analysis of how each of these variables is influenced by the sex of the child and the social status of the family. In Chapter 13 attention is focussed on the reasons behind the parents' choices and whether these are influenced by the gender or social variables. Finally, Chapter 14 addresses the more complex question of determining the extent to which parents who prefer the same school have common reasons for doing so. In other words, whether schools actually attract a set of parents with similar views about the important characteristics of good education.

The final chapter of this thesis will attempt to draw together the results and conclusions from the previous four chapters in order to focus the reader's attention onto the major outcomes of the study. It will also detail some interesting questions which remain unanswered but which may form part of a future research study.

CHAPTER 2

What Choice Do Parents Have in Education?

2.1 Introduction

One of the requirements of the 1980 Education Act is that:

> Every local education authority shall make arrangements for enabling the parents of a child in the area of the authority to express a preference as to the school at which they wish education to be provided for their child in the exercise of the authority's functions and to give reasons for their preference.
>
> (Education Act, 1980, Section 6 (1))

This opportunity for parents to express a preference of schools is often referred to as 'parental choice of schools', but it is important to remember that whenever the phrase 'parental choice of schools' is used in this study, it means that, in accordance with the 1980 Education Act, parents are given the opportunity to express a preference of school for their children. It is also important to realize that the choice is one for parents to make and not for children to make even though the children are the ones who are directly affected by the decision.

This chapter will include a discussion of both the possible and actual aspects of education in which parents have choice. It will commence with a consideration of choice within schools covering such aspects as choice in the curriculum, choice of the instructional methods employed and choice of teachers before focussing on choice between schools. The final section of this chapter will outline the effects of the introduction of grant-maintained schools on choice in education.

2.2 Possible Areas For Parental Choice

A lot has been written about parental choice in education, but most of it deals with only

one very narrow aspect of parental choice; that of parents choosing between government funded schools for their child. This focus of parental choice in education, solely on choice of schools, has tended to narrow the thinking of educators and families. This narrowing may be a deliberate action on the part of the Government, an unintentional outcome of other actions, or simply an oversight. Whatever the case the debate has certainly been narrowed. Although it is acknowledged that schooling is just one means of education, this literature review will concentrate on parental choices in schooling.

To start with, parents don't have a choice of whether they wish their child to be educated (or indeed schooled), or not. In England, by law, parents have a legal responsibility to see that their child is educated. This isn't the same as a responsibility to send them to school because the law does allow for the option of education at home. Despite this almost all parents do send their children to school.

In their article, *Increased Parental Choice* , Ashworth, Papps and Thomas also argue that; "the quantity of schooling is something over which parents have little choice." (Ashworth, Papps and Thomas, 1988, page 13) By law, all children between the ages of 5 and 16 are required to attend school for approximately 190 days per year , whether this is their 'best' time for their learning or not.

However once parents have accepted the notion that their child should be educated in a regular school environment, as a very large majority do, there are still a number of choices about the education their child receives that *could* involve the parents. Raywid from Hofstra University in The United States of America suggests four such areas in the following extract:

> Formal education has a number of components, and it is possible in principle for families to have some choices with respect to some or all of these. There is always a curriculum with detailed content, and this is presented through particular instructional methods and activities, by teachers, and in schools. Here then are four possible areas of choice: curriculum and content, methods, teachers and schools.
>
> (Raywid, 1985, page 441)

Lawton describes parental choice of school as; "not choice within schools but choice between schools." (Lawton, 1989, page 103) Using Lawton's dichotomy, the four areas of choice identified by Raywid can be organized in the following way:

(a) Choice within schools

(i) Curriculum

(ii) Teaching methods

(iii) Teachers

(b) Choice between schools

(i) Parental choice of school

Despite these other possible areas for parental choice the major area of interest in England and indeed the major area of interest of this research, is in the choice between schools. However, before looking in detail at the issue of choice between schools it is worth considering some of the consequences of parental choice within schools, so that the issue of choice between schools can be seen in its proper perspective.

It is recognized that a school's curriculum, its teaching methods or its teachers may influence a parent's original choice of school but once the child is allocated to a particular school the parents' choice in these three areas is somewhat limited. The following discussion on these three possible areas of choice will focus on the choice of the parents once their child is enrolled in the school.

2.3 Choice Within Schools

The Curriculum

The first of the four areas suggested by Raywid was the curriculum and content. It appears that parents have had very little choice over this aspect in the past, and that in future, whatever choice they did have will be eroded by the introduction of the National Curriculum. Indeed, even the choice that teachers had over the curriculum will also be significantly reduced. Prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum almost all government secondary schools in England offered their own, standard set of courses, which they required students to work through, mainly according to chronological age. It was only in some areas of the curriculum that parental choice was provided. Although it is difficult to generalize, the choice for parents in the curriculum often amounted to, for example, a choice between a second foreign language and instrumental music.

In his recent book Lawton compares this method of curriculum delivery with that of the significantly more flexible unit curriculum model used in Western Australia. (Lawton, 1989, page 117) In the Western Australian situation students with their parents select all of the courses, with the school only able to recommend, but not require, students to study particular courses. Naturally there are government requirements for breadth and depth of study but these still leave the majority of the choices with the parents. For example, the government requires that in every semester all students must study at least two units each of English and of mathematics, and at least one unit each of science, humanities, physical education, practical and creative arts, and personal development. However there is no requirement to study any particular unit and therefore some 13 year olds are studying, say, more units of mathematics and maybe two or three years ahead of the norm for their age, while others may be studying just two units of mathematics at a stage two or three years behind the norm for their age. The critical point is that both groups are studying at least two units of mathematics and therefore meeting the government prescribed minimum. Also, after selecting units according to the requirements listed above, there is still considerable freedom to select other units, simply because they are the ones that the parents want their child to study. This system of organizing the curriculum into smaller units allows each parent to have a significant choice over the curriculum for their child. Sugarman refers to this type of choice as a genuine choice scheme which would:

> . . . . . offer special hope to children of below average ability . . . . . and would allow the family to decide how educationally demanding its child's educational setting should be.
>
> (Sugarman, 1979, page 487)

By comparison, the situation in England is one of very little choice, on the part of the parents, in the curriculum. The introduction of the National Curriculum will reduce choice even further in that it will significantly reduce the choice that schools themselves have enjoyed in the past.

Stillman, the most prolific writer on the subject of parental choice in education, in England in the last decade, says this about the effect of the National Curriculum upon parental choice:

> . . . . . it might appear that the required information and indeed the National Curriculum itself, are all leading down a very closed avenue, an avenue that might be restricting

> choice at the same time as giving us more information about it!
>
> (Stillman, 1990, page 95)

It is also interesting to note the views on the National Curriculum of the Hillgate Group, referred to as "the new right" (Quicke, 1988, page 5) and who appeared to have had a significant input into government policy in this area. Despite their consistent argument for a 'market driven' education system and for the flexibility for schools to attract parents without interference from governments, both national and local, the Hillgate group state clearly that:

> We believe that a national curriculum is essential.
>
> (Cox, et. al., 1986, page 7)

While they don't give, or purport to give reasons, the Hillgate Group do link the need for government control over the curriculum with the fact that standards of traditional education are falling as evidenced by the fact that only 28 out of nearly 150 secondary schools in the Inner London Education Authority enter candidates for O - level Latin.

It would seem that by the introduction of the National Curriculum, the Central Government has significantly reduced the choice that parents have in the area of curriculum and content. At the same time it is claiming to have extended parental choice by giving parents the right to exercise choice between schools.

The Instructional Methods

The second area identified by Raywid was that of instructional methods. The role of parents in this area of the school's operations appears to be even more restricted. As Raywid suggests:

> The educator's claim to professional knowledge and expertise is usually thought to reside in the ability to make and execute informed decisions on such matters.
>
> (Raywid, 1985, page 443)

Most parents would accept this as the principal responsibility of the professionals within the school, although experience suggests that many would appreciate more dialogue between themselves and the teachers on the issue. While the teacher is generally more experienced and knowledgeable about available instructional methods and

activities than the parents, it is usually the case that the parents are more experienced and knowledgeable about their child than is the teacher. This suggests that a degree of cooperation and information sharing could be beneficial to the education of the child.

While choice of instructional methods rarely involve parents, this does not constitute a reduction in parent choice because, for the majority of schools, such powers have never resided with the parents.

The Teachers

Raywid's third area, within the school, in which parents could have some say is that of the teacher. Because schools themselves, are made up of a number of teachers it would be reasonable to assume that the variation between teachers is greater than the variation between schools. It is surprising that groups, such as the Hillgate Group do not recognize this and make choice of teacher one of the key aspects of their charter. After all, a true 'free market' approach doesn't allow the consumer to decide whether they wish to purchase a powder or a liquid washing detergent and then restrict the consumer's choice to only one brand of powder and only one brand of liquid. Also this notion of choice of teacher is often practiced at the tertiary level where classes are repeated at different times during the week. Scribner, a strong advocate for parent choice in U.S.A. and a professor at the University of Massachusetts, is quoted by Raywid as follows: (Scribner's original paper remains unpublished.)

> . . . . . such an arrangement will drive poor teachers from classrooms since they will not be able to attract a clientele.
> (Raywid, 1985, page 445)

The teacher appraisal system, which has recently been introduced by the Central Government is designed, in part, to remove the 'weaker' teachers from the classrooms. However, it does not propose to achieve this, using the market forces approach, by giving parents the right to choose teachers from within a given school.

Maybe giving parents a right to choose teachers would, through the driving out of poor teachers suggested by Scribner, lead to improved standards in excess of the improvements claimed by giving parents the right to choose a school for their child. Raywid discusses an initiative in Minnesota which aims to pay teachers salaries and classroom budgets according to enrolments. The logic in this procedure, at the

classroom level, seems no different to the logic used by the Central Government for the introduction of open enrolment and the local management of schools scheme which will operate at the school level.

Of course there would be significant difficulties in introducing a system of total freedom in the choice of teachers. These would include;

(a) the administrative difficulties of allocating students to classes,
(b) the effect of some classes being full while others may only have a few students,
(c) the fact that some classes may have to be 'closed' due to lack of sufficient enrolments, and
(d) the morale of some teachers would be decreased.

These are precisely the difficulties experienced at the local education authority level with respect to freedom to choose between schools. To ensure adherence to the 1980 and 1988 Education Acts, local education authorities must overcome exactly these difficulties except that the units are schools and not classes. It could be argued that freedom to choose teachers is a logical next step after the freedom to choose schools but at this stage there is no stated government policy to introduce legislation which would make parental choice of teachers a reality. However, it must be said that it is now common for one of the parent governors of the school to be on the selection panel for the headteacher and this may filter down to their inclusion on selection panels for all teachers. Overall, at the present time parents have very little choice in the area of teachers for their children and there is no evidence to suggest that this is likely to change markedly in the foreseeable future.

2.4 Choice Between Schools

The final area over which parents may exercise choice is that of choice of schools, or as Lawton calls it; "choice between schools". (Lawton, 1989, page 103) This will be discussed in more detail than the previous three as it is the major focus of this study.

Choice For Whom?

Although there are many types of schools in England they can be broken up into two groups according to where their funds are derived. On the one hand there are those schools that are funded, directly or indirectly, by the government and the local education authorities. These will be referred to as maintained or government funded schools. On the other hand there are those schools that derive their funds from private sources, usually from tuition fees paid by parents and private donors. These will be referred to as non-maintained or private schools. For a large majority of parents there is no choice as to which of these two types of schools their child attends because of the prohibitive cost of an education in a private school. They must send their child to a government funded school and take advantage of a substantially free education. There is, however, the Government's Assisted Places Scheme which provides financial assistance to a very small number of parents, who could not otherwise afford it, to send their child to a private school.

There is another sizeable group of parents who also don't have a great deal of choice of schools. This is pointed out by O'Connor in her book titled *A Parents' Guide to Education* :

> In rural areas, though, families may have very little choice about which school their children attend. There will probably only be one primary and one secondary school either within walking distance or to which school transport is provided. Real choice in those circumstances is restricted to those able and willing to take their children to another school by car - and accept that commitment of time and money for years.
>
> (O'Connor, 1986, page 48)

Hence this whole debate really boils down to a choice of schools for those living in urban areas where schools are closer together and, even then, for most there is only a choice between government funded schools. Midwinter describes the choice that many parents have as 'Hobson's choice'. (Midwinter, 1980, page 7) However, this choice, no matter how restricted, is still a real issue for those involved.

How Much Choice?

Under the selective system of education which existed in England up until the mid 1960's, and beyond in some counties, parents had virtually no choice in the school their

child was to attend. Each child was required to sit for an examination and if they scored above a certain level, they were allocated to a grammar school and if they failed to achieve this level they attended a secondary modern or technical school. This system resulted in parents who themselves were unskilled workers having only a 9% chance of getting one of their children to a grammar school while parents who were in professional jobs stood a 59% chance of having their child accepted for a grammar school place. (Floud, Halsey and Martin, 1956, page 42)

It was after the change from the two tier system to the comprehensive school system, which commenced in 1966, that parents began to be involved in the selection process. At this stage a number of counties introduced schemes of parental choice which are still in use today and did not require significant changes as a result of the 1980 and 1988 Education Acts. Under these schemes, which have now been legislated for all local education authorities, parents must be given the chance to express a preference for the schools of their choice. Usually this involves listing three or four schools in order of preference. Even early attempts to give parents a say in the secondary school for their child were quite successful. For example, in the period 1973 to 1977 in Manchester, the number of parents receiving their first, second or third choice is provided in the table below.

Year	Number of Pupils	First Choice %	Second Choice %	Third Choice %
1973	5672	77.4	14.8	7.8
1974	5471	79.6	15.0	5.4
1975	5513	78.1	15.2	6.7
1976	5324	81.0	14.3	4.7
1977	5300	82.3	12.3	5.4

Table 2.1: Percentage of first, second and third preferences of secondary schools gained by parents in Manchester in the period from 1973 to 1977.
(Fiske , 1978, page 71)

This table highlights another restriction upon the extent of parental choice of schools. When the total number of students is less than the capacity of the schools in the area then parents have an improved chance, in percentage terms, but not in absolute terms, of getting their child accepted into the school of their first choice. In this particular example, when there were 5672 students competing for places, only 77.4% were

successful in achieving their first choice but when the total number of competing students had dropped to 5300 the chance of success was over 82%. In fact, over this five year period the actual number of parents who had been allocated the school of their first choice dropped from 4390 to 4360. Thus, while the percentage of parents gaining their first preference improved, the actual number gaining first preferences fell. An analysis of the data provided in Table 4.1 shows a similar trend. In this case, in 1983, the 90.27% success rate for parents achieving their first preference meant that 2190 parents were satisfied. Just five years later, in 1988, while the percentage of successful parents had only dropped marginally to 88.90% the actual number of parents who were securing the school of their first choice had reduced to 1617. That is, 573 more parents were able to achieve their choice of school in 1983 than in 1988. The claim, often made on behalf of the Government, that parental choice has increased over the last five or so years has to be questioned. The point to be made here is that parental choice can be increased by maintaining surplus places in schools, over and above the needs of the area. However, it is part of the National Government's stated policy to reduce the number of secondary schools and hence reduce the number of secondary places:

> Between 1979 and 1985 over a quarter of a million school places were taken out of circulation at the Government's behest (National Audit Office, 1986), and a further reduction is still being sought with the government asking for another 430 000 places to be removed between 1987 and 1990.
>
> (Stillman, 1990, page 94)

The irony is that while the Government claims that it has increased parental choice, the number of parents actually receiving their first choice is decreasing, as a direct result of the same government policy on school closures.

Part of the rhetoric that went with the introduction of the 1980 Education Act and in particular the section on parental choice of schools was that it would lead to improved quality of education with poor schools being shunned by parents and then closed. By closing schools, however, parental choice is being restricted again. Once a school is closed all of the parents who would have chosen it as the school for their children suddenly have their freedom to choose reduced. Thus a logical conclusion to the Government's 'right to choose' philosophy could be a smaller degree of choice because it will reduce the number of schools available and hence the number of different schools

from which parents can make a choice.

A similar argument of how school closures can seriously affect, not only the amount of parental choice but also the efficiency of the provision of schooling is provided by Fielding, the Chief Executive Officer of the Somerset Local Education Authority:

> The Government's open enrolment proposals will extend parental choice well beyond the present arrangements, however, and that will not be as good as the Government imagines. In quite a number of cases the legislation will be costly to implement and, ironically, it may have the effect of reducing parental choice.
>
> (Fielding, 1987, page 23)

He goes on to outline the situation of a town in Somerset where, under the system of the County setting artificial limits on the enrolments of the three secondary schools, only 6 parents out of 1700 over the past five years, have not had their child allocated to a school with which they were happy. On the other hand, removing the artificial limits and accepting the definition of standard number outlined in the 1988 Education Act, one school would be closed and thus some 403 parents would be dissatisfied over the next five year period.

Ashworth, et. al. differentiate between the amount of choice in the short term and the long term. They identify the consequences of school closure and the subsequent adjustments in nearby schools as having potentially significant effects on some children:

> In the long run when full adjustment takes place (or as much adjustment as there will ever be) it might be shown that there is more choice for parents and that this represents a real gain. In the short run, however, while adjustments are taking place there might be some people who lose. If a relatively unpopular school closes, for example, the children caught up in the adjustment process might experience severe disturbances to their education. Schooling is a once only experience for children and so the burden of marginal adjustments in the system might be felt totally by some children.
>
> (Ashworth, et. al., 1988, page 12)

These effects should not be considered as solely a result of the open enrolment policy of the present government but as a result of the falling enrolments across the country.

Economically, any government would be required to reduce the number of schools in line with the falling rolls. The reason that it is an issue in this study is because the Conservative Government has used its open enrolment legislation to help solve the problems of deciding which schools to close.

2.5 The Effect of 'Opting Out' Schools on Parental Choice

As well as the major reforms of a national curriculum, nationwide testing and local management of school, perhaps the most radical of the reforms of the 1980's, was the introduction of the grant-maintained school (opting out). The Government saw the introduction of this scheme as another way of increasing parental choice. In a booklet produced to help explain the changes in the 1988 Education Act, the Government claims:

> The opportunity for parents and the local community to run their own schools with funding direct from Central Government will increase the choice within the state sector of education.
>
> (DES, Education Reform, 1987, page 15)

Under this scheme the parents of a school may at any time, subject to some not too demanding requirements, decide to apply to the Secretary of State for grant-maintained status. This frees them from any responsibility to the local education authority and of course the local education authority, in turn, has no responsibility to the opted out school. Only time will tell if the opted out schools provide any substantially different education to that provided in the county controlled schools and hence whether the opting out scheme does give parents an increased choice. In his article titled *Legislating for Choice,* Stillman is quite critical of the Government's intentions and indeed questions their motives:

> But opting out is only one of the similar moves which have appeared over the years under the guise of choice which appear to have had more to do with subverting the LEA role than increasing educational standards.
>
> (Stillman, 1990, page 95)

It is still early days but so far approximately fifty schools have been granted approval, from the Secretary of State, to opt out. This scheme has frustrated local education authorities in their future planning. In some cases the granting of opting out status to schools has made it impractical for a local education authority to close schools, even

though the Central Government requires it to do so. One such example, in Hertfordshire, involved the authority wishing to close one of its schools, with the parents' support, and enrol the displaced students at a nearby school. The situation is explained in the Times Educational Supplement in the following way:

> The Hertfordshire Education Council responded by proposing that Durrants, which could accommodate 850 students should close and merge with Rickmansworth School, a neighbouring comprehensive. The Rickmansworth parents were unhappy with the amalgamation arrangements, however, and have voted to opt out - a request which Mr John McGregor (Secretary of State) has said he is 'minded to approve'.
>
> (Dean, 1990a, page 6)

This request for grant-maintained status was subsequently approved by the Secretary of State and now there are two, 'half filled' schools in close proximity to each other. This illustrates the Government's determination to encourage the establishment of grant -maintained schools, even when it is not economically efficient to do so.

It appeared as though the rights of the local education authorities to reorganize and rationalize the schools in their area were more clearly defined as a result of one High Court decision. In a test case before the High Court, a judge ruled that the Secretary of State had acted incorrectly by approving grant-maintained status on a school in Bath. The Times Educational Supplement reports the judge's decision in its edition dated 2nd March 1990:

> "There was a failure at a crucial stage of weighing one proposal against the other to have regard to the most important factor - the consequences in terms of disruption, delay and prolonged uncertainty for the majority of children and their parents in Bath."
>
> (Dean, 1990b, page 4)

This High Court ruling could have thrown doubt on the ability of the parents to gain grant-maintained status for their school, especially when the choice is not in the best interests of the students in other surrounding schools. However, very soon after the High Court Ruling, The Secretary of State overruled the High Court decision and gave a clearance for the school in Bath to opt out of the Local Education Authority control. This further emphasizes the Government's contradictory policies of encouraging schools to become grant-maintained and saving money by closing schools that are no longer

economically viable.

Therefore opting out, put forward by the government as a means of increasing choice, has so far been successful but not in the way that the government intended. It is ensuring that there are more schools from which parents can choose, but it is does not appear to be producing schools that are offering anything substantially different to that provided in county controlled schools.

2.6 Conclusion

One of the benefits of open enrolment, as outlined by the government, was that parents would have greater choice of schools for their children than they have had in the past. In fact this is probably not true. While Government figures show that an increased percentage of parents receive their first choice, the actual number of parents receiving their first preference is declining. This figure is also being held artificially high because the local education authorities are not moving quickly to close schools because they do not want to rationalize the provision of schools in their area until the Government's policy on grant-maintained status is clear. The fact that there are many surplus school places makes it easier for parents to gain their first choice of schools. The crunch will come when local education authorities implement their rationalization schemes and large numbers of schools close in a short period of time.

Thus the choice of schools by parents does not appear to be giving any more parents success in obtaining a place in the school that they choose for their child. Furthermore, the extent of parental choice is quite restricted when viewed in terms of the total education of their child. Parents now have less choice over the curriculum than before the introduction of the National Curriculum, and still no choice over the teaching methods, or over which teacher their child has. These are major contributing factors in a child's success, but are generally not included in a discussion of parental choice.

So, with no choice over curriculum, instructional methods or teachers, and a somewhat limited choice of schools, perhaps the introduction of parental choice in education doesn't provide any more benefits to parents and their children than in the past. However, the fact that many people believe that it does, makes parental choice an interesting area to study.

CHAPTER 3

Central Government Legislation

3.1 Introduction

This review of the literature will now focus on parents choosing between schools. As was outlined in the previous chapter this is only one of many aspects of education over which parents could be given choice. However, at least up until now, choice of school is the only legislated choice that parents have been given with respect to the education of their children.

The extent to which parents have had the right to select the school that they wish their child to attend has changed over time, both in terms of the legal situation, and in terms of the parents' perception of the facts. Variations also occur in the interpretation of the legal requirements from local authority to local authority and in some cases from location to location within the same authority.

This chapter will trace the increasing degree of parent choice of school over the past 50 years. After a brief mention of the 1921 Act, it will consider the 1944 Education Act and then move on to other relevant pieces of legislation in 1976, 1979, 1980 and 1988. These Acts detail the formal legal position but, in addition, some official requirements are detailed in circulars published by the Department of Education and Science (DES). These DES Circulars are used for a variety of purposes but the most common are;

(a) to explain some of the finer detail of an Act,

(b) to provide some operational detail about how the requirements of an Act are to be achieved, and

(c) to outline policy set by the Secretary of State.

Therefore these Circulars form an important addendum to the formal legal position and will also be dealt with in this chapter.

Those policies and practices that have been set by the local education authority in order to implement the requirements of the Central Government, will be considered in the following chapter. Then, in Chapters 5 through 7, other relevant literature will be surveyed. In this way the legal position set by the government will be separated from the requirements of the local education authority, which in turn will be kept separate from the thoughts of the many educators, economists and parents who have written on the subject. It is intended that this separation will help avoid confusion about what are the laws, what are local education authority procedures and what are interpretations and opinions.

3.2 The 1944 Education Act

Prior to the 1944 Education Act parents were permitted to send their children to a religious based school according to their own faith. The reference to this in the 1921 Act is included within the section on the provision of new schools:

> . . . . . on deciding on an appeal as to the provision of a new school, shall have regard to the interest of secular instruction, to the wishes of parents as to the education of their children, and to the economy of rates; . . . . .
>
> (Education Act, 1921, page 11)

While this Act was in place there appeared to be no controversy surrounding the issue of parental choice of schools. Parents, apparently, accepted this limited choice based solely on religious grounds. It was not until the 1921 Act was being repealed in 1944 that parental choice of schools became an issue, not because of what the Government proposed but because of what it didn't propose. In the drafting of the Bill the Government omitted to pay credence to the fact that some parents wished to continue to exercise their right to choose a school with a particular denominational basis for their children. Eventually an ambiguous statement to this end was added. To obtain an indication of the rationale behind the statement on parent choice in the 1944 Act, one has to examine some of the parliamentary debate during the passage of the Bill through both houses of parliament.

The issue of parent choice of schools was first raised during the second reading debate in the House of Commons, on the 19th January 1944, when Mr Magnay (Gateshead) as part of an emotional speech said:

> No one but the parents can say how and by whom their children should be educated and what religious principles they should adopt . . . . . The parent must say how the child is to be taught in matters of religion.
> (House of Commons, Vol 396, Col 298)

He concluded this speech by saying:

> I ask that those who want religious education should not be denied it.
> (House of Commons, Vol 396, Col 301)

On the same day, Mr Thomas (Member for Keightley), when talking about the breaking down of the dual system of state and religious education, and in response to Mr Magnay, said:

> . . . . . but its abolition should be accompanied by a guarantee that all children who so desire shall be brought up in the faith of their parents.
> (House of Commons, Vol 396, Col 305)

The following day, the president of the Board of Education, Mr Butler, spoke on behalf of the Government and indicated that the Government had not intended to take any power away from the parents and that he would endeavour to address this inadequacy in the Bill before it passed through its next phase. His statement in the parliament is detailed below:

> That is not at all the intention of the Government. As I have frequently stated in public, we propose to bring the parents in more than we have done before. In the further stages of the Bill we shall seek my Hon. and gallant Friends help to see that some of these matters are looked into. (sic)
> (House of Commons, Vol 396, Col 428)

This was an admission of oversight on the part of the Government, or the parliamentary draughtsmen, and an indication that the religious reasons given by the previous speakers were seen as legitimate grounds for choice of school. It was also a promise that the Government would aim to amend the Bill before it reappeared before the house for its next reading.

Nearly six months later on the 20th June 1944, during the Committee Reading of the Education Bill in the House of Lords, the Earl of Selborne in his speech refers to a new

section in the Bill. He points out that the Bill requires the local authority to have regard:

> . . . . . to the expediency of securing that, so far as is compatible with the need for providing efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable expense to the authority, provision is made for enabling pupils to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.
>
> (House of Lords, Vol 132, Col 287 and 288)

He went on to say that:

> No minister would like to stand up before the House of Commons, or still less this house, and confess to any form of religious intolerance.
>
> (House of Lords, Vol 132, Col 288)

Even from the first mention of this additional clause in the House of Lords Committee, it was discussed entirely in the framework of the religious rights of parents. This addition was inserted to satisfy the members such as Mr Magnay and Mr Thomas, who sought the freedom for parents to choose a school on religious grounds. The whole of this debate was really about religious freedom and not at all about education.

It was the speech by the Earl of Perth, which followed that by the Earl of Selborne, that caused the new section to be changed even further. The relevant part of this speech, although not expressed very well, is detailed below:

> The President of the Board of Education distinctly stated that the wishes of the parents would pervade the whole Bill but the only place in which they are really referred to is this clause. Would not the noble Earl at least agree that it should be this part of the Act? I do not think that it does pervade the whole Bill.
>
> (House of Lords, Vol 132, Col 288)

This input was instrumental in the change that was seen when the Bill returned to the House of Lords on the 12th of July 1944. On this occasion the Earl of Selborne formally moved that the following be inserted before Section 74 of the Bill:

General Principle to be Observed by Minister and Local Education Authorities

73. In the exercise and performance of all powers and duties conferred and imposed on them by this Act the Minister (Secretary of State) and local education authorities shall have regard to the general principle that so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.

(House of Lords, Vol 132, Col 864)

With the renumbering that was necessary due to the alteration and amendments of other parts of the Bill this section finally became known as Section 76 of the 1944 Education Act. (Education Act, 1944, page 59 and 60) This ambiguous wording became the final form of this section of the Bill, and the fact that it was placed directly under the heading *General Principle to be Observed by Minister and Local Education Authorities* has since led to some people reading more into this section of the Act than was ever intended.

The above discussion is important because it quite clearly shows that the intention of the Government and the parliament was to give parents freedom of choice of school, on the grounds of the religious character of the school, as had been the case in the past. However, because the word 'religion' isn't used, Section 76 is often quoted as the piece of legislation that opened the doors for parents to choose a school for their children on any grounds at all.

This sloppy piece of legislation was to haunt the Government over the following few years. Some parents actually took the legislation on face value and did choose schools for other than religious reasons. Some also appealed to the Minister, under section 68 of the legislation, when their freedom to 'educate their children in accordance with their wishes', was refused by the local education authority, and this prompted the Minister, through the Department of Education and Science to publish Circular Number 83 on 14th January 1946. This Circular, titled *Choice of Schools* began with the statement:

1. It has been suggested that local education authorities would welcome a short statement of the principles which may appropriately be applied in granting parents an effective choice of county or voluntary schools . . . . .

(DES Circular No 83, 1946, page 1)

The purpose behind the publishing of this letter appeared to be to reduce the number of appeals that reached the Minister, and to reduce the level of concern among parents. The condescending nature of the opening paragraph , therefore, seems a little out of place. The critical part of the Circular was that, for the first time, it listed the grounds upon which parents could exercise their new found right to choose a school. The four grounds for choice were outlined in the following extract:

> . . . . . as much freedom should be given to the parents in the choice of individual schools of the appropriate type within the area as is consistent with efficient organization and reasonable economy of public expenditure, particularly on such grounds as:-
> (a) The denominational character of the school:
> (b) Preference for an existing school of a single sex or mixed type:
> (c) Convenience of access:
> (d) Educational considerations, e.g. the provision of a particular type of advanced work in an individual school.
>
> (DES Circular No. 83, 1946, page 1)

It is worth noting that, although religious grounds were still the number one reason in this list, this was the first time that an official publication of the Government included educational considerations as an acceptable grounds for parental choice.

This same circular made it quite clear that the Minister only expected this limited freedom of choice for parents of secondary school children and that the grounds listed above were not relevant for younger children. Section 4 of the Circular states:

> 4. In the case of primary education the question of selecting a school of a particular educational type does not arise . . . . . Denominational considerations will however lead parents to wish their children to attend some other school, and in so far as may be necessary and reasonable, facilities should be afforded by the Authority to enable parents to exercise a preference based on this ground.
>
> (DES Circular No. 83, 1946, page 1)

This effectively changed the groundrules by which parents could exercise their right under the 1944 Act to have their child educated according to their wishes. There were now four, clearly stated, bases for choice by parents of secondary age pupils but at the same time choice of school by parents of primary aged children was quite clearly restricted to those whose reasons were based on denominational grounds.

3.3 The Reorganization of Secondary Schools from 1965 to 1975

The next significant document in the area of parental choice came in 1965. Until that time England had a dual, and in some counties tripartite, system of secondary education. All children at the age of 11+ were required to sit examinations which tested their academic ability and aptitude. On the basis of these tests, they were then allocated a place in a grammar school or a secondary modern school or, in some counties, a technical school. Parents, although many were not happy with the concept of differentiated schooling, found it difficult to argue with the criteria or the process used to identify those children who were to attend each type of school. There was, in fact, a general acceptance of the objectivity of the methods used. Then, in July 1965, the DES published Circular Number 10/65, titled *The Organization of Secondary Schooling* . In its introduction it states:

> 1. It is the Government's declared objective to end selection at eleven plus and to eliminate separatism in secondary education. The Government's policy has been endorsed by the House of Commons in a motion passed on 21st January 1965:
> "That this House, conscious of the need to raise educational standards at all levels, and regretting that the realisation of this objective is impeded by the separation of children into different types of secondary schools, notes with approval the efforts of local authorities to reorganize secondary education on comprehensive lines which will preserve all that is valuable in grammar school education for those children who now receive it and make it available to more children; recognizes that the method and timing of such reorganization should vary to meet local needs; and believes that the time is now ripe for a declaration of national policy."
>
> (DES Circular No. 10/65, 1965, page 1)

Although this circular announced a major reorganization of secondary schooling in England it did not come as a surprise to many. In fact, the circular itself mentions this fact:

> But the spontaneous and exciting progress which has been made in this direction by so many authorities in recent years demonstrates that the objective is not only practicable; it is also now widely accepted.
>
> (DES Circular No. 10/65, 1965, page 16)

In the following year the Government's commitment to the reorganization of secondary education on comprehensive lines was reiterated in DES Circular Number 10/66. This circular also made it quite clear that any buildings that were not designed to enhance the move towards comprehensive secondary education would not be funded. Under Section 5 of the Circular it states that:

> . . . . . it would clearly be inconsistent with the Government's long term objective if future school building programmes were to include new projects exclusively fitted for a separatist system of secondary education.
> (DES Circular 10/66, 1966, page 2)

The tying of the changes, sought by the Government, to the availability of funds is an often used and very powerful political tool. As a result almost all local education authorities moved to a system of comprehensive secondary schools, at least in name. That is, although the selection on the basis of academic ability ceased to exist, some of the schools that were previously grammar schools continued to use the same name for their school even though they had changed to be comprehensive schools. Indeed the practices and the school ethos of the grammar schools often remained unaltered even after they had changed to 'comprehensive schools'.

This change to a system of comprehensive schools meant that, in theory, the student population of schools became more heterogeneous and contained students from across a much broader range of abilities. In turn, this led to some parents, particularly of academically able and well disciplined children, feeling unhappy with their local school. Dissatisfaction with the new organization of secondary schooling increased and both major political parties addressed the issue of choice of schools in policy speeches during the 1970's. However, because of several relatively quick changeovers of government during this time, few of these initiatives made it through the parliament and hence don't warrant a detailed analysis in this chapter. Suffice to say that there was an ever growing acceptance by both of the major political parties that the role of parents in schools was to increase and that their freedom to choose a school for their children should be increased. Moreover a platform that indicated an increase in parental choice in education appeared to be a real 'vote-winner'.

3.4 The Period from 1976 to 1979

Although, in 1965, the Central Government had made it a stated policy that the basis for allocation of places in secondary schools was not to include ability or aptitude, they failed to provide any replacement criteria upon which selection could be based. Therefore, each local education authority went its own way in developing new criteria for allocation. Some local education authorities even preserved the old system of examinations at age 11 plus and hence disregarded the Government's policy.

The first piece of legislation in this period that was related to the issue of parent choice was the 1976 amendment to the 1944 Act. The Act was proclaimed on 22nd November 1976 and it made the selection of students for secondary schools on the basis of academic ability an illegal activity. The Act commences with the paragraph:

> 1. (1) Subject to subsection (2) below, local education authorities shall, in the exercise and performance of their powers and duties relating to secondary education, have regard to the general principle that such education is to be provided only in schools where the arrangements for the admission of pupils are not based (wholly or partly) on selection by reference to ability or aptitude.
>
> (Education Act, 1976, page 1)

The exceptions outlined in subsection (2) of this Act related only to special schools for children suffering from a disability, and to those schools where selection is based on reference to aptitude for music or dancing. This Act now made it quite clear that separate schools for the academically able and the academically less able were, at least in a legal sense, a thing of the past.

However, when the Conservative Government assumed power in 1979, they immediately legislated for the removal of the requirement that local education authorities introduce a comprehensive system of education where the admission of children to schools is not based on ability or aptitude. Despite this repeal, many counties already had a non-selective system in place and have continued with such a system ever since.

A second piece of relevant legislation introduced in the late 1970's by the Labour Government was not immediately repealed when the government changed in 1979. In 1978 the Labour Party introduced a Bill which included many major reforms to the 1944 Act. Included in the Bill was a precise statement about how parental choice in

selecting a school for their children was to be significantly increased and a clause regarding the publication of information to provide parents with a basis for their choice. This Labour Government Bill had not passed through the full legislative process when the Labour Party lost government to the Conservative Party in 1979. This Section of the Bill, however, was virtually unchanged by the Conservative Party Government when it was reintroduced, later in 1979, as part of their Education Bill. This time the Bill passed through all stages of the parliament and became the 1980 Education Act.

3.5 The 1980 Education Act

The 1980 Act was the first of three significant pieces of legislation, dealing with education, that the present Government brought down during the 1980's. It was significant in the area of parental choice of school in that it specifically stated that not only were local education authorities to allow parents to have a choice of school, but also that they were to establish a system by which *all* parents could express a preference for the school of their choice. Section 6 of the Act is outlined in full, because of its importance to the issue of parental choice:

> 6. (1) Every local education authority shall make arrangements for enabling the parent of a child in the area of the authority to express a preference as to the school at which he wishes education to be provided for his child in the exercise of the authority's functions and to give reasons for his preference.
>
> (2) Subject to subsection (3) below, it shall be the duty of a local education authority and of the governors of a county or voluntary school to comply with any preference expressed in accordance with the arrangements.
>
> (3) The duty imposed by subsection (2) above does not apply -
>
> (a) if compliance with the preference would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources;
>
> (b) if the preferred school is an aided or special agreement school and compliance with the preference would be incompatible with any arrangements between the governors and the local education authority in respect to admission of pupils to the school; or
>
> (c) if the arrangement for admission to the preferred school are (sic) based wholly or partly on selection by reference to ability or

> aptitude and compliance with the preference would be incompatible with selection under the arrangements.
>
> (Education Act, 1980, page 6)

This section of the Act left no doubt that it was the role of the local education authority to establish, if they had not already done so, a set of procedures that allowed each and every parent to express a preference and give a reason for the school they wish their child to attend. Moreover the Act required local education authorities to comply with these preferences, except in the very few stipulated cases.

It is worth noting at this stage that subsection 3(a) of Section 6 of this Act still permitted selection on the basis of ability, but only for schools in those counties where they had maintained or re-introduced a selective secondary school system.

In order to assist the parents with their choice, section 8 of the Act required local education authorities to publish the following information annually:

> (a) the arrangements for the admission of pupils to schools maintained by the authority, other than aided or special agreement schools;
> (b) the authorities arrangements for the provision of education at schools maintained by another local education authority or not maintained by a local education authority; and
> (c) the arrangements made by the authority under sections 6(1) and 7(1) above.
>
> (Education Act, 1980, page 7)

In part (c) above, the section 6(1) referred to is the section which is included in the previous extract from this Act dealing with the requirement that local education authorities make arrangements to enable parents to express a preference for a school. The section 7(1) referred to in part (c), deals with the requirement for each local education authority to establish a procedure for parents to appeal against the local education authority's decision.

A similar set of requirements for aided or special agreement schools are also detailed in the Act. The difference being that instead of the responsibility being on the local education authority to establish the arrangements it is up to the individual governing body of the school to arrange for parents to express their preference and also to establish an appeals procedure.

The following section of the Act specifies even more precisely what information it is that must be supplied to parents. This information includes particulars of:

> (a) the number of pupils that it is intended to admit in each school year to each school to which the arrangements relate, being pupils in the age group in which pupils are normally admitted or, if there is more than one such group, in each such group;
> (b) the respective admission functions of the local education authority and the governors;
> (c) the policy followed in deciding admissions;
> (d) the arrangements made in respect of pupils not belonging to the area of the local education authority.

In addition, the Act requires the publication of:

> (a) such information as may be required by regulations made by the Secretary of State; and
> (b) such other information, if any, as the authority or governors see fit, ...
>
> (Education Act, 1980, page 8)

As well as the requirements on local education authorities and the governors of aided or special agreement schools there is also a requirement that each school, whether it is a county school or an aided or special agreement school, publish the arrangements for the admission of pupils to the school and the arrangements made by them to deal with appeals. The only exceptions to these requirements were nursery schools and special schools. The final part of the 1980 Education Act that is relevant in this chapter is the section which establishes the number of pupils that must be admitted to a school. This is outlined in section 15 of the Act but is more clearly enunciated in the DES circular of the following year:

> If they (the local education authority or governors) wish to set a limit which is 20% or more below the standard number applying under section 15 of the Act, they must go through the procedures laid down in section 15.
>
> (DES Circular Number 1/81, 1981, page 9)

In this case the standard number for each age group in all subsequent years was defined as 'the number of pupils in any age group admitted to a school in the school year beginning in 1979". (Education Act 1980, page 15) Allowing a reduction of up to 20% of the standard number permitted some schools to close their doors to some children, whose parents had wanted them to attend. This was a major concern of the government in

subsequent years as it effectively enabled local education authorities or individual schools to manipulate school numbers, well within their rights under the 1980 Act, so as to reduce the degree of parental choice and to avoid closure of some schools, which would have otherwise been required to close due to significantly declining rolls. This concern was overcome in the Education Reform Act of 1988.

3.6 The 1988 Education Act

In the booklet, *Education Reform - The Government's Proposals for Schools*, produced by the DES, to explain the proposed 1988 Education Act to parents and the community, the Government's concern about artificial ceilings being placed on student numbers was discussed:

> The Government considers that no child should be refused admission to a school unless it is genuinely full . . . . . But in too many cases, parents are disappointed because artificial ceilings are set on the number of places available at popular schools. This barrier needs to be removed.
>
> (DES, 1987, page 8)

The 1988 Act redefined the standard number to be equal to or greater than the enrolment in that particular age group at the beginning of the 1979 school year or the enrolment in the 1989-90 school year, whichever was the greater. It should be pointed out that the standard number for primary schools is not defined in exactly the same way, but the detail is not necessary in this study about enrolments at secondary schools.

Following the 1988 Act the DES published a 17 page document, plus appendices, titled *Admission of Pupils to County and Voluntary Schools.* The very first sentence in this document states that:

> 1. The Education Reform Act 1988 provides for a significant enhancement of the ability of parents to secure the admission of their children to the school they prefer.
>
> . . . . . the Secretary of State hopes that admission authorities will give full recognition to the expression of parental preference with immediate effect and will not turn away eligible applicants to their schools unless those schools are physically full.
>
> (DES Circular Number 11/88, 1988, page 1)

Following the publication of this Circular there was no doubt that the only reason that a child could be denied access to a particular school was if the school was at, or beyond, its physical capacity. Also at this stage, the number of pupils which made a school physically full was no longer left up to individual schools or local education authorities to determine. It was now written into the law and could only be altered by an appeal to the Secretary of State. In the case that a particular school is oversubscribed in any given year, the only basis for deciding which students should gain a place and which students shouldn't are the parents' preferences and the reasons given by the parents for these preferences.

3.7 Conclusion

Hence in the period 1921 to 1988, the extent of parental choice has gone from a stage where choice was minimal and restricted to choice only on religious grounds, to the stage where open enrolment is a reality. Today, the only reason for disallowing a parent to enrol their child at a particular school is if the school is physically full. The definition of the term physically full for each school is set in the legislation and can only be changed by appeal to the Secretary of State.

However the legislation says nothing about how local education authorities are to determine which students are to be admitted and which students are denied a place when a school is oversubscribed. Therefore all the problems associated with the allocation of students to schools, together with the consequential disappointment and bitterness of the parents who fail to gain the school of their choice, are directed at the local education authority officers and not at the Central Government. The central legislation only requires that the local education authority take the parent's preferences and reasons into account. The local education authority's role is discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Local Education Authority Policies and Practices

4.1 Introduction

It can be seen from the previous chapter that while the Central Government, through the Department of Education and Science, set the law and outlined the general framework for achieving such desired outcomes as parental choice, it was left to each local education authority to administer the law. What generally occurred was that each local education authority set its own policies and practices for achieving the same national goals.

It would be an impossible task to discuss the policies and practices over the last 45 years, of each local education authority , so this chapter will only address the situation in the local education authority of Whatshire. This fictitious name is used to refer to the real local education authority within whose schools the data for this study will be collected. Its real identity will not be revealed as is customary with studies such as this. This chapter will outline the differences in policy and practice in Whatshire from the period 1944 until the present day. This authority is an interesting one to study in detail because it has generally introduced policy and changed its practices in advance of when required to do so by law, and so in the area of parental choice they were initiating changes rather than following the law makers. In many other ways Whatshire is typical of other authorities.

4.2 Allocating Students to Schools Prior to 1970

Following the Second World War and after the introduction of the 1944 Act, Whatshire operated a selective school system with grammar, modern and technical schools. A similar system then operated in nearly all counties. Selection was by an examination which all children sat at the age of 11 plus. As indicated in the previous chapter, this method of selection was seen to be quite objective by the parents and, while an increasing number of parents disagreed with the basic philosophy of selective education,

they accepted the actual process of selection as fair and reasonable.

Once the results of the 11+ examinations were available, the headteachers of the grammar schools would meet and work through the full list of transferring students to select the best for their schools. The remaining students were then allocated to the secondary modern and technical schools. This involvement of the headteachers led to a strongly held belief that they should always be integrally involved in the selection process; a right that they jealously guarded even after the change to the comprehensive system.

4.3 Allocating Students to Comprehensive Schools in the 1970's

As outlined in the previous chapter, it was the publication by the DES of Circular 10/65, that first expressed Government policy relating to the end of the selective system of secondary education in England. Whatshire started to move towards the new system almost immediately. The transition of all schools in the county from selective schools to comprehensive schools was achieved over a period of eight years. The first comprehensive school commenced in 1966 but the last of the changes from grammar to comprehensive didn't occur until 1973. As the transition occurred, there was a need to develop a new system for managing secondary transfers to replace the system of allocation to school according to a child's performance on the 11+ examination. It was at this stage, well before the introduction of the 1980 Education Act, that Whatshire introduced a system of parental preference.

The process began with each parent completing an application form which required them to list four schools in order of preference, for their transferring child, and to give reasons for their choices. At the same time the headteachers of the primary schools would prepare a report on each of their students transferring to secondary schools in the following year. In particular each child was assigned a grade of 'A', 'O' or 'S' by their primary school. An 'A' grade indicated that this child was academically able and had the potential to study A-level subjects, an 'O' grade indicated that the child had the potential to study O-level subjects and an 'S' grade indicated that the student had difficulty with learning. The headteachers of all schools would then meet for one, two or sometimes three days and proceed to allocate all children to schools on the basis of the parents application forms and the primary school reports. At this stage, those schools that were

previously grammar schools, some of whom maintained the word grammar in their school name, were oversubscribed. Hence the headteachers of the grammar schools would select their students first, naturally using the child's ability as indicated on the primary school report as a key factor. This process would continue until they had filled their intake quota. This left the remaining applicants, mainly the less able students, to be divided among the other schools.

The headteachers of those schools that were not previously grammar schools soon became disillusioned, and demanded changes to the selection process.

During this time, the 1976 Act was passed which effectively outlawed the allocation of students to schools on the basis of ability or aptitude. This led to Whatshire ceasing the use of the primary school report as a basis for determining the allocation of students to secondary schools. At the same time the county education officers began to take a greater role in the secondary transfer procedure. Without the primary school report, and in particular the grading of 'A', 'O', or 'S', the only information remaining on which to base secondary allocation were the parents' preferences and the parents' reasons for their preferences. Faced with this lack of academic performance information some headteachers 'unofficially' contacted the primary schools to seek information on the ability of applicants. Others instituted a system of interviewing all applicants and then selecting the 'best'. All in all, these practices led to inconsistencies and difficulties in the allocation process.

In 1978 the County established a formal policy and, for the first time, published a booklet outlining the system of transfers. In this booklet it first enunciated its policy on the criteria for allocation of places:

> Every attempt is made to meet parents' wishes. Problems do, however, arise when the number of parents who choose a particular school exceeds the number of places available. In these circumstances account must be taken of the reasons for the parents' choice - close family connections, strong preference for a single sex or mixed school, the wish for a school of a particular denomination, medical grounds; or there may be special educational reasons such as preference for a school which has developed a strong technical bias or has established other educational aims or traditions. Finally some account may have to be taken of geography since it would be unreasonable to exclude a pupil living near to the school in order to make a place available to someone from further afield who had no stronger case on

> other grounds.
>
> In using the term "close family connections" the County Council has in mind those having a brother or sister or parent who formerly attended the school as a pupil, or a brother or sister currently attending the school.
>
> (Whatshire County Council, 1978, page 22)

This was the first formal, written statement which included some criteria upon which selection would be based. It is interesting to note that this publication was released in August 1978, almost at the same time as the Labour Party introduced the 1978 Education Bill into the House of Commons . The section on parental choice of schools in this 1978 Bill was almost word for word, what was passed as the 1980 Education Act. The Whatshire Local Education Authority also decided to continue its system of comprehensive secondary education after the compulsion to do so was lifted by the 1979 amendment to the 1976 Act. All in all, this meant that Whatshire was prepared for the 1980 Education Act, well before it became law.

4.4 The 1980 Act and its Consequences

As indicated in the previous paragraph, the Whatshire Local Education Authority was required to make very little change to existing procedures as a result of the proclamation of the 1980 Act and indeed very little change did occur. In recent years, Whatshire County's procedure has been outlined in a booklet, titled *Transfer of Children to Secondary School,* which is updated each year and a copy given to each parent with children of transfer age.

In September of the year prior to transfer, all parents receive a copy of the booklet mentioned above. In October and November all parents are encouraged to visit the schools that they may wish their child to attend. Schools hold open nights during this time and also encourage visits during the day when the school is in operation. In November each parent is required to complete a secondary transfer form, (Appendix 1) which requires them to give four preferences of school and also to provide reasons for their selections. From November through April the forms are processed in the County Education Office and places allocated according to the following guidelines:

> 1. Priority is given to children with brothers and sisters currently at the school (at the time applications are required), provided that their parents have expressed a

preference for a place at that school on the Secondary Transfer Form.
2. The following factors will be taken into account, not in order of priority:
(a) the nearness and ease of access to a school and to alternative schools;
(b) other reasons given by parents. These reasons may include (but not in any order of priority), a desire for a single-sex or co-educational or denominational (church) school and particular medical, social, educational or personal reasons for preferring a school.

(Whatshire County Council, 1989, page 5)

It can be seen that the criteria for selection have changed very little in the intervening eleven years. It is only the structure of the paragraph that has really changed.

The area where significant change has occurred is in the process of allocation of students to schools. With the removal of any information about the student's ability from the selection process and the increased time now required to read all of the reasons given by the parents, the headteachers of the schools have gradually accepted that the selection should be carried out by officers in the County Education Office. The task of the local education authority officers is made more complicated by parents who list only one or two preference and those who list the same school four times. Also those parents who list an oversubscribed school as first preference, often list an oversubscribed school for their second, third and even fourth preference.

By the end of April the local education authority advises parents of the school to which their child has been allocated. The allocated school is almost always one of the preferred schools from the application form. If a particular child can not be accommodated in any of the schools listed on the application form then the divisional education officer allocates them to the nearest school to their home which still has a place available. This is followed in May and June with appeals by parents who were unsuccessful in gaining their first preference and wish to pursue this course of action, to which they are entitled by law under the 1980 Education Act.

After this process is complete a large majority of parents will have received their first preference. This figure is usually somewhere between 85% and 90%. The percentage of parents who receive one of their four preferences is usually between 90% and 95%. The figures for the past seven years are provided in the following table.

Year	Number of applications	% of first preferences	% of second preferences	% of third preferences	% of fourth preferences
1983	2426	90.27	4.37	0.87	0.29
1984	2546	85.82	5.11	1.21	4.87
1985	2433	83.80	3.40	0.90	0.08
1986	1937	89.26	5.14	1.44	0.51
1987	1957	88.81	6.18	1.48	0.61
1988	1819	88.90	5.11	2.14	0.66
1989	2045	85.38	7.09	1.03	0.49

Table 4.1: Percentage of first, second, third and fourth preferences of secondary schools gained by parents in the Whatshire Local Education Authority in the period from 1983 to 1989.

4.5 The Reasons Given by Parents on Their Secondary Transfer Forms

Each year on the transfer application forms parents are required to state reasons for preferring one school over another. While an analysis of these forms provides an insight into the most popular reasons given, such an analysis would yield a distorted picture. Firstly the reasons are distorted in that parents often highlight reasons that match the selection criteria published by the local education authority and don't necessarily highlight those reasons that they consider as the most important. For example, in a sample of 750, taken from the 2045 application forms submitted for transfer in September 1989, over 47% of parents listed having older brothers or sisters at the school as one of their reasons. The frequency of occurrence of this reason was far more than the second most popular reason, proximity of the school to the home, which was listed by 29% of parents. These were exactly the two first mentioned criteria in the handbook to parents published by the local education authority. (Whatshire County Council, 1989, page 5) Therefore, it may be reasonable to assume that the reasons given on the transfer application forms were, in fact, influenced by the selection criteria of the county. This assumption will be considered further in Chapter 6, when the findings of other research are examined.

A second reason for the distortion is that there is a great deal of discussion between parents as to which reasons, given in previous years, appeared to result in a successful application for a desired school. This is made more obvious after a study of the application forms. Many of the accompanying letters, in which the parents outline their reasons for their preferences, have sentences and often whole paragraphs which are identical to parts of letters from other parents. This leaves little doubt that parents are copying and adapting letters from previous successful applicants. Hence there must remain some doubt as to whether the reasons given by parents on their transfer application forms are a true representation of what they think are the important characteristics of a secondary school.

By systematically reading 750 application forms, it was possible to gain some valuable information and some indication of the beliefs and emotions involved. In particular:

(a) it was possible to adapt the first draft of the questionnaire to be used in this study. The factors listed in the questionnaire in this study were adapted to include all of those factors that were listed by five or more of the 750 parents in their application forms for secondary transfer.

(b) it became evident that there was a high degree of emotion and tension, on the part of the parents. Many parents wrote very emotional letters, as if their whole life depended on their child being allocated to the school of their choice.

(c) it provided a list of reasons together with their frequency, which can be compared with the reasons and their frequencies of the parents surveyed in this study. Only then will we really know whether the reasons given by parents on their application forms are the same as their 'real' reasons for preferring one school above another.

(d) it provided examples of the language used by parents which could then be used in the questionnaire so that the questions could be understood by as many parents as possible.

A list of the eight most popular reasons given by parents, when applying for a place in a secondary school, is provided in Table 4.2

Factors Influencing Choice of Secondary School	Number of Parents	Percentage of Parents
Older brothers and sisters attended the school	356	47.47%
Proximity of the school to the home	221	29.47%
The denominational (church) nature of the school	132	17.60%
Easy/safe/convenient travel to and from school	115	15.33%
Child wants to attend the school	102	13.60%
Discipline at the school is good	88	11.73%
Overall exam results are good	85	11.33%
School has both boys and girls	81	10.80%

Table 4.2: The eight most frequently offered reasons for choosing a secondary school, as cited by parents in Whatshire County on their applications for transfer to secondary school in September 1989.

A full list of the reasons given by the parents, and their frequency, is provided in Appendix 1.

Finally, after reading the application forms submitted by parents, it appears that the educated and articulate parents have a far greater chance of gaining their preferred school for their child than do parents with limited ability to express their thoughts in writing. The reasons given by parents vary greatly, but this variation is not as great as the variation in the style and language used. Some parents fail to submit any reasons at all while others present two, three or even four type written pages of well constructed argument.

4.6 Conclusion

Over the last 25 years the system of allocating children to secondary schools has changed from the grammar school system, based on an examination given to students at age 11 plus, to the comprehensive school system, based on the preferences of, and reasons given by, the parents of the children. The latter is certainly more administratively cumbersome and less objective than the former. In the same period, the role of the local

education authority has changed from allocating places based on student ability to one based on parental preferences and their associated reasons.

This generally means that it is the former grammar schools that are oversubscribed and therefore the ones for which some selection must take place. Whatever the case, it appears quite clear that the system of selecting students for grammar schools based on their ability in an examination at age 11 has been replaced by a system of selecting for pseudo-grammar schools based on the ability of the parents to write a convincing argument on an application form. The test is now one that the parent sits. The results now have more to do with the ability of the parents than they have to do with the ability of the students.

CHAPTER 5

Why Parents Should or Shouldn't Have a Choice of School

5.1 Introduction

There have been many arguments put forward as to why parents should or shouldn't have the right to choose the school their child attends. This chapter will address only this issue of choice of school and not delve into the numerous reasons as to why parents should or should not have a choice in other aspects of their children's education. The arguments for and against giving parents the opportunity to choose a school for their children can be categorized under these major headings:

(a) the political arguments

(b) the economic arguments

(c) the social arguments

Within each of the above categories, an attempt will be made to firstly describe and explain the reasons supporting parental choice and then to address the arguments against parental choice. In each case the reasons discussed will be taken from those outlined by key authors. Finally an attempt will be made to summarize and compare the arguments.

Of course many of these arguments have been around for many years, but the need to consider them more carefully was brought about by the significantly declining enrolments which hit primary schools in the late 1970's and secondary schools in the 1980's. It was at this stage, when governments had to deal with the falling school rolls, that they turned to parental choice to help solve a difficult problem. Therefore, before considering the arguments for and against parental choice, some background should be provided in terms of the demographic situation. This is not a matter for differences of opinion. All authors agree, and the facts verify, that school rolls have been through a stage of significant decline.

5.2 The Demographic Situation

The reduction in the school age population throughout the 1970's and 1980's has been considerable. This fall is due, in large part, to a reduction in the birth rate in the late 1960's which led to the decrease in the percentage of the population that are at school age compared to the percentage in other age bands. As in most other developed countries the population is aging. Data from the 1981 Census and provided by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys have been used to construct the following table:

Year	Population or estimated population	% in age 0 to 4	% in age 5 to 15
1971	49 152 000	8.0%	17.1%
1981	49 634 000	6.0%	16.1%
1991	50 726 000	6.6%	14.8%
2001	52 171 000	6.6%	14.8%

Table 5.1: The percentage of the population of England and Wales of pre-school and school age in 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001
(Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1988, page 43 and 46)

In 1979 three authors from the Policy Studies Institute in London, made predictions about the number of school age children up to the year 2006. Their figures showed the primary enrolments reaching a peak of 6 274 000 students in 1973 and then falling to 4 515 000 students by 1987. This represents a fall of nearly 30%. Consequently, secondary enrolments were predicted to peak at 3 618 000 in 1978 and to fall to 2 521 000 in 1991, again a fall of approximately 30%. (Carter, Ermish and Ruffett, 1979, page 6) There are, of course, more up-to-date predictions than those from the Policy Studies Institute and those provided in Table 5.1, but these sets of data were typical of those which were available at the time of the parliamentary debate on parental choice, leading up to the 1980 Education Act.

It was predictions of this sort that made it essential for the government to address the issue of falling school rolls. There was no doubt that many schools would have to be closed. The costs involved in not closing schools was very large indeed and some indication of the costs was given in the following extract of an article on open enrolment:

> The independent Audit Commission, in its recent second report on falling school rolls says that empty school places are still costing the country some £250 million a year.
> (Dakers , 1988, page 55)

The need to close schools is obvious but the difficult decision remains, which ones should be closed and when? This leads the debate out of the demographic and educational arenas and into the political arena.

5.3 The Political Arguments

This section on the political arguments includes those issues raised by politicians when discussing open enrolment and those that have arisen directly out of a political party's platform. For clarity they will be discussed in four parts although these parts are by no means mutually exclusive. The issues relating to improving standards will be treated first and then attention will be focussed on the political expediency of open enrolment. The third part will outline the need for a reduced administrative burden on the DES and finally the introduction of open enrolment as a reaction to the movement towards comprehensive schools will be addressed.

Improving Standards

Perhaps the best place to start is with the Conservative Party Manifesto, which led the party to electoral victory in 1979. This paper espouses by far the most common of the political arguments used to justify increasing parental choice in education:

> Extending parents' rights and responsibilities, including their right of choice, will also help raise standards by giving them greater influence over education.
> (The Conservative Party, 1979, page 291)

This document states quite clearly, the political claim, that giving parents the right to choose will lead to an increase in standards. In 1982, in a speech to the Conservative Party Conference, Sir Keith Joseph, the Secretary of State for Education, repeated the claim that increased parental choice would lead to higher standards of education. This speech was reported in the editorial of Volume 160 of the journal *Education* .

> Improved standards could not be achieved by circular or by

> law, he maintained, but by increased parental responsibility and choice.
>
> (Education, 1982, page 265)

The logical connection between increased choice and higher standards is not at all clear, but, nevertheless, improving standards has become part of the political rhetoric that is associated with parental choice.

It seems that while the argument politicians use when advocating increased parental choice is that it will increase standards, there is a distinct lack of evidence to support their argument. Writing in 1987, Elmore examines the research into improved standards and concludes that:

> The evidence, examined earlier, suggests that there is no simple causal relationship between choice, as we have discussed it here, and students' academic performance.
>
> (Elmore, 1987, page 93)

Elmore continues by saying that:

> In other words, one effect of introducing greater choice may simply be to increase competitiveness without increasing quality, because quality is an ambiguous commodity in education.
>
> (Elmore, 1987, page 95)

At this stage the research which compares standards achieved when parental choice is in operation to those where parents have no choice of schools is not conclusive. One study, however, which compares achievements of private school students, whose parents presumably chose to send them to that school, with the achievements of students in government schools, is discussed by Eric Bredo:

> A relatively recent study comparing achievement in public, parochial, and other private schools suggested that private schools, in particular parochial schools, produced higher achievement scores for comparable students than public schools. (Coleman, et. al., 1982) However this study has provoked considerable criticism for the adequacy of its controls on selection bias. Follow-up studies that better match student backgrounds find fewer differences. In fact, a recent analysis of the same data found that the apparent advantage of parochial schools drops from five points on the achievement test used to less than half a point when student body composition is controlled (Raudenbush

> and Bryk, 1986). In short, the differences appear to be trivial.
>
> (Bredo, 1987, page 68)

Other studies by Gray, McPherson and Raffe (1983), Marks, Cox and Pomian-Srzednicki (1983) and Steedman (1983) have considered the differences in results between the selective school system and the non-selective school system. Although each of the studies considered the same research question each produced a different conclusion. The study by Marks, et. al., which involved 350 000 pupils in 2100 schools and 57 local education authorities in England and Wales, used 'aggregate level' data with an inadequate adjustment for intake concluded that:

> The results presented above indicate that substantially higher O-level, CSE and A-level examination results are to be expected for pupils in a fully selective system of schools compared to pupils in a fully comprehensive system of schools.
>
> (Marks, et. al., 1983, page 61)

Steedman's research, which involved nearly 1500 pupils, between 1969 and 1976, found that no such difference existed. In a conclusion to her research she states that:

> There was no sign from the results that selection, in the sense of having a mixture of grammars and secondary moderns, could be said to have made a difference to examination performance.
>
> (Steedman, 1983, page 133)

The third piece of research completed in the early 1980's produced a conclusion which was different to both that of Marks, et. al. and that of Steedman. Although the differences in the English and Scottish systems are acknowledged, in the study, based on some 20 000 Scottish pupils involved in a longitudinal study, Gray, et. al. concluded that:

> Leavers from the comprehensive sector had levels of attainment which were, on average, slightly higher than those of leavers from the selective sector.
>
> (Gray, et. al., 1983, page 265)

The above three research studies have produced conflicting conclusions about the relative standards of the two school systems. This research is relevant to this study because it is generally the schools that were previously grammar schools, and especially those that have maintained the word 'grammar' in their school name, that are

generally oversubscribed. If it is because of the parents perception that they produce better examination results then the research quoted above indicates that such a perception is not necessarily a valid one.

Fogelman, in a critical review of these three studies which was published in the Oxford Review of Education, criticized each of the studies for its shortcomings. He claims that the data used by Gray, et. al. and Steedman is out of date and in any case Gray, et. al's. data on Scottish pupils may not be generalizable to English pupils in English schools. The research of Marks, et. al. comes in for even more severe criticism:

> The examinations on which Marks et. al. is based is more recent, but in view of the methodological weaknesses discussed above, it is clear that this is just about the only virtue of that study.
>
> (Fogelman, 1984, page 42)

Goldstein goes even further and says, "there are deficiencies in all existing comparative studies of school outcomes." (Goldstein, 1984, page 74) He argues that a multilevel design should be used so that the effects of both pupils and schools can be taken into account.

This multilevel approach has been employed by a group of researchers who have been studying the results, over a three year period, of students in 140 secondary schools in the Inner London Education Authority. As a result of their analysis they have concluded that students with similar input characteristics, do perform better at one school than at others. However it is not always the same school that achieves the greatest gains with all types of students. They conclude their recent paper with the following comment:

> Our research indicates . . . . . that it is more meaningful to describe differences between schools for different sub-groups: the concept of school effectiveness is not useful.
>
> (Nuttall, et. al., 1989, page 776)

These researchers also cast severe doubt on the work of many previous studies, by showing that the data analysis they use is inadequate. The problem occurs because they do not take into account the second level differences. That is, they often claim that one school is better than another, but fail to show that such differences are not uniform for all students. It is more likely that a particular type of student will perform better at school A while another type of student will perform better at school B.

Therefore, at least at this stage, there appears to be no valid evidence to suggests that providing parents with the chance to choose a school, results in any uniform increase in standards in the chosen school, or, for that matter, any other school. Nuttall, et. al. would argue that, even in the long term, it is only possible to compare school performance for particular types of students, whether they be, say, female, Asian, highly intelligent, or whatever. Thus it is unlikely that the performance of a whole school can be effectively compared with that of another school in any meaningful way.

The undefined term in both the politicians' and Elmore's claims, and the term that is both multidimensional and complex, is that of standards. It appears that politicians often define standards in terms of the subjects and content that the parents spent most of their time on, during their own school days. This view is reiterated by O'Hear, who was one of the Hillgate group, and is criticized by Patricia White in her article *The New Right and Parent Choice.* (White P, 1988) She credits O'Hear with the view that parental choice will give parents the chance to send their children to schools that teach the same content, in the same way, as when they were at school. White illustrates this in her article on the Hillgate Group's reforms:

> Is a rise in standards being equated, as Anthony O'Hear seems to do, for instance, with more students studying Greek and Latin to A - level. If so, is that an important yardstick?
>
> (White, 1988, page 195)

The point of view espoused by White is that the yardstick that parents use, is how similar the educational provision of a school is to that provided by the school that they attended in their own schooldays. It appears that the political arguments, based on standards, gain popularity because they provide parents with the chance to choose schools that more resemble the highly structured schools of their own days. This could lead to a slowing down of progress in education and hence educational change not keeping pace with changes in society. Then again, this adversity to radical change is generally a part of the underlying philosophy of a 'conservative' party. The key question to answer is, will England suffer in the long term, if its education continues to mirror, and to be judged on, the education system of the past generation?

A Cheap Vote Catcher

A second reason for governments of both the major parties to been keen to increase

parental choice is to gain political support for their party. Charles Martin expresses this view on parental choice and parental power, in his book *Schools Now* :

> Politicians seem to take it for granted that they have a real vote-winner.
>
> (Martin, 1989, page 74)

However the view that such an issue is a cheap vote catcher was more clearly expressed by Gerry Fowler, the Labour Minister of State for Education in 1969, 70, 74 and 76, when he wrote the following:

> I was looking only the other day at a memo I sent to Reg Prentice in the Department as early as March 1974, just after the first election of that year, where I had broken down what we might want to do into things that cost nothing, which came first, things that didn't cost very much, and things that were far too expensive to contemplate however desirable they might be. The extension of parental choice and the better representation of parents on governing bodies were both on that list.
>
> (Fowler, 1986, page 11)

This comment by the former Minister suggests that extending parental choice may have been a politically popular and inexpensive thing to implement. This in itself could be a key reason for Section 6 of the 1980 Education Act. It is often the case that minimal cost is the reason for political initiative, but in the end , the initiative should be judged by whether education is better off because of the change. Politicians, however, will also judge its success by whether or not they are re-elected.

Reduction of the Administrative Burden on the DES

A third reason for the 1980 legislation, to increase parental choice of school, has been expressed by Stillman:

> From then until the mid-sixties it is estimated that there were about 100 central appeals per annum. . . . . the number of central appeals rose between the mid-sixties and the late seventies to over 1100 per annum.
>
> (Stillman, 1986a, page 38)

Fowler also talked about the number of appeals as a reason for changing Section 76 of the 1944 Education Act, to increase parental choice. In particular he refers to section 68 which gives parents the right to appeal to the Secretary of State if they are unhappy

with the local education authority's decision regarding the allocation of a school for their child:

> Ministers are constantly trying to reduce the burden on themselves, and nobody liked Section 68 because in the end a great pile of paper landed on somebody's desk, and he/she had to do something about it.
>
> (Fowler, 1986, page 12)

This reduction of such an administrative burden is certainly a just cause to look for alternatives. It is not clear whether the alternative appeal system has in fact reduced the burden or simply shifted it from the desks of the DES officers to the desks of the local education authority officers. The effect of this appears to be to occupy the local education authority personnel with administrative tasks and make it much more difficult for them to involve themselves in policy making.

A Reaction to the Comprehensive School Movement

Finally, the Hillgate Group in their *Radical Manifesto* claims that the community had become concerned and disillusioned with the comprehensive school system:

> Following the establishment of the comprehensive system the public sector has lost considerable ground, and is now increasingly recognized as a poor second to the private sector.
>
> (Cox, et. al., 1986, page 3)

This claim is based on the statement that comprehensive schools have deteriorated, and then assumes that increasing parental choice will reverse this trend. The logic in this argument is very similar to the logic used in the improved standards argument which has already been discussed. Perhaps the parents are judging schools by how closely they resemble the school that they attended some fifteen to twenty years ago. In many instances, the parent's schooling was probably based on the tripartite structure of grammar, secondary modern and technical schools. Again it is a question of whether schools should be achieving and structured as they were in the 1960's and 1970's or whether they should be looking forward to the 1990's.

It is not clear, however, as to how giving parents a choice of schools for their children will overcome the perceived difficulties of the comprehensive system. That is, unless what results is a system which re-establishes the selective schools of the past and

replaces all comprehensive schools with grammar and secondary modern schools. Maybe that is the political motivation behind the changes. If this is the case, it will be interesting to note whether or not this return to the grammar school structure has been achieved through the parental choice legislation. The present study is designed to throw some light on the answer to these issues.

Several local education authorities have considered a return to the selective system of education, but these have been strongly opposed by parents. One notable example was described in the Times Educational Supplement of 2nd March 1984. Reporting on a scheme to reintroduce a selective system to education in secondary schools in Solihull, Passmore writes:

> Members of the ruling Tory group decided by a large majority on Monday not to pursue the plan, in view of the overwhelming opposition they encountered from local parents and schools during the consultation period. They agreed on a resolution, calling instead for a programme to raise the standards in all schools.
>
> (Passmore, 1984, Page 3)

With parents, in general, opposed to the return of the selective system, it seems unlikely that a return to the 11+ examination and the consequent selection based on performance of the student, will occur. What is not so certain, is the extent to which, in practice, some oversubscribed schools will continue to attract, and select, a large proportion of able students, while other schools that are undersubscribed will be left with those who were not so able and can not gain a place in the oversubscribed schools. In other words will the new procedures for parental choice lead to two types of schools which closely resemble the grammar and secondary modern schools of the past, without putting the students through the traumatic ordeal of the 11+ examinations?

5.4 The Economic Arguments

As with the political arguments, the economic arguments can also be divided into parts so as to clarify the discussion. Hence this section will commence by addressing the issue of reducing government spending. Then the debate about the free market approach, which has underscored many government initiatives in the 1980's, will be considered.

The economic arguments can be categorized into two groups. Firstly, there are those that involve reducing costs in line with decreasing enrolments and secondly there is the need for a general reduction in public spending in all areas of government activity. Each of these require the provision of education to be managed more economically than it has been in the past. Secondly there are those reasons that can be linked with the 'free market' approach to all aspects of government and the claim that freeing the markets leads to increased competition and hence to improved quality.

Reducing Government Spending Without Political Backlash

Since the issue of the falling rolls has been dealt with in Section 5.2, attention can now be given to the issue of reduced public spending.

Most governments of developed countries, after heavy spending in the 1970's, went about reducing public expenditure in the 1980's. The Thatcher Government in England was no exception, and in fact went about this reduction in a very determined manner. Denis Lawton outlines this in the following extract from one of his books:

> Many countries since the mid - 1970's have tried to reduce public expenditure, and in England a critical review of spending on welfare services became official policy in 1979 with the election of the Conservative Government under Mrs. Margaret Thatcher. Reductions in public expenditure have been achieved by cost-cutting, by campaigns to promote value for money, and by a variety of central devices to reduce local control over the allocation of resources (for example, rate capping).
>
> (Lawton, 1989, page 102)

This desire to reduce costs has led to a real commitment, on the part of the government, to make the education system more efficient. Education is a particular target because in most developed countries it receives between one quarter and one third of the available public funds. School closures have been a major government strategy in the reduction of costs. How to make these closures without disenchanting the voters is a crucial political issue and as discussed earlier, parental choice of schools was the major initiative to soften the criticism of the government, that inevitably flows with school closures. Thus, the government has let the parents choose, not just the schools that they wish their children to attend, but also, as a result of not choosing particular schools, which schools should be closed.

In short, the Government has achieved a more economical system (at least in that there are fewer schools) without significant alienation of voters towards the National Conservative Party. Through its policy of open enrolment, it has managed to deflect any parental discontent over school closures to the local education authorities and local government councils.

The Free Market Approach

The second set of economic considerations deal with the 'free market' approach and have been the topic of many writers in both education and economics. The move towards placing education in the market place is generally attributed to Milton Friedman, who won a Nobel Prize for his work in economics. In a book, which he co-authored with his wife, he claimed that:

> The establishment of the school system in the United States as an island of socialism in a free market sea reflected only to a very minor extent the early emergence among intellectuals of a distrust of the market and of voluntary exchange.
>
> (Friedman and Friedman, 1980, page 154)

Friedman and Friedman then mention Dr. Max Gammon who studied the British National Health Service and attributes to him, the statement that in a bureaucratic system:

> . . . . . increase in expenditure will be matched by fall in production.
>
> (Friedman and Friedman, 1980, page 155)

This same argument is applied to schools by Eric Bredo in his assertion that:

> . . . . . in a competitive educational market schools that are efficient in producing what people want will stay in business while others will go out of business. Thus a market approach is seen as a way of ensuring the efficient supply of the educational services parents desire.
>
> (Bredo, 1987, page 69)

Although Bredo talks of ensuring efficiency, it is more likely that it is the effectiveness, in terms of what the parents want, that will determine whether the school stays in business. This is because parents have a better chance of knowing about how well a school is meeting the outputs that they expect, than they have of knowing whether or not

the school achieves these outputs in an efficient manner. In fact, even the extent to which parents can judge a school's effectiveness is questionable.

Ashworth, et. al. are also strong supporters of the idea that increased choice will lead to a better quality of provision. They provide an economic argument for increased choice:

> There is a considerable body of theory in economics which shows that the exercise of free choice by individuals and efficiency in the use of society's resources are directly related. They are simply two characteristics of the same economic process of allocating resources in response to consumer's preferences. The general principle of consumer sovereignty holds that each individual is the best judge of his or her needs and wants and of what is in their best interest. . . . . If consumers know what is best for themselves then the exercise of free choice in the market results in efficiency.
>
> (Ashworth, et. al., 1988, page 11)

It is the last sentence that includes the proviso, if consumers know what is best for themselves, that must be questioned. It may be true in other fields of business but it has yet to be proven that the consumers, or parents, do know what is best for themselves or their children, before the resulting efficiencies can be translated to the school situation.

In his article *Economic Choice and the Dissolution of Community*, Weeres outlines the problems that arise when people are not sure about which product is the better. (Weeres, 1987) If for example, a parent has a choice of three schools, A, B and C, and their preferences go like this; they prefer A to B, they prefer B to C and they prefer C to A, then their preference order would be circular and would give no clear indication of which school would be their first choice. Hence, their preferences would not assist schools to better meet their needs. This argument becomes more powerful when several parents' preferences are considered together.

Now, take the case where each parent does have a clear idea of the order in which they prefer the three schools. For example:

Person 1 prefers A to B to C

Person 2 prefers B to C to A

Person 3 prefers C to A to B

Here each individual has a non-circular preference and hence there is some indication available to the school on what each particular parent wants. However, when taken together, the situation is not as clear. In the above, the majority of people (Persons 1 and 3) prefer A to B. Also the majority (Persons 1 and 2) prefer B to C, and the majority (Persons 2 and 3) prefer C to A. Therefore the majority of the group prefer A to B, B to C and C to A, which, again, is a circular and unhelpful situation for schools. Weeres concludes the argument by stating that "the group, in other words, doesn't know what it wants". (Weeres, 1987, page 123)

This theory of choice taken from the business world and applied to schools seems to fit well. While many individual parents may have a clear idea of which schools, in their view, are better than others, when the majority view of all of the parents is considered, the preference order may well be circular. This would be an interesting issue to study, but it is outside the scope of this research.

While this theory from the business world may apply to some aspects of education, many educators believe that not all aspects of education can be treated as business activities. Unlike the business world where achievement is measured by profits, education involves human achievements which are usually very difficult to define and measure. Another significant difference between the world business and education is that the results of business are usually short term. That is, monthly balance sheets and annual reports. On the other hand the outcomes of schooling are often not immediately obvious or measureable. The less specific goals of schools and their long term nature make it more difficult to make comparisons between schools than between different companies.

The Costs of the Free Market Approach

Judith Chaplin puts forward another reason why choice of schools may not provide the economic advantages that some people believe it should:

> Choice, as the Audit Commission has pointed out, will result in a less than optimum distribution of resources at any one time. The dynamic process of schools expanding and contracting will involve additional costs that do not arise in a more planned static situation.
>
> (Chaplin, 1987, page 4)

An excellent example of where the costs involved in an open enrolment situation are

greater than in a planned environment is discussed in a clear, very detailed, way by Fielding, the Chief Education Officer for Somerset Local Education Authority. In his article he quotes a town in Somerset which has three secondary schools. If the local education authority was to plan, by placing artificial limits on enrolments, they could maintain all three schools as economically viable and efficient schools. If on the other hand, they allow schools to enrol up to their standard number, as required in the 1988 Education Act, the story would be somewhat different. First, one of the school's intakes would very quickly fall to the low thirties and hence this school would be very costly to operate, or more probably it should be closed. However, if it was closed the students would have to go to one of the other two schools, both of which already are full. Therefore some additional building would have to take place. Since there is no space for new buildings on either of the remaining sites a new school would have to be built on another site. This could be achieved at a reasonable cost by selling the sites of the closed school and the school to be replaced, which is in an area of demand, and purchasing a new site on the outskirts of town for a much smaller sum. Hence the money gained will help pay for the new building. However, in this situation, there would be many parents who feel that the new school is too far from their home and would prefer their children to attend the school that has been closed. Too late. What is more, when secondary enrolments increase again, in the mid - 1990's, there will be the need to build a third school, a cost that could have been avoided if the local education authority could have planned by restricting enrolments in the schools. Fielding also claims that under the procedure of artificial limits on enrolments very few parents were not getting a school of their choice, but after the closure of one of the schools and the building of another, there would be an increasing number of unhappy parents. (Fielding, 1987, page 23)

With arguments such as the one above by Fielding, the view that open enrolments will save government money is thrown open to question. Sams tries to shed some light on the issue in his article in *Education.* He attempts to link the monetary savings with the social cost of dissatisfied parents:

> If parental choice was paramount and money no object, there would be no problem. If spending the least amount of cash were the only consideration, again there would be no problem. The difficulty arises because we have two conflicting requirements and it is difficult to find the optimal solution. What we want to know is the marginal cost of a dissatisfied parent.
>
> (Sams, 1987, page 131)

5.5 The Social Arguments

No significant educational changes can be implemented without a corresponding effect on the wider community. Included in the debate on the social consequences of open enrolment are, firstly, the consequences for the child and their family directly involved in the selection process and, secondly, the consequences for the society as a whole. The third area that will be discussed in this section relates to the social continuity for those children involved.

The Child and the Family

A well argued case as to why the family should decide on the school a child should attend is put forward by Coons and Sugarman. They claim that:

> . . . . . the family is his most promising champion and a fit senior partner of the decision-making team.
> (Coons and Sugarman, 1978, page 53)

They also believe that the parents are the best people to be involved in the choice of school because it is they who are ultimately responsible:

> When a child's education is faulty today, who is hurt? In contemporary jargon, who is accountable? . . . . . Personal accountability of this kind is reserved for families.
> (Coons and Sugarman, 1978, page 58)

Patricia White in her attack of the Hillgate Group expresses concern over whether parents are the best people to choose a school for their own child. To make her point she cleverly uses quotations from the members of the group. For example, she quotes Scruton as saying that, " the number of hours that parents let their children watch television is one factor that has contributed to educational decline of recent years." A second quotation taken by White, also directly from Scruton, is as follows:

> The second important factor has been the increasing tendency of parents, busy in their separate employments, and influenced by the prevailing ideas of social welfare, to regard their children as only part of their responsibility.
> (White, 1988, page 196)

White goes on to make the point that while Scruton blames parents for two of the major

factors contributing to educational decline, he and the others in the Hillgate Group, claim that giving these same parents additional power will lead to an improvement in the quality of education they receive. Thus, she questions whether giving parents this power is in the best interest of their children. The implication being that many parents will not care enough to spend time choosing the best school for their children, while other parents who devote considerable time and effort to choosing a school, ironically described in *New Society* as "pushy parents", will have a higher success rate of receiving their preferred school. (New Society, 29th May 1987, page 3) Whether differences in these success rates occur and whether they are related to parents of different social status levels will be addressed in the analysis stage of this research

The Society as a Whole

The key issue at stake here is the extent to which parents have the right to have their children educated in a school which contains other children with similar backgrounds, or whether the school should be considered to be a 'melting pot' of people from different backgrounds. In other words should the there be a deliberate attempt to mix races and social classes, using the schools as a vehicle, or should segregation by class and race continue to be an integral part of the English way of life. In addressing this issue it is worth noting that the importance placed upon class structure is a special characteristic of English society, which is not as prevalent in most other western societies. Denis Lawton, a prolific writer on education, defines the characteristic as "snob appeal", and claims that, "it is more important in the UK than in most other countries, and should not be under-estimated". (Lawton, 1989, page 106)

An example of the desire for racial segregation was a case where white parents did not want to enrol their children in a school which contained 85% Asian students. This occurred at Dewsbury in 1987. In order to avoid having their children educated in the same school as Asians, 23 parents withdrew their children from the school for nearly a year. (Martin, 1989, page 95)

However, much more is written in the literature about the classification of schools according to the 'social class' of the students, or at least of their families. As expected this area is full of emotional statements but nevertheless raises some valid issues in the debate, especially in the context of English society.

There is no acknowledgement by the Government of the class issues involved in parental choice. Neither is there very much written elsewhere, which expresses the point of view that schools should play their part in maintaining the class structure that has been a significant part of English society for many years. The lack of official statements putting this case, by the government, could be due to the unpopularity of such comments with many electors. The lack of articles by other authors is more difficult to explain. As may be expected, the closest to a supportive article comes from Roger Scruton, who was one member of the Hillgate Group:

> It is true that equality of opportunity leads to inequality of outcome. But this lies in the nature of things. An equality achieved by preventing the more able pupils from advancing benefits no-one. Obviously this issue is deep and philosophical. But it is the great issue of the day. The anti elitism and egalitarianism, which have played so large a part in entrenching the present educational values are now widely questioned. In our view elites are a necessary outcome of education.
>
> (Scruton, 1987, page 20)

Of the many writers who are opposed to the continuation of England's class structure, members of the Labour Party are prominent. One Labour Member of Parliament, David Blunkett, expressed deep concern about the effects of parental choice. In an article about the need to reduce parental choice of schools, which appeared in the Times Educational Supplement Blunkett offers the following warning:

> If we are not to see an even more divided society emerging in the next few years, reinforcing all the present predominance of selfishness and greed, we are going to have to move swiftly.
>
> (Blunkett, 1987, page 4)

It is interesting to note that nothing has moved swiftly, and indeed parental choice has been increased since Blunkett's article. Others to write on this issue include David Lipsey, the editor of *New Society*, a journal with a tendency to take a left wing point of view. He is very critical of the Government on the issue of social class and its association with education. In an editorial in 1987, the journal claims that the then Prime Minister was a supporter of a divided society:

> Which suits Maggie perfectly. For it is a logical introduction to the elitist society she favours. . . . . parental choice indeed. Mrs. Thatcher has realized that to

> consolidate her dream society she must go back to the schools
>
> (Lipsey, 1987, page 3)

This notion that schools could be used to achieve particular social ends was also pointed out by a Leeds Headmaster, when he wrote:

> . . . . . what happened was a form of social selection. While it dominates other considerations, schools will both mirror and extend social divisions. . . . . that the Government's emphasis on parental choice was a con trick. It had nothing to do with parent power and everything to do with stopping the LEAs ridding the state sector of elitist education.
>
> (Spooner, 1987, page 320)

Caroline St. John-Brooks highlights the selection process and its role in class differentiation, in a subsequent edition of *New Society*, when she asserts that:

> The bright, articulate and ambitious parents of all classes will be the winners. But what will happen to the rest?
> (St. John-Brooks, 1987, page 22)

It is necessary to consider the processes by which parents express their preferences, and then the way the schools are allocated by local education authority officers. Under Section 6 of the 1980 Education Act local education authorities are required to make arrangements for parents to express their choice of schools and for the parents to give reasons for their preferences. In many local education authorities, these reasons, written by the parents, form the sole basis for deciding whether or not a child should be allocated to the school of their first choice.

The point made in the concluding paragraphs of Chapter 2, and worthy of repetition here, is that the grammar school system which operated across the country until the mid 1960's selected students for the selective grammar schools on the basis of an examination that all 11 year olds sat. It could be argued that the present, parental choice system, selects students for pseudo grammar schools on the basis of a test that their parents sit, namely the written response to the request to provide reasons. These written responses vary greatly in quality and quantity. The extent to which the educational level and the social status of parents determines the success in gaining their preferred school will also be addressed in the analysis stage of this study.

Continuity of Schooling

Another issue which affects individual children and grows out of the freedom of parental choice, is that of continuity from primary to secondary school. There are disadvantages, at least in the short term, when children from the same primary school transfer to many secondary schools and lose the security of transferring with their friends. In his report on schooling in inner London, David Hargreaves states that:

> . . . . . the commitment to parental choice of secondary school leads secondary schools to have an unusually high number of 'feeder' primary schools, 30 to 40 (or even more) being fairly common.
>
> (Hargreaves, 1984, page 24)

Similar figures are given by Dudley Fiske for the Manchester area:

> The difficulties of continuity from primary school to secondary school are illustrated by looking at the number of contributory primary schools to each comprehensive school for the 1975 intake. This varies from 57 to 15, with 15 out of the 28 comprehensive schools taking children from 40 or more primaries.
>
> (Fiske, 1978, page 71)

Although this was data from 1975, it should be pointed out that Manchester had already had parental choice in place for some time. These figures, which indicate that in any given secondary school intake there are students from a large number of primary schools, not only have implications for the continuity of the students' social setting but also for the continuity of their learning.

5.6 Conclusion

There are numerous reasons put forward in favour of and against the right of parents to choose a school for their children. This concluding section will summarize these reasons but concentrate mainly on some of the consequences of parental choice.

Firstly, because not everyone will be successful in gaining their preferred school, what could happen is that some of the people the politicians were trying to appease may become more disillusioned with the education system than they were previously.

Secondly, severe doubt is expressed over whether the monetary savings that the government achieves, to coincide with falling rolls, will match their expectations. Finally, it will still be some time, if ever, before there is evidence which supports the theory that the quality of education has improved as a result of the introduction of open enrolment.

Ashworth, et. al. argue that parental choice is all about selecting a school of an approved standard, (Ashworth, et. al., 1988, page 14) and that open enrolment will only result in efficiency if parents know what is best for themselves. The definition of 'best' will always mean different things to different people and so schools are left in the unenviable task of trying to do what Abraham Lincoln said couldn't be done; that is to please all of the people all of the time.

Overall there appears to be little, if any, valid evidence which indicates any advantages in giving parents the right to choose a school for their children. There is no proof that standards are improved, or that monetary savings, that are above those that could be achieved in other ways, are made. Perhaps the two major outcomes of parental choice are that it takes the pressure off of the Central Government when schools are closed, and that it helps to maintain the traditional social class structure that pervades many aspects of British life. Parental choice may, therefore, be more about politics and social engineering, than it is about education.

CHAPTER 6

The Factors That Influence Parental Choice

6.1 Introduction

Many authors, especially over the last decade, have written about the factors that influence parents when selecting a school for their children. Some have simply written about what they believe the factors are, without any research backing. These include Packer (1969), Kemble (1972), Taylor (1981), The Home and School Council (1983), Itzin (1985), O'Connor (1986), and Martin (1989). Others have written about the influential factors as a result of some research that they had conducted. These include Elliott (1982), Mortimore (1984), Steward (1985), Stillman and Maychell (1986a), Petch (1986), Walker (1986), Kent Education Authority (1988), Hunter (1989) and West and Varlaam (1989).

This chapter will commence with a review of each of the above authors, first the unresearched works, and then the research findings. Following each group, an attempt will be made to combine the factors listed to provide a composite view of the factors that influence parents when choosing a school. The final Section of this Chapter will deal with the information that parents seek and/or use to help make their decision about the schools they choose.

6.2 The Views of Authors

One of the earliest writers to offer advice to parents about selecting a school for their children was Edwin Packer in 1969. It was at this stage that some local authorities were moving towards parental choice of schools as they dismantled the grammar school selection process, even though the legislation requiring them to do so was still seven years off. Packer's comments, although unresearched, were appropriate and useful. For example he warns prospective parents about some of the tricks of the game:

> Official prospectuses tell only what the school authorities want to be known, and there may be things they don't know. . . . . Opinions of other parents with children at the school can be sought, but bear in mind what suits their children will not necessarily suit yours.
>
> (Packer, 1969, Section 53)

Packer then proceeds to list ten areas that any parent should consider when making a decision about the suitability of a school for their child. These include:

* Academic standards.
* Staff relationships, qualifications and ratios.
* Buildings.
* Discipline and rules.
* Atmosphere.
* Social graces.
* Sports and leisure activities.
* Arts.
* Religious instruction.
* Child's preferences.

(Packer, 1969, section 54)

In his book titled *Give Your Child a Chance,* Bruce Kemble mentions the factors listed by parents taking part in a survey. He gives no details of what questions were asked, which parents were asked nor how many parents were asked, so it is not appropriate to list the factors identified by Kemble as resulting from significant research. The eleven factors listed by Kemble are as follows:

* School's academic record.
* Access to higher education.
* Training and qualification of staff.
* Facilities such as laboratories, workshops and subject rooms.
* Head's personality.
* Accessibility from home.
* School's attitude to discipline.
* Size of classes.
* Social class composition.

* Single-sexed or mixed.
* Denominational or not.

(Kemble, 1972, page 126 and 127)

Rather than give advice, Felicity Taylor (1981) suggests to parents who read her book, that all she can do:

> . . . . . is offer a series of points worth considering. What you make of them is up to you.
>
> (Taylor, 1981, page 18)

She then proceeds to list the following criteria, upon which parents should make their decision:

* Communication with parents.
* Partnership with parents.
* School staff, stability and ratios.
* School organization, including ability grouping and co-educational nature of the school.
* Uniforms, rules and discipline.
* Religious education.
* Out of school activities.
* Future plans, including local education authority reorganization.

(Taylor, 1981, page 18)

The Home and School Council, also reacted to the 1980 Education Act by publishing a book to give parents advice on how to identify a good school and how to choose one. After providing their personal definition of a 'good' school, they highlight the following characteristics of secondary schools to help parents with their choice:

* Size of school.
* Pastoral arrangements.
* Internal organization, including how students are grouped.
* Teaching organization, including the number of teachers that any student would have.

* The buildings.
* The curriculum
* Choices and options.
* Examinations; which examinations are taken and by which students.
* Out of school activities.
* Career education and guidance.
* Homework policy.
* Uniform.

(Home and School Council, 1983, page 5)

In her lengthy book titled *How to Choose a School,* Catherine Itzin devotes a chapter to what she believes are each of the major areas that parents should consider when choosing a school. These chapters are headed in the following way:

* The curriculum.
* Teaching methods.
* Academic standards.
* Equal opportunities.
* Discipline.
* Staff attitudes (including relationships with students).

(Itzin, 1985, page vi to ix)

In yet another of the books published to help parents with the education of their children, Maureen O'Connor, includes a section on the factors she considers important in the selection of a secondary school:

* Size of school.
* Ability grouping.
* Discipline.
* Standards (including examination results).
* Technical and vocational educational opportunities.
* Pastoral care.
* Home school relationship.

(O'Connor, 1986, page 177)

O'Connor, unlike the other authors mentioned above, continues by adding that parents

should not read too much into examination results:

> Exam results cannot therefore be taken at face value, and particular care should be taken in comparing one school with another without knowing something about the school's intake, and about its policy on entering children for examinations.
>
> (O'Connor, 1986, page 171)

Finally, Charles Martin provides the following list for parents to consider:

* Buildings and atmosphere.
* A stable system of support.
* Accessibility of headteacher and staff.
* A balanced curriculum.
* A variety of teaching methods.
* Individualized understanding and attention.
* Contact with the wider community.
* Adequate career advice.
* Good communications between teachers and pupils, and between teachers and parents.

(Martin, 1989, page 82)

Each of the above sets of factors or considerations are biased by the author's particular point of view about what is important when selecting a school. This is not a criticism because, after all, this is what authors do. However readers should be careful not to confuse these suggested factors with those that have been derived from thorough research. Nevertheless, the factors that are commonly mentioned by these authors are often the ones that are found, in the research, to be the factors that parents actually consider when choosing a school. A comparison of the views of these authors and the results of the researchers can be found in Section 6.5.

Only Kemble, from the authors mentioned above, placed his factors in what he claimed to be an order of importance. Therefore it is unreasonable to add the respective positions of the factors to determine an overall order of importance. However, it is worth noting that some factors appear in almost all of the lists while others appear in only one or two. The following table summarizes all of the reasons given by two or more of the authors together with their popularity among the authors. It will be interesting to

compare these with those found in the research.

Factors to Consider	Author						
	EP	BK	FT	HCS	CI	MO'C	CM
Academic standards, examination results and which students are permitted to sit which exams	*	*		*	*	*	
Discipline and rules	*	*	*		*	*	
Staff relationships, qualifications and student ratio	*	*	*		*		
Buildings and facilities	*	*		*			*
Pastoral care arrangements				*		*	*
Internal organization, including how students are grouped			*	*		*	
Curriculum				*	*		*
Religious education	*	*	*				
Communication with parents			*			*	*
Size of school				*		*	
Out of school activities			*	*			
Career education and guidance				*			*
Atmosphere	*						*
Teaching methods					*		*
Single-sex or mixed		*	*				
School uniform			*	*			

Table 6.1: A summary of factors that authors have advised parents to consider when choosing a school for their child. The author's details are listed below.

EP = Packer Edwin, 1969, section 54

BK = Kemble Bruce, 1972, page 127

FT = Taylor Felicity, 1981, page 18

HSC = Home and School Council, 1983, page 5

CI = Itzin Catherine, 1985, page iv to ix

MO'C= O'Connor Maureen, 1986, page 177

CM = Martin Charles, 1989, page 82

From the above table it can be seen that academic standards or good examination results

and good discipline were both mentioned by five of the writers, while good staff relationships and good buildings and facilities were listed by four of them. Those items listed by only one of the authors have been omitted from the summary table. This table will be compared to a similar table for the research findings in Section 6.4.

6.3 The Findings of Researchers

Some headteachers have, from time to time, collected information from their parents about what the parents expect from the school or what the parents are looking for in the secondary school that they choose. While these surveys have local interest and are useful to particular schools they are generally too small to have any wider applicability and therefore have only marginal interest in the parental choice debate.

However, during the last decade there have been nine major pieces of research completed in Britain. These include five pieces of research carried out by researchers in the Research and Statistics Branch of the Inner London Education Authority; Mortimore (1984), Steward (1985), Walker (1986), Hunter (1989), and West and Varlaam (1989). Other research has been conducted by Elliott as part of the Cambridge Accountability Projects in 1982, Stillman and Maychell in a large study for the National Foundation for Educational Research in 1986, Alison Petch in Scotland in 1986 and the Kent Education Authority in 1988. Each of theses studies will now be examined in more detail.

Research by Elliott (1982)

Elliott's study involved 32 parents who attended an 'Evening for New Parents' held at a secondary school in 1980. The sample is small and could easily be biased because, as Elliott puts it:

> . . . . . a formal evening for new parents is likely to attract more middle class parents.
>
> (Elliott, 1982, page 41)

Nevertheless, Elliott's research was the one of the first of its kind to be published, and while it is difficult to draw any conclusions, his work did provide valuable information for future researchers. The parents were asked to say whether given factors were;

very important, important, or not important, influences on their selection of a secondary school for their child. The ten factors cited the most often by parents as ' very important' or 'important' are provided in Table 6.2.

Factor	Percentage of parents
Provides a balanced, all round education	67
Children generally are happy at the school	42
Our child wanted to go to the school	35
Curriculum caters for child's personal, social as well as academic level	34
Parents can easily approach head and staff	33
A personal rather than impersonal atmosphere	31
The headmaster will remain for some time	30
It is the nearest school	28
The teachers care for the children as individuals	25
The school is well managed and efficient	21

Table 6.2: List of factors cited by parents as important or very important when choosing a school for their child. Results are taken from the research by Elliott.
(Elliott, 1982, page 40)

These findings are, by Elliott's own admission, in the main from middle class parents. This was an impression gained from talking with the parents and not due to any attempt to measure the social class of the parents involved.

Research by Mortimore (1984)

This study obtained responses from 216 parents in the former Inner London Education Authority, over six times as many as Elliott's study. Parents were asked to state the two most important reasons for choosing the school that they did. Unlike Elliott's study, Mortimore posed an open question and did not provide a list of factors from which the parents were asked to choose. The reason given by Mortimore for asking this style of question was:

> These questions were asked in order to ascertain the factors relevant to parent's choice and to enable

> comparisons to be made with earlier work (Elliott, 1981).
>
> (Mortimore, 1984, page 49)

In Mortimore's survey there were ten reasons that were mentioned by more than ten percent of the parents. These are listed in the following table:

Factor	Percentage of parents
Close to home	33
Good reputation	31
Relations at school	29
Well disciplined	23
Single-sex	20
Recommended by others	19
Church school	18
Child's friends going to school	16
Easy access from home	11
Child wanted to go to school	10

Table 6.3: List of factors most frequently cited by parents as important when choosing a school for their child. Results are taken from the research by Mortimore.
(Mortimore, 1984, page 49)

Mortimore also found that there were no significant differences between the parents of boys and girls as far as their choice of school was concerned, but did note that:

> More working class parents than middle class parents selected their child's school because it was single sex (24% v. 8%).
>
> (Mortimore, 1984, page 49)

Research by Steward (1985)

Steward's research was the second of five research studies conducted by the Inner London Education Authority on parental choice of secondary schools. Like Mortimore, Steward asked parents to list what they regarded as the most important factors when selecting a secondary school. For this survey, 1650 questionnaires were distributed to parents in

48 primary schools within the Inner London Education Authority. Fifty-one percent of the questionnaires were completed and returned. Steward lists the seven most important reasons as judged by the percentage of parents who listed them. Parents were not restricted to just two reasons as was the case with Mortimore's study and some parents listed as many as five and six factors. The results are provided in Table 6.4.

Factor	Percentage of parents
Child's choice	19
Reputation for discipline	19
Good examination results	12
Easy to get to	10
Facilities	6
Siblings at same school	5
School well organized	5

Table 6.4: List of factors most frequently cited by parents as important when choosing a school for their child. Results are taken from the research by Steward.
(Steward, 1985, page 4)

Research by Stillman and Maychell (1986)

This is the most comprehensive study of parental choice of secondary school that has been published in England. It involved the parents of students who had just transferred to secondary school and parents of students in their last year of primary school. The parents and students involved spanned four local education authorities. Over 2700 questionnaires were completed by parents of children who changed from primary to secondary schools over the summer of 1984. As well as seeking information from the parents on the factors that they thought were important, Stillman and Maychell also collected information which would enable them to divide the sample on the basis of social class.

Stillman and Maychell gave no prompting to the parents and simply asked "What things were most important to you when choosing a school? Please write down no more than five points." (Stillman and Maychell, 1986b, page 5) The ten most popular responses, with the associated percentage of parents, are listed in the following table:

Factor	Percentage of parents
Good standards of education, exam results and academic record	52.1
Good Discipline	38.0
Short distance/close	27.7
Good reputation/well recommended	16.9
Wide choice of subjects/options/broad curriculum	14.8
Good facilities	11.8
Easy to get to/accessible/safe journey	9.4
Child wants to go there	8.2
Easy travelling/transport free or provided	7.5
Denominational	7.5

Table 6.5: List of factors most frequently cited by parents as important when choosing a school for their child. Results are taken from the research by Stillman and Maychell.
(Stillman and Maychell, 1986a, page 198 to 202)

This study considered how the important factors listed by the parents, differed for different family characteristics. They found that there were no significant differences in the factors listed by parents of boys and those listed by parents of girls. Stillman and Maychell also found that the level of education and occupation of the parents had a slight effect on both the number of school visits and brochures that were read and on how well they knew their child's primary school teacher. However, this difference was not apparent when parents were asked how useful the information was that they had gained.

Even though they collected some data that could have been used to measure social status, Stillman and Maychell did not analyse the reasons given by the parents for choice of school, in terms of the education level or occupation of the parents. However, when comparing the parents reasons from each of the four local education authorities, they did note which of the authorities had more highly educated parents with better jobs.

Stillman and Maychell also looked at the percentage of students who attended the secondary school closest to their home. They found that approximately 38% of children

with fathers in the highest job category attended the closest school to their home, while 77% of children whose fathers were in the lowest job category attended the closest school. They also concluded that "when the terminal education age was considered, the results showed that the likelihood of children attending the nearest school to their home decreased from 70% to 49% as the age at which the fathers terminated their education rose from less than 15 years to over 21 years of age." (Stillman and Maychell, 1986a, page 90 to 91). Similar results were found when the mother's job and terminal education age were considered apart from the difficulty that arises with the job classification of women who work in the home.

These results provide clear evidence that the more educated parents and those with the better jobs (these are largely the same) are much more likely to seek out a school, whereas the less educated parents are more likely to choose the nearest school.

Research by Petch (1986)

This research is different to the others discussed in this Chapter because it was carried out in Scotland. It must be pointed out that in Scotland, at the time of Petch's data collection, parents were allocated the district school and then had to apply if they wanted their child to attend a different school. Petch collected data from approximately 600 parents, who had applied for their child to attend a different secondary school, by interviewing them in their homes. The parents came from three different regions in Scotland. Although Petch used a structured interview technique, she imposed a tight time schedule and therefore didn't get fine detail or the complexities that this method could have delivered. In fact a questionnaire may have been as useful under the circumstances.

In her research, Petch examined the reasons why parents rejected the district school. Firstly parents were asked the open-ended question and then they were given a list of possible factors and asked to choose the three most important. She concludes that the three most frequently given reasons across all schools were as follows:

* Poor reputation for discipline
* The district school was less convenient to get to than the selected alternative
* Poor education provided at the district school

(Petch, 1986, page 31)

Then Petch provides the three most frequent reasons given by parents for choosing the school that they did:

* Siblings attend the school.
* More convenient location.
* Child's friends attend the school.

(Petch, 1986, page 34)

These results differ substantially from those of Elliott, Mortimore, Steward and Stillman and Maychell. This could be explained by the fact that Scottish parents have a different outlook on education or it could be the way the question was framed. It appears more likely, however, that the situation in Scotland is different because students are first allocated to their district school and then parents apply to send their children to a different school. In short, asking parents why they chose a particular school seems to provide a different set of answers to when the same parents are asked the more general question; what are you looking for in a school for your child?

Research by Walker (1986)

Walker specifically looked at the views of parents after transfer. He distributed over 1400 questionnaires to parents and slightly more than 60% of parents completed and returned them. The questionnaire sought to determine how satisfied parents were with different aspects of the transfer to secondary school and with the school itself. The parents' level of satisfaction as found by Walker is shown in Table 6.6.

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Mixed views	Dissatisfied
26%	51%	17%	6%

Table 6.6: The level of parental satisfaction with their child's secondary schooling. Results are taken from the research by Walker.

(Walker, 1986, page 10)

An interesting result of Walker's research was his comparison between the satisfaction levels of parents who gained their first preference for their child and those who did not.

> There was no evidence that parents who had not gained a place at their first preference school were any less likely to be satisfied.
>
> (Walker, 1986, page 10)

Although Walker's research doesn't consider the factors that influenced the parents when expressing their preference, his results do have some bearing on this study in that they indicate that once a child is in a secondary school over 75% of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with the school, whether it is their first preference or not. This raises the question as to whether any more parents are happy with their child's secondary school as a result of having the chance to express their preferences. Indications are that providing parental choice may not result in making parents more satisfied with the government school sector.

Research by the Kent Education Authority (1988)

The Kent Education Authority study was conducted by the Authority and included the views of parents, recent school leavers and employers. This review of their work will concentrate on the views of parents, but will acknowledge the views of the other two groups. In the Kent research, some 498 parents were asked to state their expectations of a good secondary school. The ten most frequent responses, together with the associated percentage of parents, are given in Table 6.7.

The comparisons between the expectations of parents and those of school leavers and employers produce some interesting questions. The most frequently stated expectation among school leavers was 'good teaching and teachers' (42% of school leavers), the most frequent for employers was 'teach the basics' (54% of employers) and the parents' most frequent response was 'good education and tuition' (55%). This leaves schools with an extremely difficult task. In some authorities, schools are also expected to please the local education authority's advisors and administrators. Schools must ask themselves the question whether the expectations of students, employers or local education authority personnel should have an influence over what the school aims to provide. It is apparent that they can not be all things to all people and must decide who it is that they are to satisfy and to concentrate on the requirements of that particular group. The parental choice legislation makes it difficult to avoid the decision that the views of parents are the most important, because their decisions will, in the long term, determine the future

viability of the school. Once the school has decided which group or groups they will aim to satisfy, they must convey their intention to all concerned and get themselves out of the bind of trying to satisfy all of the people all of the time.

Factor	Percentage of Parents
Good education / tuition	55
Good discipline	41
Good teaching / teachers	17
Good exam results	13
A rounded education	10
Teach the basics	10
Caring attitude	10
Preparation for life after school	9
Wide choice of subjects	8
Good facilities	5

Table 6.7: Factors parents expect to be present in a 'good' school. Results are taken from the research by the Kent Education Authority.
(Kent Education Authority, 1988, page 7)

Research by Hunter (1989)

This research was conducted at the Research and Statistics Branch of the Inner London Education Authority in 1988, the same year as the study in Kent. Hunter chose to interview parents using a structured interview technique carried out in the parent's home in the hope that it would provide richer, and more reliable information. There was no evidence presented to show whether this increased reliability was achieved. The final sample was made up of approximately 16 parents from each of 18 schools, and in total 289 parents were interviewed. Hunter asked parents which aspects of secondary school were important. She first asked parents without any prompting and then asked again with a list of 26 school characteristics in front of the parents to which they could refer. The results of responses given by parents without prompting are given in Table 6.8.

Factor	Percentage of parents
Discipline good/children well-behaved	46.5
Proximity to home	42.3
Emphasis on good exam results	38.8
Easy travel/accessible	33.6
Single-sex (boys or girls only)	25.9
Well managed school /head has good reputation	21.3
Church school (denominational)	18.5
Caring/understanding/friendly teachers	18.2
Good choice of subjects	17.5
Special emphasis on practical areas of curriculum e.g. sports, art, music, science	16.8

Table 6.8: List of factors most frequently cited by parents as important when choosing a school for their child. Parental responses are without prompting by the interviewer. Results are taken from the research by Hunter.

(Hunter, 1989, page 10)

Hunter does not give the corresponding figures for when the parents were prompted by the list of possible characteristics, so this makes any comparisons difficult. She does, however, provide a list of the combined frequencies of responses by parents both with and without prompting. It is therefore possible to deduce the frequency of response after prompting for some of the characteristics but because many of the characteristics appear in one table only, it is not possible to compare all of the characteristics that are mentioned. Nevertheless, it is clear that discipline was the most important factor, both without prompting (46.5%) and after prompting (84.7%). Once the prompting had taken place the number of parents who thought that 'caring/understanding/friendly teachers' was an important characteristic grew from 18.2% to 79.2%. (Hunter, 1989, page 10 and 11).

Unfortunately, Hunter gives no indication as to whether or not she thought that the provision of a list for parents to choose from, gave the more accurate results. Whatever the case they certainly yielded different results. The responses without prompting could provide the first impressions, and perhaps more strongly held views. On the other hand

the responses after prompting could yield results that are more considered and complete. Given that the decision as to which school they should choose for their children is one that attracts a lot of parent time and thought, it could be argued that, in making a decision about their own child, parents are more likely to react similar to the way they did after the prompting with the list of possible characteristics.

Research by West and Varlaam (1989)

As a follow-up to the study by Hunter, which quizzed parents of children who had just entered a secondary school, the Inner London Education Authority also commissioned a study of parents who were about to express their preferences. Thus it interviewed 72 parents with children in the final year of a primary school. As with the Hunter study, parents were first asked to list the most important factor affecting their choice of secondary school. The ten most frequent responses from the 72 parents of this study are listed in Table 6.9.

Factor	Percentage of parents
Child wants to go	71
Discipline good/children well-behaved	67
Emphasis on good exam results	54
Easy travel/accessible	53
Proximity to home	42
Special emphasis on practical area of curriculum e.g. sports, art, music, science	42
Child's friends go there	39
Well managed school /head has good reputation	38
Good choice of subjects	33
Caring/understanding/friendly teachers	31
Church school (denominational)	31

Table 6.9: List of factors most frequently cited by parents as important when choosing a school for their child. Parental responses are without prompting by the interviewer. Results are taken from the research by West and Varlaam.

(West and Varlaam, 1989, page 9)

West and Varlaam repeated the question, but this time giving parents access to a list of 26 possible factors. Then, as did Hunter, they provide a table of the combined frequencies of responses for both the prompted and the unprompted question. West and Varlaam report that eleven separate factors were mentioned by more than 85% of the parents interviewed. These range from 'good/competent/dedicated teachers' (mentioned by 99% of parents) to 'easy to get to' (mentioned by 85% of the parents). This data, therefore, is not very discriminating and hence its value reduced. It is an indication that many parents want a great deal from the school they choose for their child. Probably more than any school can deliver. Again, schools could easily find themselves in the impossible situation of each parent expecting different things from the school, and together wanting far more than the school can reasonably achieve. The school's planning documents provide it with an ideal vehicle to clearly state its goals and performance indicators and hence take control over the multiplicity of wishes of the parents. After all, as West and Varlaam show, there is almost nothing that is not wanted by some of the parents, and that some of the qualities wanted by some parents are incompatible with those wanted by other parents.

6.4 A Summary of the Research Findings

The nine pieces of research discussed in this review provide similar, and yet remarkably varied, results. Because of the different way the questions were framed, the use of prompted and unprompted responses and the variation in sample sizes, it seems unwise to attempt to combine the results of all of the research to derive an overall list of important factors. However, it would be useful to place all of the factors into one table and to indicate which researchers found them to be frequent responses of the parents that they interviewed. Table 6.10 includes all of those factors which have been listed by more than two of the researchers discussed in this Section.

From Table 6.10 it can be seen that the research by West and Varlaam identified each of the nine most commonly identified factors while Hunter identified eight out of the nine most commonly found factors. Care must be taken here, because of the fact that four of the eight pieces of research listed in the table above, including that of West and Varlaam and that of Hunter, took place in the Inner London Education Authority. This may have biased the combined results in favour of these parents. On the other hand, Stillman and Maychell's study didn't involve schools from the Inner London Education Authority, but it

was by far the largest and most comprehensive of the studies.

Factor	Researchers							
	JE	PM	GS	S&M	AP	KEA	JH	W&V
School accessible and safe journey	*	*	*	*		*	*	
Discipline and reputation for good discipline		*	*	*		*	*	*
Children wanted to go to the school	*	*	*	*				*
Wide choice of subjects	*			*		*	*	*
The nearest school	*	*		*			*	*
Good examination results			*	*		*	*	*
Good and caring teachers	*					*	*	*
The school is well managed/good head	*		*				*	*
Denominational		*		*			*	*
Good facilities			*	*		*		
Siblings and relations attend school		*	*		*			

Table 6.10: Combined results of eight of the major research studies on parental choice of school in Britain.

The authors details are listed below.

JE = Elliott J, 1982, page 40.

PM = Mortimore P, 1984, page 49.

GS = Steward G, 1985, page 4.

S&M= Stillman and Maychell, 1986a, page 198 to 202.

AP = Petch A, 1986, page 34.

KEA = Kent Education Authority, 1988, page 7.

JH = Hunter J, 1989, page 10.

W&V= West and Varlaam, 1989, page 9.

6.5 A Comparison of the Research with the Views of Authors

In this section a comparison will be made between the factors that authors write about as

the important factors for parents when selecting a school, and those factors that have been shown to be important as a result of research. For this purpose the following table will include those factors that the authors cited most frequently, as listed in Table 6.1 and the factors most commonly identified in the research to be of importance to parents as listed in Table 6.10. In each case the nine most frequently stated factors are listed.

The important factors according to the authors	The important factors according to the researchers
* Academic standards, examination permitted to sit which exams	* School accessible and safe journey
* Discipline and rules	* Discipline and reputation for good discipline
* Staff relationships, qualifications and student ratio	* Children wanted to go to the school
* Buildings and facilities	* Wide choice of subjects
* Pastoral care arrangements	* The nearest school
* Internal organization, including results and which students are how students are grouped	* Good examination results
* Curriculum	* Good and caring teachers
* Religious education	* The school is well managed/good head
* Communication with parents	* Denominational

Table 6.11: A summary of the factors most frequently cited by parents as important when choosing a school for their child. Included are the nine most frequent factors from the research and the nine most frequent factors from the views of authors.

The differences are obvious, but it is worth noting that only two of the top nine factors from the research occurred in the top nine factors from the views of the authors. These were, discipline, examination results and staff student relationships. Although authors are simply listing factors that they think parents should consider it is surprising that their lists contain so few of the factors that parents do actually consider important. However, it is an author's prerogative to express their views, and because parental choice is one of the more contentious issues of recent years it will therefore attract a fair share of comment. Whether or not the views of authors on this subject are correct, is beside the point, because many anxious parents read what they say.

6.6 Information Available to Parents

The 1980 Education Act requires schools and local education authorities to publish information about individual schools. The information required to be published includes examination results at GCSE and A-level and the size of the school intake but the Act does not exclude schools from publishing whatever else they want. This has resulted in all schools producing an annual school brochure, which in some cases consumes a great deal of time for its preparation. The other major source of information for parents comes from visits to the schools. Each school holds a formal 'open evening' to encourage parents to send their children to the school. As well as this, most schools welcome parents to visit during the school day to see the school in action. This is more difficult to manage on the part of the parents and so is not as popular as the open evening.

There can be no doubt that the quality of the decision as to which school to choose for a child depends to a large extent on the quality of the information gained to help make that decision. As well as the quality of the information it also depends on the ability of the parent to interpret the information. However the information provided by schools varies a great deal in format, quality and comprehensibility. This leaves the parent with a very difficult task of comparing the schools on the basis of differing information. In any case, as Barry Taylor warns:

> Objectivity is a scarce commodity in education, as elsewhere, and there is no substitute for parents' own investigation.
>
> (Taylor, 1983, page 72)

Even examination results, which are perhaps one of the more objective measures that schools provide and, a measure that is provided by all schools, are not that easy to compare as the following two quotes indicate.

> You can learn a great deal from the results of each school. A quick glance can show whether a school will give your child some chance of getting a reasonable GCSE or A-level pass in a particular subject.
>
> (Cox, Balchin and Marks, 1989, page 38)

> Publishing results may lead to comparisons, though these may be unfair since the schools may have very different types of intake.
>
> (Bullivant, 1977-78, page 22)

The claim by Cox, et. al. is unbelievable, to all but the most gullible parents. To estimate, from a published set of examination results, the chances of a particular child having success in a particular subject has occupied the minds of statisticians and educators for years. It is not at all a simple question and, if there is an answer, then it is far from easy to determine. The more reasonable statement by Bullivant, highlights the fact that intake variables must be considered if the parent wishes to determine the likely success of their own particular child. This identifies some of the difficulties associated with removing intake variations from the results in a way that still makes it possible, for the average parent, to compare the difference to an individual student that one school makes with the difference made by any other school.

This suggests yet another real difficulty facing parents. A thorough investigation of schools is a very time consuming and demanding exercise and many parents will not have the time nor inclination to pursue such an investigation.

Despite the difficulties in the interpretation of the information provided by schools and local education authorities, a number of researchers have examined the types of information that parents find useful and how such information is obtained.

Again it was Elliott, in the Cambridge Accountability Project study, who first wrote about the influential sources of information for parents. Elliott lists a number of sources but those which were considered influential by more than five percent of the parents questioned are listed in Table 6.12.

It is interesting to note that after the open day and the school brochure, the next four

sources were all from other people, none of whom had any specific knowledge of schools. The primary school headteacher and teachers came a long way behind with only 15% and 14% respectively, of parents seeing them as influential sources of information. What isn't discussed is, the reliability of the information gained from these other people.

Source of information	Percentage of parents
Meeting the teacher and looking around at open day	72
The contents of the brochure	70
Near neighbours who have, or had, children at the school	47
Social acquaintances at local clubs/societies who have, or had, children at the school	31
Working colleagues of mother who have, or had, children at the school	30
Working colleagues of father who have, or had, children at the school	21
The primary school headteacher	15
The primary school class teacher	14

Table 6.12: Percentage of parents who considered each source of information as influential or very influential in their choice of school. Results are taken from the research by Elliott.

(Elliott , 1982, page 38)

In her research for the Inner London Education Authority, Jan Hunter found similar results to Elliott, except that she did not include information from friends and acquaintances, as one of the options for parents to choose. The results she did obtain are listed below in Table 6.13.

Hunter does restrict her interest to the notion of usefulness and not the level of influence of each source of information. However, if Elliott's results are correct, then Hunter, by not including information gained from other people, has missed a significant set of sources which are influential and probably also useful.

Source of Information	Percentage of parents
Secondary school open day/evening	90.0
Secondary school brochures	78.0
Interview with primary school head	68.3
Divisional information booklet	63.3

Table 6.13: Percentage of parents who considered each source of information as influential in their choice of school. Results are taken from the research by Hunter.
(Hunter, 1989, page 9)

Similarly, Stillman and Maychell only quizzed parents about the usefulness of the formal sources of information. Their results indicated that school visits and open days were most useful (37% of parents), school brochures were next most useful (36% of parents) and published examination results were useful for only 34% of the parents. (Stillman and Maychell, 1986a, page 106 - 107). Again the informal sources such as acquaintances and friends were omitted from this study.

However Stillman and Maychell do include in their questionnaire a category titled, 'confirmed what you already felt'. Many parents thought that this aptly described the level of usefulness of the sources of information. Some 40% of parents thought that the school visit and school brochures, only confirmed what they already knew, while 47% of parents thought that the examination results only confirmed what they knew. Does this indicate that a large number of parents make their mind up first, based on the information from friends and acquaintances, and then seek out information to support their prejudices?

The latest, and final, research study on parental choice to be conducted by the Inner London Education Authority, by West and Varlaam, looked at the number of brochures read and the number of schools visited by parents, in order to assist them with their choice of schools. Their results indicate that 36% of parents don't read any school brochures and a further 29% only read one. (West and Varlaam, 1989, page 6). This indicated that, at most, about one-third of parents are genuinely trying to compare schools before making a decision. The figures for visits to schools are quite similar. Some 35% of parents didn't visit any schools, while another 35% visited only one. In

this case it is at most 30% of parents who are seeking official information upon which they are to make their decision. (West and Varlaam, 1989, page 7).

In conclusion it must be said that there is not a great deal of evidence to suggest that many parents seek out information on a number of schools and then compare these schools with a set of criteria that they are seeking in the school for their child. It seems more likely that parents make up their mind about the school for their child on the basis of hearsay and then seek out just enough information to confirm their decision. Barbara Bullivant, when writing on the dangers of parental choice said:

> Reasons may be sensible and acceptable, or may be based on false estimates of the schools, hearsay, nostalgia, prejudice or social desires which have little to do with education.
>
> (Bullivant, 1977-78, page 22)

Indications are that the latter of the reasons given by Bullivant might be more common than the former. Parental choice may 'have little to do with education'. It is hoped that this study will throw some light on this issue.

6.7 Conclusion

Included in this chapter are details of the views of authors and the findings of researchers. Following each section there is a summary which compares and contrasts their views and findings. These are clearly set out in the relevant tables and will not be reiterated in this conclusion.

Although the issue of parental choice of schools is very important and one that involves a great majority of parents with children of school age not a great deal of research has been conducted. Also the research that has been published has concentrated on the factors that parents feel are important in the school they desire for their child. Only Stillman and Maychell consider relationships between the factors parents cite and the gender of their child or the educational and occupational level of the parents. This study will specifically focus on these relationships.

The sources of information used by parents in making their choice of school have also been the basis of several research studies but the issue of how the influence of each

source varies for parents of girls and boys and how it varies for parents of different social status levels has not been adequately researched.

CHAPTER 7

Measuring Social Status

7.1 Introduction

In the literature on parental choice of school, which has been summarized in the previous chapters, there are numerous references to the part that the social status of the family plays in the education of children. Some authors who address this issue include, Lawton (1989), Green (1988), Scruton (1987), Blunkett (1987), Lipsey (1987), Spooner (1987), and St. John-Brooks (1987). Their views are discussed in more detail in Section 5.12. There is also a great deal of literature that addresses the issue of the social implications of different methods of allocating children to schools. These are outlined in Sections 5.10 and 5.11.

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to review the literature pertaining to social status, or social class, in order that the effects of social status on parental choice can be considered in the empirical part of this study.

This will not be a comprehensive review of all of the literature which addresses the issues of social status and social class, because such a task would be a thesis in itself. Perhaps the enormity of the task is best summarized by the notable sociologist, Giddens:

> Anyone who has the temerity to write about the theory of social class is immediately plunged into controversy by the way he approaches his subject - by the materials he chooses to consider and by what he ignores.
>
> (Giddens , 1973, page 15)

Notwithstanding these words of caution, the work of some of the key sociologists of recent times will be discussed in order to provide some background to the part of this study that considers the role that social status plays in the area of parental choice of schools.

In this chapter the term social status will be used to mean both social status and social

class. The term 'social status' is preferred because it doesn't imply that there exist discrete categories of people, called classes, to the same extent that the term 'social class' does. Further justification will be provided for this choice of words, later in this chapter.

The following section of this chapter will consider some of the definitions of social class and social status. Section 7.3 will examine what the literature has to say about the use of employment as an indicator of social status. The next section will consider some of the problems associated with the use of occupational measures to determine social status. Section 7.5 will then consider the use of other social indicators and this will be followed by a section on the use of composite measures of social status.

7.2 Definitions of Social Status and Social Class

Social status, or as it is more often called, social class, is an elusive and complex construct.

It is elusive in the sense that it is not possible to measure social status directly. Sociologists tend to measure other variables, often referred to as social indicators, that are related to social status and use these to represent the variable of social status. This is quite clearly enunciated by Carley in the following quotation:

> Unfortunately we are unable to measure well-being directly, since neither individuals nor countries carry convenient gauges of well-being. So surrogates for more direct measures of well-being are required. These surrogates may be termed social indicators - which are measures of an observable trait of a social phenomenon which establishes the value of a different unobservable trait or phenomena.
> This points up to two important characteristics of social indicators: they are *surrogates* and they are *measures*.
> (Carley, 1981, page 2)

Social status is also a complex construct, because it can mean different things to different people and hence is defined in many different ways in the literature. Most sociologists avoid defining social status at all but from what they write it is clear that some sociologists tend to think of social status as Carley does, in terms of social well-being, while other sociologists tend to link social status more directly to occupation.

This second view is evident in Ivan Reid's comprehensive book on social class in Britain, when he defines social class as:

> .....a grouping of people into categories on the basis of occupation.
>
> (Reid, 1989, page 6)

Reid's definition is more of an operational definition than an attempt to give meaning to the construct, but this is typical of British sociologists. Of course, unlike many other countries, Britain has a long history as a society based on a social class structure. Thus the notion of social status permeates British society and has a generally accepted meaning in the community. For the purpose of this study, social status will be linked to Carley's notion of 'well-being' and, because it has a generally accepted meaning within British society, a more theoretical definition will not be sought. The operational definition that will be used in this research, also based on Carley's notion of 'well-being', is that social status is the construct that social indicators measure. Exactly which indicators will be used in this study will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

One of the major points of disagreement among sociologists in the 1960's and 1970's was over whether or not social status was a categorical or continuous measure. Perhaps in the past, there was a time when the British people could be classified neatly into three social classes; the upper, middle and working class. However, since the industrial revolution and increasingly so in recent years, the boundaries between these classes have become blurred. This issue of whether social class is a categorical or continuous variable has been debated at length in the literature. Landecker describes these two points of view as "the *class structure* hypothesis and the *status continuum* hypothesis". (Landecker, 1976, page 174) Although his definitions of these two hypotheses relate to American society, they are relevant to British society and worth repeating here:

> The *class structure* hypothesis is represented by the familiar assumption that the status systems of American communities are composed of distinct structural units, described in terms of a limited number of "classes".
> Advocates of the *status continuum* hypothesis do not deny the presence of social stratification in the United States. They doubt, however, that it can be described by means of a few structural categories. Status differences in American Society are thought to be of a merely gradual character and to lack "natural breaks".
>
> (Landecker, 1976, page 174)

This does not constitute a disagreement about the dimension called social class but simply a difference of opinion over whether it is a discrete or continuous variable. Status continuum theorists claim that if there are no clear boundaries or agreed number of categories then the variable must be continuous. In a review of the writings of status continuum theorists, Abrahamson puts forward the more commonly accepted arguments to support their theory. He highlights the disagreement among researchers over the exact number of social classes in a given community. Abrahamson concludes that:

> The point is that there appear to be as many social classes as there are theorists or researchers.
>
> (Abrahamson, et. al., 1976, page 171)

The 'class structurists' use the works of Karl Marx, to justify their view that classes are real and discernible entities. In fact a case can be made for each point of view and, in practice, many who begin by treating social status as a continuous variable, end up by breaking it down into several categories to make the analysis easier to report.

7.3 Using Occupation as an Indicator of Social Status

Occupation is often used by researchers as the most effective, and sometimes the only, indicator of social status. This is more true of British sociologists than of their North American counterparts. In a review of the North American literature, Hall concludes that:

> These authors are saying that the occupation has become the most meaningful indicator for placement in the stratification system *and* that occupation is indicative of and closely related to other indicators, such as education or income, which might be used.
>
> (Hall, 1969, page 259)

Similar views are expressed by both Morgan and Reid in relation to research carried out in Britain:

> Classifications based on occupation have been by far the most common in Britain, but by no means universal.
>
> (Morgan, 1983, page 116)

> In British research, ... occupation is almost the sole criterion of social class which has been used. While

> British researchers have expressed some reservations about the use of this single factor, it appears to be accepted as a reasonable general-purpose tool for classifying people into social classes.
>
> (Reid, 1989, page 6)

One of the main reasons for this almost exclusive use of occupation as a social indicator has been the ready availability of an instrument. Since the early part of this century the Registrar General of the United Kingdom has produced a classification of occupation schedule, based on the census data which is collected every ten years. Although the data collected relates to occupation, it is directly linked by the Registrar General, with social class. This is explained in the following statement taken from the 1980 report of the Registrar General:

> Since the 1911 Census it has been customary, for certain analytical purposes, to arrange the large number of groups of the occupational classification into a smaller number of broad categories called Social Class as follows:
>
> I Professional, etc. occupations
> II Intermediate occupations
> III Skilled occupations
> (N) non-manual
> (M) manual
> IV Partly skilled occupations
> V Unskilled occupations
>
> (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1980, page x and xi)

It is no wonder that Duke and Edgell are annoyed by the lack of differentiation between social and occupational class in many British studies, when the Registrar General (whose classification system is most often used) does not distinguish between the two types of classification. Duke and Edgell claim that:

> There is a confusing and annoying tendency in the presentation of British empirical research to use the label '*social class*' when the scales employed are based on *occupational class* categories (i.e. the Registrar General's social classes).
>
> (Duke and Edgell, 1987, page 446)

Despite this confusion, its ready availability, and the fact that the Registrar General's classification was seen to have some official standing in the community, meant that it formed the basis of many of the government's statistical reports. This is supported by Brewer:

> This measure has been used extensively in government statistics and has been included in many studies of education and health changes as an indicator of socio-economic circumstances.
>
> (Brewer, 1986, page 132)

The other common instrument used by British sociologists to measure occupational status was a scale devised by Goldthorpe and Hope. (Goldthorpe and Hope, 1974) The authors acknowledge that this scale, often referred to as the Goldthorpe and Hope Scale, was itself based on the Registrar General's classification which is published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

> When we embarked on our work there existed only one such coding system specifically devised for the United Kingdom; and that was the system of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, which incorporates the index of some 20 000 occupation titles to which we have already referred. We decided therefore to adopt some version of this system as the basis for our scale.
>
> (Goldthorpe and Hope, 1974, page 19)

Needless to say, there are similarities between the scale of the Registrar General and the scale of Goldthorpe and Hope. Both scales are based on the concept of occupational prestige and both rank thousands of different occupations and then place them into groups to represent class groupings. Coxon and Jones define such a prestige scale in the following way:

> A prestige hierarchy is one in which some people acknowledge that they are socially inferior to others (though they try to imitate and associate with these superiors, imitation of course being a sincere form of flattery).
>
> (Coxon and Jones, 1978, page 24)

An occupational prestige scale is constructed by providing people with a list of occupations and asking them to either rate or rank them according to their perceived prestige. In the Goldthorpe and Hope study some 620 respondents were given a set of 20 occupations to rank. The 20 occupations given to each respondent varied, so that some 860 job titles could be surveyed. These responses were then analysed by computer to arrive at a scale which ranked all 860 job titles in order of prestige. (Goldthorpe and Hope, 1974, page 47)

The scale and the allocation of occupations to categories used in this study will be based on a combination of the work of the Registrar General and of Goldthorpe and Hope. This will be achieved by using the Registrar General's six categories of occupational class, together with a seventh category for those not in paid employment at the time of the data collection. Then against each class title will be a sample list of occupations that fit within that occupational class. These exemplar occupations will be taken from the list produced by Goldthorpe and Hope and published in their book. (Goldthorpe and Hope, 1974, pages 96 to 130)

7.4 Some Problems Associated with Occupational Scales

The literature on occupational and social class is full of problems associated with using measures of occupational prestige to represent social class. One set of problems is related to the inability of the measures to keep up to date with social changes.

The first of these is associated with the changes in the workforce. Between any two censuses, a time of ten years, there are many new occupations that were not included in the previous list. There are also many changes of role within occupations which do not change their basic title. Between each of the British censuses since 1921, the Registrar General's list of occupations has undergone significant changes. This problem is clearly expressed by Coxon and Davies in this sentence:

> The goal of constructing an entirely consistent, unchanging classification is, as we have repeatedly stressed, illusory: the occupational structure has changed considerably over time and this change shows every sign of accelerating as the job market changes and the centrality and relevance of the full-time job decreases.
>
> (Coxon and Davies with Jones, 1986, page 203)

This change in occupations over time makes it difficult to compare data from one census to the next. The list of occupations in Goldthorpe and Hope's scale is also becoming dated. A second difficulty is that both the Registrar General's and Goldthorpe and Hope's list of occupations and their relative position on the scale have been determined with male workers in mind. This is pointed out in the following extract from by Coxon and Davies:

> The traditional view of women in stratification studies is that they derive their class position from that of their

husbands.

(Coxon and Davies with Jones, 1986, page 206)

Recently, the need to also consider the occupation of the female has been accepted but how to classify married women, some of whom choose to work in paid employment and some of whom prefer to remain in the home, remains a problem. The relationship between the occupation and class of married women was the main question of a research project conducted by Abbott and Sapsford. Their two major conclusions were:

(i) that the class of their own occupation is not an important predictor of women's subjective class assignment, but that education is;
(ii) that different factors come into play depending on the relationship of one's own job to one's husband's.

(Abbott and Sapsford, 1986, page 546)

So despite the fact that "there has been no shortage of advocates for basing household class location on the male *head of household*" (Duke and Edgell, 1987, page 451), in this study the occupation of both male and female parent figures will be considered. This decision is supported by Duke and Edgell. When discussing the research of Erikson they conclude that:

> His (Erikson's) empirical evidence from Sweden corroborates that taking the occupation of both spouses into account explains more of the variation in family class position than merely taking one of the spouses (however defined).
>
> (Duke and Edgell, 1987, page 451)

A third major difficulty in the allocation of people to occupational classes is the question of how to classify the economically inactive. This includes people who are retired, disabled, unemployed, students as well as housewives. Again Duke and Edgell offer some sound advice:

> The case for classifying the economically inactive (wherever possible) by their previous class location is thus a strong one.
>
> (Duke and Edgell, 1987, page 454)

However, in practice, it is not always that simple as each of these economically inactive groups should be treated differently when assigning them to an occupational class. Retired workers would, perhaps, be best classified by the occupation in which they

were last involved. However, in this study where the adults being questioned are the parents of nine to eleven year olds the percentage of parents who have retired will be assumed to be negligible. For parents who are students or unemployed through disability, it is generally not possible to place them according to the occupation in which they were last involved. Again, it is not expected that there will be a significant number of students or disabled among the parents to be surveyed. For the other two groups, housewives and the unemployed who are seeking employment, Marsh proposes a different solution:

> . . . . . that occupation is less relevant for them, and turn instead to other classifications such as level of educational attainment.
>
> (Marsh, 1986, page 141)

Level of educational attainment and other measures of social status will be further considered in Section 7.5.

A final concern that is expressed in the literature and that may be relevant for this study is related to a difficulty of assigning people to an occupational group. There are of course a number of ways including interviewer allocation, self allocation and allocation by asking other people who know the person to be allocated. Each method has its own difficulties, but those relevant to this research are related to self allocation. The first difficulty is in providing a list of occupations which are sufficient for each respondent to make a reasonably accurate allocation without providing so much information that it will be confusing or simply not read. The second difficulty was outlined by Coxon and Davies, although they attribute the idea to Kahl, and relates to the validity of self allocation:

> People tend to enhance their own occupational position (occupational egoism).
>
> (Coxon and Davies with Jones, 1986, page 16)

So while sociologists continue to use occupational status to measure social status, it does have a number of shortcomings. It has not been possible to address each of them in this brief summary but those which are most relevant to this study have been discussed and noted. More and more sociologists are turning to other indicators to improve the reliability and validity of social status scales. It is now time to consider some of the other indicators that have been suggested and used by sociologists.

7.5 Other Indicators of Social Status

While occupation is undoubtedly the most often used indicator of social status perhaps the next two most frequently used indicators are education and income. Although these two indicators are reliable measures of social status, they are not often used alongside occupational status because they are usually highly correlated with it. This high level of correlation is explained by Albert Reiss Jr. in the following paragraph:

> Both individual income and educational attainment, which are used to measure socio-economic status, are known to be correlated with occupational ranks; and both can be seen as aspects of occupational status, since education is a basis for entry into many occupations, and for most people income is derived from occupation.
>
> (Reiss, 1961, page 83 and 84)

This relationship has been quantified by a number of sociologists. In their review of attempts to measure social status, Coxon and Davies cite some results of Otis Dudley Duncan, in the form of a regression equation. In the following extract, 'PI' stands for prestige increment and represents a measure of the prestige of an occupation as seen by others in the community. Thus a high PI score is associated with a highly prestigious occupation and a low PI score with a low prestigious occupation.

> The actual equation (calculated by linear regression) for estimating the PI score of an occupation from the census information is:
> Estimated PI score = 0.59(Education)+0.55(Income)-6.0
> This equation fits the data well. Only 17% of the variation in the data is left unexplained, which for social science is surprisingly good.
>
> (Coxon and Davies with Jones, 1986, page 21 and 22)

Some of the data collected by Duncan and used to generate the above regression equation is now over 40 years old. While the strength of the relationship may have altered over time, it would be reasonable to assume that some relationship still exists between the three variables. Duncan uses education level and income to predict occupational status for each of 45 occupations, but doesn't then relate the level of occupational status to any measure of individual or household social status. As indicated in the previous section, Abbott and Sapsford claim that, for women, education is a better predictor of social

status than occupation. Hence, although for workers of 40 years ago, education level was highly correlated with occupational status, today, with many more women in occupations not necessarily related to their qualifications, education may be a useful predictor of social status, above and beyond the predictive value of occupation.

Income, which was the other variable that was highly correlated with occupational class at the end of the 1940's may also have changed. The difficulty in using income in this study is in obtaining that information from the individuals. In his study, Duncan used the percentage of people in each occupation who earned in excess of $3500 as his variable. He gained this information from Census papers which published information on the distribution of incomes and educational achievement for each occupation. In this research on parents' views of schools at the stage of secondary transfer, it is difficult to justify asking parents to disclose such personal information as their annual income.

Other social indicators of social status which have been used less often in sociological studies in the past include car ownership, household tenure and the occupation of close friends (Marsh, 1986, page 141), location of the house and its size (Owen, 1968, page 50) and ethnicity (Reid, 1989, page 75). Data for some of these variables would be relatively easy to collect. The critical question is how much data should be collected and if data on more than one indicator is collected then how can it be combined to provide the 'best' measure of social status. This question will be addressed in the following section.

7.6 A Composite Measure of Social Status

In the previous sections of this chapter, a number of possible indicators of social status were identified. Obviously some will be better predictors of social status than others, and some will be easier to collect than others. Abrahamson's advice on which data to collect, may be seen as non-committal, but is probably just being realistic:

> The choice of indicators, however, is largely dependent on the theoretical persuasion of the investigator and the research question of interest.
>
> (Abrahamson, et. al., 1976, page 186)

Marsh, on the other hand, is much more decisive about the variables that should be considered:

> There are very good reasons why a series of variables have

> become standard on the facesheet of surveys - income, education, housing tenure, sex, marital status and age (or combined into a measure of life cycle); researchers have been caught too frequently by prematurely assuming that the effect of one of these variables could be ruled out. . . . . The safest conclusion is to collect them in addition, rather than in preference to, occupational measures.
>
> (Marsh, 1986, page 144)

This advice will be heeded in this study. Many variables including education and housing tenure which were mentioned by Catherine Marsh (above) and others, such as car ownership, location and size of house, will all be considered when deciding upon the data to be collected. More details are provided in Chapter 9, when discussing the research design.

Once the data have been collected they will be treated both as individual variables and combined to form a composite variable, as suggested by Abrahamson:

> The investigator may utilize any one of these or other indicators or may combine several of them to form an "index" of position in the class strata hierarchy.
>
> (Abrahamson, et. al., 1976, page 186)

Such an index is also mentioned by Catherine Marsh, but she does warn, "the result is an index which can be given no concrete interpretation." (Marsh, 1986, page 142) Then again, social status is by no means a concrete quality. Once data on a range of indicators of social status have been collected, it will be possible to use statistical models which treat each variable separately or in combination with any others. Hence, both individual indicators of social status and a composite index of social status, will be used in different aspects of the analysis.

7.7 Conclusion

Social status is certainly an elusive construct, but several conclusions can be drawn from the literature. Firstly, social status is difficult, if not impossible, to define in other than operational terms. Secondly, it can not be measured directly and so sociologists use a plethora of surrogate variables to quantify it. Thirdly, although occupation was traditionally the best, and sometimes only, measure used, it is now more common for researchers to use a variety of indicators. Sometimes these indicators are

combined to form an index of social status.

For the purpose of this study, social status will be considered to be a level of 'social well being' and will be defined operationally as the construct that is measured by the social indicators that have been suggested in the literature. Since the main focus of this research is on parents' views on education, especially as they relate to choice of secondary schools, the social status will be considered to the extent that it affects different aspects of parents' choice of school for their children. Hence, including a variety of measures of social status in a composite index should enhance the possibility of explaining any differences in parents' views, when choosing a school for their children.

As well as each of the social indicators contributing to a composite social status index, each may themselves be related to parents' views on secondary schools, and which secondary school they prefer for their child. For example, a family with no car may be more likely to prefer the closest school to their home irrespective of their social status and well educated parents may have different views about schools to parents who are less well educated, even though they share the same social status. So the social status indicators will be considered both individually and as a composite score when attempting to explain the differences in parents views.

CHAPTER 8

The Research Questions

8.1 Introduction

Having reviewed the literature associated with parental choice in education, and choice of schools in particular, there are an enormous number of interesting research questions that arise. Each is deserving of further attention. However, it is not possible to address every issue and answer every question that has been raised in the debate, so the aim of this chapter is to focus this research on a finite number of what could be considered to be the more interesting questions. Altogether six distinct questions have been identified but each of the first five questions is stated in two parts. The questions and the reasons for their inclusion are discussed in detail in the remainder of this chapter.

8.2 The Extent to Which Parents Prefer Their Closest Secondary School

It became evident in Chapter 3 that the freedom with which parents could choose a secondary school for their child to attend, has been increasing since 1944 and increasing rapidly since 1980. While the legislation has made it progressively easier for parents to choose a school, the extent to which they take up their newly acquired powers is not documented. The legislation requires each local education authority to provide parents with a chance to express a preference of the school they desire for their child. Hence in some way, all parents are involved in making a choice. A key question is, however, what proportion of parents are making a deliberate attempt to choose a school compared to those who simply opt for the closest school? In other words, are parents simply expressing a preference for their local school or are they making a genuine choice for some other school? The answer to this question will be blurred by those parents who looked at many schools and then, in the end, chose the closest school to their home. Despite this difficulty this issue forms the basis of the first research question for this study.

Research Question 1(a)

What proportion of parents choose, for their child, the closest secondary school to their home and what proportion choose a more distant school?

Of course, not all parents have the same views on education nor are their expectations of schools always the same. It was noticeable during the review of the literature that many authors and researchers suggest that social status could explain some of the differences between parents views. Despite the frequency with which these social difference are referred to in the literature, so far, this issue has not been addressed in a significant way in any previous research study. It would be interesting to schools to know which parents, that is parents of which social status level, value their school. It may also be of interest for co-educational schools to know whether the school is favoured more by parents of girls or parents of boys. The extent to which the proportion of parents choosing their local school varies, with the social status of the parents and the gender of the child, forms the basis of the second part of this research question.

Research Question 1(b)

Is the proportion of parents, who choose for their child the closest secondary school to their home, related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

8.3 The Extent to Which Parents Read Brochures and Attend Open Nights

As well as making it a requirement for local education authorities to give parents the chance to express their preference for a secondary school, the 1980 Education Act also required local education authorities and schools to publish information about each school on a specified list of topics. This meant that for the first time parents had access to

information about a range of features of each school. What resulted was that schools produced brochures and held open nights, and in some cases open days, for prospective parents to visit the school. Many schools put in a great deal of work to produce school brochures and to conduct impressive open nights, but is it really worth the effort? The following two questions endeavour to determine the extent to which school brochures are read and the extent to which school open nights are attended. The second part of each question attempts to determine the extent to which the reading of brochures and the attendance at open nights varies with the social status of the parents or with the gender of the child.

Research Question 2(a)

To what extent do parents read school brochures?

Research Question 2(b)

Is the extent to which parents read school brochures related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

Research Question 3(a)

To what extent do parents attend school open nights?

Research Question 3(b)

Is the extent to which parents attend school open nights related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

8.4 The Extent to Which Parents are Influenced by Different Sources of Information

In addition to producing brochures and conducting open nights, some schools also explicitly seek good publicity through local newspapers, while others offer free gifts, in order to attract students to the school. This is done to either ensure that the school has sufficient students to avoid the threat of closure, or to enable the school, if it is oversubscribed, to be selective in the students that are accepted. The net result is an increased pressure on schools to 'sell' themselves. With all of this information now available, which sources of information do parents find most persuasive and which sources do not influence parents a great deal? This level of influence will be considered in the fourth research question. Again part (b) of the question will examine how the extent to which parents are influenced, by each of these sources of information, varies with the social status of the parents and with the gender of the child.

Research Question 4(a)

Which sources of information are seen by parents as the most influential in their choice of secondary school for their child?

Research Question 4(b)

Is the extent to which parents are influenced by each of the sources of information related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

8.5 School Characteristics Most Valued by Parents

In Chapter 6, it was clear that there is a great difference of opinion, especially between those who write about parental involvement in education, over which school

characteristics parents should consider when selecting a secondary school for their child. Some differences in the characteristics that parents see as important also occur in the research findings. This study will provide additional empirical evidence on the characteristics of schools that are important to parents when choosing a school for their child. This will be achieved by answering the following research question.

Research Question 5(a)

Which characteristics of a school do parents value most when selecting a secondary school for their child?

As indicated earlier, the above question has formed the basis of most of the previous research in this area. However, few of the past studies have included representative groups of parents, of sufficient size, to be able to make any generalizations about subgroups of the population. Therefore the key aspect of this research question, that adds to the previous knowledge gained by other research, is an examination of how the importance placed on these school characteristics by parents varies across different subgroups of the community. In particular it will focus on the variation between parents of differing social status and the variation between parents choosing schools for girls or for boys.

Research Question 5(b)

Are the characteristics of a school that parents value most when selecting a school for their child, related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

8.6 What Can Schools Learn From Parental Choice?

With their limited resources it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for schools to

achieve total success on all facets of school life. Schools therefore tend to focus their efforts on achieving maximum success on a subset of all possible school output variables. For example, some schools put a lot of time and other resources into achieving maximum success in the sporting arena, while others focus their resources on enhancing the facilities and achievements in music and drama, and others allocate their resources to maximize their performance on examination results in academic subjects. With this in mind it would be useful for each school to know why parents select it for their children and then to determine the extent of agreement between what the parents are seeking and what the school is delivering. Put another way, if all, or even a majority of parents who choose a particular school do so because they value the same characteristics or outcomes then such a school would be more successful, in the eyes of these parents, if it emphasized such outcomes and was successful in their achievement. What would be difficult, but just as important for the school to know, is if the parents who choose it for their children did so for a whole range of reasons so that no clear emphases could be determined for the school. In this case the school would be expected to achieve maximum success in a whole range of school activities. This would make it very difficult for such a school to achieve total success, in the eyes of many of these parents. These schools would be wise to involve parents in a discussion of the priorities for the school, so that some agreement among the parents could be reached and a clearer direction could be determined for the school. Not to do so would probably lead to widespread criticism of the school and a commensurate decrease in the school's reputation in the community. All of this leads to a research question which could provide valuable information to the secondary schools that the students, whose parents are involved in the survey, will eventually attend.

Research Question 6

Do the parents who favour each particular secondary school do so because they value the same characteristics of the school, or do the parents who favour each particular secondary school do so for a whole range of different reasons?

8.7 Conclusion

The answers to these six research questions should add significantly to the body of knowledge about parental choice of secondary school because they consider each of the following aspects:

* How likely parents are to exercise their right to choose a school other than their local or closest school.
* How parents are influenced by the sources of information available to them and in particular the extent to which they read school brochures and attend school open nights.
* What characteristics parents desire in a school for their child.
* How the parents' responses to each of the above questions differ with the social status level of the parents and how the responses differ for parents selecting for boys and parents selecting for girls.
* What schools can learn from the parents' responses that will help them to focus their educational provision on what is desired by the majority of parents who prefer their school to others.

The answers to these research questions will also reconsider some of the aspects of previous studies. These aspects generally relate to what parents see as the important characteristics of a school that influence them when selecting a school for their child. That is, research question 5(a) of this study has been the basis of most of the previous studies, but this research will attempt to also answer many other questions. If this can be achieved it should provide additional and useful information on the complex issue of parental choice of school.

CHAPTER 9

The Research Design

9.1 Introduction

With the research questions established, attention was then turned to the development of a research framework through which sufficient, quality data can be obtained to answer these research questions. The framework was developed after a comprehensive study of the literature so that the successful strategies of previous studies could be employed, and where possible enhanced, and their inadequacies could be avoided. The literature also provided a sound basis from which to develop the questionnaire to be used in this study.

The research design is outlined in this chapter by first addressing the general framework and timeline for the study. The following section outlines the development of the questionnaire. It includes a discussion on the construction of the pilot questionnaire and how the information required to answer each of the research questions will be acquired. Section 4 deals with the pilot study which was used to fine tune the questionnaire and to improve some organizational matters, before the major data collection exercise took place. The following section defines the sample and includes a rationale for the identification of the parents who would eventually be asked to act as respondents. Section 6 describes the final questionnaire and how it differed from the version of the questionnaire used in the pilot study. The final section deals with the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

9.2 The General Framework and Timeline

In order to answer each of the research questions it is essential to gain a great deal of information from parents of children who are near the age of secondary transfer. The reasons given by parents on their application for secondary transfer form, for preferring one school over another, is one source of information about the parents' views. However, upon closer analysis of these secondary transfer forms, it was evident

that the reasons given by parents differed greatly from the findings of other research studies. In particular, on the secondary transfer form, over 47% of parents listed 'having an older child at the school' as being a reason for choosing the school. Such a high percentage was not found in any of the previous studies discussed in Chapter 6, and probably occurred because this was the first, and clearest, of the criteria set by Whatshire Local Education Authority as the basis for allocating students to secondary schools. Therefore it is presumed that the reasons given on these forms were closely related to the criteria set down by the local education authority and can not necessarily be relied upon to truly reflect the views of the parents. Hence, additional data had to be collected for this study.

In order to gain such additional data two alternatives were considered; a personal interview of parents, and a questionnaire to be completed by parents. Consideration was then given to the relative merits of the two methods of collecting data and finally the questionnaire was chosen for the following reasons:

(a) This study aimed to shed light on the interactions between different variables, such as, the interaction between the likelihood of choosing the closest school and the social status. Therefore, the views of a large number of parents was more appropriate than a deeper understanding of why parents held such views. A questionnaire allowed more parents to be sampled and didn't result in the loss of any information which was essential to the established research questions. Also from the previous research, discussed in Chapter 6, it would appear that data collected through interview doesn't seem to provide substantially different results to data collected by questionnaire.

(b) There was no doubt that the issue of secondary transfer was an emotional one and personal interviews could have placed the interviewers in a face to face situation with emotional parents while not being in a position to offer any assistance. The very high level of anxiety was clearly evident from the reading of the parents' letters attached to their application forms for the previous year's transfers. There was no reason to believe that the situation would be any less emotional in the present year.

(c) As the final two research questions were intended to determine the

reasons parents selected particular schools, it was essential that a reasonable number of secondary schools, and a reasonable number of parents choosing each of these schools, were involved. Somewhere in the order of fifteen secondary schools, with an average of approximately one hundred parents favouring each one, was deemed appropriate to properly answer the questions that had been posed. The need for such a large number of respondents favoured the questionnaire as the data collection method.

(d) Another reason for preferring the questionnaire to the personal interview was the cost of the interview method. The cost of paying interviewers to conduct nearly 1500 interviews, with each interview requiring nearly an hour, was way beyond the financial means of this research project.

Once the decision had been taken to use a questionnaire the following timeline was drawn up for the period December 1989 to July 1990.

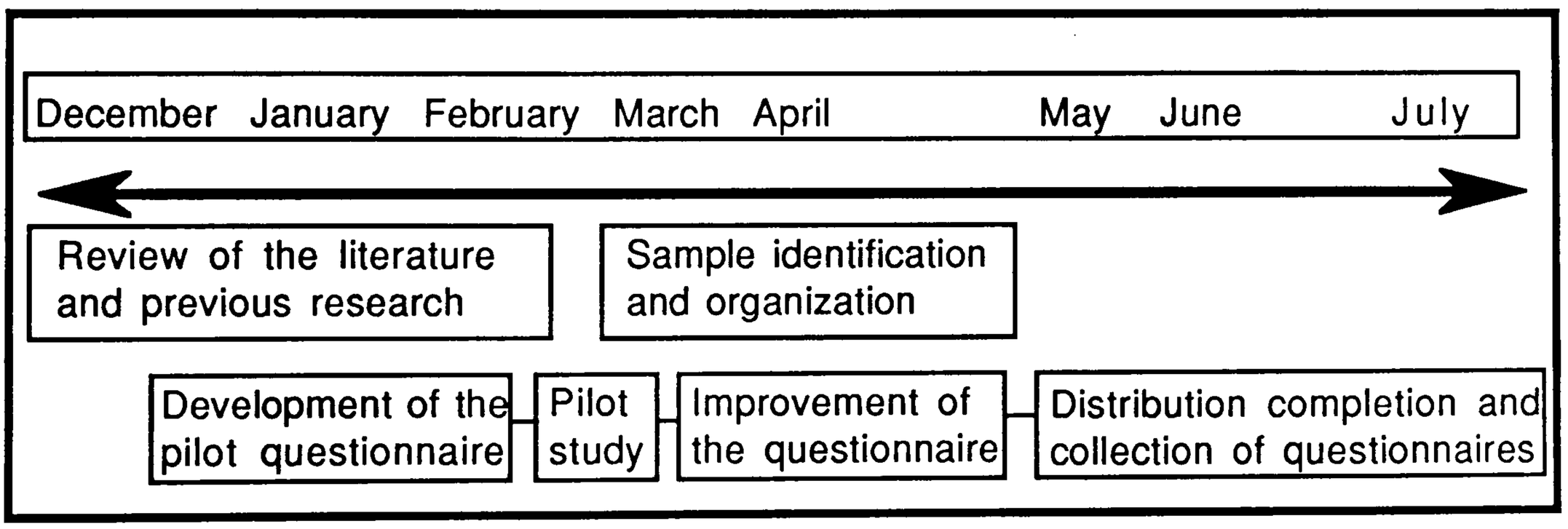


Figure 9.1: Timeline for major events of the research.

The stages identified in the above table, apart from the literature review which has already been considered, provide the basis for each of the following five sections of this chapter.

9.3 The Development of the Questionnaire

The first draft of the questionnaire was based on information from a number of sources. These sources included the literature, the results of previous studies, reasons given by parents on secondary transfer applications and informal discussions with headteachers

in the area of the study. To help with the following discussion it will be useful to consider the questionnaire in four parts. Although these parts are not totally separated within the questionnaire they are relatively easily identifiable.

The first part includes questions relating to the closest school, the reasons for selecting or not selecting it, and the likelihood that the closest school to the home would be the preferred school. This will be referred to as the 'school choice' part, and questions relating to it can be found in Sections A and B of the questionnaire.

The second part poses questions relating to the factors that parents consider to be important when making their decisions about a school for their children. This part of the questionnaire will be referred to as the 'important factors' section and will be covered by questions in Sections D through N of the questionnaire and take up almost the whole of the inside of the form.

Part 3 addresses the sources of the information that form the basis for the parents decisions and the relevant questions can be found in Sections C and O of the questionnaire. This part will be referred to as the 'sources of influence' part of the questionnaire.

The fourth, and final, part of the questionnaire seeks to determine information on those family characteristics that may influence the decisions that parents make. These family characteristics include a number of social indicators as well as the gender of the child. The phrase 'family background' will be used when referring to this part. Questions relating to family background are predominantly in Sections P, Q and R and can be found on the back page of the questionnaire with the exception of questions relating to the gender of the child (Question A2) and whether the child has older siblings (Question B5) which appear on page one of the questionnaire. It is important to remember that these four parts are only defined to assist with the following discussion and not because they form distinct or separate parts within the questionnaire.

Part 1: School Choice

The questions relating to school choice in the questionnaire were designed to determine which secondary school was closest to the family home, which secondary school the parents preferred for their child and the likelihood that parents preferred the closest school. Questions A3, B1 and B4 were designed to provide this information. To fully

answer the first research question it was necessary to ask those who preferred a school other than the closest one to their home, to say what they didn't like about the local school, while those who preferred their closest school were asked to say why this was so. Questions B2 and B3 sought to gain this information.

Part 2: Important Factors

The questions aimed at determining the factors that parents considered important when making their choice of schools, were based on two major sources. Firstly, 750 of the secondary transfer application forms for the previous school year in Whatshire LEA were read and the reasons given by parents were collated. Each reason that was mentioned by more than 5, of the 750 parents, was considered for inclusion in the first draft of the questionnaire. These reasons, with their respective frequencies, are provided in Appendix 1. Wherever possible these reasons were written using the language that was most often used by the parents on the transfer forms. It was necessary to combine some reasons and to omit others. For example, 'a good pastoral care system' and 'a good house system' were combined to become, 'a good pastoral/house/student support system' (Question M4). One reason that was often given by parents but not included in the questionnaire was that 'it is a good school'. This reason was omitted from the questionnaire, not because it wasn't important, but because it was too general to be useful and didn't address the issue of why the school is 'good'.

With the reasons given by parents on the secondary transfer forms as a starting point, each of factors listed in Chapter 6, whether an author's view or a researcher's finding, was considered and those not already included were added to the list. In many cases the factors listed in these additional sources resulted in a slight change of wording to the original statement rather than a new and separate factor being added. However care was taken so that the language used by the parents was still apparent in the final statement.

The questions aimed at identifying the characteristics that parents consider important are included in Section D through N of the questionnaire. That is, almost the whole of the inside of the questionnaire is designed to establish those characteristics which parents feel are the most important qualities of a school which their child is to attend. These questions are framed in three different ways and are separated into these three types on the questionnaire.

The first type of question is seen in Section D through J of the questionnaire. The 32 characteristics included in these sections have been divided into seven groups in a similar, but not identical way, to that employed by Stillman and Maychell in their research. (Stillman and Maychell, 1986, pages 198 to 202) Prior reading had indicated that these features were seen as desirable by virtually all parents and so it was not appropriate to simply ask parents to say whether or not they thought each factor was important. This would probably have led to a very high percentage of parents claiming that these factors were important without providing an indication of the relative importance between them. Hence a system of ranking, within the groups of factors, was seen as the best way of gaining the desired information . Each group had to be designed, where possible, to include like factors, and the groups were to some extent based on the groups of Stillman and Maychell. At the same time, each group had to contain relatively few factors because it was thought that ranking would become too difficult if the number of factors to be ranked was greater than about six. Sections E and G have the largest number of factors to be ranked but they also contain factors that are most similar in type and so should, therefore, be easier to rank.

The second type of question relating to the important characteristics are included in Sections K through M. These also include factors that some parents see as important in selecting a school but where there is no universal agreement about their importance. For example, some parents feel very strongly that they wish their child's school to be a single-sex school while others feel just as strongly that their child should be educated in a co-educational school. Other issues which are addressed in this section of the questionnaire include:

* the balance between academic and practical subjects
* ability grouping in the first year of secondary school
* the size of the school
* the policy of giving regular homework
* the wearing of school uniform

It can be seen that these are issues over which parents have a wide range of views. Some parents, for example, think that students should be grouped according to ability from the beginning of their secondary education, while others are opposed to ability grouping. Because of this variance of opinion, parents were not asked to rank these factors but to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, don't mind, disagree or strongly disagree,

with a series of statements about what a school should be. At the end of this section parents were invited to add any other factors that they thought had not been adequately covered.

The third type of question in this 'important factors' part of the questionnaire (Section N) required parents to consider all of the factors, whether they were listed on the questionnaire or not, and write down the five that they felt were the most important. The information gained in Section D through N will be used to consider Research Questions 5 and 6.

Part 3: Sources of Influence

The headteacher and staff of some schools put a great deal of time, money and effort into the production of a school brochure and into school open nights, both designed to attract students to enrol in their school. Questions C1 and C2 are expected to provide information on the extent to which parents read school brochures and attend school open nights, as part of the process of selecting a school for their child. The items in this part of the questionnaire are designed to directly assist with the answering of Research Questions 2 and 3, and hence provide secondary schools with some feedback on the extent to which parents read brochures and attend open nights.

These two questions have been deliberately separated from similar questions later in the questionnaire which ask about the extent of the influence school brochures and open nights had upon their selection. Section O of the questionnaire deals with this issue. It also deals with the extent of influence of other sources of information including published examination results, newspaper articles and school staff at the child's primary school. The results of this section may be useful for those schools that want to 'market' themselves. At least it should provide a list of those sources of information that are most likely to influence a parent's decision about a school for their child.

In particular, the responses in Section O of the questionnaire will be useful in the consideration of Research Question 4.

Part 4: Family Background

The questions for the fourth part of the questionnaire, dealing with family background,

were formulated after extensive reading in the area of sociology. The findings from this reading have been summarized in Chapter 7. The literature provided many social indicators, all of which could interact with the parents' likelihood of choosing the closest school, or with the school factors they ranked highly when making their choice. It was important that questions in this area didn't become a major part of the questionnaire because it would have detracted from the focus on school choice. Furthermore, it was important that questions which could be seen by parents as too personal were not included because this may have reduced the response rate and hence made the results less useful. As was stipulated at the end of Chapter 7, the aim was to collect data on a number of social indicators and use these indicators both as individual variables and also, in a combined form, as a variable called social status index.

The three most commonly used indicators of social status are occupation, educational attainment and income. The first two seemed likely to be inoffensive to the majority of respondents and at least spuriously related to the issue of choice of school. Income, on the other hand, is often considered to be a personal matter and information about it was not sought on the questionnaire because of the fear that it may have reduced the number of returns. However, because income has also been found to be highly correlated with employment status and educational level its absence from this study should not be a matter of great concern. The categories for educational level in Question Q were designed to represent standard exit points from schooling in Britain from about the time that participating parents would have attended school. Parents who were not educated in Britain were asked to indicate the level that most closely matched their level of education. The six levels of occupation used in Question R were taken from the Registrar General's Classifications and the exemplar occupations from the Goldthorpe and Hope Scale. (Detailed references to these works are given in Chapter 7). The category of 'presently not in paid employment' was added because its omission may have resulted in those who were unemployed not answering this question or perhaps being offended by the exclusion of this category.

Of the other social indicators mentioned in the literature, car ownership, size of dwelling, housing tenure and the stability of the families' present address were appropriate to the issue of choice of school and information on these was sought in Section P of the questionnaire. The questions related to these indicators were generally phrased to make them appear closely related to the schooling of their child. For example, it didn't seem appropriate to ask about the size of the home but the related

question of whether or not the child shared a room seemed to be both relevant and related to size of home.

Other questions which are included in the family background part of the questionnaire are Questions A2 and B5. These provide information on the gender of the child and on whether or not the parents have had previous experience with secondary school selection.

It would have been interesting, and perhaps valuable, to also collect data on family racial background to see how race or ethnicity were related to the other aspects of parental choice of school, but unfortunately the Whatshire Local Education Authority was, at the time of this survey, the subject of an official enquiry by the Commission for Racial Equality. The alleged racial bias of the authority's secondary transfer system and the sensitivity that the issue had caused, both among local education authority officers and among parents, made questions on race and ethnicity inappropriate at the time the data was collected.

The data gathered from this fourth part of the questionnaire will be used to assist with the consideration of Part (b) of Research Questions 1 through 5 and with Research Question 6.

Other Features of the Questionnaire

During the development of the questionnaire it became evident that the questionnaire was to require approximately four A4 pages. It was decided to restrict it to exactly four A4 pages so that it could be printed onto a single piece of A3 paper and folded in half so that it was of A4 size. Attached to each questionnaire was a covering letter which briefly outlined several key pieces of information for the parents. On the reverse of this letter, space was provided for parents to make any additional comments that they felt unable to make within the formal part of the questionnaire.

Once the first draft of the questionnaire was completed, copies were made and sent to a variety of people for comment. Those who provided comment included parents of primary and secondary aged children, primary headteachers, secondary headteachers and local education authority officers involved in secondary transfer. The resulting feedback enabled the questionnaire to be further refined and then tested on a wider group of

parents. This was done through a pilot study.

9.4 The Pilot Study

Once the pilot questionnaire was developed and improved it was essential that it be tried with parents similar to those who would be included in the large survey. This pilot study was conducted at two schools in the same geographic area as the final data collection was to take place. The two schools used were not selected randomly but were chosen because of the high level of interest of the headteachers in the issue of secondary transfer. Because none of the data collected in the pilot was to be used in the final analysis, how the schools were selected was not important from this point of view. What was important, however, was that a sufficient number of questionnaires were returned and that the headteachers, who would inevitably come into contact with headteachers from the other schools in the area, remained positive about the exercise and didn't discourage their colleagues from participating in the formal study later in the year.

In March of 1990, some 118 draft questionnaires were distributed, in the two pilot schools, to the parents of children who would enter secondary school in 1991 and 1992. The parents of children entering secondary school in the following September (i.e. September 1990) were not included in the pilot because at the time of the pilot these parents were anxiously waiting for the secondary school allocations from the local education authority, and their level of tension and emotion, which was already high, would only have been increased if they had been included. Of the 118 questionnaires, 63 or just over 53% were returned.

The information obtained from the questionnaires in the pilot study was collated and frequency tables and graphs of the responses were produced. These were returned to the two participating schools, for their information. This return of the data was important, as a sign of gratitude for the assistance given by the school in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

This pilot school data was not used in any further analysis, as the main purpose of the pilot study was to identify weaknesses and difficulties with the questions. In this regard the pilot was invaluable and led to some more refinements and improvements in the questionnaire. These improvements will be discussed in detail in the Section 9.6.

9.5 The Sample

The parents involved in completing the final questionnaire were parents with children in their last few years of primary education. Unlike the pilot version, the final questionnaire was to be distributed after parents of children in their final year of primary school had been allocated their secondary schools for the following academic year. This meant that they too could be included in the final sample without fear of raising their level of anxiety and tension.

Hence some parents who were to be asked to complete a questionnaire had just been through the secondary transfer process and had been allocated a secondary school while others would go through the process within the next two years. So although the research questions involve the views of parents on the factors they consider important in the secondary school they choose, the parents who were asked to complete the questionnaire were actually parents of children in the last three years of primary schooling. This study was primarily interested in the parents' reasons for preferring particular schools at the time they were making their decisions and prior to the children attending the secondary school. It was also thought that once the student has actually entered the secondary school other factors may begin to influence the parents' views and opinions.

Having restricted the sample to parents of children near the end of their primary education, other conditions were necessary if the sample was to provide data which enabled the research questions to be addressed. It was necessary to find a group of parents who met the following conditions.

(a) They belong to a community that contains sufficient secondary schools and where most of the children attend one or other of these secondary schools. Between ten and twenty secondary schools was deemed to be appropriate.

(b) They belong to a community where distance and transport are not barriers to attending a number of secondary schools. It is acknowledged in the literature review that for some communities there is really only one school to choose because others are too distant or too difficult to get to. Nevertheless, it was important for this study that parental choice of school was at least a possibility.

(c) They belong to a community where there are some oversubscribed and some undersubscribed schools so that a clear picture of why parents favour some schools above others can be developed. This is not a difficult condition to meet because many communities with a number of schools seem to have some schools more favoured than others.

(d) They reside in a local education authority that is supportive of the research being carried out in its schools. Because secondary transfer is such a sensitive area for most local education authorities, this condition could not be automatically assumed.

The area from which the parents were chosen for the survey was therefore specifically identified to meet the above set of conditions and not because its parents were necessarily representative of all parents in the country. Representativeness was not essential because data was also collected on a number of social variables and the results will only be generalized for particular subgroups of the population. For example, results such as the percentage of parents who prefer their local school will not be generalizable beyond the survey area but the reasons they give for preferring, or not preferring, their local school are likely to be common to parents in other areas of England and Wales. Similarly, the number of school brochures read by parents may not be generalizeable but the differences in the number read by parents of different social status levels are likely to exist in other parts of the country. In summary, generalizations will not be made on the basis of the actual frequencies of responses of the parents but will be made about the effects of the social status and gender variables on these frequencies. When results are generalized the generalizations will be restricted to parents living in England and Wales, although for some results a more universal generalization may be appropriate.

The area selected was a town, close to London which was quite 'closed' in the sense that most children in the area attended one of the secondary schools in the town. All together there were 56 primary schools in the survey area and a large majority of the children from these primary schools would normally attend one of the 15 secondary schools in the town. It therefore provided an appropriate number of secondary schools. All but a handful of the 71 schools were within five miles of the town centre and there was a comprehensive transport system that made it relatively convenient for most students to attend a number of schools. Upon talking to the local education authority officers, who

were involved in allocating children to secondary schools, it became evident that the area contained some highly sought after schools and some which were not favoured. Also local education authority approval was gained for the schools to be involved in the data collection.

The town appeared to have a slightly higher proportion of parents from the middle and upper social status groups than the national average, but also seemed to contain significant numbers of parents of low social status. In any case, because social status was one of the variables to be measured it was felt that this imbalance could be redressed during the statistical analysis phase. It was believed that being aware of the biased sample, and then dealing with it in an appropriate manner, would be far better than hoping, or assuming, that the sample was unbiased and then ignoring the fact that it may or may not be so.

Having selected the area, the next task was to identify the parents who were to be asked to complete the questionnaire. Bearing in mind the desire for a high response rate, it was decided to work through schools where additional encouragement to respond could be placed on parents. With this in mind, headteachers within the area who would be willing to assist with the data collection were sought. This was done by sending a letter to the headteachers of 54 primary schools in the area. (Two of the 56 schools were involved in the pilot study and therefore were not invited to take part in the final data collection exercise.) This letter to headteachers outlined the purpose and general framework of the study and asked the headteachers for their cooperation in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. In return each headteacher was promised a complete set of results for the parents from their school and for the set of all 1255 parents involved in the survey.

As stated earlier it was hoped that responses could be gained from approximately 1500 parents because this number would enable the research questions to be adequately addressed. This meant that nearly 2000 parents would be needed with a response rate of approximately 70%. In two other studies that required parents to complete a questionnaire the response rate was 51% (Steward, 1985, page 1) and 60%, (Walker, 1986, page 1) and bearing in mind the 53% response rate from the pilot study, it was clear that a lot of work had to be done with headteachers and teachers to ensure maximum cooperation and effort in the data collection exercise. The tasks then were to identify these 2000 parents and to do everything possible to gain the optimistic response rate.

The 54 schools that received the letter varied in size from as low as 12 students in each year to as high as 75 students in each year or from about 40 to 180 families with children in the final three years of primary education. Hence it was not possible to determine, in advance, the number of schools required. However, with an average of just under 100 families with children in the final three years of each school, it was likely that between twenty and twenty five schools would be required. Upon receiving the letter requesting their assistance, 22 headteachers responded positively and promptly. Seven others responded in a positive but less enthusiastic manner and a further nine headteachers indicated that they did not wish to be involved, leaving only six headteachers who did not respond. It was decided to accept each of the 22 schools where the headteacher's response was enthusiastic, even though this took the potential number of children to about 2200. At the stage of acceptance, the only information available was the total number of students in each year. However, because the questionnaire was to be completed only once by each set of parents, the number of parents was less that the number of students as some parents would have more than one child in the latter three years of the primary school.

9.6 The Final Questionnaire

With the development of the questionnaire having been dealt with in Section 4 of this chapter, attention will now focus on the improvements to the questionnaire that were made as a result of the pilot study.

Firstly, it was obvious that some questions needed to be made even clearer and that more had to be done to avoid responses such as 'because it is a good school'. Consequently some questions were adapted to require more specific answers. In Section B, the instruction "Please be specific. For example, don't just say it is a good school or the best school, but say why it is good or the best." was added in Question B2 and a similar statement was added to Question B3 and Question N.

Secondly, it was evident from an analysis of the responses to the pilot survey that some questions, which required parents to indicate their level of agreement, produced only responses of agreement or strong agreement. Consequently these factors were included in Section D through J of the final questionnaire so as to require parents to rank them among other factors. Conversely some questions were changed from requiring a ranking

to requiring a statement about the level of agreement. As a result of these changes Section J became a set of miscellaneous factors.

In the pilot study the questions which aimed to provide information on a range of social indicators, were completed better than any others and consequently remained virtually unchanged. The one ironic exception was the concern among teachers, whose support was needed to distribute and collect the questionnaires, that their occupation was listed as one of the examples in level 6 of the occupational class scale and not listed among the other professional occupations in level 7. However, because the inclusion of teachers, in level 6, was based on the findings of Goldthorpe and Hope, it could not be changed. A decision was therefore made to omit teachers as an example in the final form of the questionnaire. This would lead to parents who were also teachers having difficulty in placing themselves into a correct category, but at the time this seemed a lesser evil than losing the teachers' support for the whole exercise. Other than this the questions on social indicators remained unchanged.

Finally several questions which parents found very difficult to answer and which were not central to the major focus were omitted from the final version of the questionnaire.

Once the final format of the questionnaire had been determined it was necessary to produce a second form of the questionnaire. This second form included the same questions as the first form but, because it was for those parents who had already selected their child's secondary school, the questions were written in past tense. Such a form was not required in the pilot study as parents of final year primary school children were not included. The first form of the questionnaire, designed for those students entering secondary school in September 1991 or 1992, was called Form 1. The other form of the questionnaire for those students entering secondary education in September 1990, was called Form 0.

A copy of each form of the questionnaire, together with their accompanying letter to parents, is included as Appendix 2.

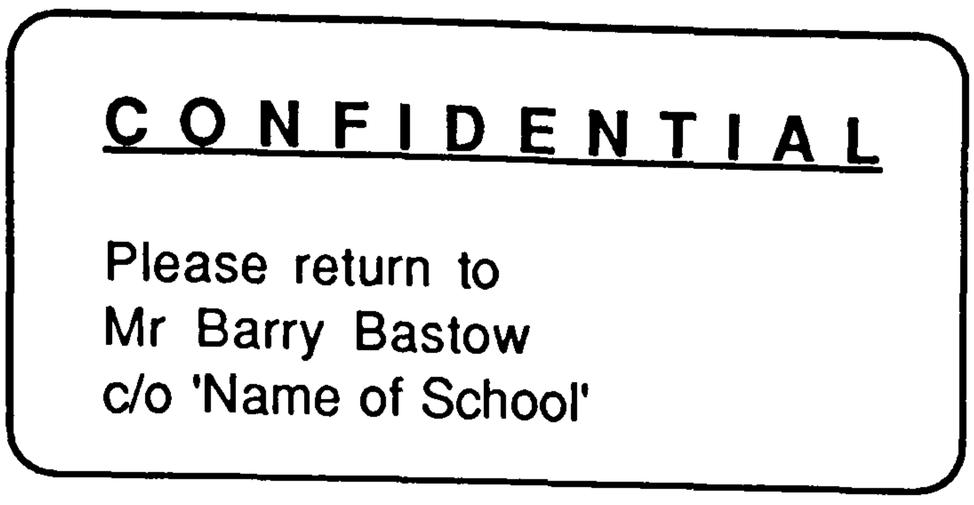
With the final forms of the questionnaire now established the next task was to have it distributed to the parents for completion. A description of how this was achieved is detailed in the following section.

9.7 The Distribution and Collection of the Questionnaires

In May 1990, the final version of the questionnaire was printed. This included 850 copies of Form 0 which was to be completed by parents of children who had already selected and been allocated to secondary schools and 1350 copies of Form 1 which was intended for those parents of children who still had to make a choice of school in either of the subsequent two school years. These numbers included some spare copies.

In the latter half of May 1990 each school was visited and all details of the distribution and collection of the questionnaires were discussed with the respective headteachers. These discussions made it clear that the aim of the exercise was to gain as high a return rate as possible and that it would be left up to each individual headteacher to manage the distribution and collection of the questionnaires in the best way to achieve this aim. With this in mind, headteachers were asked to provide their own covering letter, which would be attached to the questionnaire, and include whatever statements that the parents of the school would respond to in a favourable manner. The headteachers were told that the questionnaires would be delivered to the school on the Monday immediately after the mid term break of the summer term, and that the completed questionnaires would not be needed until the schools broke for their summer vacation towards the end of July. This left each headteacher to manage the timing of the exercise to suit the school and to maximize the response rate. Some sent the questionnaires home immediately while others preferred to wait for a more suitable time. Some preferred to wait until an arranged parents' meeting and others had to avoid school camps because a large number of students were not at home for a week. Some headteachers allowed one week for the parents to return the questionnaires to the school while others allowed up to three weeks. However, no questionnaire was excluded from the analysis because it was returned after the deadline set by the school. In fact, most headteachers continued to encourage the return of questionnaires well after their return deadline had expired. Headteachers were also encouraged to send home reminder notes and to get their teachers to remind students on a regular basis, but the extent of the encouragement was left to the discretion of the respective headteachers.

Each child took home a package which comprised of the introductory letter by the school's headteacher, the accompanying letter for the questionnaire, the questionnaire itself and an envelope labeled in the following way:



The provision of the envelope allowed the parents to express their views confidentially, even though they were returning the completed forms to their child's school. All returned questionnaires in their sealed envelopes were then collected from the 22 schools prior to the end of the school year.

9.8 Conclusion

In this chapter the many issues relating to the design of the research have been addressed. Firstly, it discussed the reasons for the use of a questionnaire for parents and a timeline for the development of the questionnaire and the data collection. Section 3 described how the questionnaire was developed. It began with an explanation of how the questions were framed as a result of the literature review and feedback and criticisms obtained from a variety of people. It also outlined the different parts of the questionnaire and how each related to the research questions. The following section described the pilot study which involved parents from two schools and assisted with the further improvement of the questionnaire. Then attention turned to how the sample was identified, why the geographical area was selected and then how schools were selected from within the area. This was followed by the section which described how the final version of the questionnaire was developed as a result of the pilot survey. Finally, Section 7 provided details of the actual data collection exercise, including a discussion of the school's role in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

Once all of the questionnaires were returned, it was time to look forward to the coding and analysis of the responses. A discussion of this analysis and the conclusions reached will form the basis of the remainder of this thesis.

CHAPTER 10

Proposed Analysis

10.1 Introduction

With over 1250 parents responding to the questionnaire and each providing approximately eighty pieces of information, the result was a very large data base with in excess of 100 000 individual items. The amount of data collected meant that a computer package able to handle large data sets would be necessary. In particular those research questions that sought to identify relationships between variables demanded a very sophisticated statistical analysis package. As it is the examination of the interactions between variables that stands this study apart from previous research into parental choice, it is important that the best possible interaction analysis be undertaken so as to not sell the research short.

Prior to commencing the detailed discussion of the statistical analysis to be used, it will be useful to describe the data set which resulted from the questionnaires. It will also be beneficial to clearly describe each of the variables and to outline how the responses of the parents were transferred into numerical values for use in the analysis. This information is provided in detail in the following two sections of this chapter.

In order to be able to best answer all of the research questions it was decided that multilevel analysis would be most appropriate. Some background on multilevel analysis is provided in Section 10.4 and following this the reasons for choosing multilevel analysis are outlined.

As can be seen from Chapter 8 the first five research questions are similar in that each is in two parts. The first part of each of these five questions seeks answers to issues concerning an individual variable. Hence the analysis of the data required to answer each of questions 1(a), 2(a), 3(a), 4(a) and 5(a) is quite similar and will be discussed in the sixth section of this chapter. Similarly, part (b) of each of the first five research questions can be answered in a similar, but not identical, way and the analysis proposed

for these questions is outlined in Section 7 of this chapter.

Research Question 6 is quite different in nature to each of the first five questions. Discriminant analysis will be used to answer this question. The analysis proposed for this final question will be dealt with separately in Section 8 of this chapter.

It is hoped that, by discussing the analysis of the research questions in these groups, it will make the reading easier and at the same time illustrate the similarities between the analysis of similar types of questions. Firstly, however, attention must be given to the data set, the definition of the variables and some of the general theory, advantages and disadvantages of multilevel analysis.

10.2 Description of the Data Set

The exact number of parents who were sent a questionnaire was 2031. A full list of schools with the number of students in each year and the number of questionnaires distributed and returned is provided in Appendix 3. The primary schools from which the data were collected are identified by numbers in order to provide them with the normal anonymity and protection desired by schools when voluntarily engaging in research. As there were 22 primary schools involved they will be numbered from 1 to 22.

For reasons outlined in Chapter 9, the pressure placed upon parents to return the questionnaires was left entirely up to the headteachers and teachers in the individual schools. Consequently the actual percentage returned to the school for inclusion in this survey depended on the efforts and determination of the staff in each school. Appendix 3 also shows the response rate for each primary school. The greatest percentage response rate was achieved by School 19 with over 85% of its parents returning their form. On the other hand the poorest response rate, from School 3, was only 42%. It was expected that the response rates for schools would vary, with schools in the poorer areas returning a smaller percentage than schools in more affluent areas. In fact, this was not the case because the best response rate was achieved from a school in one of the poorest areas and the school with the worst response rate was in one of the more affluent areas. The evidence for the above description of the school's catchment areas was not based upon reliable data but rather on the headteachers' perceptions and on observing the general standard of housing in the area. So, although the response rate varied from 42% to 85%

there was no apparent pattern other than that the rate was higher where the school staff vigorously sought the return of the questionnaires.

Nevertheless, nearly 62% of all questionnaires distributed to the schools were returned for analysis. It will never be possible to know exactly how many questionnaires actually reached the parents nor how many were lost while being returned to the school but it could be assumed that a small, but unknown, percentage of the questionnaires would have been lost in transit between school and home.

Despite these difficulties 62% response rate was considered to be good. In any case, because social status data was collected as part of the questionnaire, inferences could still be made about parents in different social status groups. Also this study deals a lot with relationships between variables and these relationships should be able to be generalized for parents across the country. However, as the set of parents who responded was not a representative sample of parents in the whole of England, generalizations based on the raw frequency data will be avoided.

Although 1255 questionnaires were returned to the schools, not every parent had answered every question. In fact, one questionnaire was returned completely blank and was omitted from any further analysis. When other individual analyses are conducted the sample size may be further diminished because some parents failed to answer all questions. How these missing data are treated is discussed in a later section of this chapter. All that is necessary now is that the reader understands that the different size samples used for the analysis of different questions arises solely from the fact that some parents failed to respond to some questions.

10.3 Definition of the Variables to be Used

In the design of the questionnaire each question was given a unique name consisting of a letter, to identify the section of the questionnaire, and a number to indicate whether it was the first, second, third, etc. question in that section. It is also worth recalling that the questionnaire was in two forms depending upon whether the child had already been allocated a secondary school (that is, they commenced secondary school in September 1990) or whether they were to commence in 1991 or 1992. This section will consider how the responses for each question were coded and how the variable used to represent

the responses for each question was defined. Of course some questions can be treated as members of like groups and this will be done where appropriate.

However, before discussing each question, some general comments about the coding will be made. Firstly, as with the primary schools, each secondary school was allocated a letter to maintain its anonymity. The 15 maintained secondary schools in the area of the survey were each identified by a letter from 'A' through 'O'. All non-maintained schools mentioned by parents were given the same code, the letter P, and all other maintained secondary schools outside the designated area were assigned the letter Q.

Secondly, wherever parents were asked to give reasons for preferring particular schools or to list important characteristics they desired in a school for their child, each reason given was coded using a number between 101 and 210. A complete list of the reasons and characteristics identified by parents with the numerical code assigned to them is detailed in Appendix 4. A description of how all of the questions were coded is now provided.

Question	Description of the variable	Response	Code
Question A1	Year of entry to secondary school	1990	0
		1991	1
		1992	2
Question A2	Sex of the child	Girl	0
		Boy	1
Question A3	Closest secondary school	Each secondary school was identified by a letter	A through Q

(Continued over)

Table 10.1: Coding of the responses to the questions on the questionnaire.

Question	Description of the variable	Response	Code
Question B1 (1991/2 Form)	Likelihood of preferring the closest school	Certain	1
		Very likely	2
		Reasonably likely	3
		Not likely	4
		Will not	5
Question B1 (1990 Form)	Preferred secondary school	Each secondary school was identified by a letter	A through Q
Question B2	Reasons for preferring closest school	Each reason was coded using numbers	101 through 210
Question B3	Reasons for **not** preferring closest school	Each reason was coded using numbers	101 through 210
Question B4 (1990 Form)	Allocated secondary school	Each secondary school was identified by a letter	A through Q
Question B4 (1991/2 Form)	Preferred secondary school	Each secondary school was identified by a letter	A through Q
Question B5	Previous experience with secondary transfer	Yes	0
		No	1

(Continued over)

Table 10.1 (continued): Coding of the responses to the questions on the questionnaire.

Question	Description of the variable	Response	Code
Question C1	Number of open nights attended or expected to attend	None attended	0
		One attended	1
		Two attended	2
		Three attended	3
		Four attended	4
		Five or more attended	5
Question C2	Number of school brochures read or expected to read	None read	0
		One read	1
		Two read	2
		Three read	3
		Four read	4
		Five or more read	5
Section D	Geographic factors	Each question was coded according to the ranking given by parents.	1 to 3
Section E	Academic factors	as above	1 to 6
Section F	Reputation and recommendations	as above	1 to 3
Section G	Physical factors	as above	1 to 7
Section H	Staff factors	as above	1 to 4
Section I	Child/family factors	as above	1 to 5
Section J	Other factors	as above	1 to 4

(Continued over)

Table 10.1 (continued): Coding of the responses to the questions on the questionnaire.

Question	Description of the variable	Response	Code
Section K Section L Section M	Statements about secondary schools	Strongly disagree Disagree Don't mind Agree Strongly agree	1 2 3 4 5
Section N	Reasons for selecting a school	Each reason was coded using numbers	101 through 210
Section O	Sources of influence	Large influence Some influence No influence	1 2 3
Question P1	Child driven to school	Yes Sometimes No	3 2 1
Question P2	Number of cars in the household	No car One car Two or more cars	0 1 2
Question P3	Child sharing a room with siblings	Child shares a room Child has own room	1 2
Question P4	Family remaining at their present address	Yes Maybe No	3 2 1
Question P5	Rent or own the family house	Rent Own	1 2

(Continued over)

Table 10.1 (continued): Coding of the responses to the questions on the questionnaire.

Question	Description of the variable	Response	Code
Question Q1			
(Mother)	Mother's educational level	Each level was coded by its order on the questionnaire	1 to 6
(Father)	Father's educational level		
Question R1			
(Mother)	Mother's occupational level	Each level was coded by its order on the questionnaire	1 to 7
(Father)	Father's occupational level		

Table 10.1 (continued): Coding of the responses to the questions on the questionnaire.

As well as these variables that result directly from the questions on the questionnaire there are three derived variables that are also used in the analysis. Each of these involves the combination of the response to more than one question.

Firstly, from simultaneously considering Question A3 with Question B1 from the 1990 Form or Question B4 from the 1991/2 Form it is possible to determine whether or not the preferred school was the same as the closest school. Hence this variable takes on the value 1 if the preferred school was the closest school to the family home and the value 0 if a more distant school was preferred.

Secondly, as was indicated in Chapter 7, a composite social status variable is to be considered. Such a variable is generally made up of a number of social status indicators added together to form a composite score. In this study the composite social status variable is derived by summing the score on each of the questions in Section P through R of the questionnaire. This variable will be referred to as the social status index. The lowest possible score is 8, because the smallest value for eight of the contributing variables is 1 and the smallest value of the ninth contributing variable is 0. The highest possible score is 38. However, before this variable is used in the analysis 8 will be subtracted from each score so that the variable ranges from 0 to 30. This makes the analysis and its interpretation easier without affecting the distribution of the data. This variable is useful in that it provides a measure for each family which is approximately normally distributed, but it has the disadvantage of not being able to assign meaningful descriptors to each particular value. This difficulty is overcome by including the

following, and final, derived variable.

Thirdly, so that a social status variable which has values that can be meaningfully described can be used in the analysis, the social status index is broken down into three categories. In order to avoid groups that are very small the boundaries will be set so as to achieve three approximately equal size groups. In fact, the first group will contain those families whose score on the scaled social status index is between 0 and 12 inclusive, those in the middle group will have a score of between 13 and 18 inclusive and the high group will be those who score 19 and above. These three groups will be referred to as the low, middle and high social status groups, respectively. These categories do not match the official use of the terms low, middle and high social class used by the Registrar General's Office but their meaning is similar. In the data analysis this variable will be referred to as the social status group and will take on the following values:

Low social status group	0
Middle social status group	1
High social status group	2

This completes the description of the variables to be used whether they are taken directly from the parents' responses to particular questions or whether they are derived from the answers to two or more questions. However, before a description of how these variables are to be analysed an outline of some of the theoretical basis of multilevel modelling will be provided.

10.4 Some Background Theory on Multilevel Analysis

It is hoped that this section will provide the reader who is interested in some of the theory of multilevel analysis with a brief and simplified description of the key ideas. A more comprehensive account of the statistical theory of the multilevel approach is given in Goldstein's book "Multilevel Models in Educational and Social Research". (Goldstein, 1987)

To understand this section it will be an advantage, but not essential, to have some knowledge of ordinary least squares analysis (OLS) or multiple regression analysis, as

multilevel analysis can be considered to be "a generalization of ordinary regression". (Paterson and Goldstein, 1991, page 1)

To illustrate the theoretical basis of multilevel modelling, an example relating academic performance to a general ability measure will be used. In this example, let **Y** represent a score based on the grades in the subjects at GCSE level with $\mathbf{Y}_i$ being the score for student i. Also let $\mathbf{X}_i$ represent a score based on the verbal reasoning score of the i^{th} student. The GCSE score will be the measure of academic performance and the verbal reasoning score will be the measure of general ability. The GCSE score varies from 0 to 70 and the verbal reasoning score ranges from 0 to 50. This example can be described using ordinary least squares analysis by the following regression equation:

$$\mathbf{Y}_i = \mathbf{a} + \mathbf{b}\mathbf{X}_i + \mathbf{e}_i \qquad (10.1)$$

A graph of this model can help with the explanation and will also be beneficial later as some of the results of this study will be given in graphical form.

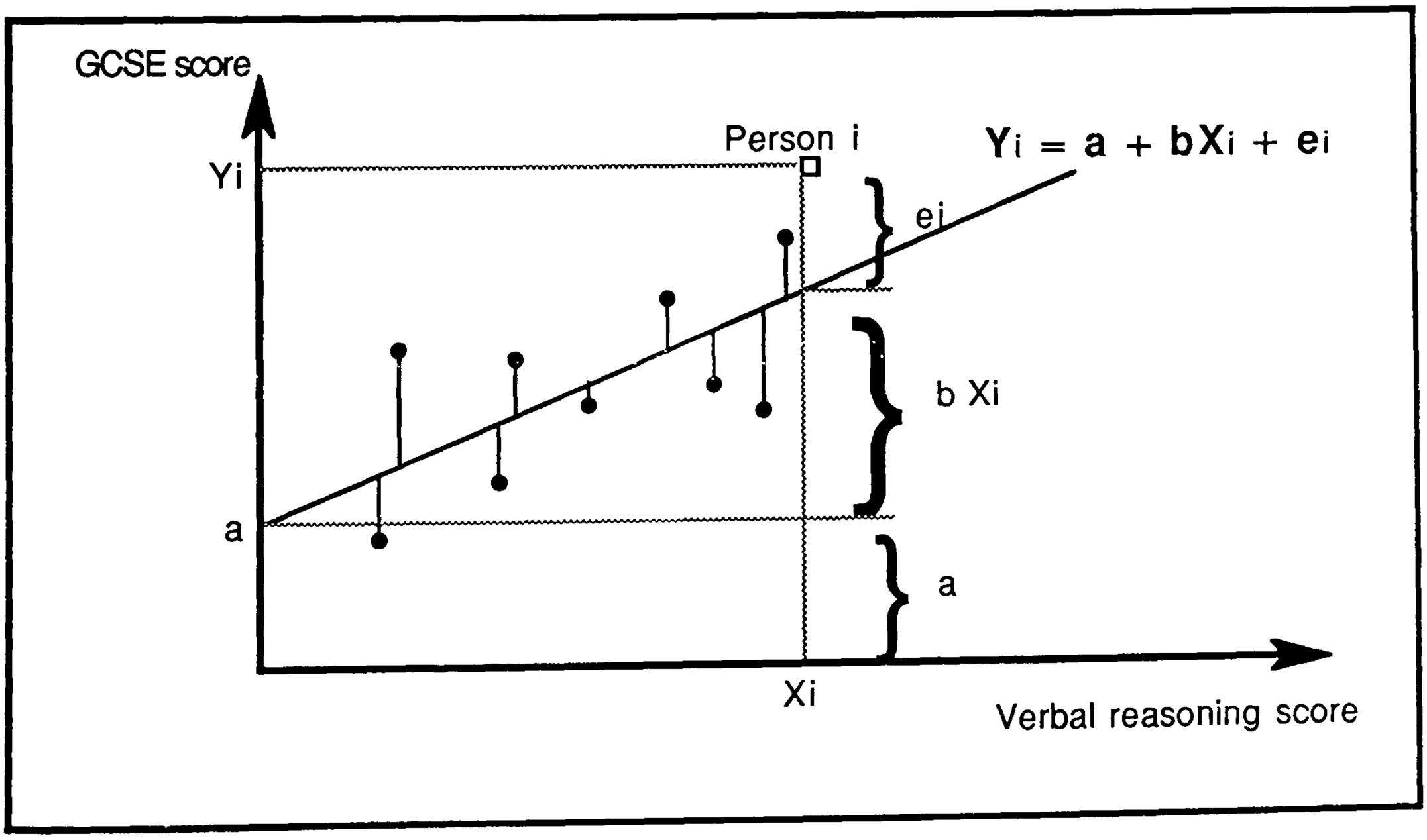


Figure 10.1: The component parts of a single level regression line.

In Figure 10.1 each dot represents a particular student, with a particular verbal reasoning score and a particular GCSE score. The line is the 'line of best fit' which is the line that 'best' predicts the Y-value for any given X-value. In this case 'best' means the case where the sum of the squares, of the vertical distances of each point from the line, is a minimum. It is therefore, often referred to as the least squares line. This vertical distance of each point from the line is called the residual and is represented by the **e** term in Equation 10.1. This single line is then used to predict the GCSE score for a student given their verbal reasoning score. The same line would have to be used for all students no matter which school they attend.

In this example the value of **a** is the same for all students and represents the predicted GCSE score for those students with verbal reasoning score of zero. The **b** represents the factor that verbal reasoning score is multiplied by to predict the GCSE score. In other words the value of **a** is the intercept of the regression line on the y-axis, in Figure 10.1, and **b** is the slope of this same line. There is only one value of **a** and only one value of **b**, that is only one line of prediction for the whole sample of students. No account is taken of the school each student attended.

However, when dealing with populations in the social sciences, most individuals belong to subgroups of the population and membership of a subgroup is related to the predicted or response variable, in this case the GCSE score. This is put more succinctly by Goldstein in his article on modelling survey data when he says, "Real populations have hierarchical structures". (Goldstein, 1991, page 1) In the above example, it would be unreasonable to expect the line of best fit to be exactly the same for all students from all schools. It is therefore appropriate to group the students according to the school they attend. To do this requires a multilevel model.

When a multilevel model is fitted, Equation (10.1) would include another subscript (j), which indicates the school the student attends, and would look like this:

$$\mathbf{Y}_{ij} = \mathbf{a}_j + \mathbf{b}\mathbf{X}_{ij} + \mathbf{e}_{ij} \qquad (10.2)$$

Where $\mathbf{Y}_{ij}$ is the GCSE score of the i^{th} student in school j and $\mathbf{X}_{ij}$ is the verbal reasoning score of that student. There are two other differences between Equation

(10.1) and Equation (10.2). Firstly, the residuals or $\mathbf{e}_{ij}$'s also contain the j subscript to indicate that they represent the difference between observed score of the i^{th} student in the jth school and the estimated score for the i^{th} student from the regression line for the school (j) that the child attends. The second and most important difference in the two equations is that the ($\mathbf{a}_j$) term varies for groups of students attending different schools. Thus Equation (10.2) actually represents many lines, one for each school from which the sample data is derived. If there are three schools being considered then there would be three regression lines as follows:

$$\mathbf{Y}_{i1} = \mathbf{a}_1 + \mathbf{b}\mathbf{X}_{i1} + \mathbf{e}_{i1} \qquad \text{for school 1} \qquad (10.3)$$

$$\mathbf{Y}_{i2} = \mathbf{a}_2 + \mathbf{b}\mathbf{X}_{i2} + \mathbf{e}_{i2} \qquad \text{for school 2} \qquad (10.4)$$

$$\mathbf{Y}_{i3} = \mathbf{a}_3 + \mathbf{b}\mathbf{X}_{i3} + \mathbf{e}_{i3} \qquad \text{for school 3} \qquad (10.5)$$

In graphical form, the single line graph in Figure 10.1 would now be represented by three separate lines, one for each school.

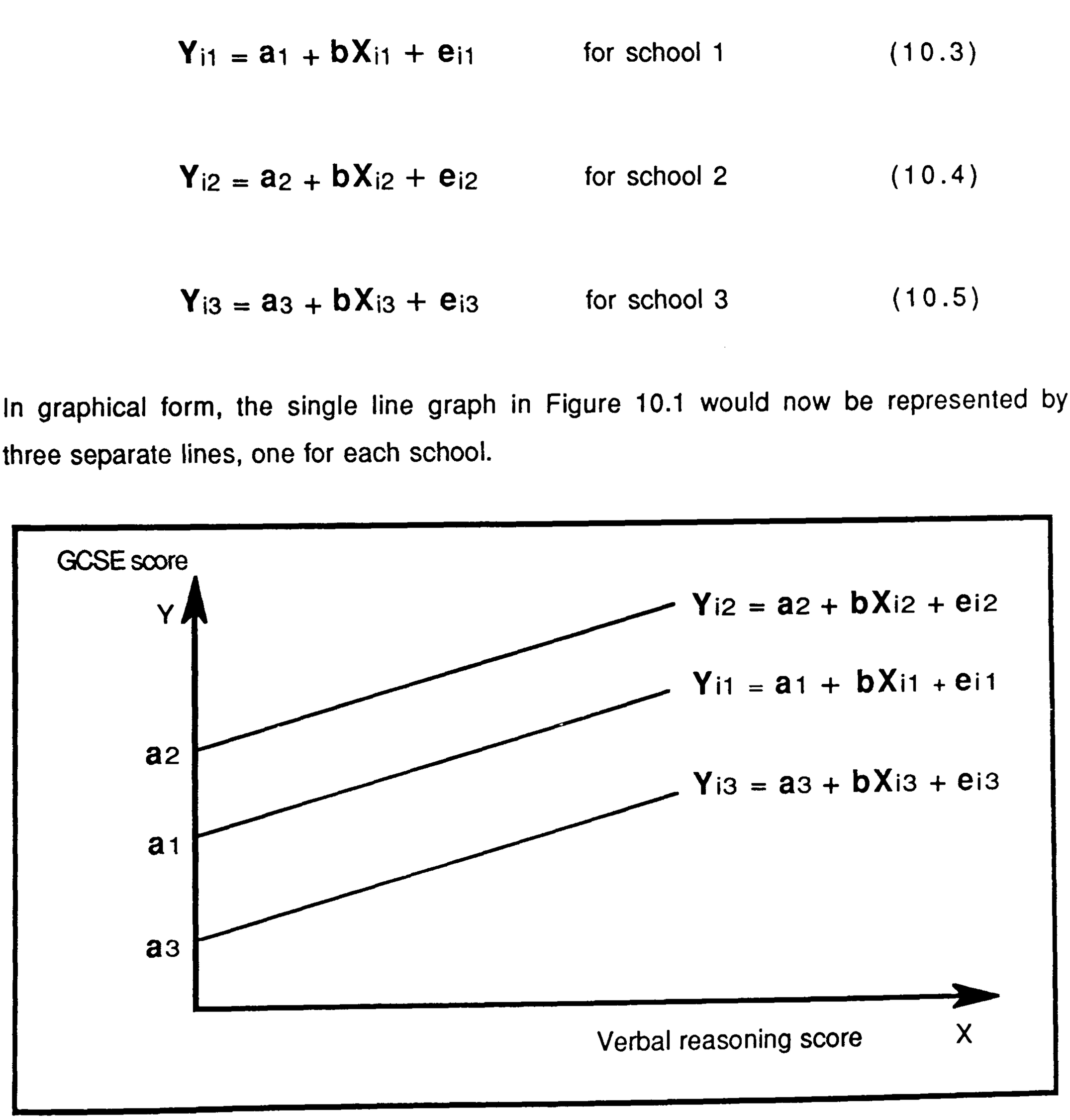


Figure 10.2: The regression lines for three different schools, when verbal reasoning score is used to predict the GCSE score, using a multilevel model with the verbal reasoning score in the fixed part of the model.

This graph shows the lines of prediction for three schools. Each school (j) has its own line with its own intercept (a_j). What is important to notice here is that when the second level of the hierarchy, or school, was included in the model a much clearer picture emerges. Indeed, not all students are well represented by the regression line in Figure 10.1 but these students do belong to groups, or schools, each of which has its own unique characteristics and hence its own line. This is the benefit of multilevel analysis and one of the reasons why it will be used for the analysis in this study.

This model can also be expressed more generally in the following way.

$$\mathbf{Y}_{ij} = \mathbf{a}_j + \mathbf{b}\mathbf{X}_{ij} + \mathbf{e}_{ij}$$

where $\mathbf{a}_j = \mathbf{a} + \mathbf{u}_j$

and $\mathbf{a}$ = the mean intercept for all schools.

and $\mathbf{u}_j$ = the random departure for each school.

Therefore $\mathbf{Y}_{ij} = (\mathbf{a} + \mathbf{u}_j) + \mathbf{b}\mathbf{X}_{ij} + \mathbf{e}_{ij}$

$= (\mathbf{a} + \mathbf{b}\mathbf{X}_{ij}) + (\mathbf{u}_j + \mathbf{e}_{ij})$

Here, $(\mathbf{a} + \mathbf{b}\mathbf{X}_{ij})$ is called the fixed part of the model because it does not vary across schools. On the other hand $\mathbf{u}_j + \mathbf{e}_{ij}$ is referred to as the random part of the model. In this case it is assumed that;

the $\mathbf{e}_{ij}$'s are normally distributed with mean 0 and variance σ_e^2, and

the $\mathbf{u}_j$'s are normally distributed with mean 0 and variance σ_u^2.

Here σ_e^2 is the within schools or level 1 variation and σ_u^2 is the between schools or level 2 variation. It is also assumed that the $\mathbf{e}_{ij}$'s and the $\mathbf{u}_j$'s are distributed independently. This is known as a variance components model.

A comparison of the between school variance and the within school variance will indicate the percentage of the variance that is attributable to differences between schools and the

percentage that is attributable to differences between individuals.

In a similar way, **b**, the coefficient of the explanatory variable (verbal reasoning score) could be allowed to vary across schools. This would have the effect of allowing the regression lines for each school to have a different slope to that of other schools thus highlighting other between school differences.

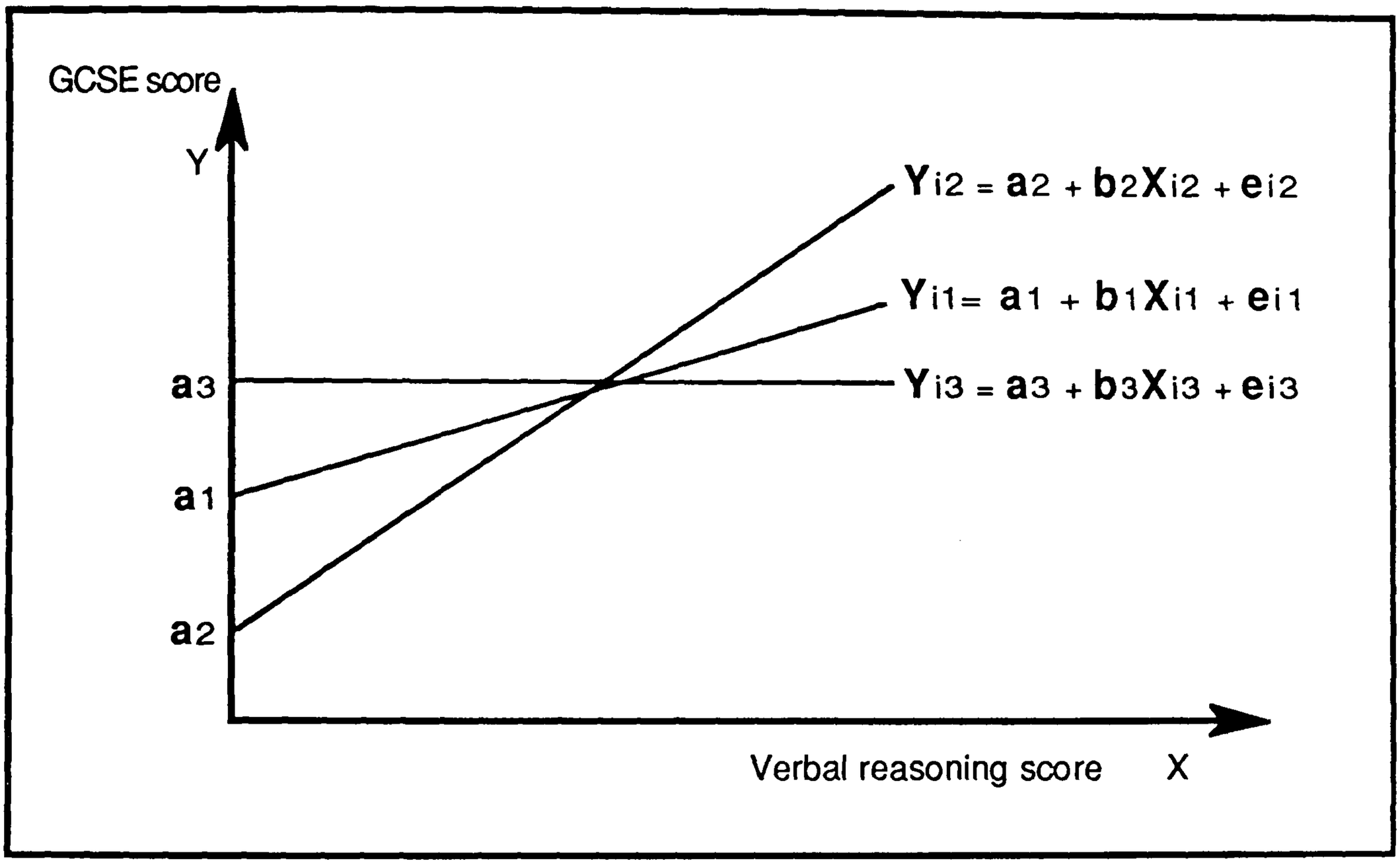


Figure 10.3: The regression lines for three different schools, when verbal reasoning score is used to predict the GCSE score, using a multilevel model with verbal reasoning score in the random part of the model.

In this case, when the verbal reasoning score coefficient is permitted to vary across schools, the slopes of the regression lines can differ for each school, as is the case in Figure 10.3. This provides an even clearer picture. For example, in the above graph, it is better for a student with a high verbal reasoning score to attend School 2 if they wish to maximize their success in terms of GCSE passes. On the other hand a student with a low verbal reasoning score would be better advised not to attend School 2. Similarly, it can be seen that School 3 produces similar numbers of GCSE passes no matter what the student's verbal reasoning ability.

Thus multilevel analysis permits the study of relationships between a response variable and one or more explanatory variables. Moreover, because multilevel analysis also allows the coefficients to vary across subgroups of the population, it enables the researcher to examine how the relationships between the response and explanatory variables vary from one subgroup to another.

It should be noted that multilevel analysis is not restricted to one explanatory variable nor to just two levels. In the above example, the analysis could have involved more explanatory variables and could have been extended to a third level by considering schools as members of local education authorities. In this case the students would be the level one unit, the schools would be the level two unit and the local education authorities the level three unit. In this study the data do not permit a three level model to be fitted. The reader who would like more information on three level models is directed to Goldstein's text on multilevel modelling. (Goldstein, 1987)

10.5 Reasons for Choosing Multilevel Analysis

Many of the questions in this study involve consideration of the variations in the responses given by parents of differing social status levels and the variations in responses given by parents of boys and girls. At first glance it would appear that an ordinary least squares regression analysis would be appropriate. However, this would not be able to take into account the different subgroups within the parent population. For example, it seems be reasonable to expect that whether or not a parent prefers a particular secondary school would vary according to which characteristics of schools they consider most important. A multilevel approach, with individuals as the level 1 unit and schools as the level 2 unit will yield estimates for the individual school's effects. These estimates may be examined to determine any differences between parents who prefer different schools.

Since this research is all about parents selecting schools, it is schools, as units, that are of critical importance. Therefore a multilevel analysis will be used because it permits parents to be considered both as individuals and as members of groups according to which secondary school they prefer for their child. Using individuals as the level one unit and preferred school as the level two unit it will be possible to not only examine relationships between variables but also to see how these relationships vary for

different schools within the survey area. (The reasons for choosing the preferred school as the level two unit will be discussed in the following section.) Multilevel analysis deals very efficiently with this structure and therefore will be the major technique used.

It should also be pointed out that by not using multilevel analysis, it is possible to overlook important results. For example, there may be no obvious or significant relationship between two variables when the data structure is ignored in the analysis. However, by grouping the individual parents according to their preferred school, some interesting relationships may appear within some or all of the groups. Conversely, OLS analysis may show a significant relationship between two variables but by using multilevel analysis and grouping the parents according to their preferred school it could be that there is a very strong relationship between the variables in a few schools and no relationship between the variables for other schools. What is very likely is that the strength of the relationship will vary for different subgroups of parents, grouped according to their preferred school, and it is the use of multilevel analysis that will allow such differences to be identified and discussed.

Finally, in order to identify differences between schools, the data for each set of parents could be aggregated and then compared with the aggregate data of parents choosing different schools. However, this would not be acceptable because it would mean that the information collected about individual parents would be lost in the analysis and only data for groups of parents would be considered. Woodhouse and Goldstein, in an article published in the Oxford Review of Education would go further and claim that results of analysis based only upon aggregate level regression analysis are faulty.

> These analyses are typically applied to aggregated data: this paper demonstrates that such procedures give unstable results. It is suggested that aggregate-level analyses are uninformative and that useful comparisons cannot be obtained without employing multilevel analysis using student-level data.
>
> (Woodhouse and Goldstein, 1988, page 301)

For all of the above reasons multilevel modelling seems to be the most appropriate statistical technique to deal with the data in this study. In particular, the software package, ML3, developed as part of the Multilevel Models Project at the Institute of Education within the University of London will be used. (Prosser, et. al., 1990) Although this package permits up to three hierarchical levels to be simultaneously

considered, the data in this study will only require the use of two levels.

10.6 Research Questions 1(a), 2(a), 3(a), 4(a) and 5(a)

To assist the reader to follow this section, part (a) of each of the first five research questions will be restated below and this will be followed by a description of the statistical models that will be employed to consider these questions.

1(a) What proportion of parents choose, for their child, the closest secondary school to their home and what proportion choose a more distant school?

2(a) To what extent do parents read school brochures?

3(a) To what extent do parents attend school open nights?

4(a) Which sources of information are seen by parents as the most influential in their choice of secondary school for their child?

5(a) Which characteristics of a school do parents value most when selecting a secondary school for their child?

In order to answer each of these five questions, frequency tables of the parents' responses will be provided. These will show the number, or percentage, of parents who gave each of the possible responses to each question. These tables will also be broken down further to show the response rates for different groups of parents. In particular, the results will be provided for groups of parents who preferred each of the secondary schools.

A discussion on the interesting and significant aspects of these tables will follow, but it must be remembered that these data are only appropriate to the area surveyed and care must be exercised before generalizing these results to all parents in the country. It is the second part of these five questions, which will be analysed using multilevel analysis, that will form the basis for most of the conclusions about relationships between variables in this study. It is expected that these relationships will be generalizable to parents across the country.

10.7 Research Questions 1(b), 2(b), 3(b), 4(b) and 5(b)

The Research Questions to be addressed in this section are all alike in that they seek to determine the effect of the social status of the family and the gender of the child on each of the variables in part (a) of these questions. These questions are restated below to assist the reader with the following discussion.

1(b) Is the proportion of parents, who choose for their child the closest secondary school to their home, related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

2(b) Is the extent to which parents read school brochures related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

3(b) Is the extent to which parents attend school open nights related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

4(b) Is the extent to which parents are influenced by each of the sources of information related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

5(b) Are the characteristics of a school that parents value most when selecting a school for their child, related in any way to the social status of the parents or to the gender of the child?

In order to analyse each of these five questions a two level model will be used and the computer package ML3 (Prosser, et. al., 1990) will be employed for all computations. The algorithms used in multilevel modelling are iterative procedures which involve estimating the required parameters and then using these estimates in the following iteration. The iterations continue until the estimates converge. That is, until each subsequent iteration of each estimate is closer to the previous estimate than a stated value or tolerance. In all models in this study, the iterative generalized least squares (IGLS) algorithm will be used and a tolerance of 0.01 will be set. Prior to performing the computations the model must be set by indicating the level one unit, the level two unit, the response variable and the explanatory variable(s). Each of these will be addressed in turn in this section.

The Level One Unit

The level one variable will always be the individual parents, or pairs of parents, who completed the questionnaires. It is acknowledged that in some cases the questionnaires were completed jointly by both parents. This however makes no difference to the analysis nor to the level one variable. Since there were 1254 questionnaires returned there will be at most 1254 values of the level one variable. This number will be reduced in the analysis because if any individual parent failed to answer any question which is the basis for one of the variables in a model then their responses must be eliminated from the data set for that particular part of the analysis. More will be said about missing data in a later section of this chapter. Hence for most models the number of level one cases will be around one thousand.

The Level Two Unit

The individual parents could be grouped in a variety of ways. However, the most appropriate basis for the grouping is according to the parents' preferred secondary school. It is also possible to group the parents according to the primary school their child attends or according to the closest secondary school to the family home. However, such groupings are not relevant as the parents were asked to complete the questionnaire in terms of the secondary education they desired for their child. Also the grouping of the parents according to the closest secondary school to their home will only serve to see how parents who live in different areas differ in their views about schools and education. On the other hand grouping parents according to their preferred school will determine whether the views of the parents who prefer each school differ from the views of parents who prefer other schools. This grouping will also highlight any differences in parents' choices of schools for parents of different social status levels. Similarly differences between parents of girls and parents of boys will also be available for discussion. After all, subject to available space, the preferred school will be the school the child eventually attends.

However, when considering the reasons given by parents in answer to Questions B2 and B3 of the questionnaire the closest school to the family home will be the level two unit. This change is necessary because these two questions require the parents to comment specifically on their closest school and so differences in their responses only make sense if compared on the basis of the closest school.

There were 15 secondary schools in the area studied, so there are 15 values of the level two variable. For some 32 parents the preferred school was not one of these fifteen even though their child attended one of the primary schools in the area. These 32 parents are excluded from the multilevel analysis and as they constituted less than 3% of the parents, their omission should not significantly affect the results. Also a pair of contingency tables which compare the gender of the child and the social status of the family for the 32 parents omitted with that of those included show no significant differences.

The Response Variables

The response variable will be different for each of the five questions being discussed in this section. For Research Question 1(b) the response variable will be a binary response and take the value 1 if the school the parent prefers is the closest school to the family home and take the value 0 if the parents prefer their child to attend a different school. As this response variable is binary, this fact will have to be taken into account in the analysis. A discussion on the treatment of binary response data will be given in a later part of this section.

For Research Questions 2(b) and 3(b) the response variables will be the number of brochures read and the number of open nights attended, respectively. As these are represented by ordinal data they will be analysed using the standard multilevel procedure in the ML3 package. (Prosser, et. al., 1990.)

Research Question 4(b) which considers the extent of influence of seven different sources of information, will be analysed as seven different questions. There were three possible responses that each parent could provide for each of these seven questions on the questionnaire, namely; 'large influence', 'some influence' or 'no influence'. To simplify the analysis and the interpretation of these results, the responses for each question will be reduced to just two values by combining two of the responses. Care must be exercised so that the number of parents in each of the two categories is not too small. To avoid small numbers in either of the categories these responses will be grouped in the following way.

For the first four sources of information;

the school's brochure or prospectus,
the parents' visits to the school (including open nights),
talks with parents who have children at the school, and
published examination results,

the response variable will take the value 1 if the parent thought the source of information to be a 'large influence' and take the value 0 if they thought the source of information was of 'some influence' or 'no influence'.

On the other hand, for the remaining three sources of information;

newspaper articles and reports,
the staff at the child's primary school, and
other family members attending the school,

the response variable will take the value 1 if the parent thought the source of information to be a 'large' or 'some influence' and take the value 0 if they thought the source of information was of 'no influence'.

In each case the response variable will be a binary variable which will be equal to either one or zero depending on the amount of influence the particular source of information exerted on the parents. Hence the analysis of the models to answer these seven questions will also require the special treatment for binary response data similar to that which will be used with Research Question 1(b).

To answer Research Question 5(b), the response variables will come from several questions on the questionnaire. Firstly, the responses given in answer to Question B2 which asked parents to indicate their reasons for preferring their child to attend their closest school will be used as the response variable. While 110 different reasons were provided by the parents, a large majority of these were given by only a small number of parents. After considering the frequency tables for the reasons provided, only those reasons which are provided by a substantial number of respondents will be considered. Each reason is assigned a number between 101 and 210 but the reason number does not in any way indicate that one reason is more important or less important than any other

reason. Also, because there is no order in the code numbers used to identify the reasons it is not appropriate to assume this variable has a continuous, ratio or even ordinal scale. It will be necessary to identify the more frequently provided reasons and create dummy variables which take the value 1 if a parent gave it as one of their reasons and the value 0 if they did not. Then each dummy variable will be analysed in the same way as the response variable in Research Question 1(b).

The second set of response variables will be derived from the responses to Question B3 on the questionnaire and again, response variables will be created, in a similar way to that used for Question B2, for each of the more frequently provided reasons given by parents for **not** wanting their child to attend their local school.

Thirdly, the responses to Sections D through M also provide information on the relative importance, in the eyes of parents, of a number of school characteristics. The number of parts to be ranked in Sections D through J ranged from three to seven. When the number of parts to be ranked is four or less, as in Sections D, F, H and J, the response variable associated with each part will be a dummy variable equal to 1 if the parents ranked it number one and equal to 0 if the parent did not rank it first. When five or more parts were to be ranked, the resulting response variable for each part will be the numerical ranking given by each parent and it will be assumed to be continuous. Sections E, G and I satisfy this condition. Then for Section K, L and M which required parents to indicate, on a five point scale, their level of agreement the variable will be a numerical score between 1 (for strongly disagree) and 5 (for strongly agree) which will also be assumed to be continuous.

Finally, the other questions in which the responses were parents' reasons for choosing a school were Questions N1 through N5 which asked the parents to list, in order of importance, those characteristics they desire in a school for their child. Two sets of response variables will be derived from these questions. The first set will be a set of dummy variables based only on the parents' response to Question N1 which asked for the most important reason for choosing a school. Again dummy response variables will be created for the most frequently given reasons. Another set of dummy variables will be established using the responses to each of the five questions in Section N, which will take the value 1 if a particular reason is included as any of the five reasons given by a parent and take the value 0 if that reason is not listed as one of the five. As before, these dummy variables will only be established for frequently given reasons.

The variables derived from Questions B2, B3 and D1 through N5 will each be used as response variables in the analysis required to answer Research Question 5(b).

The Explanatory Variables

While each of the five questions involve different response variables, each requires the use of the same explanatory variables. For example, part (b) of each of these questions, which will be answered using multilevel modelling, requires consideration of the relationship between the particular response variable and the social status of the family and the gender of the child. The variable defining the gender of the child comes directly from the responses to Question A2 on the questionnaire. It has been coded so that a girl is represented by a 0 and a boy by a 1. As can be seen from page four of the questionnaire (Appendix 2) and as outlined in an earlier section of this chapter, data were collected on each of the following social status indicators:

Mother's educational level
Father's educational level
Mother's occupational level
Father's occupational level
Whether the child is to be driven to and from school
The number of cars in the household
Whether the house is large enough for the child to have a room of their own
Whether the family expects to move house in the next few years
Whether the family house is owned or rented

To answer Research Questions 1(b), 2(b) and 3(b) each of the social status variables concerning the mother's and father's educational and occupational level will be fitted as individual explanatory variable. Also, as indicated earlier, a composite index of social status will be used as an explanatory variable. This social status index will be calculated as the sum of the scores on each of the above nine variables thus producing a score for each family. Finally this social status index score will be categorized into three groups, representing high, middle and low social status. This variable will be referred to as the social status group of the family.

The latter five variables in the above list are not as reliable, nor valid, measures of social status and therefore will not be treated individually. They do, however,

contribute to the composite social status variables of social status index and social status group and so will be considered as part of these more reliable variables.

As well as using the parents' educational and occupational level as variables, models will also be constructed that use the square of each of these explanatory variables to see whether the relationship is a quadratic one. The results of these analyses will only be mentioned if a quadratic relationship does exist. In order to observe any other type of relationship a dummy variable will be constructed for each of the variables involving educational and occupational level. The social status index will not be broken down into a series of dummy variables as there are too many categories. However it will be broken down into three groups and called the social status group variable. Finally the gender and social status group variables have two and three categories, respectively, so it will be inappropriate to consider non-linear relationships for these variables.

Initially each of the educational and occupational variables will be fitted into a model, one at a time. Then some pairs of educational and occupational variables will be fitted, in the same model, as explanatory variables. Models with more than two explanatory variables will generally not be considered because they are likely to produce results similar to those which use the social status index as the explanatory variable. After all, each is a major contributor to the social status index variable.

To answer Research Questions 4(b) and 5(b) the social status group will be the only social status variable fitted. This will be done to avoid a plethora of models which could be overwhelming and result in confusion rather than provide some manageable set of relationships.

The Analysis of Binary Response Data

The computations involved in the standard ML3 software assume that the response variable is a continuous variable. In Research Questions 1(b), 4(b) and 5(b) this is not the case. Each of these response variables is binary. That is, they take on the values of either 0 or 1. Another way of considering binary data is as a set of proportions which relate directly to the proportion of ones and zeroes for any group within the data set. In order to cope with this an additional procedure to the standard ML3 software is used. This addition uses a 'logit' transformation which converts the expected proportions in the following way:

$$\text{Logit} \quad (\pi ij) = \ln (\pi ij \ /(1-\pi ij))$$

where πij is the expected proportion of responses for the ijth parent which are one's and $(1-\pi ij)$ is the expected proportion of responses that are zero.

Then the standard ML3 algorithms, with appropriate corrections, are used. Once the estimates have converged they are converted back to proportions using the following transformation.

If $\hat{y}$ is the predicted proportion

then $\hat{\pi} = 1/(1 + e^{-\hat{y}})$

Further details and theory on models involving binary response data can be found in Goldstein, 1991.

It is important to realize that even though the standard model still fits lines to represent the relationships, because the logit transformation is used, the final lines produced are not straight. This will be seen in some of the graphs of the results in the ensuing chapters.

Missing Data

With over 1250 completed questionnaires with approximately 80 items on each one, there is almost certain to be some missing data. Such data may be missing because of an oversight on the part of the respondent, a deliberate decision by the parents not to respond to particular questions, a misunderstanding of the question so as to make the response given irrelevant or in some other way inadequate, an inability or unwillingness to differentiate between items when asked to rank them in order of importance or a host of other possible reasons.

The effects of missing data on the accuracy of results, especially in the use of multilevel modelling, has been given much consideration by Prosser. He claims that:

> Failure during statistical analysis to come to terms appropriately with the absence of measurements results in

> bias and inefficiency in parameter estimation.
> (Prosser, 1990, page 4)

In the data collected for this study, there appears to be no pattern to items for which the data is missing other than that parents who miss one answer tend also to miss several other responses. If the data that is missing is not missing randomly across all parents then there could be some bias in the estimates of the parameters. However, the relationships between variables should not be affected. So that any bias in the parameter estimates caused by missing data can be established a contingency table will be examined for each response variable. These tables will compare the parents who responded to the appropriate question with those who didn't respond, on a the basis of the gender of their child and the social status of their family. The results of these significance tests will be discussed in the appropriate section in the results chapters.

In the meantime, when setting up the multilevel models any respondent who is missing a response to any question that is to be used in the model will be deleted and not included in the analysis for that question.

The Presentation of the Results

The number of secondary schools involved in this study is fifteen. Hence, when producing tables and graphs of the results of each multilevel model, the inclusion of results of all fifteen schools could well be confusing or superfluous. So where there are significant differences between schools, the tables and will include the results for the school with the highest predicted values of the response variable and the school with the lowest predicted values of the response variable. In some cases, where it is necessary to do so or, where simply providing the results for two extreme schools conceals some vital or interesting information, the results for other schools will also be included in the discussion. Graphs are used to show level 2 variation and these graphs will show the lines for up to four of the schools with extreme estimates of either the intercept or slope.

When the differences between schools are small only the estimates for the mean of all schools will be provided and the reader can assume that the estimates for all schools will lie close to the overall mean. In all cases 95% confidence intervals will be provided for estimates used in the discussion. This will enable the reliability of the estimates to be determined and permit statements to be made about whether or not differences are

statistically significant.

10.8 Research Question 6

Research Question 6 is restated below to remind the reader of what it seeks to establish.

6 Do the parents who favour each particular secondary school do so because they value the same characteristics of the school, or do the parents who favour each particular secondary school do so for a whole range of different reasons?

This question attempts to identify common views among the parents who choose each particular school and to show how these views are different from the views held by parents who prefer other schools. Discriminant analysis is the most appropriate and available statistical technique for this research question. Briefly, discriminant analysis establishes linear combinations of variables which discriminate to the greatest extent between the groups. Since discriminant analysis has been available and been used for many years and is reasonably well understood by researchers, an explanation, such as that given for multilevel analysis in Section 4 of this chapter, will not be included.

<u>The Models to be Examined</u>

In this study the groups will be the preferred schools of the parents. This grouping is chosen because the school characteristics listed by parents as important are most likely to be apparent in the preferred school. The discriminating variables will be the parents responses to many of the questions on the questionnaire. With the preferred school as the grouping variable three sets of explanatory variables will be used in the discriminant analysis. These include:

(1) Factors listed by parents as the five most important characteristics of the school for their child
(Questions N1 to N5 of the questionnaire)

(2) The parents' rankings and ratings of a set of given school factors
(Questions D1 to M4 of the questionnaire)

(3) The parents' responses to the individual social status indicators (Questions P1 to R1 of the questionnaire)

Each of these three sets of variables will be treated in their own model and then a model will be fitted which combines variables from Set 1 and Set 2. Finally a model which contains variables from each of the three sets will be fitted, making five models in all. Each of these five models will now be discussed in more detail.

For the first set of models, the factors cited by parents as the most important school characteristics to be considered when selecting a school for their child, will be entered into the model as the discriminatory variables. They will be considered both individually and as a set of discriminatory variables. The factors listed as one of the five most important by each parent will be considered, but as before, the analysis will be restricted to those 15 reasons which are provided by more than 10% of the parents. Not all of these 15 variables will necessarily add significantly to the discriminatory power of the model so only the significantly discriminating variables will be discussed.

Secondly, the parents' responses to each of the questions in Section D through M will be used as discriminatory variables. These will also be considered as individual variables and as part of a set. It is not expected that every variable will add significantly to the discriminatory power of the model so only those that do will be included in the discussion.

The third model to be considered will combine each of the variables from the previous two sets into the one model. This should enable schools to determine which of all of the school factors discriminate most among the schools that parents prefer. There will be no need to examine the variables individually here, because this has already been done.

Fourthly, each individual social status variable will be fitted, in turn, into a model to see if it can be used as a discriminator between the schools parents prefer, and if so whether it is a better or worse discriminator that the educational beliefs of the parents. Then a model in which all nine individual social status variables will be considered. In this case the social status index, or social status group variables will not be included in the analysis because they are simply linear combinations of the individual indicators and this contravenes the requirements of the analysis package.

Fifthly, a model with all variables from each of the three sets mentioned above will be included so that the best discriminating variables, of those for which data was collected, can be identified.

Each of the models discussed above will be modified slightly to include a factor which indicates whether the preferred school is the closest school. This will have the effect of removing the discriminatory power associated with parents choosing their closest school from the other variables in the model. Then each of the first two sets of discriminatory variables, the important characteristics from Section N of the questionnaire, the rankings and ratings on Section D through M of the questionnaire and the combination of these two, will be re-examined after omitting those factors that schools have no power to change. This should indicate to schools which of the characteristics that they have the power to change are the most significant discriminators among parents. In other words, it is not all that useful to a school to know that many parents discriminate against it because it is a denominational school when the school staff have no say in this aspect of the school and do not have the power to change its status. If on the other hand parents discriminate on the basis of the schools' facilities then poorly equipped schools can endeavour to improve their facilities.

The Method to be Used

The method used in this study will be the 'Rao's V' Method which gives a measure of total group separation. It is described by Klecka in the following way:

> It measures the separation of group centroids and does not concern itself with cohesiveness within the groups.
> (Klecka, 1982, page 54)

The software package to be used is SPSSX (SPSS Inc., 1983) and it describes Rao's V Method as "a generalized measure of the overall separation between groups".

It will not be necessary to employ the second phase of the discriminant analysis model which is to use the model to identify which school a parent who holds a particular set of views is most likely to prefer. This may be useful to the schools involved. What will be important in this analysis is the discriminatory power of the models and the proportion of the between schools variance that can be predicted.

The Presentation of the Results

The results of this analysis will be described in terms of the parameter 'Rao's V' which estimates the degree of separation between the group centroids and the overall centroid. The larger this estimate the more the variables discriminate between the parents in different groups. At the same time an F-test will be applied to determine whether or not each additional variable adds significantly to the discriminatory power of the model. Comparisons will be made between different models to see which variables discriminate best. The results of this analysis and the results associated with the sixth research question will be outlined in Chapter 14.

10.9 Conclusion

The sheer size of the data base and the complexity of the research questions means that sophisticated statistical techniques, with available computer software, must be employed. Multilevel analysis is the best available package to answer the first five research questions because it acknowledges the hierarchical structure of the data. Other benefits of this statistical procedure are outlined in Section 5 of this chapter. For the sixth research question discriminant analysis will be used.

The analysis proposed in this chapter will now be applied to the data and the results discussed in the following four chapters. The final chapter of this thesis will draw conclusions from these results and endeavour to place these results and conclusions in the context of the present state of the research and literature relating to the issue of parental choice of secondary schools.

CHAPTER 11

The Proportion of Parents Who Prefer Their Child to Attend Their Closest School

11.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of four that outline the results of this study. The results of Research Question 1 will be dealt with in this chapter and then Research Questions 2, 3 and 4, because of their similarities, will be discussed in Chapter 12. Finally Chapters 13 and 14 will contain the results for Research Questions 5 and 6 respectively.

A complete set of frequency tables of the parents' responses, to each of the questions in the questionnaire, is provided in Appendix 5. These frequencies are broken down into subgroups of parents according to which secondary school the parents prefer for their child. The fifteen maintained secondary schools from within the survey area are coded by the letters A, B, C, . . . O, with P representing any non-maintained school and Q any maintained secondary school form outside the survey area. Most of the analysis will include only the fifteen maintained secondary schools. In almost all cases the frequencies will be given as percentages, but in a few cases, where this is inappropriate, raw frequency data will be provided. Also for Questions B2, B3, and Section N the frequencies with which parents stated each reason will not be broken down into school groups because to do so would result in many percentages which are too small to be meaningful. However an analysis of these reasons will be the basis of Chapter 13 so more detail will be provided then. It is well worth looking at the tables in Appendix 5 in order to get an overall mental picture of the parents' responses to each of the questions on the questionnaire.

Attention will be now be focussed on the variable which describes the proportion of parents whose preferred school is also their closest school. A number of multilevel models will be established and analysed in order to determine any relationship between this proportion and the social status variables or the gender of the child. For each model discussed in the body of the text a full set of parameter estimates will be provided in a

table in one of the appendices. In the discussion the results will either be given for the most popular and least popular school, when they differ significantly, or for the mean of all schools when there is no significant difference between schools. When the explanatory variable is fitted in the random part of the model the results will be given in graphical form as this will enable differences in the slopes of the lines to be easily identified. Each graph will include the least popular and most popular school and the schools with the smallest and largest slopes. Also 95% confidence intervals will be given each time an estimate is used in the explanation. This will allow the reader to judge the significance of the results.

11.2 The Proportion of Parents Who Prefer Their Closest School

Some 1149 parents responded to both the questions requiring them to indicate their closest secondary school and their preferred secondary school. The results are provided in the table below. The entries represent the proportion of those parents who prefer each school who also live closer to it than to any other secondary school.

Preferred school	Proportion of parents for whom it is also the closest school	Preferred school	Proportion of parents for whom it is also the closest school
A	0.53	I	0.52
B	0.44	J	0.25
C	0.33	K	0.40
D	0.47	L *	0.52
E	0.26	M *	0.50
F	0.16	N *	0.64
G	0.51	O	0.21
H	0.55	Average	0.44

Table 11.1: Proportion of those parents who prefer each school and who live closer to it than any other secondary school. The * indicates a single-sex school.

From Table 11.1 it can be seen that, on average, 44% of parents actually preferred their child to attend the closest school. This left the majority, or 56% of parents, who preferred their child to attend a school other than the closest one.

When reading this chapter it should be remembered that each proportion quoted is the number of parents who prefer a school and also live closest to it divided by the total number of parents who prefer the school. That is, these proportions are defined in the following way:

$$\text{Proportion(School A)} = \frac{\text{Number of parents who prefer School A and live closest to it}}{\text{Number of parents who prefer School A}}$$

Incorrect interpretations are possible if the table entries are considered to be the number of parents who prefer each school out of the number of parents who live close to it. So throughout this chapter it should be remembered that a high proportion means a less popular school because in this case a large percentage of the parents who prefer it also live nearby. So the school attracts, mainly by default, those parents who live close by. On the other hand a low proportion indicates that the school is a popular one because the number of local parents who prefer the school is overshadowed by the large numbers of parents who live further afield and are attracted to this school. For ease of explanation phrases such as more popular, more sought after and more attractive will be used to mean that, of those parents who prefer a particular school a larger proportion live outside the school's local area.

It is interesting to note the range of values for the individual schools in Table 11.1. For example, only 16% of all parents who prefer Schools F actually live closer to it than any other secondary school. In other words 84% of the parents who prefer School F live closer to some other school. So School F is a very popular school and attracts many parents from outside its area. On the other hand, of the parents who prefer School N it is the closest school for 64% of them. So it is not nearly as attractive to parents from outside its area.

To examine the randomness of the missing data a set of contingency tables are formed. When the respondents who fail to indicate either their preferred school or closest school are compared with those who responded to both questions, on the basis of the gender of the child or on the social status group of the family, there are no significant differences. Therefore, in this chapter the missing data will be assumed to be missing at random.

It can therefore be concluded that a majority (56%) of parents, at least in the area surveyed, intend to exercise the rights granted to them in the 1980 and 1988 Education Acts by expressing a preference for a secondary school other than their closest school. It must be added that the extent of this take-up is not uniform across all schools and, in fact, varies considerably from one school to another.

11.3 The Influence of the Gender and Social Status Variables

The basis of Research Question 1(b) is to establish whether the proportion of parents who prefer their closest school is influenced in any way by the gender of the child or by the social status of the family. Throughout this chapter only one response variable is used and it is the dummy variable which equals 1 if the preferred school is also the closest school and takes the value 0 otherwise. The explanatory variables used in this chapter include the gender of the child, the educational and occupational level of the mothers and fathers and the composite variables of social status index and social status group. The other social status indicators, such as housing tenure and the number of cars in the family will only be considered by including them in the composite measures referred to as the social status index and the social status group.

To answer this research question a set of multilevel models are fitted. The explanatory variables for each model are a set of dummy variables associated with one of the social status variables. For example, the model used to determine the influence of the mothers' educational level on the proportion who favour their local school, contains five dummy variables, one for each of the levels two through six of mothers' education and the overall mean which incorporates mothers' educational level 1. This overall mean variable is referred to as the constant or 'cons' variable. The level 1 and level 2 units remain the same throughout this chapter. That is, the individual parent is the level 1 unit and the preferred secondary school is the level 2 unit.

A significance test is applied to each of these models to determine if there is a significant relationship when each variable is considered, one at a time. The results of this analysis are presented in the Table 11.2. The probabilities, in this as well as other tables, are correct to three decimal places.

Social variable	Degrees of freedom	Chi-squared value	P-value
Gender of the child	1	4.64	0.031
Mothers' educational level	5	17.20	0.004
Fathers' educational level	5	12.27	0.031
Mothers' occupational level	6	12.62	0.049
Fathers' occupational level	6	13.41	0.037
Social Status group	2	21.53	0.000

Table 11.2: The significance of the relationships between the proportion of parents who prefer their closest school and the gender of the child and between the proportion and the social status variables.

From Table 11.2 it can be seen that each of the variables significantly influences (at the 5% level) the proportion of parents who prefer their child to attend their local school. The discussion on exactly how this proportion is influenced by each of these variables is the basis of the remainder of this chapter. To determine the influence of each variable on the proportion of parents who prefer their closest school a more detailed look at a variety of multilevel models is required.

The Gender of the Child

A frequency table which shows the percentage of parents of girls and boys who prefer each of the fifteen secondary schools is provided as Table 11.3. Some care needs to be exercised in reading this table as the existence of both mixed and single-sex schools in the sample makes the interpretation difficult. Also the fact that the gender of the child has a significant relationship should not be taken too seriously because the survey includes three single-sex schools. Naturally the parent of a boy who lives closest to an all girls school will not prefer their local school for their child and also the parents who desire a single-sex education and have a mixed school closest to their house will choose a more distant school. Examples such as these make the results which highlight gender difference difficult to interpret. It is not sufficient to simply repeat the analysis excluding the single-sex schools because, for example, a sizeable proportion of the boys who live near School M (an all girls school) may attend the next closest co-educational school. This would upset the gender balance at this school. Similar imbalances could

also arise in co-educational schools near other single-sex schools and it is difficult to know exactly what effect this would have on the data.

Preferred school	Parents of girls	Parents of boys
A	34.5	65.5
B	33.3	66.7
C	47.1	52.9
D	59.5	40.5
E	47.6	52.4
F	53.6	46.4
G	45.7	54.3
H	50.0	50.0
I	54.5	45.5
J	65.0	35.0
K	53.8	46.2
L *	0.0	100.0
M *	100.0	0.0
N *	100.0	0.0
O	68.4	31.6

Table 11.3: The percentage of parents of girls and boys who prefer each secondary school. The * indicates a single-sex school.

Despite the difficulties in interpreting the table it is interesting to note that apart from the single-sex schools most schools attract about equal numbers of girls and boys. The exceptions are Schools A, B, J and O. Such difficulties in interpretation do not arise with the social status variables which are discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

Educational and Occupational Level Variables

When mothers' educational level is used as the explanatory variable in the fixed part of the model, 15 sets of estimates are produced. That is, one set for each school. For each level of mothers' education there is a proportion associated with each of the schools. Similar sets of estimates are produced for fathers' educational level variable and each of the mothers' and fathers' occupational level variables. Although the parameter estimates enable proportions to be calculated for each level of the explanatory variable only the proportion for the lowest and highest educational and occupational levels are

provided in the tables. The results are provided for the school with the smallest proportion (the most popular school) and also the school with the largest proportion (the least popular school). Also 95% confidence intervals will be provided with the results. Estimates for other levels of education or occupation and estimates for other school can be derived from the appropriate table in Appendix 6 in which the full details of all parameter estimates used in the discussion in this chapter are provided.

The results in Table 11.4 show a significant difference between the proportions for School F and School G (the two extreme schools) and a significant difference between the responses for parents at either end of the educational and occupational scales.

Educational level of the mother	SCHOOL F (Most popular)			SCHOOL G (Least popular)		
	Estimate	95% Confidence Interval		Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
Lowest level of mothers' Ed'n	**0.35**	0.21	0.52	**0.64**	0.48	0.78
Highest level of mothers' Ed'n	**0.19**	0.09	0.34	**0.43**	0.25	0.63
Lowest level of fathers' Ed'n	**0.31**	0.19	0.47	**0.60**	0.43	0.75
Highest level of fathers' Ed'n	**0.19**	0.10	0.31	**0.43**	0.28	0.60
Lowest level of mothers' Occ'n	**0.28**	0.17	0.43	**0.56**	0.41	0.71
Highest level of mothers' Occ'n	**0.18**	0.08	0.38	**0.43**	0.22	0.67
Lowest level of fathers' Occ'n	**0.53**	0.07	0.95	**0.78**	0.19	0.98
Highest level of fathers' Occ'n	**0.22**	0.12	0.36	**0.47**	0.30	0.64

Table 11.4: The proportion (with a 95% confidence interval) of parents whose preferred secondary school is their closest secondary school. The mothers' and fathers' educational and occupational levels are the explanatory variables and are in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A6.1 (Mothers' educational level), Table A6.2 (Fathers' educational level), Table A6.3 (Mothers' occupational level) and Table A6.4 (Fathers' occupational level)

For all of these models in which the response variable is the proportion of parents for

whom their preferred school is their closest school, School G consistently has the highest proportion and School F the lowest proportion. School G is an undersubscribed school which is an amalgamation of two separate schools. Unfortunately it appears to have maintained the reputation for the worst features of each of the two original schools. Although it is easily accessible from most parts of the town, it doesn't attract many parents from outside its local area. On the other hand, School F is very much oversubscribed even though it is on the outskirts of town and without a good public transport system. Its popularity means that it can be selective and despite the fact that selection is no longer based upon the ability of the child, it continually manages to gain an extraordinary number of very able students.

Mothers, at all educational levels, who prefer School G are about twice as likely to live nearby than those who prefer School F. So School F is much more attractive to parents irrespective of the educational level of the mother. However, among those who prefer each school, the proportion for whom it is the closest decreases as the educational level of the mother increases. For example, of those who prefer School F, 35% of families with lowest value of the mothers' educational level also live nearby whereas only 19% of mothers at educational level 6 live near this preferred school. Similarly the percentages for School G falls from 64% to 43% as the mothers' educational level rises from 1 to 6. Therefore families with more educated mothers are more likely to seek out a more distant school than those with less educated mothers.

Also by examining the confidence intervals in Table 11.4 it is clear that the proportions for School F and School G are significantly different. Similarly it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the proportions for the lowest and highest educational and occupational levels. The confidence intervals will be used in a similar way to identify significant differences between groups of parents in the other multilevel models presented in this thesis.

The relationship between the proportion and the mothers' educational level is close to being linear and therefore the use of a quadratic expression for mothers' educational level will not add to the interpretation. The fitting of quadratic expressions for other explanatory variables with more than three values will be considered but these models will only be mentioned when they assist with the interpretation of the results. However, because most explanatory variables have fewer than seven possible values, quadratic expressions will generally not add to the explanations of the relationships.

When fathers' educational level is used as the explanatory variable similar results occur. Again School F yields the lowest proportions and School G yields significantly higher proportions. Table 11.4 also shows that the educational level of the father significantly influences the proportion of parents who prefer their closest school.

The effect of mothers' occupational level is also very similar to that of the mothers' educational level. In this case the families with mothers' occupational level of 1 and who prefer School G are twice as likely to live near it than those who prefer School F are to live near School F. For higher levels of mothers' occupational level the factor becomes even greater than two. Once again size of the confidence intervals indicate that there is a significant difference in the proportion of parents who prefer their local school between the two extreme schools and between mothers at either end of the employment scale.

When fathers' occupational level is used as an explanatory variable in the fixed part of the model the estimates have large confidence intervals. These large intervals are particularly evident at the lower levels of fathers' education partly because these fathers were under-represented in the sample. This is due to the area selected having a social status level above the average for the country and also due to the method used to collect the data. It was discussed in the literature review in Chapter 7 that when people are asked to place their own occupational level on a given scale they usually place it one level higher than what it actually is. Nevertheless these results also show that as the occupational level of the fathers increases there is a large decrease in the proportion of parents who prefer their local school.

So far the explanatory variable has only been fitted in the fixed part of the model which has had the effect of restricting the slope of each school's line of prediction to the same value. Each of the educational and occupational variables are now fitted as explanatory variables in the random part of the model to determine if their influence on the proportion is the same for each school.

For these models the results are more clearly shown by using a graph. In each graph the lines for four schools are displayed. These include School G and School F which have the lowest and highest proportions and also two other schools whose slopes are most different to the others.

It can be seen from Figure 11.1 that the proportion of parents preferring School G, who

live locally, are less affected by the level of mothers' education than any of the other schools. For school G the proportion only varies from 0.52 (confidence interval is 0.36 to 0.69), for mothers' educational level of 1, to 0.55 (confidence interval is 0.39 to 0.71) for the highest level of mothers' education. That is, of the parents who prefer School G, it is also the closest school for about 55% of them, no matter what level of education of the mother. On the other hand, of the parents who prefer School F, it is the closest school for 39% of families (confidence interval is 0.25 to 0.53) with the lowest educational level and is closest for only 12% of families (confidence interval is 0.07 to 0.21) with the most highly educated mothers. That is, less educated mothers who prefer School F, are three and a half times as likely to live nearby than their more educated counterparts.

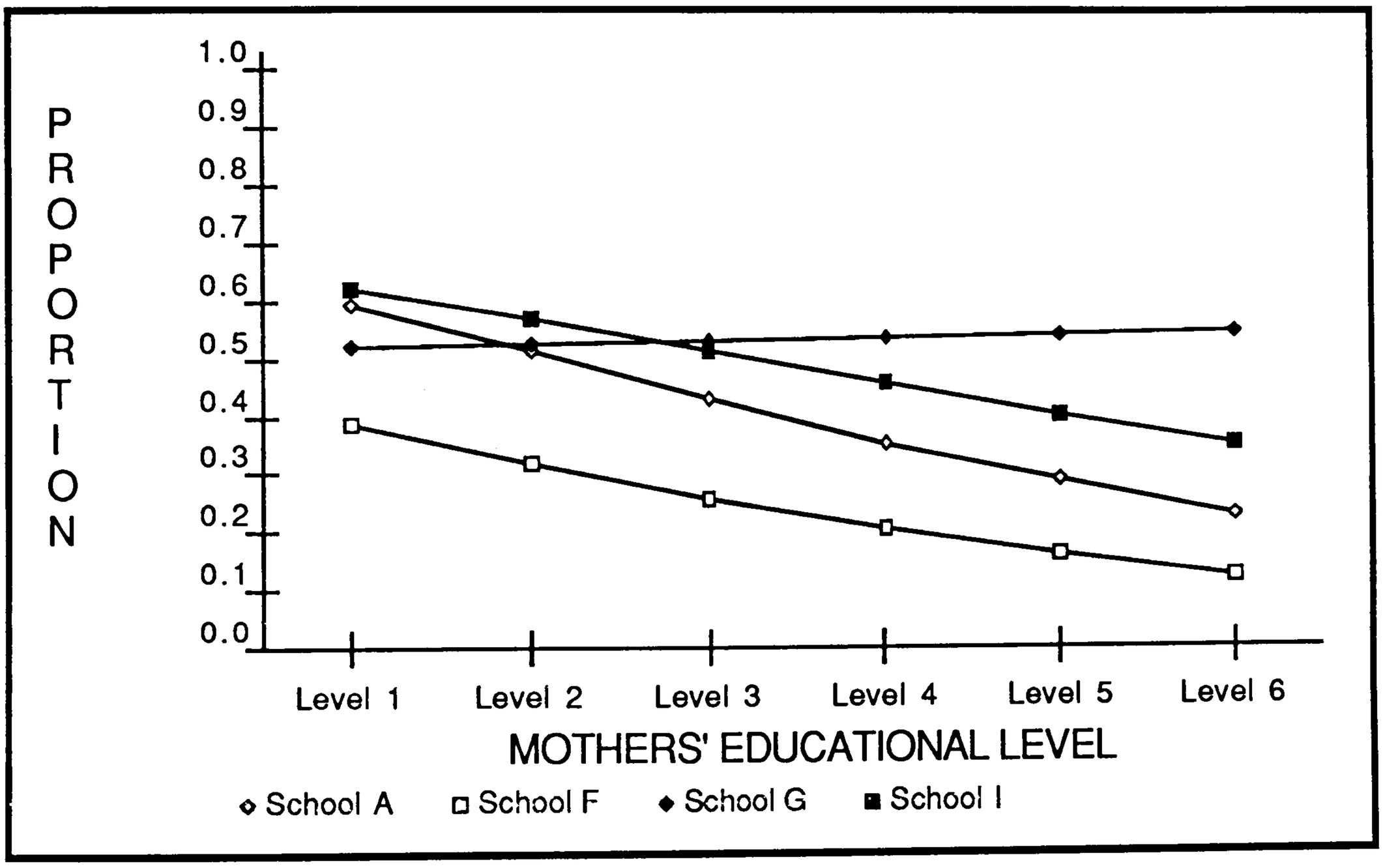


Figure 11.1: The proportion of parents whose preferred secondary school is their closest secondary school. The mothers' educational level is the explanatory variable and is in the random part of the model. Included are the four most varied lines.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A6.5.

For School A the overall variation in the proportion is even greater than it is for School F. In this case the proportion is 0.60 (confidence interval is 0.38 to 0.78) for families with mothers' educational level of 1 and is 0.23 (confidence interval is 0.11 to 0.41) for those with mothers' educational level of 6. Hence the proportions for both School A

and School F are greatly affected by the level of education of the mother, whereas the proportion for school G is virtually unaffected by the educational level of the mother.

It appears here that for the oversubscribed or popular schools, such as Schools A and F, the difference between the proportions for poorly educated mothers and highly educated mothers is greatest. Both School A and School F are oversubscribed schools and are generally sought out by mothers of high educational level from outside the local area. On the other hand mothers of low educational level are less likely to select them unless they are their local school. From some of the unsolicited comments on the questionnaires this could well be because less educated mothers feel that they have no chance of getting their child allocated to the very popular schools and so don't attempt to do so because they believe it will only result in disappointment for themselves and their child.

When fathers' educational level is fitted in the random part of the model it shows that the effect of fathers' educational level across schools is much more uniform than is the effect of mothers' educational level. This can be seen in Figure 11.2.

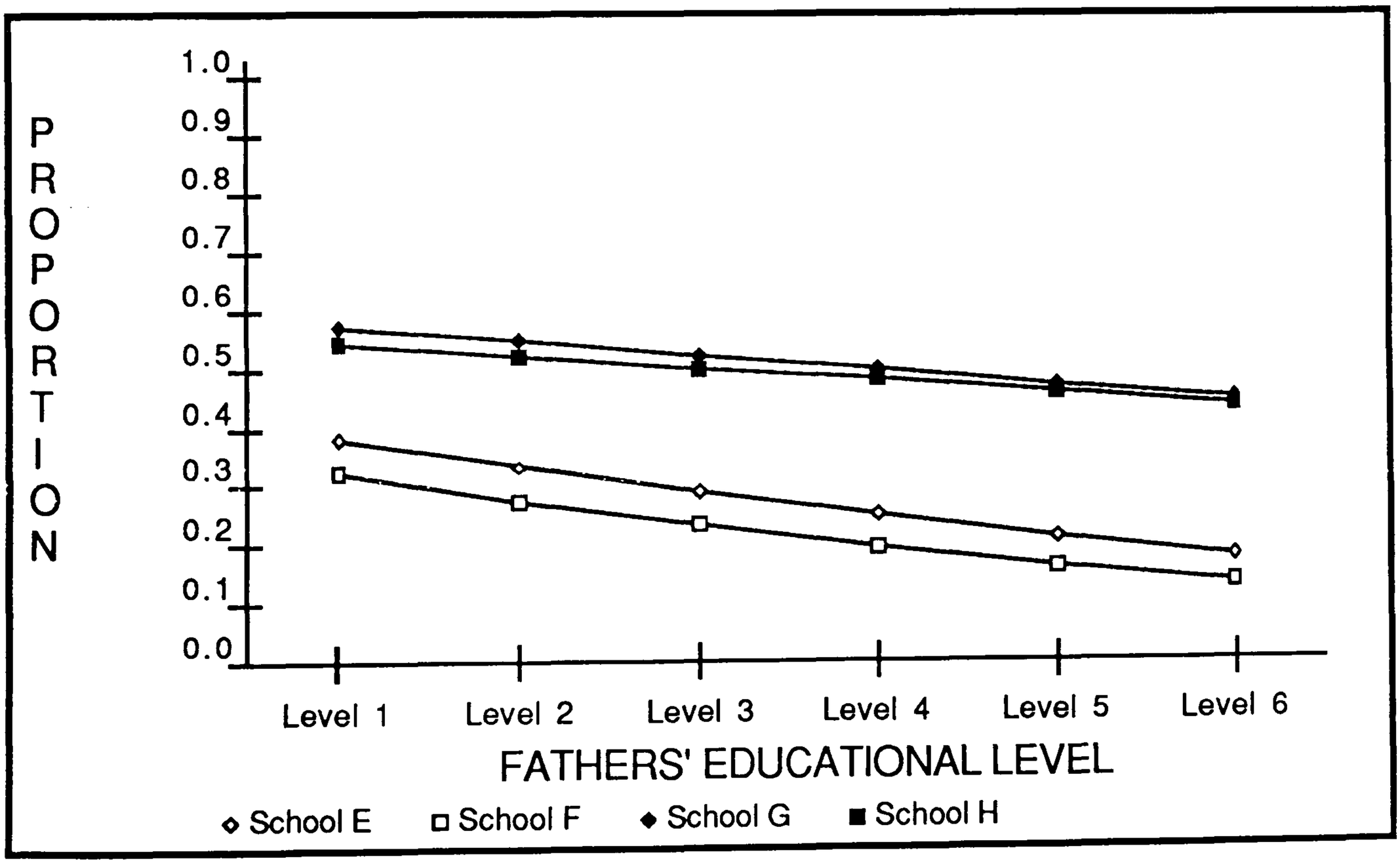


Figure 11.2: The proportion of parents whose preferred secondary school is their closest secondary school. The fathers' educational level is the explanatory variable and is in the random part of the model. Included are the four most varied lines.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A6.6.

From Figure 11.2, it can be seen that even when the lines for the most extreme schools are plotted, there is very little difference in the slopes of the lines and hence in the effect of fathers' educational level from one school to another. This means that fathers of higher education level are less likely to prefer the closest school than their less educated counterparts but that this is true to a similar extent for all schools. This is difficult to explain, unless the fathers are not as involved in the selection process as the mothers or they are not as aware of the relative popularity or merits of the schools.

Figure 11.3 shows how the effect of mothers' occupational level on the proportion varies for four different schools. From the graph of these four regression lines, it can be seen that the influence of the mothers' occupational level is similar to the influence of the mothers' educational level in that it varies appreciably from school to school.

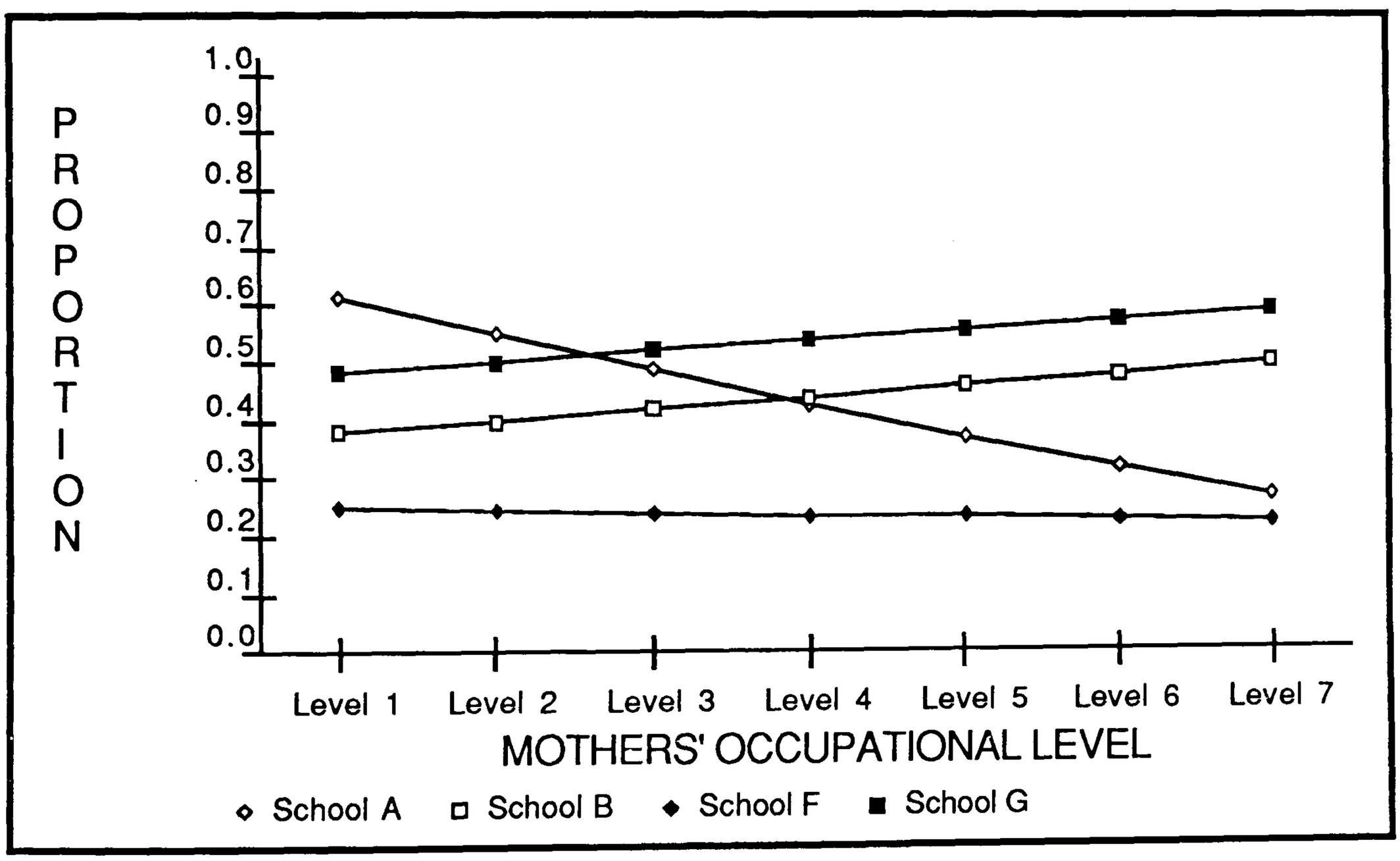


Figure 11.3: The proportion of parents whose preferred secondary school is their closest secondary school. The mothers' occupational level is the explanatory variable and is in the random part of the model. Included are the four most varied lines.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A6.7.

The popularity of School F remains almost constant across all levels of mothers' occupation. This is in contrast to School F's line in Figure 11.1 and could be attributed to the difficulties associated with the use of mothers' occupational level to measure social status and in particular the position of mothers who are not in paid employment.

On the other hand both School A and B are affected by the occupational level of the mother but in quite different ways. For School A the proportion of parents who prefer it and also live near it varies from 0.61 (confidence interval is 0.45 to 0.75) to 0.27 (confidence interval is 0.12 to 0.49) as mothers' occupational level varies from 1 to 7 while for School B the proportion varies from 0.38 (confidence interval is 0.25 to 0.54) to 0.50 (confidence interval is 0.27 to 0.72). Hence those parents who prefer School A, a popular and oversubscribed school, are more likely to seek it out if the mothers' occupational level is high than if it is low, but for those parents who prefer School B, an unpopular and undersubscribed school, the opposite is true. School G, although a little less popular than School B, has the same relationship between the explanatory and response variables.

Finally, when fathers' occupational level is placed in the random part of the model the results are also similar to previous models. A graph showing the regression lines for the four most varied schools is in Figure 11.4.

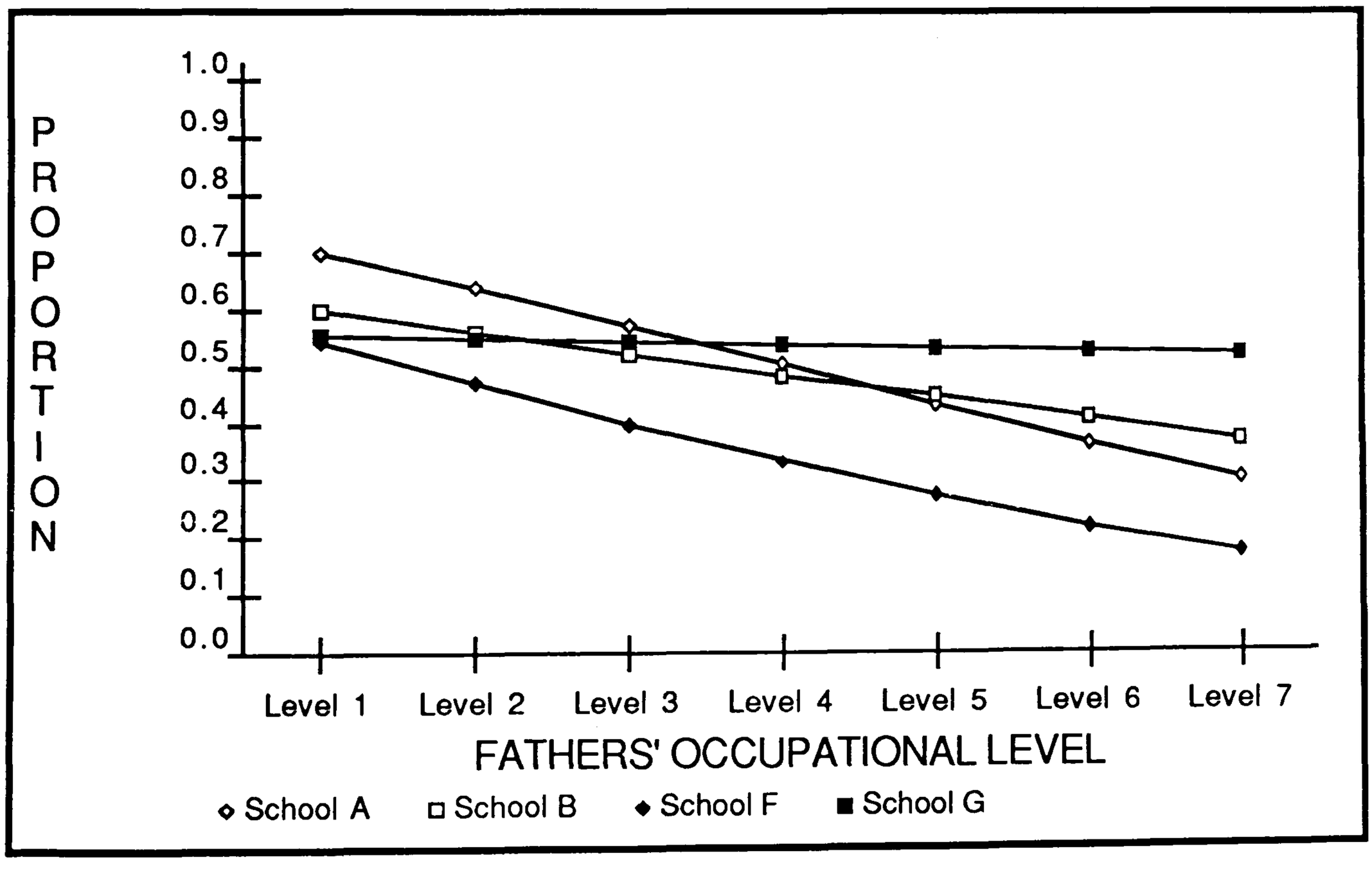


Figure 11.4: Proportion of parents whose preferred secondary school is their closest secondary school. The fathers' occupational level is the explanatory variable and is in the random part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A6.8.

This figure shows that for those who prefer popular School F, of the fathers at occupational level 1, 54% of them (confidence interval is 0.29 to 0.70) live locally but of the fathers at the highest occupational levels only 17% (confidence interval is 0.10 to 0.38) live close by. This trend is also a feature of School A and, although not as pronounced, is also apparent in the line for School B. However School G is again the odd one out in that it attracts parents from outside its local area to approximately the same extent no matter what the educational level of the father.

In summary, when each of the variables for mothers' and fathers' education and occupation are fitted individually they are significantly related to the proportion of parents who prefer their local school. Also the higher the parents on either the educational or occupational scale the less likely they are to select their local school. Finally, these relationships vary from school to school so care must be exercised when quoting proportions for all parents without relating them to particular schools.

More Than One Explanatory Variable

So far each of mothers' and fathers' educational and occupational variables have been fitted in the models, but it is often more enlightening to include two or more of these variables in a model simultaneously. From the analysis so far, mothers' educational level and fathers' occupational level variables are the two most important when fitted individually. When these two variables are fitted in the same model the estimates provide only a little more predictive power than when fathers' occupational level was fitted alone. The analysis shows that of those who prefer School F, the proportion of parents for whom it is the closest school ranges from 0.41 (confidence interval is 0.31 to 0.52) when both mothers' educational level and fathers' occupational level are lowest to 0.17 (confidence interval is 0.11 to 0.24) when they are both at their highest. For School G the range is from 0.69 (confidence interval is 0.62 to 0.75) to 0.39 (confidence interval is 0.32 to 0.47). Full details of these estimates are provided in Table A6.9 in Appendix 6.

When other pairs of variables are fitted simultaneously the range of values for the proportions is even less. When three or more variables are fitted simultaneously some more predictive power could be expected but this leads naturally to fitting the composite term of social status index which is a linear combination of all of the social status variables.

The Social Status Index and Social Status Group

The social status index is a composite variable and its value for each family is the sum of the family's scores on each of the individual social status variables. The social status index ranges in value from 0 to 30. The proportions for selected values of the social status index are provided in Table 11.5.

Social status index of the family	SCHOOL F (Most popular)			SCHOOL G (Least popular)		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
0	**0.49**	0.38	0.60	**0.75**	0.67	0.82
5	**0.41**	0.31	0.52	**0.68**	0.60	0.76
10	**0.33**	0.24	0.44	**0.61**	0.52	0.70
15	**0.27**	0.19	0.36	**0.53**	0.44	0.63
20	**0.21**	0.14	0.29	**0.45**	0.36	0.55
25	**0.16**	0.11	0.23	**0.37**	0.29	0.47
30	**0.12**	0.08	0.18	**0.30**	0.23	0.39

Table 11.5: The proportion (with a 95% confidence interval) of parents whose preferred secondary school is their closest secondary school. The social status index is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A6.10.

With the social status index as the explanatory variable the variations in the proportions between families are significant. A family which has the lowest social status index score is, on average, three times as likely to prefer their closest school (0.67, with confidence interval 0.57 to 0.76) than a family with the highest social status index score (0.23, with confidence interval 0.16 to 0.32). The differences for Schools F and G, the two extreme schools are also large and can be seen in Table 11.5. As well as the significant difference between parents of high and low social status the difference between the two extreme schools is also significant.

When the social status index is permitted to vary across level 2 units, and the slopes of

the lines of prediction are able to vary, it can be seen that although the relationship between social status and choice of school is strong, it is different for different schools. The lines for four schools are shown in Figure 11.5.

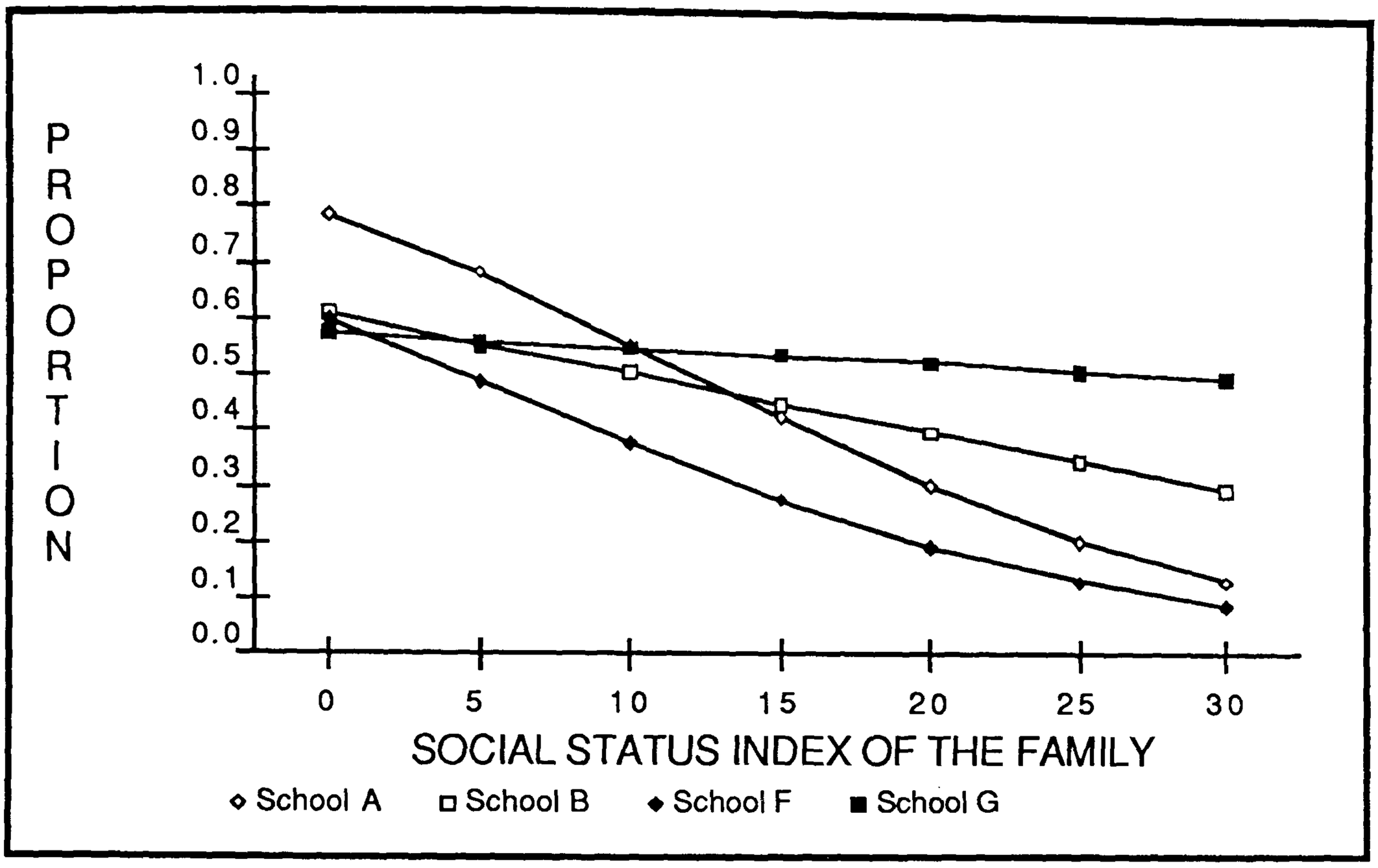


Figure 11.5: The proportion of parents whose preferred secondary school is their closest secondary school. The social status index is the explanatory variable and is in the random part of the model. Included are the four most varied lines.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A6.11.

The regression lines in Figure 11.5 show that the proportion for School A is greatly affected by the social status of the family. For families of low social status who prefer School A, 78% will live nearby while of the high social status families who prefer School A only 13% will have it as their closest school. So once more it is clear that the high social status parents are far less likely to choose their local school for their child. School G is the school where this trend is least evident and hence whose regression line is closest to horizontal. For this school, a larger percentage of high social status families are likely to have it as both their preferred and closest school. Further analysis of the reasons why parents prefer or do not prefer each school will be the basis of Chapter 13.

The social status index is also categorized into three groups and these are referred to as

the low, middle and high social status groups. With the social status group as the response variable the results are similar to those using the social status index with parents in the lowest social status group, on average, one and a half times as likely to prefer their closest school than parents in the highest social status group.

11.4 Conclusion

As would be expected, the proportion of parents who prefer their local school will depend on the nature of the school. This study shows that the proportion of parents whose preferred school is their local school also varies significantly with each of the social variables. That is, the more educated the mother or father, or the higher status job they have, the less likely they are to express a preference for their closest school, but this does vary from school to school. The educational level of the mother and the occupational level of the father proved to be the two variables most related to the proportion of parents preferring their local school.

When the social status variables are combined into the single variable of social status index, the differences between parents at the lower end and those at the higher end is very apparent. It showed that, on average, only 23% of parents at the top of the social status index are likely to prefer their local school. On the other hand families near the lower end of the social status index preferred their local school about 67% of the time, depending on the school. This shows that the social status level of the family has a significant effect on a parent's preference of school although the actual percentages vary according to which is the preferred school.

Finally, it could be expected that the parents of a higher social status level are better placed to choose a more distant school because of their ability to drive their children to and from school. Conversely, the poorer families may have fewer cars and be less able to drive their children to school. In fact a multilevel model with social status index as the response variable and whether the child will be driven to school as the explanatory variable shows that there is a very weak relationship between them. This means that parents at all levels of social status are equally likely to drive their children to and from school.

Hence there is a real difference in the proportion of parents in the high and low social

status groups who prefer their closest school and this is more than can be explained by their ability or willingness to transport their children to a more distant school.

CHAPTER 12

The Influence on Parents of School Brochures, School Open Nights and Other Common Sources of Information

12.1 Introduction

As a result of the 1980 Education Act, and subsequent announcements by Secretaries of State for Education, each school is required to publish details about its educational provisions. The purpose of this information is to help parents to compare schools and to select the 'best' school for their child. Such information is generally relayed to parents through a school brochure or prospectus. This brochure must also include details of the performance of past students on the public examinations. Schools also hold open nights during which parents can gain more information and see the school first hand. Other sources of information that may influence parents in their choice of school include;

talks with other parents who have children attending the school,
newspaper articles and reports,
staff at the child's primary school, and
other family members already attending the school.

The influence of each of these sources of information will be examined later in this chapter but first particular attention will be paid to the extent to which school brochures and open nights are used by parents to gain information about the schools.

12.2 The Number of School Brochures Read by Parents

Full details of how the parents responded to the question asking how many school brochures they read or expect to read are provided in Appendix 5, Table A5.11. From this table it can be seen that less than 3% of parents do not read any school brochures

and that over half of the parents (57%) read four or more brochures. The parents who prefer School A or E, two of the least popular schools, are more likely to read no school brochures than parents who prefer the more popular schools (Schools B, F and G). However, parents who prefer School C, another unpopular school, contradict this trend. Close inspection of the data suggests that there is not a clear relationship between the preferred school and the number of school brochures that parents read. However when multilevel models are fitted the picture will become clearer.

The parents who failed to respond to the question, regarding the number of brochures read, are not significantly different to those who did respond, when compared on the basis of the gender of the child or the social status of the family. Therefore the missing data for the response variable will be assumed to be missing at random.

12.3 The Influence of Gender and Social Status on the Number of School Brochures Read by Parents

As was the case in the previous chapters a set of significance tests are applied in order to determine which, if any, of the social variables are significantly related to the number of school brochures read by parents. In this case the number of school brochures read is the response variable and each of the social variables, in turn, is fitted as an explanatory variable. The results of these tests are summarized in Table 12.1.

Social variable	Degrees of freedom	Chi-squared value	P-value (If < 0.05)
Gender of the child	1	0.35	-
Mothers' educational level	5	35.06	0.000
Fathers' educational level	5	21.22	0.001
Mothers' occupational level	6	19.99	0.003
Fathers' occupational level	6	14.07	0.029
Social Status group	2	25.64	0.000

Table 12.1: The significance of the relationships between the number of school brochures read by parents and the gender of the child and the number of brochures and the social status of the family.

Once again each of the key social status variables has a significant relationship with the number of brochures read by the parents but the gender variable has a very weak relationship. Before proceeding to a more detailed look at each of these relationships it is worth noting how little the number of brochures read varies across schools. For example, when the gender variable is used as the explanatory variable the between schools variance is only 2.3% of the total variance and hence any further attempt to examine differences between schools will be unproductive. The percentage of the variance between level two units (schools) compared to the total variance in each model is given in Table 12.2. In each case the percentage refers to the multilevel model with the indicated gender or social status variable as the explanatory variable and the number of school brochures read as the response variable.

Social variable	Percentage of variance between the schools
Gender of the child	2.3
Mothers' educational level	1.8
Fathers' educational level	1.7
Mothers' occupational level	2.2
Fathers' occupational level	1.7
Social status group	1.5

Table 12.2: The percentage of the total variance which is variance between schools when each of the gender and social status variables are used to predict the number of school brochures read by parents.

With such small variation between schools most of the discussion in this section will relate to the effect of the gender and social status variables. However, there still may be significant differences between particular schools and these will be highlighted when appropriate.

The Gender of the Child

From Table 12.1 it can be seen that the number of school brochures read is not

significantly influenced by whether the child is a girl or a boy. Fitting a multilevel model with the number of brochures read as the response variable and gender as the explanatory variable confirms this belief. The estimates for the two extreme schools from this multilevel model, together with the 95% confidence intervals are provided in Table 12.3.

The parents who prefer School F read the greatest number of brochures and those who prefer School H read the fewest. School F is a very popular, and hence oversubscribed, county school. It is only about 20 years old and has very good facilities compared to other schools in the town. School H has recently become a grant maintained school and is the only school of that status in the town at the time of the study. Its numbers were low and it was to be amalgamated with another school but this prospect drew its parents closer together and in support of their school. This led directly to their vote to seek grant-maintained status.

Gender of the child	SCHOOL H (Least brochures)			SCHOOL F (Most brochures)		
	Estimated number of brochures	95% Confidence interval		Estimated number of brochures	95% Confidence interval	
Girls	**3.3**	3.0	3.5	**3.8**	3.6	4.0
Boys	**3.3**	3.1	3.6	**3.8**	3.6	4.1

Table 12.3: The number of school brochures (with a 95% confidence interval) read by parents. The gender of the child is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A7.1.

The difference between the number of brochures read by parents preferring these two extreme schools is appreciable but there is no difference at all between the number of brochures read by parents of boys and by parents of girls no matter which of the two secondary schools they prefer. The relatively small confidence intervals indicates that the estimates are very reliable.

The Social Status of the Family

A set of multilevel models with school brochures as the response variable and each of the mothers' and fathers' educational and occupational level variables, in turn, fitted as the explanatory variables show that the number of school brochures read is significantly affected by each of these other variables. See Table A7.2 (mothers' educational level), Table A7.3(fathers' educational level), Table A7.4 (mothers' occupational level) and Table A7.5 (fathers' occupational level) in Appendix 7 for the complete sets of parameter estimates. Those parents who prefer School H read fewer brochures than those parents who prefer any other secondary school and those who prefer School F read the most school brochures.

When each educational and occupational variable is fitted, the difference between the school with the smallest number of brochures that are read and the school with the most brochures read is about 0.4. The difference between these two extreme schools is generally not significant, as would be expected with the small between school variance reported in Table 12.2. So only mean estimates for all parents will be discussed in the remainder of this section.

Two of the most strongly related explanatory variables are the mothers' educational level and the fathers' educational level. Mothers at the lowest educational level read, on average, 3.1 brochures (confidence interval is 2.6 to 3.5) and mothers at the highest end of the scale read 3.9 brochures (confidence interval is 3.4 to 4.4). A similar range is evident for levels of fathers' education. Fathers at the lowest level of education read 3.2 brochures (confidence interval is 2.7 to 3.6) while the most educated fathers read 3.9 brochures (confidence interval is 3.5 to 4.3). These two sets of results are very similar and show a clear relationship between either parent's level of education and the number of school brochures that they read.

There is not nearly as much difference when mothers' occupational level is fitted as the explanatory variable. In this case the number of brochures read ranges from 3.5 (confidence interval is 3.1 to 3.9) to 3.7 (confidence interval is 3.1 to 4.3). The large standard error in this model, probably caused by the difficulties of grading mothers' occupations and especially for those who choose to work in the home, makes any interpretation of this set of results somewhat dubious. The variation in the number of brochures read for the different levels of fathers' occupation is also large. Fathers with

a university degree read 3.8 (confidence interval is 3.4 to 4.2) which is 0.9 more than fathers with no formal educational qualification.

The difference between parents of different social status can be summarized with the use of the social status index and the social status group fitted as the explanatory variables. From Table 12.4 it can be seen that parents at the high end of the social status index range read approximately 1.4 more school brochures (4.2 brochures), on average, than parents at the lower end of the scale (2.8 brochures). When the parents are divided into three groups for low, middle and high social status the differences are still significant. For example, those parents who belong to the lowest social status group read significantly less brochures (3.2) than those parents who are from the high social status group who read an average of 3.8 brochures.

Level of social variable	Estimated number of brochures	95% Confidence interval	
Lowest level of social status index	2.8	2.6	3.1
Highest level of social status index	4.2	3.9	4.4
Lowest level of social status group	3.2	2.9	3.5
Highest level of social status group	3.8	3.5	4.1

Table 12.4: The number of school brochures (with a 95% confidence interval) read by parents. The social status variables are the explanatory variables and are in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A7.6 (social status index) and Table A7.7 (social status group).

A multilevel model with the social status group variable fitted in the random part of the model shows that the relationship, between social status and the number of brochures read, does not vary greatly from school to school.

So it can be concluded that any differences in the number of brochures read can be best explained in terms of the social status of the parents. In fact there is a significant link between the number of brochures read by a parent and each of mothers' and fathers' educational levels as well as the composite social status variables. Also there were no discernible differences between groups of parents who prefer different schools nor between parents of boys and parents of girls.

12.4 The Number of School Open Nights Attended by Parents

The table of parents' responses to the question concerning the number of school open nights attended appears in Appendix 5, Table A5.10. The responses are similar to those for the number of brochures read except that the number of open nights attended by parents was slightly fewer. This difference is understandable because the effort required to read a school brochure in the comfort of the home is much less than the effort required to go out of the home to attend an open night. Nevertheless almost half (49%) of the parents attended four or more open nights. Again there is no clear trend in the table other than a hint that the parents who prefer the oversubscribed schools are likely to attend more open nights than those parents who prefer less popular schools.

The parents who prefer School F, which is one of the more sought after schools, attend the most open nights and those who prefer Schools J and P attend the fewest. School J is a denominational school and parents who are committed to this faith will want their child to attend this school on the basis of their faith and not necessarily so much on what other qualities the school has to offer. So for some parents knowing that a school provides a 'catholic education' is sufficient and hence they do not seek out other schools for comparison. Similarly, some parents desire a non-maintained or private secondary school and the basis for their decision is the type of school. Other differences between schools, in the number of open nights attended, are not so apparent but if they exist they will be identified by the multilevel models and will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

Once again the contingency table tests reveal that the responses to the question asking parents for the number of open nights they attend are missing at random.

12.5 The Influence of Gender and Social Status on the Number of School Open Nights Attended by Parents

Having seen the differences in the number of brochures read by parents of different social status levels it will be interesting to see if similar trends are evident with respect to the number of open nights attended. Once again a table detailing the gender and the social status variables and indicating which of them are significantly related to the number of open nights attended is provided in Table 12.5.

Social variable	Degrees of freedom	Chi-squared value	P-value (if < 0.05)
Gender of the child	1	0.31	-
Mothers' educational level	5	29.97	0.000
Fathers' educational level	5	19.08	0.002
Mothers' occupational level	6	17.91	0.007
Fathers' occupational level	6	17.69	0.007
Social Status group	2	25.48	0.000

Table 12.5: The significance of the relationships between the number of school open nights attended by parents and the gender of the child and the number of open nights and the social status of the family.

As with the number of brochures read, the number of open nights attended is significantly related to each of the social status variables. Also there is no significant relationship between the gender of the child and the number of open nights attended. The percentage of the total variance which is variance between schools for each of the multilevel models is included in Table 12.6.

Once again the percentage of the total variance that is variance between schools is relatively small and so most of the discussion in this section will focus on the differences between parents on the social variables rather than on the differences between schools.

Social variable	Percentage of variance between the schools
Gender of the child	5.0%
Mothers' educational level	4.4%
Fathers' educational level	4.1%
Mothers' occupational level	4.5%
Fathers' occupational level	4.1%
Social status group	4.3%

Table 12.6: The percentage of the total variance which is variance between schools when each of the gender and social status variables are used to predict the number of school open nights attended by parents.

What follows is a more detailed analysis of how the various social variables influence the number of open nights the parents attend. This will be done by examining another set of multilevel models, this time with the response variable being the number of open nights attended.

The Gender of the Child

As the previous discussion has indicated, there is very little difference between the number of open nights attended by parents of girls and the number attended by parents of boys. On average the parents with daughters transferring attended 3.2 open nights (confidence interval is 3.0 to 3.5) and those with sons attended 3.3 (confidence interval is 3.0 to 3.6). A similarly small gender difference exists between each pair of schools and in no case is the difference a significant one. A full set of parameter estimates are provided in Appendix 8 as Table A8.1

The Social Status of the Family

When each of the social status variables is used as the explanatory variable to help study the differences in the number of open nights attended they produce similar but interesting results. Table 12.7 shows how each social status variable affects the number of open nights attended. As before the mean results are provided in the knowledge that there is not a great variation between schools.

Level of social variable	Estimated number of open nights	95% Confidence interval	
Lowest level of mothers' education	**2.9**	2.4	3.4
Highest level of mothers' education	**3.7**	3.1	4.2
Lowest level of fathers' education	**3.0**	**2.5**	**3.5**
Highest level of fathers' education	**3.6**	3.1	4.0
Lowest level of mothers' occupation	**3.2**	2.7	3.6
Highest level of mothers' occupation	**3.5**	2.8	4.1
Lowest level of fathers' occupation	**2.2**	0.5	3.8
Highest level of fathers' occupation	**3.5**	3.0	4.0

Table 12.7: The number of school open nights (with a 95% confidence interval) attended by parents. The educational and occupational level variables are the explanatory variables and are in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A8.2 (mothers' educational level), Table A8.3 (fathers' educational level), Table A8.4 (mothers' occupational level) and Table A8.5 (fathers' occupational level).

Once again the confidence intervals for the models involving fathers' occupational level are quite large and so caution must be exercised when drawing conclusions. There is a significant difference between parents at the low end of the educational and occupational scales and those at the upper end of these scales. Mothers' and fathers' educational levels are again the most strongly related variables and mothers' occupational level has the weakest relationship to the response variable.

With the social status group as the explanatory variable, the greatest difference between any two schools in the number of open nights attended by the parents is between those who prefer School F and School H. This difference is approximately 0.8 and remains the same for all levels of the explanatory variables. The results for the mean school are provided in Table 12.8 and it can be assumed that the estimates for the schools with the lowest and highest number of attendances will lie within about 0.4 below and above these mean values.

Table 12.8 shows that when the social status index is used as the explanatory variable parents at the top end of this scale attend, on average, 1.4 more open nights than those parents at the lower end of this scale. When this result is combined with the additional number of brochures that these parents read, there can be little doubt that the parents of high social status are much better informed about the schools in the town than the parents from the lower social status levels.

Level of social variable	Estimated number of open nights	95% Confidence interval	
Lowest level of social status index	**2.5**	2.2	2.8
Highest level of social status index	**3.9**	3.6	4.2
Lowest level of social status group	**3.0**	2.7	3.3
Highest level of social status group	**3.7**	3.3	4.0

Table 12.8: The number of school open nights (with a 95% confidence interval) attended by parents. The social status variables are the explanatory variables and are in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A8.6 (social status index) and Table A8.7 (social status group).

The variance between level two units is again small, but by placing the explanatory variables into the random part of the model attention can be directed at how the regression lines vary for groups of parents who prefer different schools. When this is done fifteen lines are produced and the four most varied of these are shown on the graph in Figure 12.1.

The regression lines show that the effect of social status group on the number of open nights attended is relatively uniform. The most extreme cases are the parents who prefer School J, who attended about the same number of open nights whether they are in the low or high social status group, and the parents who prefer School A, who exhibit the

strongest positive relationship between the number of open nights attended and the social status of the family. Apart from these two schools, the others all have a similar relationship between the two variables as can be seen by the closeness of the slopes of their regression lines.

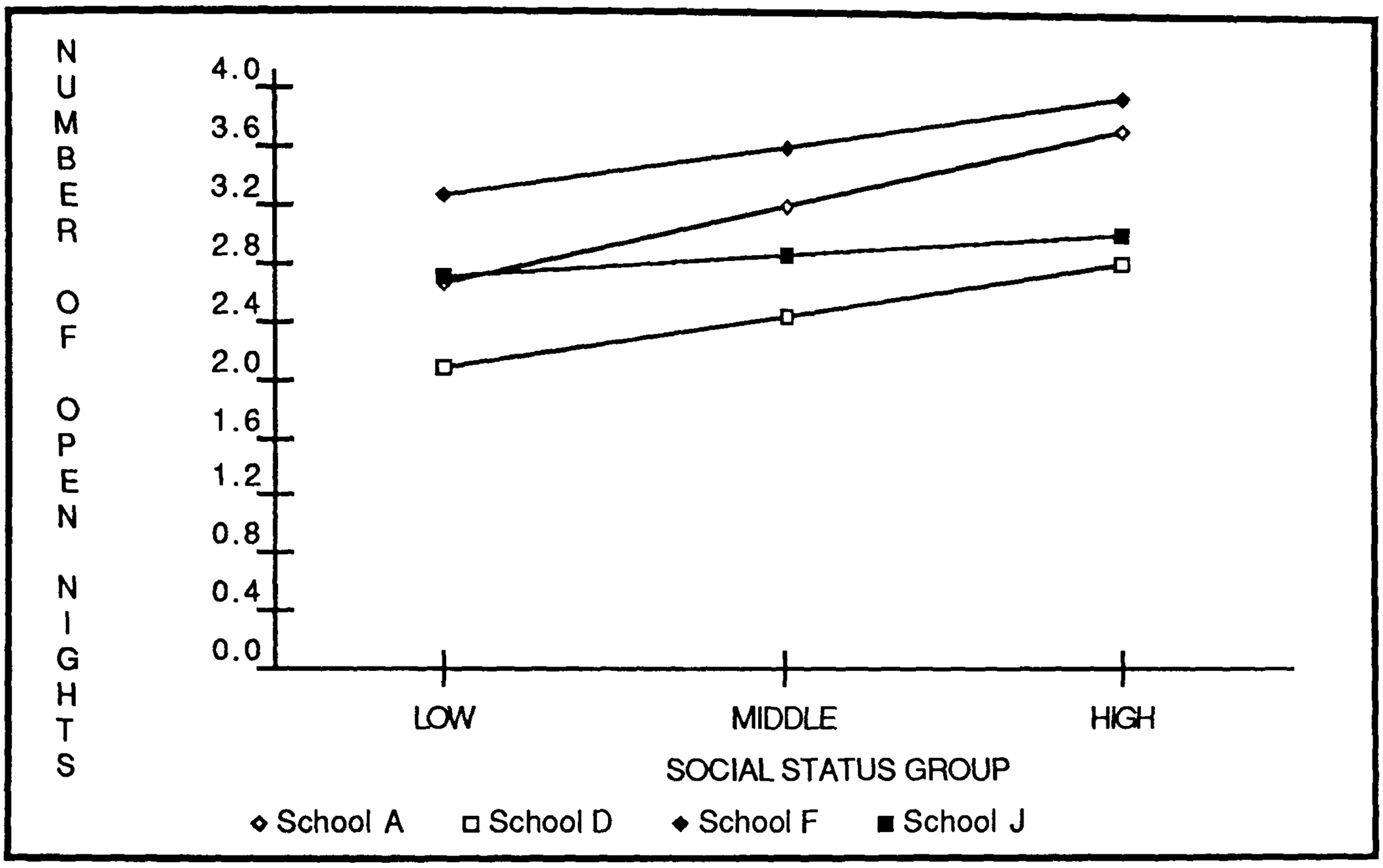


Figure 12.1: Number of school open nights attended by parents. The social status group is the explanatory variable and is in the random part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A8.8.

With respect to the number of open nights attended it is possible to conclude that this variable is significantly related to each of the major social status variables. It is also generally not related to the preferred school of the parents. Only a small percentage of the total variance occurs between schools and the relationship between social status and attendances at open nights is similar in all but a few of schools. Finally, the gender of the child plays no part in influencing the number of open nights their parents attend.

12.6 The Extent to Which Parents are Influenced by Different Sources of Information

There are always many sources of information available to parents to help them make decisions about schools for their children. Some sources of information are more reliable than others but even the unreliable ones may influence parents faced with such a difficult decision. To determine the extent to which parents are influenced by the different sources of information they were given a list of seven of the most common sources and asked to indicate whether each source had a large influence, some influence or no influence upon their decision. The frequencies of the parents' responses are detailed in Appendix 5 in Tables A5.58 to A5.64 and a summary of these responses is provided in Table 12.9.

Source of influence	Large influence	Some influence	No influence
School brochures	20.5	68.3	11.2
School visits (inc. open nights)	75.4	21.9	2.7
Talks with other parents	41.3	49.2	9.5
Published examination results	45.5	43.2	11.3
Newspaper articles and reports	9.6	40.7	49.7
Primary school staff	13.4	41.1	45.5
Other family members at the school	38.6	22.4	38.9

Table 12.9: The extent to which parents are influenced by the common sources of information when selecting a secondary school for their child.

From this table it is clear that parents' visits to the school including attendance at school open nights are by far the most influential activity. It would have been interesting to ask parents what it is in particular about open nights that they value. Some indications are given by the parents' answers to Questions B2 and B3 and these generally referred to the discipline of the present students, the general facilities of the school and the headteacher's address all of which they observed when they attended a school open night. However, because parents were not specifically asked to say why they were influenced by open nights it would be wrong to place too much emphasis on these observations.

One unexpected result in Table 12.9 is the very low percentage of parents who were greatly influenced by the staff at their child's primary school. Many secondary school staff believe that this source of information is one of the most influential.

For each of the questions in Section O, when the parents who failed to respond are compared to those parents who did respond, there is a significant difference between parents of different social status groups. In particular, parents in the lowest social status group were more likely to miss a question than parents in the high social status group. This could make the raw percentages cited in Table 12.9 a little inaccurate but it should make no difference to the relationships which are identified in the following sections.

In order to determine the way these sources of information vary for families of different social status levels and for children of each sex, a number of multilevel models are fitted. In each case, one of the seven sources of information is the response variable. Each of these variables is transformed into a binary response variable by combining two of the three categories. With the dummy variables associated with each of the social status indicators fitted as the explanatory variables in the models, a set of significance tests is applied. Table 12.10 shows the values of these statistics for each source of information and significant results are shown in bold type with the appropriate probability beneath the chi-squared value.

To assist in the understanding of Table 12.10 the seven sources of information, referred to by the numbers 1 to 7 at the top of the table, are repeated below.

(1) The school's brochure or prospectus
(2) Visits to the school (including open night)
(3) Talks with parents who have children at the school
(4) Published examination results
(5) Newspaper articles and reports
(6) Staff at the child's primary school
(7) Other family members attending the school

The first line of Table 12.10 illustrates that the extent to which parents are influenced by each of the sources of information is the same for those who are parents of girls and those who are parents of boys.

Social status indicator	Degrees of freedom	Source of information 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender of the child	1	0.37	0.14	0.00	1.96	2.65	0.55	0.42
Mothers' education	5	7.55	3.84	2.04	2.78	2.62	7.09	10.39
Fathers' education	5	**11.41** (0.04)	**11.33** (0.04)	6.84	8.85	8.33	9.44	3.67
Mothers' occupation	6	11.98	11.07	3.87	11.82	3.68	7.13	8.17
Fathers' occupation	6	6.77	**12.79** (0.05)	**17.9** (0.01)	**14.94** (0.02)	3.49	1.76	7.08
Social status group	2	4.31	**14.05** (0.00)	**15.43** (0.00)	**6.54** (0.04)	3.44	3.00	**6.40** (0.04)

Table 12.10: The significance of the relationships between the social variables and the extent of influence of common sources of information. The entries are the chi-squared values and the numbers in brackets are the probabilities. These are only included when they are below 0.05.

The extent of the influence of the first source of information, the school's brochure, was significantly related to only one social indicator, that being the educational level of the fathers. The more educated fathers being more influenced by the brochures than the fathers who are less educated. This could be related to their ability to comprehend the brochures, some of which are written using a high level of language and some with technical terms not easily understood by the average parent.

The extent of the influence of the second, third, fourth and seventh sources of information, namely, visits to the school, talks with other parents, published examination results and talks with other family members, were all significantly related to the social status group of the parents. As the social status group is a more general measure its relationship to each of these four sources of information will now be analysed in more detail. The fifth and sixth sources of influence, the newspaper articles and the staff at the child's primary school are not significantly related to any of the social status variables nor to the gender of the child.

The School Open Night

The first of the sources of influence to be significantly related to the social status group of the family was the school visit which almost always occurred on the school's open night. Parents in the high social status group are much more influenced by open nights than those in the low social status group but the middle group are even more influenced than the high group. For each school the proportion of parents in the low social status group who saw the school open night as a large influence is 0.67 (confidence interval is 0.56 to 0.76) while 81% of parents (confidence interval is 0.73 to 0.86) from the middle social status group thought the open night was a large influence on their decision. The proportion for parents in the high group was 0.79 (confidence interval is 0.71 to 0.85). Therefore a school that wants to attract parents from the middle and upper social status groups should put a great deal of effort into the presentation of the school open night. Alternatively, the low social status group is not as influenced by the open night so a poorly presented open night will not deter these parents to the same extent. The net result being that a low quality open night could well lead to a disproportionately high number of students from the low social status group applying for a place in the school. A full set of parameter estimates for this model is provided in Table A9.1 in Appendix 9.

Of those who prefer School M a larger proportion, 70% of parents (confidence interval is 0.60 to 0.79) in the low social status group and 82% in the high group (confidence interval is 0.75 to 0.87) are largely influenced by the school open night. The parents who preferred School L were least influenced by the school open night with 61% (confidence interval is 0.50 to 0.71) from the low group and 74% of parents (confidence interval is 0.66 to 0.82) from the high social status group claiming that the open night is a very influential factor in their choice of school. It is interesting to note that School L is an all boys school and that School M is an all girls school but also that these two schools are both ex-grammar schools which have maintained their reputation in the community for providing a 'grammar school' type of education. However, the confidence interval for School M indicates that this difference between School L and School M is not statistically significant.

Talks With Other Parents

The second of the sources of information that is significantly related to the social group of the family is the talks with parents who already have children at the school. For all

schools the proportion of parents who are influenced by their talks with other parents is higher for parents of the higher social status group. In fact, 47% of parents (confidence interval is 0.39 to 0.56) from the highest group are greatly influenced by their talks with other parents. That is, they are about one and a half times more likely to perceive their talks with other parents as having a large influence on their choice of school than are the parents from the low social status group (30% with confidence interval of 0.21 to 0.40). Table A9.2 contains the complete set of estimates for the model.

Again, it is the parents who prefer School M (32% of parents with confidence interval of 0.23 to 0.43 in the low group and 50% of parents with confidence interval of 0.42 to 0.59 from the high social status group) who are most influenced by what they hear about it from other parents. School H, the only grant-maintained school in the survey, has the lowest proportion which indicates that the parents who prefer it are less likely to be influenced by what other parents have to say about it (28% of parents with confidence interval of 0.20 to 0.37 in the low group and 45% of parents with confidence interval of 0.36 to 0.54 from the high social status group). An examination of the confidence intervals for these two schools shows no significant difference between schools.

This perhaps explains the 'catch 22' in which schools find themselves. The parents belonging to the high social status group are influenced by parents, who are probably of a similar social status, and whose children are likely to be in the popular schools. Thus schools that already contain many children from the higher social levels are likely to continue to do so, not necessarily because of what the school does, but because of what the present parents say, and the future parents hear, about the school.

Published Examination Results

Published examination results are the third source of information that influence parents from different social status groups in significantly different ways. Once again, parents of high social status are significantly more influenced by examination results than parents from the low social status group. This difference could be related to the difficulties in comparing schools on the basis of raw examination data. These difficulties are likely to be more prevalent among low social status parents. The actual interpretation of these results is a difficult exercise for many people. It is shown in the literature review that even educational experts disagree on the interpretation of data

derived from school examination results. Parents of all social status levels must have at least as much difficulty in interpreting examination results as these experts. Notwithstanding these difficulties nearly half of the parents surveyed (45.5%) state that examination results are a very influential source of information.

Once again it is the parents who prefer School M who are most influenced by examination results. Of these parents, 67% (confidence interval is 0.58 to 0.75) from the high social status group and 56% (confidence interval is 0.44 to 0.67) from the low group are influenced to a large extent. For School H, at the other end of the scale, only 37% (confidence interval is 0.29 to 0.47) of parents of high social status and 27% (confidence interval is 0.19 to 0.37) from the low social status group say they are largely influenced by such results. A full set of parameter estimates is included in Table A9.3 in Appendix 9.

With so many different ways of presenting examination results to parents and so many more ways of interpreting the results it would be worth considering a follow up study to see which aspects of a school's examination results attract parents and which aspects deter parents from a school. More insight into how parents interpret examination results would also be interesting.

Other Family Members

The final source of information that influences parents to a different extent depending on their social status level is the other members of the family who have attended, or who presently attend, the school. From the comments made in the margins and in the open response part of the questionnaire it is obvious that the family members are often the parents themselves or aunts and uncles who attended the school some twenty to thirty years ago. This could explain why a school's reputation is so difficult to change in the short term.

The variable that derived from the extent of influence of other family members is defined differently to the three discussed above. The proportions that are quoted for this response variable are the proportion of parents who rate the information gained from other family members as 'large' or 'some' influence on their decision. Even so there is a noticeable difference between the results in this section and those in the previous three sections. It is the trend that the parents of each school are more influenced by

family members if they are in the low and middle social status groups than if they are in a higher group. The estimates for each group and for the two extreme schools, are shown in Table 12.11. This table shows that parents in the middle social status group are most influenced by their contact with family members who attend the school. The extent of their influence is significantly greater than for parents in the high social status group. Parents in the low social status group are very similar to those in the middle group.

Social status group of the family	SCHOOL M (Least influenced)			SCHOOL C (Most influenced)		
	Estimated number of open nights	95% Confidence interval		Estimated number of open nights	95% Confidence interval	
Low	**0.48**	0.35	0.61	**0.78**	0.68	0.86
Middle	**0.51**	0.40	0.63	**0.80**	0.72	0.87
High	**0.41**	0.30	0.52	**0.73**	0.62	0.81

Table 12.11: The proportion (with a 95% confidence interval) of parents who thought that their talks with other family members attending the school had a large or some influence on their choice of school for their child. The social status group is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A9.4.

So parents of low and middle social status are more likely to listen to other family members and less likely to talk to other parents. On the other hand the parents of the high social status group are more likely to listen to other parents than to family members. This is a strange phenomena but may also contribute to the 'catch 22' mentioned in the previous section.

For most schools the proportion of parents influenced by other family members is significantly lower for families in the high social status group than it is for those in the middle or low group. There are also some significant differences between schools so the extent of the influence for parents who prefer the two extreme schools is provided in Table 12.11. The parents who prefer School M, an oversubscribed ex-grammar school, are least likely to be influenced by what other members of the family say. School C, at the other end of the scale, has between 73% and 80% of its parents who are influenced

by other family members. School C is an undersubscribed school with a relatively poor intake.

The confidence interval, for those parents in the middle social status group and who prefer School C, ranges from 0.72 to 0.87 and includes the estimate for only three of the other schools. So the parents who prefer School C, are strongly influenced by the information they gain from other family members who attend the school. If the information passed on by these families is positive then the school may well encourage these parents to spread the word more widely and talk to other parents who are about to choose a school for their child. If the information passed on is negative then the school has a much more difficult problem to solve.

When the social status group variable is fitted to the random part of the model the estimates are the much same as when it is in the fixed part. Therefore any relationship between the extent of the influence and the social status group is the same for each school.

12.7 Conclusion

Initially this chapter considered the school brochure and the school open nights and the extent to which they were read and attended. These two activities are the most obvious attempts by a school to attract new parents and students to their school. The staff of most schools expend a great deal of energy producing brochures and preparing for and conducting open nights so it is important to know how they are perceived by the parents.

Nearly 57% of parents of transferring children read four or more brochures and 49% of the parents attended four or more open nights. On average they read 3.5 brochures and attend 3.2 open nights. However the parents appear to be much more influenced by the open nights than by the school brochures.

The first conclusion is that parents of boys and parents of girls read the same number of brochures and attend the same number of open nights. So it is clear that parents put equal effort into choosing a school for a boy as they do choosing a school for a girl.

Secondly, both the number of brochures read and the number of open nights attended

were significantly related to each of the social status variables. That is, significantly more brochures were read by more educated parents and parents with higher status jobs. When the families were divided into three groups for low, middle and high social status, the low status group read, on average, about 0.6 less brochures and attended about 0.7 less open nights, than the high status group. While these differences between social status groups are significant the differences between groups of parents who preferred different schools is rarely significant. Moreover, where there was a significant difference between schools it was thought that such differences could be attributed to the variation in social status of the parents who preferred that school rather than any inherent characteristic of the school itself.

When it came to the extent of the influence of the brochures and the open nights there were great differences. Over 75% of parents thought that the school open night was very influential in their choice of schools but only 20% saw the school brochure as very influential. Apart from the open nights, the next most influential sources for parents were the published examination results (45% thought they were very influential), talks with other parents (41%) and information from other family members (39%).

Once again there were no differences between the parents of girls and boys. That is, both groups were influenced to the same extent by each of the common sources of information. However the different social status groups were influenced to significantly different extents by the open nights, the talks with other parents, published examination results and the information gained from other family members. With the school open nights, published examination results and the talks with other parents the high social status group were influenced significantly more than the low social status group. However, with the information gained from other family members it was the low social status group that was influenced the most.

Finally, for each of the sources of influence there were no significant differences between the parents who favoured each school. This means that parents are influenced differently depending on their social status level but the extent of the influence does not depend upon which school they think is the 'best'. So the same message is there for all schools. They can influence parents by improving the quality (in terms of what the parents want) of the school open night, and then encourage the supportive parents to talk about the school, both in the community and in the home. The influence of the interaction between and within families should not be underestimated.

CHAPTER 13

The Characteristics of Schools That Parents Value

13.1 Introduction

Included in the literature review are a number of studies that have identified the characteristics of schools that parents say are important when choosing a school for their child. This study goes beyond that in four important ways. Firstly, the question that asked parents who preferred their closest school to say why they chose this school, should provide evidence about what attracts parents to their local school. Secondly, the question that asked parents who preferred a school other than their closest school, to say why they did not chose the closest school, should give some ideas about what encourages parents to look beyond their local school. The third way in which this study goes beyond its predecessors is that each of the reasons given by parents and the important characteristics listed by them will be analysed to determine if there are any differences in the responses given by parents of different social status groups or in the responses given by parents of boys and parents of girls. Finally, as well as considering what parents say are the important factors this study also considers the factors that actually *are* important in accounting for the school the parents select. This final difference to the previous studies will be discussed in detail in Chapter 14. Meanwhile this chapter will concentrate on what the parents say are the important factors.

The reasons given by parents for favouring their local school will be discussed in Section 2 and those reasons that cause parents to turn away from their closest school will be outlined in Section 3 of this chapter. Section 4 will examine the rankings and ratings on sets of given characteristics and the fifth section will outline the characteristics of schools that the parents say are most important when choosing a school. It will consider the most important factor listed by each parent and then it will consider all of the characteristics that are listed in the top five by each parent. In this chapter school factors and school characteristics are used interchangeably to mean those things about a school that cause parents to choose or not to choose it for their child. They are frequently expressed as reasons for preferring one school over another.

To avoid an overwhelming number of results and tables, the social status group of the family will be the only social status variable fitted in the multilevel models. Then, only if more explanation seems necessary, will other social status variables be included. As well as this social status variable, the gender variable will be fitted to determine if any reason is cited to a different extent by parents of girls and parents of boys.

13.2 Factors That Attract Parents to Their Closest School

One of the early questions on the questionnaire asked parents who preferred their closest school to say why they preferred it. This question included the following rider asking parents to be specific. "Please be specific. For example, don't just say it is a good school or the best school, but say why it is good or the best." Despite this request some parents simply said, "because the school is a good one". As this question was addressed to just those parents who preferred their closest school only 44% of the parents surveyed could answer it. This reduced sample increases the standard errors of the estimates in the models but confidence intervals will be quoted so that false conclusions are not made.

The reasons given by parents for preferring their closest school are listed in Appendix 5, Table A5.6. The percentages given in the Appendices are out of the total number of parents who responded to the questionnaire. A summary of those reasons provided by more than 5% of all parents are included in the table below.

Reason for preferring the closest school	Percentage
Good overall examination results	23.8
Child has older brothers or sisters attending the school	19.6
School has a good reputation in the community	18.6
School is close to home	14.3
Easy, safe, convenient travel to and from school	13.3
Good discipline	13.1
Good general facilities	10.5

Table 13.1: The most common reasons offered by parents for why they prefer their closest school.

Only these seven most common reasons will be further analysed in this section. To include other reasons in the analysis will produce proportions which are too small to provide meaningful results. The percentages included in Table 13.1 are proportions of parents who cited each reason out of the 509 parents who preferred their closest school.

In order to determine how these proportions vary for parents of girls and boys and for families of different social status groups a number of multilevel models are fitted. In each case the level one unit will remain the individual parents but the level 2 unit will be the closest school to the family home. This change is necessary because the reasons given were related to the closest school and not to the preferred school as they were in the previous two chapters. Seven different response variables will be fitted, one for each of the seven reasons in Table 13.1. For each reason a binary response variable will be created which takes the value 1 if the parent offered that particular reason and the value of 0 if the parents did not include that reason. The parameter estimates provided in the appendices will be on the logit scale but will be transformed to proportions before they are used in the discussions in this chapter.

While examining how the proportion of parents who cite each reason varies between parents of boys and parents of girls and between parents of different social status levels some results will be provided that show how these proportions also vary from school to school. However, the reasons parents favour particular schools is the basis of the following chapter and so the discussion at this stage will be brief.

The Influence of the Gender of the Child

A set of multilevel models with the gender of the child fitted as the explanatory variable and each reason, in turn, as the response variable show that none of the top seven reasons given by parents depend upon the gender of the child to any significant extent.

Despite popular belief, there is no difference between parents of girls and parents of boys in the frequency with which they cited either of the reasons 'the school should be close to home' or 'there should be easy, safe and convenient travel to and from the school'. If anything the parents of boys were a little more likely to give the reason relating to the school's proximity to home than were the parents of girls.

However, two of the other reasons given show a moderate relationship with gender. A

more detailed examination of the model with the highest chi-squared value will be discussed to provide some indications of how the reasons given vary from school to school. The proportion of parents who said that the school's good reputation was what attracted them to the school is shown in Table 13.2. Details are included for the school with the lowest proportion and the school with the highest proportion.

Gender of the child	School B (Lowest school)			School G (Highest school)		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
Girls	**0.10**	0.05	0.17	**0.18**	0.10	0.29
Boys	**0.14**	0.08	0.22	**0.24**	0.15	0.36

Table 13.2: The proportion (with a 95% confidence interval) of parents who cited the good reputation of the school as a reason for preferring their local school. The gender of the child is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A10.1.

It is interesting to note that the proportion of parents who quoted their closest school's good reputation, as a reason for preferring it, only varied between 0.10 and 0.18 for parents of girls and between 0.14 and 0.24 for parents of boys. While the difference in the proportions between parents of boys and parents of girls is not significant, the results indicate that perhaps parents of boys are more likely than the parents of girls to prefer the local school because of its good reputation . It is interesting that even the school with the lowest proportion (School B) has its good reputation cited by between 10% and 14% of its local parents as the reason for preferring it. The same reason was only quoted by 18% to 24% of the parents who lived near the school with the highest proportion. Common beliefs would indicate that these differences would be greater.

One of the few reasons which show a significant variation between schools is the one relating to the quality of the general facilities. The multilevel model shows that of parents who live near School G, 25% of parents of girls (confidence interval is 0.12 to 0.44) and 29% of parents of boys (confidence interval is 0.14 to 0.49) give the quality of the school's general facilities as a reason for selecting it. These proportions should be compared with the 5% of parents of both boys and girls (confidence interval is 0.02 to

0.12) who give this reason for selecting School L or School M. This indicates that the parents are aware of the quality of the general facilities offered by these schools and select their local schools at quite different rates accordingly. A complete set of parameter estimates for this model is included in Table A10.2. These school differences will also be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

The Influence of the Social Status of the Family

When a set of significance tests are applied to models with the social status of the family as the explanatory variable, there is only one significant relationship between the proportion of parents offering a particular reason and their social status level. 'Good overall examination results' is the reason that is significantly influenced by the social status of the parents The variation between the lowest and highest schools is also significant so the proportions for the two extreme schools are provided in Table 13.3.

Social status group of the family	School A (Lowest school)			School L (Highest school)		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
Low	**0.08**	0.03	0.18	**0.34**	0.17	0.55
Middle	**0.15**	0.08	0.28	**0.51**	0.32	0.69
High	**0.17**	0.08	0.33	**0.55**	0.34	0.74

Table 13.3: The proportion (with a 95% confidence interval) of parents who cited the good examination results of the school as a reason for preferring their local school. The social status group of the family is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A10.3.

Eight percent of parents in the low social status group cite the schools' good examination results as a reason for preferring School A and 17%, or double that number, from the high social status group give the same reason. Also, some 15% of parents from the middle social status group choose their local school because they believe it has good examination results. These proportions are significantly different to those for parents who prefer School L where between three and four times as many parents state the school's good examination results as a reason for choosing it.

To conclude, the major results from this section show that the three most common reasons parents offered as to why they choose their local school are its good overall examination results, whether older siblings attend it and whether it has a good reputation in the community. However none of these are significantly related to the gender of the child and only the desire for good examination results is significantly related to the social status group of the family. Although not significant it was interesting to note that the school's good reputation had a strong relationship but it was the parents in the middle social group who cited it most often.

13.3 Factors That Deter Parents From Their Closest School

The previous section dealt with the reasons parents cited for selecting their closest school. Thus it highlighted what the parents saw as the strengths of the school closest to their home. This section will attempt to identify the weaknesses of the schools as perceived by the local parents. Question B3 of the questionnaire asked the parents who did not select their local school to say why they had not chosen it. A full set of reasons are provided as Table A5.7 in Appendix 5 and the six that were cited by more than 5% of the total respondents are listed below in Table 13.4. In this table the results are percentages of the 686 parents who prefer their child to not attend their closest school.

Reason for **not** preferring the closest school	Percentage
Overall examination results are not good	14.4
Discipline is not good	14.3
School does not have a good reputation in the community	12.4
The school is a single sex school	10.2
It is not the school that older siblings attend	8.5
School is too large	7.4

Table 13.4: The most common reasons offered by parents for why they do **not** prefer their closest school.

The three most often cited reasons for not selecting the local school also appeared in Table 13.1 as reasons for selecting the local school except that they are in the negative form. The two additional reasons in this set indicate that quite a few parents did not want

to send their child to a local school if it was single-sex or if it was too large. Once again a set of multilevel models will be fitted to determine the effect of gender of the child and social status of the family on the frequency of reasons given.

The Influence of the Gender of the Child

To determine the influence of the gender of the child, a set of multilevel models is generated with the gender of the child fitted as the explanatory variable and each of the six reasons, in turn, fitted as the response variable. When a significance test is applied to each of these models it clearly shows that the gender of their child does not significantly affect the frequency with which the parents offered each of the six reasons. Only the reason 'the school is not the one attended by the child's older siblings' has even a moderate relationship. There is a tendency for parents to want girls to attend schools with their older brothers or sisters but they feel that this is not as important for boys.

Irrespective of gender, what is obvious from these multilevel models is that, for some of these reasons, differences do occur between schools. The biggest difference between schools occur with the citing of the reason 'the school is a single-sex school'. This is not surprising as there are both single-sex schools and co-educational schools in the sample and this result reflects the fact that parents distinguish between them. This result will be further analysed in Chapter 14.

The Influence of the Social Status of the Family

A set of multilevel models with the social status group of the family fitted as the explanatory variable and each reason, in turn, as the response variable is generated to study the relationship between social status and the reasons given for **not** preferring the local school. When a significance test is applied to each of these models the resulting set of chi-squared statistics indicate that there is only one significantly related variable. This reason relates to the school's poor examination results. The estimates for the model with this reason fitted as the response variable are contained in Table 13.5.

There is a significant difference between the proportion of parents from each social status group who cite poor examination results as a reason for avoiding their closest school. For those parents in the lowest social status group who live near School L only 3% of those who opt for a more distant school give this reason, while of those in the

highest social status group, some 15% avoid it because of its poor examination results. Ironically, some 55% of parents in the high social status group chose School L because of its good examination results. So there is by no means total agreement about the quality of the examination results for School L. Such disagreement is equally apparent in the other schools in the survey area.

Social status group of the family	School L (Lowest school)		School E (Highest school)	
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval	Estimate	95% Confidence interval
Low	**0.03**	0.00 0.17	**0.06**	0.01 0.29
Middle	**0.06**	0.03 0.12	**0.12**	0.06 0.22
High	**0.15**	0.10 0.22	**0.27**	0.19 0.37

Table 13.5: The proportion (with a 95% confidence interval) of parents who cited the poor examination results of the school as a reason for **not** preferring their local school. The social status group of the family is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A11.1.

For each school in Table 13.5 the high social status parents are about five times as likely to choose a more distant school because of the local school's poor examination results than are parents from the lowest group. It is interesting to note that the middle social status group behaves much more like the lowest group and is also significantly different from the highest group.

The difference in opinion the parents have over whether the school has good or poor examination results could arise because parents have different views about what constitutes good results or it could mean that they place different interpretations on the results published in school brochures. Some of the difficulties in interpreting published examination results are discussed in Section 3 of Chapter 5. This illustrates that there is probably no more confusion and disagreement among parents over how to interpret examination results than there is among educators and researchers. In fact, how parents interpret published examination results and what they consider to be good results would be a fascinating area for further study. What is clear from this study is that, however they interpret them, there are significant differences between groups of parents from different social status groups and groups who prefer different schools.

The extent to which parents consider the poor examination results of the local school to be a reason to seek a more distant school is the only variable that is significantly related to the social status group variable. The frequency of none of the reasons given for either selecting or avoiding the closest school varies significantly with the gender variable. There are, however, some differences between the schools on a number of school characteristics. These include the school's reputation, the quality of the school's general facilities, the school's examination results, whether there is an older sibling attending the school and on whether the school is single-sex or coeducational. These school differences will be further analysed in Chapter 14.

13.4 How Parents Rate Sets of Given School Characteristics

After giving their reasons for choosing or not choosing their closest school, parents were asked to rate sets of characteristics of schools according to how important they thought they were. These questions differed from those discussed in the previous two sections in two ways. Firstly, they were not related specifically to the closest school but to the school they would select for their child, and secondly they did not require an open response. For sections D through M of the questionnaire the parents were asked to either rank, or grade in terms of their level of agreement, a set of given characteristics.

In Sections D, F, H and J there were only three or four factors to rank. So, as proposed in Chapter 10, the response variables used for these four sections are not the numerical ranking of the parents but rather the proportion of parents who rank each factor as the most important. For each of Sections E, G, I, K, L and M there are five or more factors to be ranked or graded. This will permit these response variables to be treated as continuous. The ranking given by each parent will be the value of the response variable the level 2 unit now reverts to being the preferred school as it is the one the child is most likely to attend and the school that the parents believe best matches the factors that they consider to be important. The analysis of Sections D, F, H and J will be discussed first and will be followed by the results for Sections E, G, I, K, L and M.

When the missing data were checked to determine if they are missing at random some interesting results occurred. For the questions that require parents to assign a numerical rank to each factor in a set of factors there is no significant difference between the social status of the parents who provided ranks and those who did not.

However, when asked to write down the factors that they consider to be most important, the parents in the low social status group are significantly more likely to omit the question than those in the high social status group.

The other questions that produce a significant result for the missing data are the three that refer to the academic, practical and creative balance and emphasis of the school. That is, Questions K1, K2 and K3. In each case these questions are answered by a significantly higher proportion of high social status parents than parents in the low social status group. This probably indicates a difficulty in understanding the questions and this could be caused by the use of sophisticated language not as easily understood by parents in the low social status group.

These significant results mean that the raw percentages given to each of the reasons cited in response to Question N could be inaccurate but once again any significant relationships identified between pairs of variables should not be affected.

The Geographical Factors

The responses of the parents on Section D of the questionnaire are provided in Table A5.12, Table A5.13 and Table A5.14 in Appendix 5. These tables show that parents thought that the ease and convenience of travel, ranked most important by 44% of parents, and the fact that the school was not in danger of closing (46%) were far more important factors than the school's proximity to the child's home (10%). To analyse Questions D1, D2 and D3 of the questionnaire the response variable for each model will be the proportion of parents who rank each factor as number 1.

When gender is fitted as the explanatory variable, no significant differences occur. The difference in the proportion of parents who rank the schools' proximity to home as number 1 varies by less than 1% for boys and girls and the residuals for each school are also generally small, apart from one school on the outskirts of town. In this case the responses probably indicate the difficulty in getting to other schools in the town.

When the social status group of the family is fitted as the explanatory variable there are, again, no significant differences. Parents in the high social status group place less importance on the school's closeness to home and the ease and convenience of travel than do the parents in the middle and low social status groups. For the factor relating to the

school being in danger of closure the higher the social status group the more it is seen as important. However, none of these differences are significant.

Reputation and Recommendation Factors

This section relates to the responses to the questions in Section F of the questionnaire. The response variables, again, are the proportion of parents who ranked each factor as the most important in the set. The frequencies of the responses are included in Table A5.21 to Table A5.23 in Appendix 5. These tables show that the school's reputation in the community is the most important of these factors with over 54% ranking it above the other characteristics in this section. This supports the findings in the previous two sections where the school's reputation was one of the most important factors in selecting or not selecting the local school.

Using the gender variable as the explanatory variable shows that there are no significant differences between the way these three questions are answered by parents who have daughters and parents who have sons. There was also very little difference in the rankings between parents who preferred different schools.

There were, however, significant differences between the responses of parents from different social status groups. The differences in the way the parents ranked 'recommendations from students at the school' was not significant but the rankings given to both other factors in Section F are significantly related to the social status group of the family. This is illustrated by the chi-square statistics in Table 13.6.

Reason or school factor	Chi-squared value (d.f. = 2)	P-value (if < 0.05)
School is recommended by students already attending the school	4.41	-
School has a good reputation in the community	14.69	0.001
School is recommended by other parents	9.26	0.010

Table 13.6: The significance of the relationships between each factor listed in Section F of the questionnaire and the social status group of the family.

A multilevel model with the proportion of parents who rank the schools' good reputation in the community as number 1 is used to study the differences between the groups of parents. The variation between parents of different social status groups is large with parents in the low social status group seeing the school's reputation as significantly more important than those in the highest social status group. Table 13.7 illustrates these differences with the inclusion of the school with the lowest and highest proportion of parents who rank the school's reputation as the most important factor in the set.

Pref sch	Social status group 1			Social status group 2			Social status group 3		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
B	**0.50**	0.39	0.61	**0.51**	0.41	0.60	**0.36**	0.27	0.46
L	**0.69**	0.58	0.77	**0.69**	0.60	0.77	**0.56**	0.45	0.65

Table 13.7: The proportion (with a 95% confidence interval) of parents who ranked the school's good reputation in the community as the most important factor in Section F of the questionnaire. The social status group of the family is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A12.1.

The parents who prefer School L are significantly more likely to see its reputation as important than those who prefer about five of the other schools. School F, which was often shown to be the most popular school in the two previous chapters also has a large proportion of its parents who see the school's reputation as important.

Correspondingly the response to the third part of Section F which asks parents to rank the importance of the school being recommended by other parents, shows that parents of high social status are significantly more likely to rank it as most important than are the parents in the low social status groups. For most schools about twice as many parents in the high social status group as in the low group, rank this factor as most important. Therefore for high social status parents it is more important for a school to be recommended by other parents than to have a good reputation in the community but for parents of low social status the reverse is true.

Staff Factors

The analysis of the parents' responses to this section are displayed in Table A5.31 to A5.34 in Appendix 5. The need for the school to have a competent and respected headteacher is ranked first, by 34% of parents which is more often than any other factor in this section. Competent and well qualified teachers is second, with 30% of parents seeing it as most important, and this is followed by a caring and enthusiastic staff (20%) and then good relationships between teachers and students (16%).

The need for a competent and respected headteacher is the only factor in this section where the responses by parents of girls differed significantly from the responses of parents of boys. When asked to rank this factor, parents of girls were significantly more likely to place it first than parents of boys. The proportion of parents of girls who ranked the need for a competent and respected headteacher as most important, ranged from 0.35 (confidence interval is 0.29 to 0.41), for those who prefer School B, to 0.45 (confidence interval is 0.38 to 0.52) for those parents who prefer School C. For the same two schools, the proportion of parents of boys ranged from 0.27 (confidence interval is 0.21 to 0.33) to 0.36 (confidence interval is 0.29 to 0.43). Full details of the parameter estimates are included in Table A12.2. The variation between the two schools probably says something about the relative merits of the headteachers of the two schools but it is much more difficult to explain why the competence of the headteacher is so much more important for girl students than it is for boy students.

The only significant difference for the parts of Section H when social status group is fitted as the explanatory variable is with respect to the factor 'good relationships between students and teachers'. In this case 'good relationships between students and teachers' is ranked as most important by 23% of parents (confidence interval is 0.14 to 0.35) in the lowest social status group which is nearly twice as many as parents who are in either the middle or high social status groups (12% with confidence interval of 0.08 to 0.19). This means that the quality of the interpersonal relationships that a child has with their teachers is significantly more important to the parents of the low social status group than it is to all other parents. Further information can be calculated from the full set of parameter estimates in Table A12.3.

Miscellaneous Factors

The factors listed in Section J of the questionnaire are a miscellaneous set. In hindsight this section does not achieve what it is meant to but it does still have some merit. The comparisons between the four factors have little meaning, but differences in how each factor is ranked by different groups of parents does provide some insight.

Again, just one of the factors is ranked in a significantly different way by parents of girls and parents of boys. The proportion of parents who rank 'extra activities, clubs and hobbies' as most important or second most important is significantly higher if the parents have a son (9% with confidence interval of 0.06 to 0.14) than if they have a daughter (4% with confidence interval of 0.02 to 0.08). For most schools the parents of boys are at least twice as likely to see the extra activities as important than are the parents of girls. See Table A12.4 for details of parameter estimates.

The two factors in Section J that produced significantly different rankings from parents of different social status level were 'good discipline, and 'a happy, warm and caring atmosphere'. In each case there is not much variation between schools. The other factor in this section, 'good examination results', was seen as equally important by parents of girls and boys and by parents of all social status levels. Good discipline was seen as the most important factor by 37% of parents (confidence interval is 0.28 to 0.47) in social status group 1, by 41% (confidence interval is 0.34 to 0.49) in group 2 and by only 29% (confidence interval is 0.22 to 0.38) in group 3. Therefore, discipline is seen as most important by the middle social status group and least important by the high group.

On the other hand, a warm and caring atmosphere is viewed as significantly more important by the high social status group with 32% of parents (confidence interval is 0.24 to 0.41) in this group giving it the highest ranking. For this factor, 26% of parents (confidence interval is 0.18 to 0.36) in the low group and 23% (confidence interval is 0.17 to 0.32) in the middle group rank it highest. So the parents of low and middle social status levels see discipline rather than a warm, caring atmosphere as the way for their children to learn whereas parents for the highest group see the warm caring atmosphere as the way to go. All details for the parameter estimates can be found in Table A12.5 (good discipline) and Table A12.6 (warm and caring atmosphere).

Academic Factors

In this section of the questionnaire parents were asked to rank the importance of good courses and standards in a number of curriculum areas. Exactly how each subject was ranked is detailed in Table A5.15 through Table A5.20 in Appendix 5. Good standards and courses in English were considered to be of most importance (48% of parents ranked it number 1) and mathematics was second (24%). Despite this many other parents cited English as least important of the six (20%) whereas mathematics was ranked lowest by only 0.8% of the parents. Science was seen as the third most important curriculum area then design and technology and foreign languages with humanities seen as the least important curriculum area.

The average ranking of the parents for each curriculum area often varies significantly with the social status of the family and depends upon whether the child is a girl or boy. The chi-squared values for each of the six subjects when parents of boys are compared with parents of girls are outlined in Table 13.7.

Academic factors Good courses and standards in:	Chi-squared value (d.f. = 1)	P-value (if < 0.05)
Design and Technology	11.93	0.001
English	7.58	0.006
Foreign Languages	7.75	0.005
Humanities	0.77	-
Mathematics	0.06	-
Science	4.97	0.026

Table 13.8: The significance of the relationships between the relative importance of each curriculum area and the gender of the child.

Only humanities and mathematics are seen to be of equal importance for girls and boys. In fact, mathematics is ranked almost exactly the same by parents of boys and girls.

The average ranking for each of the curriculum areas which show a significant

relationship with the gender variable is provided in Table 13.9. This shows that parents of girls rank design and technology and science lower than parents of boys. That is, parents see these two curriculum areas as less important for girls. The boys' parents place less importance on English and foreign languages than do parents of girls.

Curriculum area	Girls			Boys		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
Design and technology	**4.6**	4.4	4.8	**4.3**	4.0	4.5
English	**1.6**	1.5	1.8	**1.8**	1.7	2.0
Languages	**4.3**	4.1	4.4	**4.5**	4.3	4.7
Science	**3.6**	3.4	3.8	**3.4**	3.2	3.6

Table 13.9: The average rank (with a 95% confidence interval) of selected curriculum areas as given by parents of transferring students. The gender of the child is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A12.7 (design and technology), Table A12.8 (English), Table A12.9 (foreign languages) and Table 12.10 (science).

Most of the academic factors were also rated significantly differently by parents from different social status groups. The chi-squared values which arise out of the multilevel models are provided in Table 13.10.

The factors in Table 13.10 and Table 13.11 are coded in the same way as they are on the questionnaire and also the corresponding factors for these codes are included in Table 13.10.

Code for factor	Academic factors Good courses and standards in:	Chi-squared value (d.f. = 2)	P-value (if < 0.05)
E1	Design and technology	10.25	0.006
E2	English	18.91	0.000
E3	Foreign languages	29.83	0.000
E4	Humanities	14.33	0.001
E5	Mathematics	2.43	-
E6	Science	29.59	0.000

Table 13.10: The significance of the relationships between the relative importance of each curriculum area and the social status group of the family.

This time it is only mathematics that is ranked the same by parents of all social status levels. In order to determine which social status group of parents rank which curriculum areas highest, the estimates from the multilevel models are detailed in Table 13.11. In this case the variation between schools is again very small so figures will be given for the mean across all schools.

Code for factor	Social status group 1			Social status group 2			Social status group 3		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
E1	**4.3**	4.0	4.6	**4.3**	4.1	4.6	**4.6**	4.4	4.9
E2	**1.6**	1.4	1.8	**1.6**	1.4	1.8	**1.9**	1.8	2.1
E3	**4.7**	4.5	5.0	**4.3**	4.2	4.5	**4.2**	4.0	4.3
E4	**4.7**	4.5	5.0	**5.1**	4.9	5.3	**5.0**	4.8	5.2
E5	**2.0**	1.8	2.1	**2.0**	1.9	2.2	**2.1**	1.9	2.2
E6	**3.8**	3.5	4.0	**3.6**	3.4	3.8	**3.2**	2.9	3.4

Table 13.11: The rank (with a 95% confidence interval) of each curriculum area as given by parents of transferring students. The social status group of the family is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A12.11 (design and technology), Table A12.12 (English), Table A12.13 (foreign languages), Table A12.14 (humanities), Table A12.15 (mathematics) and Table 12.16 (science).

By far the biggest differences occur in the parents views of science with parents in the low social status ranking it, on average, 0.6 below parents in the high social status group. The parents of the high social status group also rank courses and standards in foreign languages significantly higher than do the parents of the low social status group. Conversely, courses and standards in design and technology, English and humanities are ranked as more important by the parents in the lowest social status group. So science and foreign languages are seen as more important from parents in the high social status group while design and technology, English and humanities are seen as more important by parents in the low group. Mathematics is seen as equally important by parents of all social groups.

The results from this section involving the relative importance of the curriculum areas is summarized diagrammatically in Figure 13.1. Each curriculum area is placed in the plane according to whether it is seen as significantly more important by parents of low or high social status groups and by how it is ranked by parents of girls and parents of boys. Subjects considered to be of equal importance by parents in each group are placed on the appropriate axes.

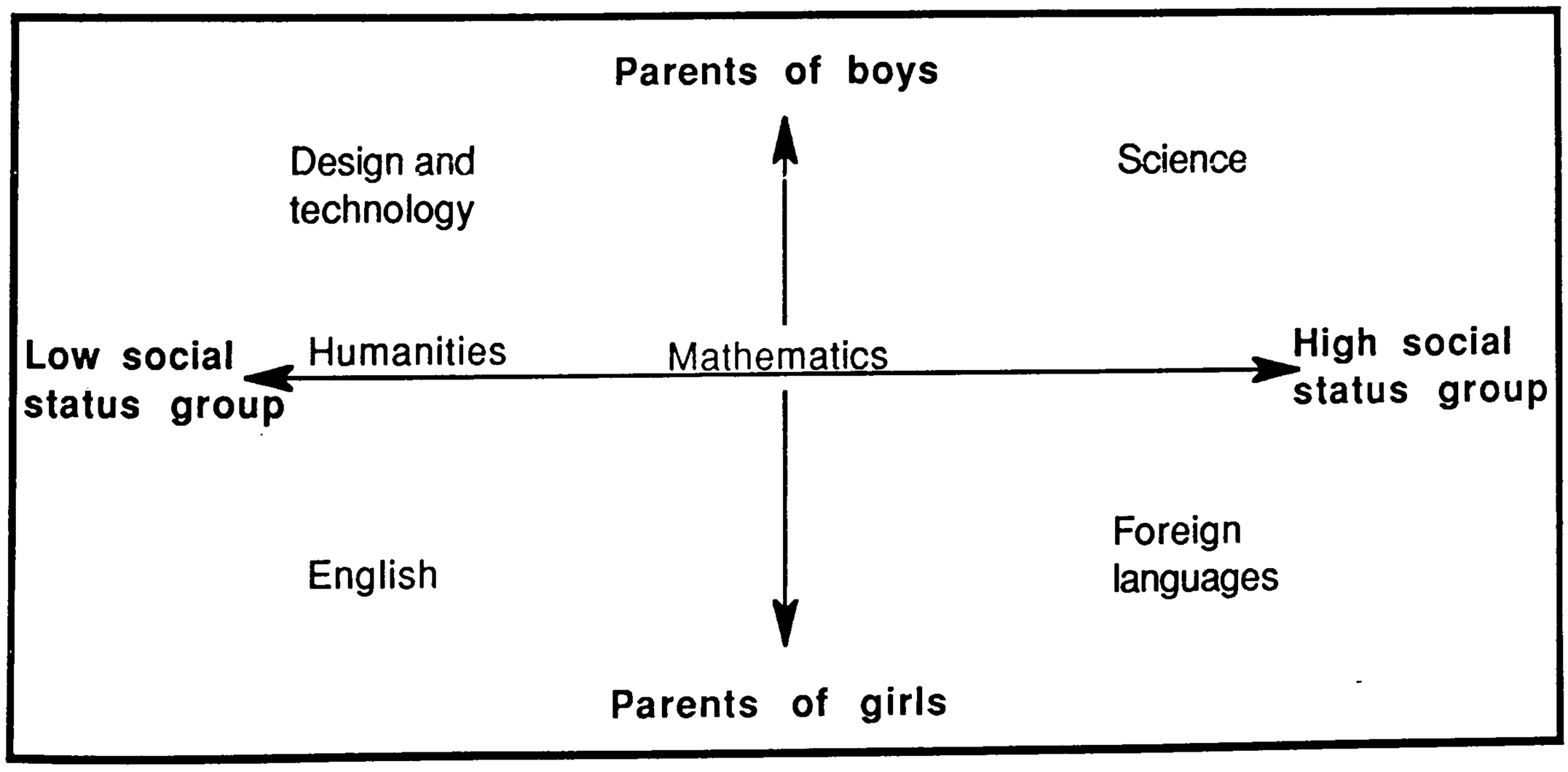


Figure 13.1: The level of importance of the curriculum areas as seen by parents of different social status groups and parents of boys and girls.

Physical Factors

The analysis of these questions from the questionnaire also produced many significant differences. The raw response data are outlined in Table A5.24 to Table A5.30 in Appendix 5. Most parents (55%) ranked good general facilities as the most important factor in this section. Its ranking did not differ significantly for different groups of parents. That is, parents of girls and parents of boys ranked it about the same and there was no significant difference in this factor's ranking for parents in any of the social status groups. The interesting differences occur when the ranks of the other six factors are considered. Again, since there is very little variation between schools the average rankings will be provided and the reader can be confident that any particular school does not differ much at all from this average.

With gender as the explanatory variable four factors produce significantly different results for parents of boys and parents of girls. This is summarized in Table 13.12.

Code for factor	Physical factor	Chi-squared value (d.f. = 1)	P-value (if < 0.05)
G1	Clean, attractive and well-maintained buildings	1.02	-
G2	Good general facilities	0.12	-
G3	Good facilities for sports and games	5.10	0.024
G4	Good facilities for art and design	4.95	0.026
G5	Good facilities for music and drama	15.49	0.000
G6	Good facilities for computing	0.19	-
G7	Good facilities for technical studies	15.95	0.000

Table 13.12: The significance of the relationships between the relative importance of each physical feature and the gender of the child.

The ranks, with their 95% confidence intervals have been calculated for each of the four factors which are shown, in Table 13.12, to be significantly related to the gender of the child. This will determine whether each factor is seen as more important by the parents of girls or the parents of boys. The results of this analysis are provided in Table 13.13.

Facilities	Girls			Boys		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
Sports and games	**4.7**	4.5	5.0	**4.5**	4.3	4.7
Art and design	**4.8**	4.7	5.0	**5.1**	4.9	5.3
Music and drama	**5.1**	4.7	5.4	**5.6**	5.2	5.9
Technical studies	**4.2**	4.0	4.5	**3.7**	3.5	4.0

Table 13.13: The average rank (with a 95% confidence interval) of selected physical features as given by parents of transferring students. The gender of the child is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A12.17 (sports and games), Table A12.18 (art and design), Table A12.19 (music and drama)and Table A12.20 (technical studies).

Table 13.13 shows that parents of girls rank art and design and music and drama higher than do of parents of boys. Meanwhile the opposite is true for both sport and games and for technical studies. It appears as though some of the traditional views of gender stereotypes remain apparent among these parents.

When the social status of the family is fitted as the explanatory variable there are only two factors that receive significantly different ranks among parents of different social status groups. The variance between schools remains low so only data for the mean of all schools are included in Table 13.14.

Code for factor	Social status group 1			Social status group 2			Social status group 3		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
G1	**3.3**	2.8	3.8	**3.8**	3.4	4.3	**4.0**	3.6	4.5
G5	**5.7**	5.3	6.2	**5.4**	5.0	5.8	**4.9**	4.5	5.3

Table 13.14: The average rank (with a 95% confidence interval) of selected physical features as given by parents of transferring students. The social status group of the family is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A12.21 (clean, attractive buildings) and Table A12.22 (music and drama).

The general cleanliness of the buildings is much more important to the parents in the low social status group than it is to parents in either of the other two groups. A significant difference is also evident for the rankings of the facilities for music and drama. Here the parents from the low social status group rank it significantly lower than parents from the middle group who in turn rank it lower than parents in the highest social status group. Hence parents from the high social status group are more interested in facilities for music and drama than are the parents of low social status. Meanwhile the opposite is true for the need for a clean and well maintained building. The difference in the relative importance placed on the physical factors by the different groups of parents is represented in the following diagram.

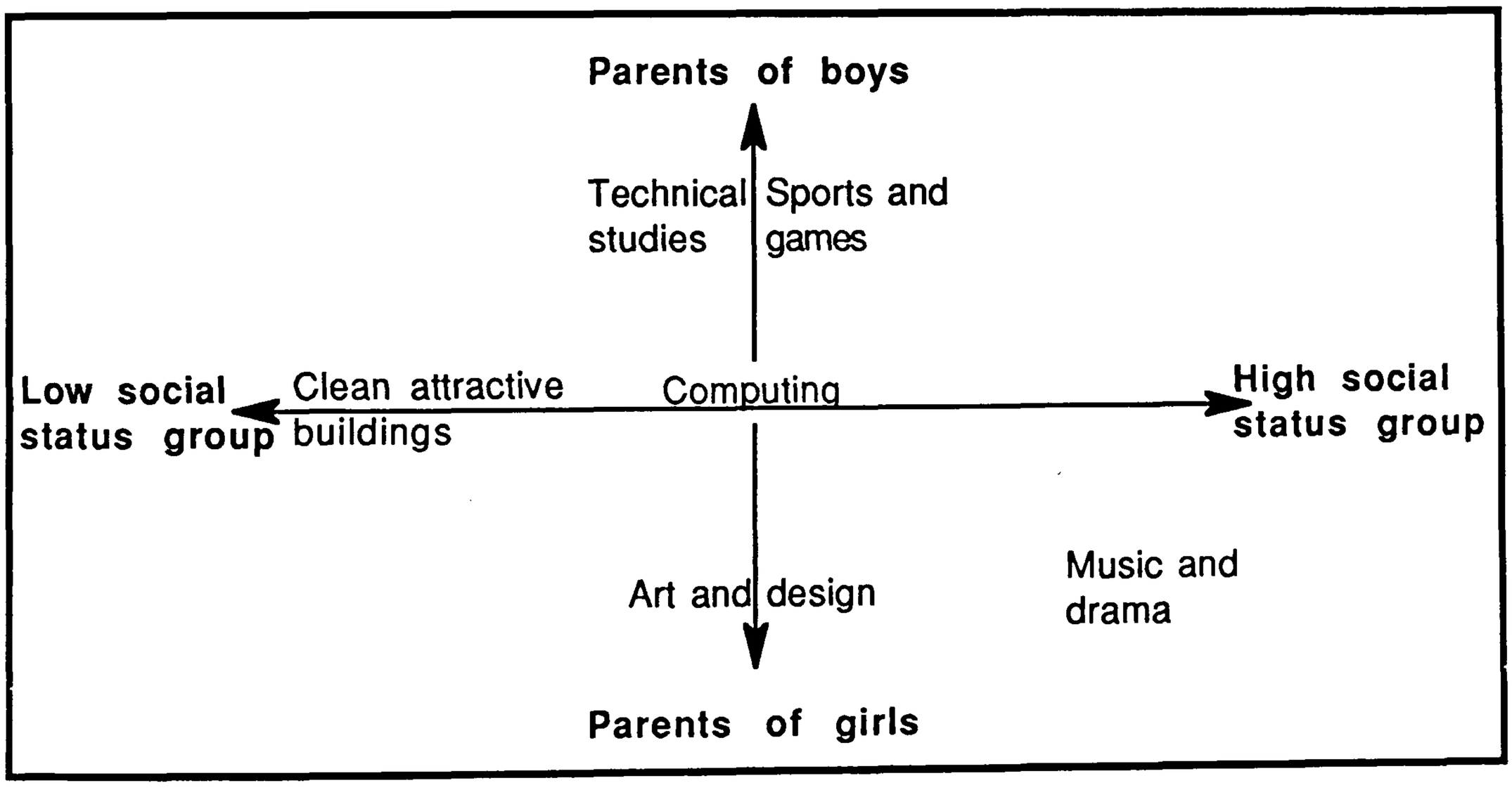


Figure 13.2: The level of importance of the school facilities as seen by parents of different social status groups and parents of boys and girls.

Child and Family Factors

Questions for this part of the analysis are in Section I of the questionnaire and the frequencies of the parents' responses are included in Table A5.35 to A5.39 in Appendix 5. The child wanting to attend the school, ranked highest by 48% of parents, and the

child being happy at the school (36%) are considered to be most important of the factors in this section.

Only one of the factors produces significantly different results for parent of girls and parents of boys. It appears as though parents of boys, want to be made to feel part of the school, more than do parents of girls. The boys' parents rank this factor, on average, at 3.6 (confidence interval is 3.5 to 3.8) while girls' parents rank it at 3.8 (confidence interval is 3.7 to 4.0). A full set of parameter estimates are included in Table A12.23.

The social status group of the family is significantly related to two of the factors in this section. Table 13.15 shows the chi-squared values for these relationships.

Code for factor	Reason or school factor	Chi-squared value (d.f. = 2)	P-value (if < 0.05)
I1	Child wants to attend the school	7.00	0.030
I2	Child has friends who will attend the school	3.92	-
I3	Child has older siblings attending the school	0.94	-
I4	Child will be happy at the school	19.70	0.000
I5	Parents will be made to feel part of the school	4.74	-

Table 13.15: The significance of the relationships between the relative importance of each child/family factor and the social status group of the family.

Table 13.10: The significance of the relationships between the relative importance of each curriculum area and the social status group of the family.

Whether the child will be happy and whether the child wants to go to the school are both significantly related to the social status group of the family as is indicated in Table 13.16. The factors in this table are coded in the same way as they are on the questionnaire and these codes are also included in Table 13.15.

Code for factor	Social status group 1			Social status group 2			Social status group 3		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
I1	**1.7**	1.5	1.9	**1.8**	1.6	2.0	**1.9**	1.8	2.1
I4	**2.2**	2.0	2.4	**2.0**	1.8	2.1	**1.8**	1.7	2.0

Table 13.16: The average rank (with a 95% confidence interval) of selected child/family factors as given by parents of transferring students. The social status group of the family is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A12.24 (child wants to attend) and Table A12.25 (child will be happy at the school).

This table shows that, when compared to parents of high social status, parents of the low social status group think it is more important that the child wants to attend the school and less important that the child be happy at the school.

Factors in Sections K, L and M

The thirteen questions in these three sections are split into groups, but only to make the questionnaire look balanced and to avoid long unbroken sections of text. While there are some similarities between questions in each section the similarities are not sufficient, except in Section K, to warrant a separate analysis. Question M5 was an open question which allowed parents to add any factor that they thought had not been adequately covered by the factors listed in Section D through M. Some 31 parents took this opportunity, but the most commonly added factor was cited by only three parents and therefore this question will not be included in any further analysis. Each factor in these Sections K, L and M was scored as a 1 for strongly disagreeing with the statement through to a 5 for strong agreement. These variables are considered, in the analysis, to be continuous, with a higher score indicating a greater level of agreement. The full results for these questions are contained in Appendix 5 in Tables A5.44 through A5.55. A summary of the results is provided in Table 13.17. The factors in this table are coded in the same way as they are on the questionnaire and are also listed below to assist with the interpretation of the results.

K1 is the school should emphasize academic *and* practical and creative subjects

K2 is the school should have an academic bias or ethos

K3 is the school should have a practical and creative bias or ethos

K4 is the school should cater for students with special needs

L1 is the school should group students according to ability from the beginning of the first year

L2 is the school should have a relatively small number of students

L3 is the school should have both boys and girls

L4 is the school should be denominational

M1 is the school should offer a wide range of courses

M2 is the school should give regular homework

M3 is the school should have all students wearing school uniform

M4 is the school should have a good pastoral care system

Question number	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
K1	0.3	0.5	6.4	45.7	47.1
K2	1.9	15.6	18.1	42.2	22.2
K3	2.1	20.6	24.2	44.5	8.6
K4	2.1	3.9	18.4	41.7	33.9
L1	8.8	25.6	10.5	33.2	21.8
L2	1.2	8.4	21.4	40.7	28.4
L3	5.2	9.1	23.2	33.4	29.1
L4	17.0	28.7	42.3	8.1	3.8
M1	0.0	0.9	2.7	41.7	54.8
M2	0.4	2.0	5.1	47.3	45.4
M3	0.9	1.7	5.6	35.1	56.7
M4	0.1	1.0	10.7	43.8	44.5

Table 13.17: Summary of parents responses to Questions K1 through M4 of the questionnaire. The entries are the percentage of parents who gave each of the five ratings in each question.

Only two of these twelve factors produce significantly different responses for parents of girls and parents of boys. These two concern whether the school should cater for student with special needs and whether the school should be co-educational. The results show that parents of boys believe that the school should cater for students with special needs more than do the parents of girls. The difference on the average ranking is only 0.1 even though it is a significant difference. The parents of boys also agree more with the statement that schools should have both boys and girls but the difference, on average, is only from a ranking of 3.7 for girls (confidence interval is 3.3 to 4.1) to 3.9 for boys (confidence interval is 3.5 to 4.2). That is, the parents of girls are more in favour of single-sex schools than the parents of boys.

The social status group of the family is significantly related to the level of parental agreement on eight out of the twelve school factors. These are listed in Table 13.18 together with the chi-squared statistics and the associated probabilities.

Factor	Chi-squared value (d.f. = 2)	P-value (if < 0.05)
Emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects	34.52	0.000
Has an academic bias or ethos	21.90	0.000
Caters for students with special needs	20.80	0.000
Groups students according to ability from the beginning of the first year	18.00	0.000
Has a relatively small number of students	10.22	0.006
The school is denominational	6.99	0.030
Gives regular homework	12.84	0.002
A good pastoral care, house, support system	22.41	0.000

Table 13.18: The significance of the relationships between the extent of the agreement with the selected statements in Sections K, L and M of the questionnaire and the social status group of the family.

The first three factors which relate to the bias or ethos of the school will be dealt with first. Once again there is very little variation between schools so only the mean ratings

for all parents will be included in Table 13.19. The factors in this table are coded in the same way as they are on the questionnaire and as outlined prior to Table 13.17.

Code for factor	Social status group 1			Social status group 2			Social status group 3		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
K1	**4.2**	4.1	4.3	**4.4**	4.3	4.5	**4.5**	4.4	4.6
K2	**3.4**	3.2	3.6	**3.6**	3.4	3.8	**3.9**	3.7	4.1
K4	**4.3**	4.0	4.5	**4.0**	3.8	4.2	**3.9**	3.7	4.1

Table 13.19: The average level of agreement (with a 95% confidence interval) on selected factors from Section K of the questionnaire by parents of transferring students. The social status group of the family is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A12.26 (school emphasizes academic and practical) Table A12.27 (school has an academic bias) and Table A12.28 (school caters for students with special needs).

It is clear from Table 13.19 that the parents of high social status believe that a school should have an academic, practical and creative bias or ethos. These parents rated this factor, on average, half way between the agree and strongly agree categories. From the estimate of the rating for Question K2 in the above table it can be seen that these parents also rank the need for an academic bias half a point higher than those in the low social status group. It appears as though the high social status groups want the school to have an academic bias and at the same time to emphasize academic, practical and creative subjects. The parents of lower social status are not quite as demanding but still want the school to have these conflicting ends. Also the parents of the high social status group do not agree to the same extent as the lower group that the school should cater for students with special needs.

The remaining five school factors from Table 13.18 that included factors that were answered differently by parents of different social status levels, will now be discussed. The level of agreement with each factor and by each social status group is detailed in Table 13.20. The factors in this table are coded in the same way as they are on the questionnaire and as outlined prior to Table 13.17.

Code for factor	Social status group 1			Social status group 2			Social status group 3		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
L1	**3.7**	3.4	4.0	**3.4**	3.1	3.7	**3.2**	2.9	3.5
L2	**3.9**	3.7	4.1	**4.0**	3.9	4.2	**3.8**	3.6	4.0
L4	**2.5**	2.1	2.9	**2.7**	2.4	3.1	**2.6**	2.2	2.9
M2	**4.2**	4.1	4.4	**4.4**	4.3	4.5	**4.4**	4.3	4.5
M4	**4.2**	4.0	4.3	**4.3**	4.2	4.4	**4.5**	4.3	4.6

Table 13.20: The average level of agreement (with a 95% confidence interval) on selected factors from Sections L and M of the questionnaire by parents of transferring students. The social status group of the family is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A12.29 (school should group students according to ability from the beginning of the first year), Table A12.30 (school has a relatively small number of students), Table A12.31 (school is denominational), Table A12.32 (school gives regular homework) and Table A12.33 (school has a good pastoral care and support system).

From the top line in Table 13.20 it can be seen that the lower the social status of the family the more they agree with the grouping of students according to ability in the first year of secondary school. This result is perhaps not what the majority of educators would expect. The following line shows that parents of lower social status also agree more strongly than the high social status group with the need for smaller schools but it is the middle social status group that agrees most strongly with this statement.

Each of the other factors, the denominational nature of the school, the school giving regular homework and the desire for a good pastoral care system, receive more agreement among parents of high social status than among those of low social status. The middle social status group rate the desire for denominational schools higher than the high social status group and the need for regular homework equal to parents from the high social status group.

This concludes the analysis and results of the parents responses to some 44 questions of

the questionnaire which asked parents to rank or rate a series of school factors. The analysis produced many factors which induced significantly different responses from parents with sons transferring to those from parents with daughters transferring. There were even more factors that showed a significantly different response rate by parents from different social status groups. The other important feature of the analysis was the very low variation between schools. This indicates that the responses of parents who prefer different schools may be more likely to depend on the gender of the child and the social status of the family than on how the preferred school achieves on the factors they think are important. This premise will be systematically addressed in the following chapter.

13.5 The School Characteristics That Parents Desire

This section contains an analysis of the parents' responses to Section N of the Questionnaire. This asks parents "of all of the things about a secondary school, that you consider important for your child, which five are the *most* important?" When answering this question the parents had already been exposed to the full set of given characteristics that have been discussed in the previous section of this chapter. However, it was made clear that they did not have to list only characteristics that had appeared in the questionnaire and indeed, many parents provided additional school characteristics. Since the characteristics listed in the questionnaire were originally based on reasons given by parents in their application forms for secondary transfer none of the additional characteristics received a great number of votes.

The responses to Section N will be analysed in two different ways. Initially attention will focus on the characteristic that parents thought was the most important and on how the proportion of parents who offered each school trait varies across schools and between parents of different social status groups and between parents of boys and girls. Again the only social status variable to be used will be the social status group otherwise the sheer number of statistical models and results will be more of a source of confusion than a source of explanation. Then a similar analysis will be conducted but this time combining each of the five characteristics listed as important by each parent.

The Most Important School Characteristic

The frequency with which each characteristic was cited by parents as the most important aspect of a school is outlined in Table A5.56. This table includes all factors that were listed by five or more parents. It must be remembered that the responses to this question were not tied to the closest school but rather to the school they would like their child to attend and so it is appropriate to have the preferred school as the level two unit. This grouping should show differences at level 2 because presumably each parent's preferred school is the one that displays most of the characteristics that the parent sees as important. Also, subject to available space in the school, the preferred school will in fact be the secondary school that the child attends.

The detailed analysis will be restricted to those reasons given by more than 5% of the parents. The eight characteristics that were cited by more than 5% of the parents are also detailed in Table 13.21.

Reason or school factor	Number	%
Child will be happy at the school	160	14.0
Good overall examination results	118	10.3
Good discipline	93	8.1
Child wants to attend the school	74	6.5
A happy, warm and caring atmosphere	74	6.5
Competent and well qualified teachers	74	6.5
Emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects	68	5.9
A competent and respected headteacher	58	5.1

Table 13.21: The school characteristics cited by parents as the most important when selecting a school for their child.

Not surprisingly good examination results and good discipline are among the top three but having the child happy at the school was not a reason given by many parents when saying why they liked or disliked their closest school. Having the child happy at the school is similar to the one often quoted in the pilot study which stated that the school had to be a 'good' school. After all it doesn't say a lot about the actual school but more about the child and their love of school. The fourth most often quoted factor in the above

table (the child wants to attend) also says very little about the school itself, although it does emphasize the need for schools to market themselves to the potential student as well as to the potential parents. If schools can encourage the child to want to attend then a good number of parents may be influenced by their child's wishes.

Each of these eight school characteristics will be fitted, in turn, as the response variable in a set of multilevel models to help to explain the differences between schools and between different groups of parents.

With gender fitted as the explanatory variable, and each of the eight reasons, in turn, fitted as the response variable the most interesting feature is the almost total absence of variation between schools. This preempts the discussion of the next chapter but it is an important feature of the analysis of this section.

The significance level for each of the eight multilevel models appears in Table 13.22.

The most important school factor	Chi-squared value (d.f. = 1)	P-value (if < 0.05)
The child will be happy at the school	8.15	0.004
Good overall examination results	0.06	-
Good discipline	0.61	-
Child wants to attend the school	0.22	-
A happy, warm and caring atmosphere	0.61	-
Competent and well qualified teachers	1.04	-
Emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects	4.78	0.029
A competent and respected headteacher	6.15	0.013

Table 13.22: The significance of the relationships between each of the important school factors and the gender of the child.

There are three school factors that each have a significantly different level of importance to parents who have daughters transferring to a secondary school than to parents who have a son transferring. Each of these will be examined in more detail and

because of the very small variation between schools, the results will only be given for the overall mean. The results for all schools will be very close to those given for the mean.

Reasons or factors	Girls			Boys		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
The child will be happy at the school	**0.17**	0.13	0.23	**0.11**	0.08	0.15
Emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects	**0.04**	0.03	0.07	**0.08**	0.05	0.13
A competent and respected head	**0.07**	0.04	0.12	**0.03**	0.03	0.06

Table 13.23: The proportion (with a 95% confidence interval) of parents who cite each factor as the most important characteristic of a secondary school. The gender of the child is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A13.1 (child happy at the school), Table A13.2 (emphasizes academic, practical and creative subjects), Table A13.3 (a competent and respected headteacher).

The results in this table show that 17% of the parents of girls think that the most important characteristic is that their daughter should be happy at the school. However, only 11% of the parents of boys believe that their son being happy the school is the most important thing.

Similar differences exist between the parents of boys and girls when it comes to the proportion who believe that the school should emphasize the academic, practical and creative aspects of education. Four percent of girls' parents think that this emphasis is the most important aspect of a school whereas twice as many boys' parents (8%) cite it as the most important school factor.

The third factor in the above table confirms an earlier finding that parents of girls place much more importance on the competence of and respect for the headteacher (7% rate this as the most important school factor) than do the parents of boys (3%). All other factors are either cited equally by parents of boys and girls or else too few parents offer them as the most important factor to warrant further analysis. Therefore, parents of boys are more likely than parents of girls to want a school where their child will be happy and that emphasizes academic *and* practical and creative subjects but are not as concerned about the quality of the headteacher.

Just two of the reasons offered by the parents are significantly related to the social status of the parents. Therefore, the eight factors most frequently cited by parents as the most important aspects of a school generally do not depend upon the social status of the parents. The first exception relates to the need for the school to emphasize academic *and* practical and creative subjects. Some 6% of parents (confidence interval is 0.03 to 0.10) from the middle and high social status groups offer this emphasis as the most important factor, while only 2% of the parents (confidence interval is 0.01 to 0.10) from the low social status group think that it is the most important thing about a school. The details of the parameter estimates can be found in Table A13.4 in Appendix 13. This confirms the results discussed earlier in this chapter from Question K1 of the questionnaire.

The second exception relates to the desire for good overall examination results. Again the parents of the high social status group cite this reason significantly more often than the low social status parents. Eleven percent of parents (confidence interval is 0.06 to 0.19) in the high social status group list it as the most important factor while only 6% of parents (confidence interval is 0.03 to 0.14) in the low social status group see examination results as the most important school factor. Table A13.5 contains the full set of parameter estimates for this model.

So when parents are asked to give the most important characteristic for the school they want their child to attend, the responses of parents from the different social status groups are significantly different for two of the top eight reasons while three out of the top eight factors were cited significantly differently by parents of girls and parents of boys.

The Five Most Important School Characteristics

The responses for this part of the analysis are taken from Questions N1 through N5 of the questionnaire. The response variable for each factor has the value 1 if the factor is listed by a parent in their response to any of Questions N1 to N5 and a 0 if it is not offered by them as one of the five most important factors about a school. The frequency with which parents offered each reason is provided in Table A5.57 and all factors listed by more than 2% of parents are included. The analysis discussed here will be restricted to the fifteen most frequently offered reasons or all of those reasons given by more than 10% of all parents. These fifteen factors appear in Table 13.24. Also in this table are the significance levels that result when the fifteen dummy variables are, in turn, fitted as the response variable of a multilevel model with gender as the explanatory variable.

Reason or school characteristic mentioned by the parents as among the five most important	Chi-squared value (d.f. = 1)	P-value (if < 0.05)
Easy, safe convenient travel	2.08	-
Offers a wide range of courses	1.85	-
Good reputation in the community	3.22	-
Good general facilities	0.19	-
Caring and enthusiastic teachers	2.87	-
Competent, well qualified teachers	1.43	-
Good teacher student relationships	0.00	-
Competent and respected headteacher	9.92	0.002
The child wants to attend the school	0.07	-
The child will be happy at the school	4.35	0.037
Good overall examination results	0.06	-
Good discipline	1.39	-
Happy, warm and caring atmosphere	0.45	-
Emphasis on academic *and* practical and creative	0.22	-
Good pastoral care and support system	3.20	-

Table 13.24: The significance of the relationships between school characteristics, seen as among the five most important, and the gender of the child.

The two factors, from Table 13.24, that are significantly affected by the gender of the child are the same as two of the three factors identified, in Table 13.22, when only the most important factor was considered. Therefore there will be no advantage in discussing them further at this stage.

Finally, the same fifteen school characteristics are fitted to a set of multilevel models with the social status of the parents as the explanatory variable. This leads to four of the characteristics showing a significantly relationship to the social status group of the family. The significance levels for these four characteristics are included in Table 13.25.

Reason or school characteristic mentioned by the parents as among the five most important	Chi-squared value (d.f. = 2)	P-value (if < 0.05)
Good overall examination results	7.43	0.024
Emphasis on academic *and* practical and creative subjects	13.09	0.001
Good pastoral care and support system	6.31	0.043
Good relationships between teacher and students	6.43	0.040

Table 13.25: The significance of the relationships between school characteristics, seen as among the five most important, and the social status group of the family.

When only the most important reason was considered in the previous section, the only reason that was significantly affected by the social status variable was the emphasis on academic *and* practical and creative subjects. This school factor is again significant when the top five reasons are considered. There are, however three new factors that are significantly related to the social status group of the family. These include 'good overall examination results, a good pastoral care system and good relationships between teachers and students. A set of multilevel models have been used to calculate the proportions of parents of each social status level who cite these three reasons among their top five and the results are contained in Table 13.26. The reasons included in this table are coded in the following way:

1 Good overall examination results

2 Emphasis on academic *and* practical and creative subjects

3 Good pastoral care system

4 Good relationships between teachers and students

Factor	Social status group 1			Social status group 2			Social status group 3		
	Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval		Estimate	95% Confidence interval	
1	**0.26**	0.18	0.36	**0.35**	0.27	0.43	**0.36**	0.27	0.47
2	**0.08**	0.03	0.16	**0.19**	0.15	0.24	**0.21**	0.15	0.27
3	**0.05**	0.02	0.11	**0.07**	0.04	0.11	**0.10**	0.07	0.16
4	**0.16**	0.11	0.23	**0.11**	0.08	0.17	**0.10**	0.05	0.16

Table 13.26: The proportion (with a 95% confidence interval) of parents who cite each factor among their five most important when selecting a school for their child. The social status group of the family is the explanatory variable and is in the fixed part of the model.

Full details of parameter estimates appear in Table A14.1 (good overall examination results), Table A14.2 (emphasis on academic *and* practical and creative subjects), Table A14.3 (good pastoral care system) and Table A14.4 (good relationships between teachers and students).

When only each parent's most important reason was included in the analysis, the second mentioned reason in Table 13.25 was offered in different proportions by different social status groups. Now that all of the top five reasons are included it still has two and a half times as many parents from the high social status group (21%) than from the low social status group (8%) including it in the top five. In this case the middle group act just like the high group in that some 19% of them include it in their top five reasons.

The need for a school to have good examination results, is also significantly related to social status. Of the parents in the low social status group, 26% deem good examination results to be one of the five most important factors while 36% of the parents in the high social status group rank it in their top five. A good pastoral care system is the third factor which is cited at a different rate by parents of different social status groups.

Again, it is the parents of high social status who rate it among their top five (10%) more often than the parents from the low social status group (5%). Unlike the other three reasons in Table 13.26, good teacher student relationships is cited more often by parents of low social status. Some 16% of low social status group parents offer it as one of their five most important reasons while only 10% of parents in the high group consider it to be one of their five reasons.

So, of the fifteen most frequently cited reasons only four of them are significantly related to the social status group of the family. It is interesting to note that each of these four are factors over which the school has some control. For example, a school can decide to improve its pastoral care system or to alter the balance between the academic, practical and creative subjects. It can also affect the examination results of its students, although the inequities related to the quality of student intake are acknowledged. Also two of the reasons cited by parents in Section N are significantly related to the gender of the child. These include the competence of the head and the need for the child to be happy in the school. The latter is difficult for the school to alter because it is only whether the child thinks that they will be happy that is important because their choice of school is made before they find out whether they actually are happy in the school. However, it does point to the value in secondary schools personnel visiting primary schools to attempt to gain the transferring students' confidence. This leaves the quality of the headteacher as the other factor over which the school has some control. Schools and headteachers need to be aware of the important role they play in attracting students, and especially girls, to their schools.

13.6 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the reasons given by parents for selecting a secondary school for their child. The parents who chose their closest secondary school were asked to give reasons for why they chose it and parents who chose a more distant school were asked to say why they rejected the closest school. Then all parents were asked to rank or rate a series of school characteristics that are frequently given by parents as to why they chose one school over another. Finally parents were asked to give the five most important factors of the school that they would choose for their child. There were some similarities between each set of answers but there were also some marked differences. Many of the parents' responses were significantly related to whether their child was a

boy or a girl and even more were related to the social status group of the family. Although when the set of reasons offered by the parents as the five most important characteristics of schools are examined, only two of the top fifteen are significantly influenced by the gender of the child and only four by the social status group of the family.

A very interesting result from this chapter is that the number of significant relationships identified appeared to depend on the style of question asked. For example when parents were asked to rank a set of given school characteristics the parents of different social status levels very often rated them differently. This occurred in 24 out of the 48 questions of this type. Similarly parents of boys and girls responded in a significantly different way on 13 of the questions framed in this way. On the other hand when the parents were asked to provide the five most important school characteristics there were very few significant differences in the way parents from different social status levels responded (3 out of the top 15 characteristics) or in the way parents of girls and boys responded (2 out of the top 15 characteristics). The differences in the number of significant relationships, especially those involving the social status of the family, are probably due to the fact that a large percentage of the parents from all social status groups answered the rankings questions but significantly fewer parents in the low social status group compared with the high social status group answered Question N.

Another interesting outcome is the small variation between schools in parents' responses. That is, parents who choose different schools cite the same reasons as parents who prefer other schools. This means that the raw response data may be more generalizable than first thought because the frequencies of the responses do not appear to depend on the school the parents prefer. Unfortunately it also means that secondary schools can gain no clear picture of what it is, in particular, that actually attracts parents to the school. This issue will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 14

Do Parents Who Prefer the Same School Desire the Same Outcomes?

14.1 Introduction

How the parents' views, on the school factors that they consider important, vary for parents of different social status levels and for parents of boys and girls are discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter attention will be given to how these factors vary for parents who prefer different schools. In this way it will be possible to determine the views that are shared by parents who prefer the same school. If parents cluster in this way then it will be useful for individual schools to know this as each school can identify those aspects that distinguish the parents who prefer that school from the rest of the parents. By concentrating their efforts on these aspects the school should achieve greater success, at least in the eyes of the parents whose children will attend the school. If on the other hand, parents do not have common sets of reasons for preferring the same school then there may be no educational advantages that arise from parental choice of schools. What is required to be found, if it exists, is a set of views that is common to the group of parents who favour each of the secondary schools.

The method used to analyse this research question is discriminant analysis and this is discussed in Section 8 of Chapter 10. Such analysis determines the ability of each variable or each group of variables to discriminate between the parents who prefer each school. In Section 2 of this chapter the discriminatory power of the individual variables will be considered. This will highlight those variables that discriminate most between schools. Also included as an individual variable is a dummy variable which indicates whether the preferred school is the closest school. This is the same variables as was used in the analysis in Chapter 11 and takes the value 1 if the preferred school is also the closest school and the value 0 if it is not the closest school. It will be referred to in this chapter as the closest school factor.

Following this, sets of variables will be fitted simultaneously as discriminatory

variables. The first set of variables will involve the parents' ratings on the factors listed in Sections D through M of the questionnaire. Secondly, the parents' responses to Questions N1 to N5, will be fitted as the discriminatory variables. These two sets of variables will form the basis of the discussions in Sections 3 and 4, respectively, of this chapter. The fifth section will determine the extent to which the set of social status variables can be used to discriminate between the schools that parents choose for their child. Finally, in Section 6, the discriminatory power of both the set of social status variables discussed in Section 5 and the sets of educational factors examined in Sections 3 and 4 will be compared.

Each model will involve grouping parents according to their preferred secondary school. In each case a variable which indicates whether the preferred school is the closest school will be included. This will provide details of the effect of each individual variable on the choice of school, over and above the effect of simply choosing the closest school. Also, each of Sections 3 and 4 will commence with a model which includes the full set of the factors and then a then include a second model which includes only those factors over which the school has the power to alter. The results of this second model will indicate, to those schools that are interested, which aspects of the school it could seek to change to best satisfy the expectations of the parents.

14.2 The Discriminatory Power of the Individual Variables

The variables to be used as discriminatory variables in this study can be divided into three groups. Firstly, the parents responses to the questions in Sections D to M of the questionnaire will be fitted. The variables included from this section will be restricted to include only the seven variables which have significant discriminatory power. Secondly, there are the responses to Questions N1 to N5 of the questionnaire which ask parents to list the five most important factors they seek in the school they prefer for their child. These five responses are combined to form a single variable for each of the factors identified by the parents. Each of these variables takes the value 1 if a parent cites the particular factor in their list of the top five and takes the value 0 if they do not include it. Only the seven factors which discriminate most among the parents will be included in this analysis and of these top seven factors, only three, provide a significant degree of discriminatory power. The third group of variables to be fitted are the individual social status indicators or the parents' responses to each question in Sections

P to R of the questionnaire. Each of the nine separate variables will be included in the analysis.

When the individual variables are fitted as discriminatory variables the models produce a value for Rao's V which measures the overall separation of the groups. In this case the groups are the preferred schools. The higher the value of Rao's V the more the variable discriminates between the groups. The results of the models with each variable fitted individually are provided in the first column of Table 14.1.

Initially, a variable which indicates whether or not the preferred school is the closest school is fitted in a model. This shows the effect of knowing which secondary school is the closest. The value of Rao's V when this variable is fitted alone is 64.9. This will be compared with the discriminatory power of other variables. Table 14.1 also shows the discriminatory power of a model which includes each individual variable and the closest school factor. These models will show the discriminatory power of each variable over and above the closest school factor and the results are in the second column of the table.

School factor	Individual variable only (Rao's V)	Individual variable with adjustment for closest school factor (Rao's V)
<u>Parents' ratings of a set of given factors (Section D to M)</u>		
School has both boys and girls	643.3*	605.8
School is denominational	160.2*	145.6
Good facilities for music and drama	104.0*	87.9
Good facilities for computing	58.6*	56.5
School groups first years according to ability	57.3*	27.2
Child will be happy at the school	30.3*	56.2
All students wear a school uniform	29.7*	27.9

(Continued over)

Table 14.1: The discriminatory power of the parents' responses when each variable is considered both individually and together with the closest school factor. The * indicated the discriminatory power of a variable is significant at the 5% level.

School factor	Individual variable only (Rao's V)	Individual variable with adjustment for closest school factor (Rao's V)
<u>The five most important school factors (Section N)</u>		
Good overall exam results	45.3*	46.2
Child will be happy at the school	26.3*	24.8
Competent and well qualified teachers	26.2*	23.7
Good relationships between teachers and students	23.4	24.9
Easy, safe, convenient travel	22.9	18.2
School has a good reputation	22.7	25.7
School offers a wide range of courses	22.2	23.4
<u>Social status variables (Section P to R)</u>		
Fathers' educational level	103.5*	81.7
Fathers' occupational level	101.0*	85.6
Child driven to school by car	89.5*	78.3
Mothers' educational level	80.9*	66.2
Own or rent the family home	80.0*	74.6
Number of cars in the family	54.1*	48.0
Room for the child to study at home	26.1*	16.8
Mothers' occupational level	25.1*	21.8
Likelihood of change of address	18.1	23.4

Table 14.1 (Continued): The discriminatory power of the parents' responses when each variable is considered both individually and together with the closest school factor. The * indicated the discriminatory power of a variable is significant at the 5% level.

Without a doubt, the most discriminating variable is whether or not the school is co-educational (Rao's V = 643.3). Parents definitely discriminate on this basis and as expected the three single-sex schools have negative coefficients and the co-educational schools have positive coefficients. The coefficients are negative because the value of the variable takes on a higher value if the parents desire a co-educational school and a lower

value if they desire a single-sex school. This result, while not all that useful to schools because they are unable to change from single-sex to co-educational or vice versa, could be of interest to the local education authority. It indicates that parents do want the choice of both types of school. Some parents choose single-sex schools while others deliberately favour co-educational schools. Hence it could severely restrict parental choice for the local education authority to change so that it only offers one type of school. While the political benefits of maintaining both types of schools are clear the educational benefits are not nearly as clear.

A similar case can be made for denominational and non denominational schools. This variable also discriminates significantly. Each of the denominational schools has a positive coefficient and all other schools have negative coefficients. This was the second most discriminating variable (Rao's V = 160.2) and indicates that parents also appreciate the choice between denominational and non-denominational schools.

Of the next six most discriminating individual variables included in Table 14.1, five of them are measures of social status of the family. Therefore, parents appear to discriminate more on the basis of their own social status level than on the basis of any educational views that they hold. However, caution must be exercised at this stage because each of these social status variables could be contributing to the same dimension of the model. This will be clarified and discussed further when the sets of variables are entered simultaneously into the model.

14.3 The Discriminatory Power of Parents' Ratings on Sets of Given School Characteristics

For this section of the analysis the variables are derived from the parents' rankings and ratings on Section D to M of the questionnaire. Of these questions the seven that discriminated significantly between the preferred schools of the parents are included in the further analysis. This set of seven variables is also included in Table 14.1, together with their individual value of Rao's V.

When these seven variables, together with the closest school factor, are included in a single model the total discriminatory power or the value of Rao's V is 1065.3. This is not exactly equal to the sum of the values of Rao's V when each variable is fitted

individually because some pairs of variables can provide more discrimination than when the single variables are fitted and some pairs of variables can provide less discriminatory power because they both contribute to the same dimension in the model. As outlined earlier, it is the co-educational and denominational nature of the school that provide the most discrimination. In this model they have Rao's V scores of 605.8 and 144.9 respectively. The closest school factor also has significant discriminatory power with a Rao's V value of 68.8. This means that together these three variables account for 77% of the total discriminatory power of the model. After the effect of these two school type factors and the closest school factor, it is the quality of a school's facilities for music and drama and for computing that discriminate most. Both of these two variables have the same Rao's V value (63.7). Following these, whether or not the school employs ability grouping from the beginning of the first year (Rao's V = 52.0), separates the schools most.

Whether the power to change a school's performance on any particular characteristics lies inside or outside the school is not usually very clearcut. However, among this set of factors there are two factors that require approval from other outside groups before the school can change. That is, a school does not have the right to determine whether it is co-educational or single-sex or whether it is denominational or non-denominational. Of course the staff of a school could lobby the local education authority or the local church administrators to change the status of the school but whatever pressure is exerted the decision to change the school status remains outside the power of the school. A third factor, whether the preferred school is the closest school, also can not be influenced by the school. Where the school is located and for how many students it is the closest school is determined by the school site and the housing developers. Hence, an existing school has no power to change the number of students for whom it is the closest school. However, the school does have the power to alter its performance on each of the other five variables in this set.

With school type and school location factors removed from the model the parameters for each of the remaining five variables are included in Table 14.2. The total discriminatory power of the model reduces from a Rao's V score of 1065.3, with all seven variables, to 276.0 with just five variables. The variables are entered into the model, one at a time, and in order of their discriminatory power. The relative strength of the values of Rao's V can only be discussed when the values from other models are available for comparison. This will be done after the results in the following section are

discussed.

School factor in order of discriminatory power	Rao's V	Change in V	P-value (if < 0.05)
1 Good facilities for music and drama	104.0	-	0.000
2 Good facilities for computing	160.8	56.9	0.000
3 School groups according to ability	212.0	51.2	0.007
4 Child will be happy at the school	243.3	31.3	0.005
5 All students wear a school uniform	276.0	32.7	0.003

Table 14.2: The discriminatory power of the parents' ratings in Sections D to M of the questionnaire. All five variables which the school has the power to influence are included in the same model.

14.4 The Discriminatory Power of the School Characteristics Parents Consider Important

In this section the school characteristics included in the analysis are those that the parents cited in Questions N1 to N5 as the five most important characteristics in the school they desire for their child. Initially, the fifteen that were offered by most parents were considered. Then, by the use of a discriminant analysis model, the seven factors that discriminate most are identified and only these seven are included in the following analysis. All seven variables are included in this analysis, even though some are not significant, so that comparisons could be made with the models in the previous section.

When each of these factors is entered into a separate discriminant analysis model their individual discriminatory powers are determined and each is included in Table 14.1. It can be seen from this table that only three of the variables discriminate significantly between the schools the parents prefer for their child.

When all seven variables, together with the closest school factor are included in the one model the total value of Rao's V is 249.2. This result indicates that this set of factors provides much less discriminatory power than the set in the previous section which had a Rao's V score of 1065.3 when all variables are included and 276.0 when only those factors over which the school has influence are included.

The only variable in this set over which the school has no power is 'the ease and safety of the students' travel to and from school'. Of course it could be argued that the school could lobby local bus companies to change their routes to come closer to the school, but it is claimed here that the decision to alter the bus routes lies wholly with the bus company. Also some may claim that examination results are greatly affected by the quality of the student intake, which is generally outside the school's influence, but most would also agree that the school can make some difference to these results. When a model is developed without the factor 'easy, safe, convenient travel to and from school' and the closest school factor the estimates for the values of Rao's V are included in Table 14.3.

School factor in order of discriminatory power	Rao's V	Change in V	P-value (if < 0.05)
1 Good overall exam results	55.4	-	0.000
2 Child will be happy at the school	83.6	28.2	0.013
3 Good relationships between teachers and students	111.7	28.1	0.014
4 Competent and well qualified teachers	135.1	23.4	-
5 School has a good reputation	158.0	22.8	-
6 School offers a wide range of courses	180.8	22.9	-

Table 14.3: The discriminatory power of the parents' responses to Questions N1 to N5 of the questionnaire. All six variables which the school has the power to influence are included in the same model.

Only three of the seven school factors are significant discriminators in determining the preferred school of the parents. This means that of all 110 factors cited by parents only three of them can be used to help identify their preferred school. This value of 180.8 is also significantly less than the value of 276.0 for the model that included the five factors derived from Sections D to M.

With the one exception, each of the parents' responses to the seven questions included from Sections D to M of the questionnaire is more discriminating than any of the top seven reasons given by parents. The fact that the variables representing the most important reasons are binary, whereas those from Sections D to M have between five and

seven different values, could account for some of the increase in discriminatory power but it seems that the style of question also plays a part. It appears as though the parents are more discriminating when they are faced with a set of specific characteristics to rank or rate than when faced with a more open ended question about the five most important factors. This may be worth noting by others anticipating research about parents' views on education.

14.5 The Discriminatory Power of Parents' Social Status

The final set of variables, that are fitted in order to explain the discrimination between the schools the parents prefer for their children, are those relating to the social status of the parents. It was seen in Section 2 of this chapter that, individually, most of these variables were highly discriminating. In particular, the educational and occupational level of the father and to a lesser extent the educational level of the mother, whether the child is to be driven to school and whether the family owns their home, all discriminate greatly between the schools the parents choose. Three other social status variables, the number of cars in the household, whether the child has a room to themselves and the level of the mothers' occupation all add a significant degree of discrimination. It is only the stability of each family's address that does not discriminate significantly. However when all social status variables are included in the one model some are no longer significant because they correlate highly with other social status variables that are already entered into the model.

When all eight of the significant social status variables and the closest school factor are included in the one model the total value of Rao's V is 392.3 which is significantly greater than either of the previous two sets of variables after the school type has been omitted from the calculations. When the closest school factor is omitted from this model the remaining eight variables still produce a Rao's V score of 335.5. In fact this model produces significantly more discriminatory power than do the seven most frequently cited factors that the parents consider important. This model also produces significantly more discriminatory power than the seven significant factors from the parents' ratings of given school characteristics. It is also worth noting that some of the social status variables are also binary and yet they provide significant discriminatory power, unlike the binary variables that were considered in Section 4. The values for Rao's V as each variable is, in turn, added to the model are included in Table 14.4.

Social status factor in order of discriminatory power	Rao's V	Change in V	P-value (if < 0.05)
1 Fathers' occupational level	88.9	-	0.000
2 Child driven to school by car	163.9	74.9	0.000
3 Own or rent the family home	223.0	59.1	0.000
4 Fathers' educational level	256.3	33.3	0.003
5 Likelihood of change of address	277.5	21.3	-
6 Mothers' occupational level	297.0	19.4	-
7 Number of cars in the family	316.5	19.5	-
8 Mothers' educational level	335.5	19.0	-

Table 14.4: The discriminatory power of eight social status variables. All eight variables are included in the same model.

The results in Table 14.4 clearly show that the discriminatory power of the social status variables is significantly greater than the discriminatory power of the views of parents on a range of educational factors. This means that parents are selecting a school for their child more on the basis of their social status than on the educational strengths and weakness of the school.

In this case it is not appropriate to consider the variables over which the school has no control because the social status variables are not school characteristics and so it is not possible for the school have the power to change them.

14.6 The Discriminatory Power of all Variables

Finally a model which includes all of the school factors and social status variables considered so far is fitted. The variables, in their order of discriminatory power are included in Table 14.5. Again the order of the variables in this table is not necessarily the same as the order in the individual models because the effect of a combination of variables (unless they all have zero correlation with each of the others) is not the same as the sum of effects of the individual variables. Only the nineteen of the variables that met the inclusion criteria of the software package are included in this table.

School factor or social status indicator in order of discriminatory power		Rao's V	Change in V	P-value (if < 0.05)
1	School has both boys and girls	605.8	-	0.000
2	School is denominational	750.7	144.9	0.000
3	Fathers' occupational level	842.5	91.8	0.000
4	Child driven to school by car	920.3	77.8	0.000
5	Preferred school is also closest school	989.8	69.5	0.000
6	Good facilities for computing	1053.0	63.2	0.000
7	Good facilities for music and drama	1104.8	51.8	0.000
8	Own or rent the family home	1153.7	48.9	0.000
9	School groups according to ability	1196.9	43.2	0.000
10	All students wear a school uniform	1230.8	33.9	0.002
11	Child will be happy at the school	1259.3	28.5	0.012
12	School offers a wide range of course	1287.3	28.0	0.014
13	School has a good reputation	1314.9	27.6	0.016
14	Likelihood of change of address	1341.1	26.1	0.025
15	Competent and well qualified teachers	1365.3	24.2	0.043
16	Number of cars in the family	1389.7	24.4	0.041
17	Fathers' educational level	1413.2	24.4	-
18	Good student teacher relationships	1434.9	21.7	-
19	Mothers' occupational level	1456.7	21.9	-

Table 14.5: The discriminatory power of the parents' responses when all variables from each of the three sets are considered simultaneously.

Table 14.5 indicates that after the type and location of the school have been considered (that is factors 1, 2 and 5 from the table) the most discriminatory variables are again the social status variables and they provide three of the five most discriminating variables. After eliminating the two school type variables, the closest school factor and the social status variables the remaining nine variables are those over which the school can have an influence. Eight of these nine are significant and they account for only 21% of the total discriminatory power of the model. It should also be noted that for some of these remaining variables the school has only minimal power to change. For example, the reputation of the school and the fact that the child thinks they will be happy at the school are not at all easy for the school to alter and in any case they are hardly

educational aims for a school. Nevertheless, these variables are significant and are worth identifying as they provide the schools with the best chance of attracting more parents, and hence students, to their school. These factors are listed in the following table.

School factors, over which the schools exercise some control, and which discriminate between the schools parents prefer for their child.	
1	Good facilities for computing
2	Good facilities for music and drama
3	School groups according to ability
4	All students wear a school uniform
5	Child will be happy at the school
6	School offers a wide range of courses
7	School has a good reputation
8	Competent and well qualified teachers

Table 14.6: The factors that schools have the power to influence and which discriminate significantly between the schools parents select for their child.

Table 14.6 provides schools with a list of school factors that are worth considering if the school wishes to attract more students. However, before a school places too much effort into improving these factors it should acknowledge that there is another set of factors that is much more significant in attracting parents and over which the school has no control.

It is interesting to reflect on the point, that of the 44 factors listed in the questionnaire and over 100 factors cited by parents to the open question, there are only eight that the school can affect and that also provide any significant basis for discriminating between the schools the parents will choose for their children. This does not leave the unpopular school with many alternatives. It would appear that the benefits, in terms of attracting more students, achieved by any effort designed to improve the school's performance on the above eight factors would be insignificant compared to the many other factors that exert an influence on parents who are about to select a school for their child. In fact, these results suggest that it is hardly worthwhile for a school to try to raise its overall

standards in the belief that it will attract more parents, as this is only a minor discriminator between whether parents select their school or another.

If the quality of a school's overall examination results is considered as the best measure of the school's standards then the situation is even more depressing for schools determined to improve their intake numbers. When considered individually, the quality of the examination results was the twelfth most discriminating variable, coming after such variables as, the number of cars in the family and whether the school employs ability grouping from the beginning of the first year. However, when the model including all variables simultaneously is considered the quality of the examination results does not even have sufficient discriminatory power to warrant its inclusion in the model. This is in part due to the relatively high correlation between the importance of examination results and some of the social status variables. So after the social status variables have been entered into the model, the additional discriminatory power of the examination results is insignificant and not worthy of inclusion. All of this means that parents do not discriminate between schools on the basis of a school's examination results and so there seems to be little reason for schools to strive to achieve better results, simply for the purpose of attracting more students. This is not to imply that schools shouldn't try to improve their results for other sound educational reasons.

14.7 Conclusion

When the top seven factors derived from the parents' ratings of sets of given factors, the top seven factors provided by parents in an open ended question, the nine social status variables and the closest school factor are all used to discriminate between the parents on the basis of their preferred secondary school, sixteen of them provide significant discriminatory power. However, the three factors that relate to the co-educational nature and the denominational nature of the school and the school's location, contribute 56% of the total discriminatory power of the model. Such information is useful to governments, both local and national, and indicates the parents desire to have a choice of the different types of schools. However, it is of little immediate use to schools and they must accept that they can, at best, only strive to influence 44% of the discriminatory power of the parents.

Then, if the discriminatory power attributed to the social status variables is also

subtracted, the school's sphere of influence is further reduced. The seven social status variables that meet the criteria for inclusion in the analysis contribute a further 22% of the discriminatory power to the model, leaving only 22% that the schools can hope to influence. So any efforts to improve a school's attractiveness to parents must be undertaken in the knowledge that it will be at most only 22% effective.

Nevertheless, for those schools that do wish to set about improving their popularity among parents, this research suggests that there are eight aspects of school life that are worthy of consideration. These include the following:

Ensure good facilities and courses for computing

Ensure good facilities and courses for music and drama

Employ grouping of students according to ability from the beginning of the first year

Have all students wear a school uniform

Convince prospective students that they will be happy at the school

Offer a wide range of courses

Improve the school's reputation in the community

Employ competent and well qualified teachers

It is even more interesting to note that each of the above eight school factors are inputs rather than outputs. That is, they measure aspects of what the school does to try and achieve a good education for its students but do not measure whether this improved education actually occurs. One of the more important outputs, the quality of the school's overall examination results, did not even have sufficient discriminatory power to be included in the final analysis.

Therefore it can be concluded that it is beyond the scope of the school to affect any of the factors that provide the majority of the discriminatory power (78%) with which parents distinguish between schools. When it is within the power of the school to improve its performance on some educational factors that parents use to distinguish between schools, these factors tend to be school inputs variables rather than school outputs. This may be of little value to schools attempting to improve their outputs.

CHAPTER 15

How the Results of This Study Contribute to the Parental Choice Debate

15.1 Introduction

In Chapters 2 through 6 of this thesis many of the current issues surrounding parental choice of schools are discussed. This discussion led to a set of research questions, outlined in Chapter 8, that are designed to shed light on to some of these issues. Then in Chapter 9 and 10 an empirical study was outlined and the analysis proposed. Finally the results of the study were outlined in Chapters 11 through 14. These results chapters provided the results of the analysis in terms of the pure research questions that were posed. In this chapter these results will be related to the issues that arose in the literature review. This will place the results into the context of what has been previously written and researched on the topic of parental choice of school.

This chapter will commence with a discussion of the limitations of this study and some questions that deserve further attention. Then each of the remaining sections will relate the results of this study to the issues raised in each of the chapters in the literature review. In this way it is hoped that the outcomes of this study can be used to address and maybe clarify, or even answer, many of the questions and issues raised in the literature.

15.2 Limitations of the Study and Areas for Further Research

In any study that is limited by the time and resources available there are always improvements that could be made. This study is no exception.

Firstly, this study could have been improved if a larger sample of parents had been used. The data collection exercise could have involved parents from other towns, and parents from other parts of the country. This would have allowed some of the frequency data to be generalized more readily and still permitted the generalization about the

relationships between variables to be made. It would also have been better if more parents from the survey area had completed the questionnaire. This could have been achieved by encouraging more primary schools to assist with the distribution and collection of the questionnaires and perhaps to gain a higher response rate in those schools that did participate.

A second area for improvement was in the questionnaire design. In hindsight it would have been useful to have some way of comparing the rankings given by parents to each of the factors in Sections D through J in the questionnaire. This could have been achieved by including some factors in more than one group but would have meant that the common aspects of each group (except Section J) would have been lost.

Another improvement could have occurred in the way the social status index was compiled in the analysis stage. This composite variable was derived by summing each of the nine individual social status variables. However, if time was available it would have been useful to explore other ways of combining the individual variables using scaling techniques. Improving on the measure used for social status would be interesting and worthy of further attention.

This suggests a topic for further consideration. It would be interesting to examine other social status indices and also to examine the relative merits, in terms of their correlation with the overall concept of social status.

A second area that would be interesting to pursue, but was not possible with the data set used in this study, would be to study the number of parents who were eventually allocated to their preferred school. Because only about one third of the sample used in this research had been allocated their secondary school, the sample was not large enough produce reliable estimates. In particular how the proportion of parents who gain a place for their child in their preferred school differs for parents of boys and parents of girls and how the proportion varies for parents of different social status levels would be worth considering.

A final aspect that would be interesting to consider would be how each of the research questions in this study are affected by the ethnic origin of the family. In this case it was not wise to include questions about the origin of the families because of an impending, official enquiry but the views of parents with different ethnic backgrounds would be

both interesting and enlightening.

15.3 What Choice do Parents Have?

Chapter 2 commenced with a discussion of the possible areas of parental choice including choice within schools and choice between schools. It then focussed on choice between schools. In towns where there is more than one secondary school, it is clear that parents do express a preference for schools other than their closest school. However this expression of choice is by no means uniform. While on average, in the town involved in this study, 56% of parents exercised their right to choose a more distant school, families with the highest social status index level were around three time as likely to choose a more distant school than were those families at the lowest end of the range.

Of the individual social status variables, mothers' and fathers' educational level are the most significant. These show that only 34% of families with mothers or fathers who have a university degree prefer their local school while more than half of those whose mothers and fathers have no formal educational qualification opt for their local school. So while O'Connor claims that parental choice does not exist for many rural families, (O'Connor, 1986, page 48) this study shows that even when choice is available it is not exercised to the same degree by lower social status parents as it is by the parents from the high social status group.

While the lower social status group express a preference for a more distant school much less often than the high social status group, they are also much less likely to be successful in gaining a place in their preferred school. Approximately 31% of parents in the low social status group fail to gain a place in their preferred school while only 12% of parents from the high social status group are unsuccessful. So for the low social status group expressing a preference is not nearly the same as selecting a school but for high social status parents the equating of these terms is much more realistic.

This study has shown that parents from the high social status group are exercising their rights to choose and in a large majority of cases doing so successfully. Parents from the low social status group are not opting for more distant schools to the same extent and when they do they are not nearly as successful.

15.4 Implications for Central Government Legislation

Significant attention was given, in Chapter 3, to the debate and subsequent DES Circulars which illustrated some of the reasons behind the increased parental choice legislation. Following the introduction of the 1944 Education Act, which in the end was hastily and poorly worded, the Secretary of State published, through the DES, several circulars to clarify the situation. This resulted in the publication of the grounds upon which parents could exercise their right to choose a school. The results of this study indicate that these grounds, established 45 years ago, are very close to those actually used by parents today.

The circular listed as the first two, of the four, acceptable reasons for choosing a school "the denominational character of the school and a preference for an existing school of a single sex or mixed type". (DES Circular No. 83, 1946, page 1) These are still the two major aspects of schools that parents use as criteria for selection today. These two factors accounted for about 54% of the discriminatory power of the sixteen significant variables that arose from this study. Approximately half of the remaining discriminatory power can be explained in terms of the social status of the family, leaving around 22% to be explained in terms of educational aspects of the school. This was also recognized by the authors of this Circular in 1946 when they placed educational considerations last in their list. This is certainly the appropriate position judging by the school selections of the parents involved in this study.

Although more recent legislation has made parental choice available to all, it is only the co-educational and denominational nature of the school that concerns parents to any great extent. After that they just want their children to attend a school that best matches their social status position.

The recent legislation also requires schools to publish school brochures to inform parents about a number of aspects of the school. The results of this survey indicate that the time, effort and money that goes into the preparation and publication of school brochures may not be warranted. Only 20% of parents said that the brochures were a large source of influence, compared with twice that many who said that talks with other parents (42.3%) and other family members (38.6%) was a large influence. The school open night was the most influential event but it was much more influential for parents in the high social status group than it was for parents in the low social status group. If

the legislation were changed to require schools to hold open nights and not require them to produce school brochures it may save schools a great deal of time and expense. A lesson for schools may be to involve parents of children already attending the school in the school open nights. It appears as though some positive comments from a few satisfied parents may be quite influential.

15.5 Implications for Local Education Authority Policy and Practice

Local education authorities are charged with the administrative tasks associated with secondary transfers. The literature review concentrated on the Whatshire LEA, as a typical example. The Whatshire LEA also publishes an information booklet (brochure) which details all of the county controlled schools in the area and provides some detail about each. It is easy to imagine a little more detail about each school being added to this information booklet and it replacing the relatively uninfluential individual school brochures.

This booklet also outlines the criteria for allocating students to schools. The first criteria relates to having older siblings already attending a school in the area. This study shows that this reason is not nearly as important to parents as the number of parents who cite it on their secondary transfer forms would have us believe. The list of criteria also includes the denominational and co-educational nature of the school and other educational and personal reasons. Again educational reasons are placed where the parents place them, at the bottom of the list.

The selection process conducted by the Whatshire LEA, much of which is a requirement by Central Government, also matches the desires of the parents. The parents' application forms requesting a place in a secondary school of their choice are the sole basis for determining which applicants are successful and which are not. These application forms, and the reasons on them, vary immensely in quality. Some applications include several pages of typed, logically and grammatically correct reasons, while others are very brief, poorly presented and without logical arguments. It must be extremely difficult not to be impressed by the well presented applications and it would be not at all surprising if the well presented forms are looked upon more favourably than the others. In general, although there are certainly exceptions, the well presented application forms are produced by parents with higher educational levels and hence in

the higher social status levels. The results of this study show that these applicants are more successful in gaining a place in their preferred school. Perhaps the local education authorities could consider the use of a questionnaire, similar to the one used in this study, to gain parents views on the characteristics of schools that each parent desires and then match them to schools accordingly.

It is worth re-iterating the following three sentences from Chapter 4 of this thesis to illustrate the role that social status plays in parental choice of schools.

> Whatever the case, it appears quite clear that the system of selecting students for grammar schools based on their ability in an examination at age 11 has been replaced by a system of selecting for pseudo-grammar schools based on the skills of the parents in writing a convincing argument on an application form. The test is now one that the parent sits. The results have more to do with the linguistic abilities of the parents than they have to do with the achievements of their children.

This view is confirmed by the results of this study in that parents of high social status are much more active in seeking out schools and also more successful in gaining a place in their preferred schools.

15.6 The Arguments For and Against Parental Choice of School

Chapter 5 of this thesis discusses the reasons put forward in favour of and against parental choice of secondary schools. These arguments were categorized into the political, the economic and the social arguments and they will be dealt with in these three sections in this conclusion.

The Political Arguments

The most often cited reason, by politicians, for the introduction of parental choice of schools is that it will improve standards. How standards should be measured, let alone compared, is a complex and unresolved issue so it is logically impossible to conclude that

standards have improved or deteriorated as a result of parental choice. In any case it is still early days so any long term benefits could not be established at this stage. It seems logical that if any improvement in standards were to arise then they would do so only if parents actually selected schools on the basis that they produce a better quality of education or better examination results. This study has shown that such bases for selection of schools are not the basis for decisions by parents.

Of the set of variables found to be the basis upon which parents discriminate between schools, the two most important variables were whether the school was co-educational or single-sex and whether the school was denominational. These two factors appear to have nothing to do with educational standards. Three of the next four variables were the occupational level of the father, whether the child would be driven to school and whether the family owned or rented their home. These also have nothing to do with the standards of the school selected. It is even ironic that whether the child is to be driven to school or whether the family owns its home tell more about the parents' choice of school than does any educational aspect of the school itself. Such factors are hardly going to raise standards. Even more telling is the fact that the importance of the overall examination results of the school does not even have sufficient discriminatory power for the analysis to include this factor. It would appear that comparing educational outputs such as examination results is a long way from parents minds when selecting a school.

The second and third political reasons discussed in Chapter 5 were that parental choice is a cheap vote catcher and that it reduces the burden on the DES. While conducting this research it was evident that there are no significant costs involved on the part of Central Government or the DES but the time and effort required by local education authorities is considerable. So while being relatively cheap, in terms of capital and labour costs, at the national level, it is very costly at the local level. This study did not set out to establish the popularity of the parental choice system but if it is popular among a majority of parents and there is no reason to doubt that it is, from the Central Government point of view a very cheap vote catcher.

No data were collected on the academic ability of the students so it is not possible to say conclusively that the fourth political reason has been addressed. This reason relates to the reaction to the comprehensive school movement of the 1960's and 1970's. However, it is clear from this study that there are popular schools which attract a large percentage of children from high social status families, while other unpopular schools

are left to take anyone who couldn't gain a place in one of the more popular schools. As outlined earlier a greater percentage of the unsuccessful applicants are from the lower social status group. There is no definite conclusive evidence to show that the grammar school system of the past is still in place, but several aspects of this study strongly suggest that some elements of it are, albeit by another name.

The Economic Arguments

The economic arguments discussed in Section 5.4, revolve around the need for the consumers knowing what is best for themselves. There can be no doubt from the results of this study that some parents definitely want co-educational schools while others clearly want single-sex schools. The same can be said about denominational and non-denominational schools. However, whether the child is to be driven to school and whether the family owns its home tells more about which school the parents will select than any educational factors. This indicates that parents are not at all clear about the relative quality of the educational outcomes in the schools from which they select. Ashworth states that, "If consumers know what is best for themselves then the exercise of free choice in the market results in efficiency." (Ashworth, et. al., 1988, page 11) The lack of clear educational reasons for basing decisions about schools suggest that education may not become a more efficient enterprise because of the introduction of parental choice. Moreover, if the customers, in this case parents, do not know what educational outcomes they want from a school, then what chance have the companies, in this case the schools, got of meeting the customers' wishes. This uncertainty is particularly evident in the parents' views on school examination results and hence there is little chance that parental choice, alone, will result in increased efficiency in this aspect of school output.

The fact that educational outcomes account for only about one-fifth of the total discriminatory power of all variables, with school type and social status variables accounting for the other four-fifths, severely restricts the possible gains, in attractiveness to parents, to be achieved by schools striving to improve their educational outputs.

The Social Arguments

There can be no doubt from the results of this study that social factors are more important in parental choice of school than educational factors. In fact students are selected on the basis of the arguments put forward by their parents. This tends to lead to highly educated and articulate people gaining places in the popular schools above students of less well educated parents. Given that educational levels of the parents are correlated with social status the selection is, in part, based on the social status position of the family. This possibility lead to Blunkett's article referred to in Chapter 5 in which he claimed that we are likely, "to see an even more divided society". (Blunkett, 1987, page 4)

The continuity of schooling issue has also been addressed in this study. From an analysis of the questions involving the primary school attended and the preferred secondary school it is clear that each secondary school gains students from a large number of primary schools. Over half of the secondary schools in this study could expect to gain students from more than nine of the primary schools surveyed. This number would be greatly increased if the data were available for the 36 schools in the town, not included in this study. This means that it is extremely difficult for a secondary school to provide a programme of work which achieves continuity of educational experience for the children it receives. Social continuity is also hampered by the fact that a child's group of friends from primary school may well attend many different secondary schools. The social continuity between school and home is also reduced because children from the same neighbourhood may also go to a number of different secondary schools. The size of the continuity of schooling issue is clear but whether this is detrimental or beneficial to a students' progress remains open to question.

15.7 The Factors That Influence Parental Choice

Chapter 6 of the literature review considered the factors suggested by authors and the factors arising out of research that parents should or do consider important in selecting a school for their child. In this summary section comparisons will only made with the previous research finding as summarized in Table 6.10.

The first set of factors established in this thesis arose from the questions which asked

those parents who prefer their closest school, what it is that attracts them to it, and then asked those parents whose preferred school was not their closest school, why they did not choose their local school. These reasons are summarized in the following table:

Reasons given by parents for preferring their closest school	Reasons given by parents for NOT preferring their closest school
Good overall examination results	Examination results are not good
Older siblings attend the school	Discipline is not good
School has a good reputation	School does not have a good reputation
School is close to home	School is single-sex
Easy, safe, convenient travel	Older siblings attend a different school
Good discipline	School is too large
Good general facilities	

Table 15.1: Reasons given by parents for selecting or not selecting their closest school. Reasons cited by more than 5% of parents are included in the table and they are listed in order of the frequency with which they were given.

This table shows that the set of reasons cited for preferring the closest school is quite similar to the set of reasons given for not preferring the local school. The analysis shows that what some parents consider a strength of a particular school is seen as a weakness by other parents. For example, 23% of parents in the high social status group who favour School E cite its good examination results as one of the reasons while 27% of parents in the high social status group who live closest to School E but prefer a different school, cite Schools E's poor examination results as one of the reasons. Similarly disparate views are held by parents who live close to other schools. The results of this study show that parents do not discriminate between schools on the basis of these factors.

What is also interesting was the fact that the parents of boys are just as likely to cite a particular reason as were the parents of girls. Even more unusual is that parents of all social status levels are just as likely to cite any particular reason. The only exception to this was that parents of high social status were significantly more likely to give 'poor examination results' as the reason for not selecting their closest school.

The other set of factors that parents consider important in the school for their child were gained from Questions N1 to N5 of the questionnaire. This list arose from the question asking parents to give the five most important factors for their child. Unlike Questions B2 and B3 they did not refer to a specific secondary school. The following table compares the factors that have resulted most often from the previous research (as listed in Table 6.10) with the factors listed as the most important by the parents and the factors listed among the five most important by the respondents in this survey.

School factors listed as the most important school factor in this study	School factors most frequently found in previous research	School factors listed as one of the five most important school factors in this study
Child will be happy	Accessible and safe travel	Good discipline
Good overall exam results	Good discipline	Good overall exam results
Good discipline	Child wants to attend	Competent, well qualified teachers
Child wants to attend	Wide choice of subjects	Happy, warm atmosphere
Happy, warm atmosphere	Closest school	Child will be happy
Competent, well qualified teachers	Good examination results	Caring, enthusiastic teachers
Emphasizes academic, practical and creative	Good and caring teachers	Competent, respected headteacher
Competent, respected headteacher	Competent, respected headteacher	Wide range of courses

Table 15.2: School characteristics valued by parents. Listed are results from this study including factors ranked as the most important and those ranked among the five most important and also results from previous research.

Table 15.2 shows the similarities between the factors listed by parents in this study and those listed by parents in previous studies. However, this study went on to examine how these views varied for parents of different social status levels and for parents of girls and boys.

This part of the study showed that only two of the top 15 factors are answered

differently by parents of girls and parents of boys. Parents' of girls are significantly more likely to cite the need for a competent and respected headteacher and the need for the child to be happy at the school than are the parents of boys. Also three of the top fifteen reasons are cited with different frequencies by parents of different social status levels. In this case parents in the high social status group are significantly more likely to state the need for the school to have good overall examination results, a good pastoral care system and an emphasis on academic *and* practical and creative subjects than are the parents in the low social status group.

Many other interesting and significant results occurred when the parents were asked to rank or rate a number of given factors. Parents of girls and parents of boys produce significantly different responses on thirteen of the 44 factors. These are listed in the following table.

School factors favoured by parents of girls	School factors favoured by parents of boys
Competent and respected headteacher	Offers extra activities, clubs, hobbies
Courses in English	Courses in design and technology
Courses in foreign languages	Courses in science
Facilities for art and design	Facilities for sports and games
Facilities for music and drama	Facilities for technical studies
	Made to feel part of the school
School should be single-sex	School should cater for students with special needs

Table 15.3: Those factors that are rated significantly differently by parents of boys and girls.

When the social status of the family was used as the explanatory variable many more factors showed a significant difference. Table 15.4 shows those factors that are ranked differently by parents in high and low social status groups. It should be noted that there is only one factor that is ranked in a similar way by parents in the high and low social status groups but is ranked significantly differently by the parents in the middle group. The parents in this middle group rank good discipline significantly higher than either of the two extreme groups.

School factors favoured by parents in the high social status group	School factors favoured by parents in the low social status group
School recommended by other parents	School's good reputation
Warm, caring atmosphere	Good student/teacher relationships
Good courses in foreign languages	Good courses in design and technology
Good courses in science	Good courses in English
Good courses in humanities	Clean attractive buildings
Facilities for music and drama	Facilities for technical studies
Child will be happy at the school	Child wants to attend the school
Emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects	Caters for students with special needs
Has an academic bias or ethos	Ability grouping from first year
School gives regular homework	Relatively small number of students
Good pastoral care system	Offers a wide range of courses
	All students wear school uniform

Table 15.4: Those factors that are rated significantly differently by parents in the high and low social status groups.

While this study did not produce a set of factors that are markedly different from previous research findings it shows that many of these factors gain a significantly different response from parents of girls than they do from parents of boys. Even more differences are identified between parents in different social status groups. This study also shows that parents are more discriminating when asked to rank or rate a set of given school characteristics than they are when asked to provide factors in response to an open question.

15.8 Measuring Social Status

Although measuring social status was not a primary aim of this study, by collecting social status data and developing a social status index and then using it as an explanatory variable, some conclusions can be made about its use.

Firstly, because the score on each of the four educational and occupational level variables ranged up to six or seven, these variables contributed most to the social status index used in the analysis. However it was the fathers' educational level that correlated most highly (0.784) with the social status index compared to the mothers' educational level (0.768), the fathers' occupational level (0.710) and the mothers' occupational level (0.651). This suggests that educational level rather than occupational level may be the better singular measure of social status.

Secondly, the tenure of the family home contributes positively to the social status index but there is a weak negative relationship between social status index and the stability of the family address. This means that, at least for the parents involved in this study, the higher the social status the more likely they are to move houses in the next few years. This trend is not in line with that in the literature and suggests that care should be taken before including this measure in future social status indices.

Thirdly, the difficulties in classifying the occupations of women, especially those that perform unpaid work in the home, are evident in this study. In fact, the mothers' educational level has only a weak relationship to their occupational level (correlation coefficient of 0.395) compared to the relationship between occupation and education for men of 0.603. In fact the mothers' occupational level, as it was measured in this study, produced the smallest correlation with almost all other social status variables.

15.9 Conclusion

Parental choice in education, as restricted as it is to choice of school, has little to do with selecting a school (or educational offering) and a lot to do with preserving a class - the social class of the families involved.

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* Whatshire is the fictitious name given to the County from whose schools the data for this study was collected. The real name is intentionally not used to maintain the anonymity of the schools and county involved.

APPENDIX 1

FACTORS LISTED BY 750 PARENTS IN WHATSHIRE ON THEIR APPLICATION FORMS FOR TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SEPTEMBER 1989

Factors influencing choice of secondary school	Number of parents	Percentage of parents
Geographic Factors		
Proximity of the school to the home	221	29.47
Easy/safe/convenient travel to and from school	115	15.33
The school is part of the local community	3	0.40
There is no fear of closure for the school	3	0.40
Academic Factors		
The school emphasizes both academic and practical and creative subjects	58	7.73
Overall exam results are good	85	11.33
The school caters for children with special needs	15	2.00
Courses and standards in English are good	3	0.40
Courses and standards in Mathematics are good	2	0.27
Courses and standards in Science are good	7	0.93
Courses and standards in Design and Technology are good	7	0.93
Courses and standards in Foreign Languages are good	9	1.20
School Type Factors		
The school has both boys and girls	81	10.80
The school is a single sex school	23	3.07
The school employs streaming or setting into ability groupings from the beginning of the first year	13	1.73
The school continues through to A level (6th Form)	18	2.40
The school is a comprehensive school	8	1.07
Reputation and Recommendations		
School has a good reputation in the community	30	4.00
School is recommended by other parents	23	3.07
School is recommended by students already attending the secondary school	16	2.13
Physical Factors		
School size is not too big or small	11	1.47
The school is clean and bright	4	0.53
Good general facilities	69	9.20
Good facilities for sports and games	34	4.53
Good facilities and courses for Art and Design	8	1.07
Good facilities and courses for Music and Drama	57	7.60
Good facilities and courses for Computing and Technology	18	2.40
Good facilities and courses for Technical Studies	7	0.93

(continued over)

Table A1.1: Factors listed by 750 parents in Whatshire on their application forms for their child's transfer to secondary schools in September 1989.

Factors influencing choice of secondary school of parents	Number of parents	Percentage
Pastoral Care Factors		
Discipline at the school is good	88	11.73
Students wear school uniform	28	3.73
Present students' behaviour and appearance	7	0.93
The denominational (church) nature of the school	132	17.60
The school has a happy/warm/ caring atmosphere	66	8.80
Many extra activities/clubs/hobbies	36	4.80
The school has a good pastoral/house/support system	23	3.07
Staff Factors		
Caring and enthusiastic teachers	52	6.93
Competent and quality teachers	16	2.13
Good relationship between teachers and students	12	1.60
Respect for the headteacher	38	5.07
Respect for the teaching staff	17	2.27
Child/Family Factors		
Child wants to attend the school	102	13.60
Child's friends will attend the school	32	4.27
Older brothers and sisters attended the school	356	47.47
Child will be happy at the school	7	0.93
Parents are made to feel a part of the school	8	1.07
Other Reasons		
The impression you received during visits to the school (Including open-night)	51	6.80
The standard of student work displayed on open night	5	0.67
Homework is given regularly	8	1.07
Smaller class sizes	3	0.40
Latin is offered	3	0.40
Child shouldn't attend the same school as their older brother or sister		0.00
Students have a sense of pride in the school	3	0.40
There is a matron on the staff	3	0.40
School is recommended by primary school teachers	2	0.27
The headteacher is a Christian	2	0.27
	1	0.13

Note: The total number of reasons given on the 750 application forms was 2049 or an average of 2.73 per application form.

Table A1.1 (continued): Factors listed by 750 parents in Whatshire on their application forms for their child's transfer to secondary schools in September 1989.

APPENDIX 2

THE QUESTIONNAIRES USED IN THE STUDY
FORM 0 AND FORM 1

PARENTAL CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL
NOTES ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE .

Form 0

1. This questionnaire aims to find out how you went about choosing a secondary school for your child. It is part of a research study carried out at the Institute of Education in the University of London. The information gained should enable schools to, in future, better meet the wishes of parents.

2. Please do not put your name on the questionnaire. That way, all of your answers will be strictly confidential.

3. Answer each question by either ticking, or numbering, the appropriate box or by writing a brief answer to the question. If you feel that you can not answer one or two of the questions, then please leave them out, but still answer the rest of the questions.

4. You may use the back of this page to write anything else that you would like to add but were unable to write as you answered the questionnaire.

5. Would you please complete the questionnaire as soon as possible, seal it in the envelope provided and return it to your child's school.

4th June 1990

Barry Bastow
Researcher
Institute of Education

OPTIONAL

This page is included for you to make any further comments about those things that you believe are important when expressing a preference of secondary school for your child or any other issues relating to the secondary transfer process or to this questionnaire.

Parental Choice Questionnaire

Form 0

When answering this questionnaire please think in terms of your child who brought it home.

A1 In which year will this child commence their secondary schooling? Sept 199___

A2 Is this child a boy or a girl? (Please tick one of the boxes.) Girl ☐ Boy ☐

A3 What is the name of the secondary school which is closest to your home? (Please name only one school.) _____

Last November you were asked by the local education authority to complete a Secondary Transfer Form and express a preference for four schools for your child.

B1 Which school did you list as your number 1 preference, when applying for a school for this child. _____

Please answer either Question B2 or Question B3 but not both.

B2 **If your number 1 preference was also the closest school to your home** then please say why you preferred this school. (Please be specific. For example don't just say it is a good school or the best school, but say why it is good or the best.)

_____

_____

_____

B3 **If your number 1 preference was NOT the closest school to your home** then please say why you did not prefer this closest school. (Please be specific. For example don't just say it is not a good school, but say why you think it is not good.)

_____

_____

_____

B 4 To which secondary school has your child been allocated for the 1990 school year? (Please list the school to which the child has been allocated even if this is still the subject of an appeal.)

_____

B5 Do you have an older child for whom you have previously selected a secondary school? Yes ☐ No ☐

Secondary schools hold open nights and produce school brochures to provide information and to help parents choose a school for their child. When deciding on your preferences for this child:

C1 How many open nights did you attend? _____

C2 How many brochures did you read? _____

Please go to page 2

Listed below are some of the things that may influence parents when choosing a secondary school for their child. Please indicate their order of importance for you when you expressed your preferences for schools for your child.

Please <u>do not</u> rank them equally.

Please be sure to number each box.

Geographic Factors

The school should be:

D1 Close to our home .....
D2 Easy/safe/convenient for travel to and from school.....
D3 In no danger of closure .....

Write the numbers 1 to 3 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Academic Factors

The school should have:

E1 Good courses and standards in Design and Technology
E2 Good courses and standards in English .....
E3 Good courses and standards in Foreign Languages .....
E4 Good courses and standards in the Humanities .....
E5 Good courses and standards in Mathematics .....
E6 Good courses and standards in Science.....

Write the numbers 1 to 6 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Reputation and Recommendations

The school:

F1 Is recommended by students already attending the secondary school .....
F2 Has a good reputation in the community .....
F3 Is recommended by other parents.....

Write the numbers 1 to 3 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Physical Factors

The school should have:

G1 Clean, attractive and well maintained buildings.....
G2 Good general facilities.....
G3 Good facilities for sports and games.....
G4 Good facilities and courses for Art and Design.....
G5 Good facilities and courses for Music and Drama .....
G6 Good facilities and courses for Computing.....
G7 Good facilities and courses for Technical Studies.....

Write the numbers 1 to 7 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Staff Factors

The school should have:

H1 Caring and enthusiastic teachers.....
H2 Competent and well qualified teachers .....
H3 Good relationships between teachers and students.....
H4 A competent and respected headteacher .....

Write the numbers 1 to 4 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Child/Family Factors

Your child:

I1 Wants to attend the school.....
I2 Has friends who will attend the school.....
I3 Has older brothers or sisters attending the school.....
I4 Will be happy at the school.....
I5 And your family, are made to feel part of the school.....

Write the numbers 1 to 5 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Please go to page 3

Other Factors

The school should:

J 1 Offer extra activities/clubs/hobbies ☐
J 2 Have good overall exam results ☐
J 3 Have good discipline ☐
J 4 Have a happy, warm and caring atmosphere ☐

Write the numbers 1 to 4 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Listed below are some of the things that you may, or may not, look for in the secondary school that you select for your child. Please indicate next to each of the statements, by ticking one of the five boxes, whether you strongly disagree, disagree, don't mind, agree or strongly agree with it.

The school should:	Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	Don't Mind	Agree	Strongly Agree
K 1 Emphasise academic *and* practical/creative subjects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
K 2 Have an academic bias or ethos	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
K 3 Have a practical and creative bias or ethos	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
K4 Cater for students with special needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
L 1 Group students according to their ability from the beginning of the first year	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
L2 Have a relatively small number of students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
L3 Have both boys and girls	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
L4 Be a denominational (Church) school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M 1 Offer a wide range of courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M2 Give regular homework	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M3 Have all students wearing school uniform	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M4 Have a good pastoral/house/student support system	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M 5 Any other (Please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Of all of the things, about a secondary school, that you consider important for your child, which five are the **most** important? You may list any things from this questionnaire or any others that you feel are important. Use the code (e.g. D7, K5 etc.) if you wish.

N1 Most important factor _____
N2 Second most important _____
N3 Third most important _____
N4 Fourth most important _____
N5 Fifth most important factor _____

Parents gain information about secondary schools in a number of different ways. Please tick one of the boxes in each line to show how much you were influenced by each of the following

	Large Influence	Some Influence	No Influence
O1 The school's brochure or prospectus	☐	☐	☐
O2 Your visits to the school (including open night)	☐	☐	☐
O3 Talks with parents who have children at the school	☐	☐	☐
O4 Published examination results	☐	☐	☐
O5 Newspaper articles and reports	☐	☐	☐
O6 Staff at the child's primary school	☐	☐	☐
O7 Other family members attending the school	☐	☐	☐
O8 Other sources (Please indicate)	☐	☐	☐

Please go to page 4

For questions P1 to P5 please tick the appropriate box.

P1 Will your child be driven to or from school by car? Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No ☐

P2 How many cars are there in the household? No Car ☐ One Car ☐ ☐

P3 Will your child have a room to themselves for the completion of homework?
The child will share a room ☐ The child will have a room of their own ☐

P4 Do you expect to be still living at your present address when your child enters secondary school? Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No ☐

P5 Do you rent or own your present home? Rent ☐ Own ☐

Q1 What is the **highest** level of education of the child's parent figures? Please tick the box that best describes your level of education. (Mother and father are to be taken as the female and male head of the household in which the child normally lives.)

	Mother	Father
No formal qualification		
A Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) or clerical or apprenticeship qualification, or equivalent		
A pass in one or more subjects at O-level, or equivalent		
A pass in one or more subjects at A-level, or equivalent		
A higher education diploma, certificate, etc., or equivalent		
A University degree, or equivalent		

R1 In what type of employment are you usually involved? Please tick the box that best describes, or is most similar to, the type of work that you do.

	Mother	Father
Presently not in paid employment		
Unskilled manual worker, e.g. caretaker, waiter/waitress, shop assistant, cleaner, kitchen help, porter, labourer		
Semi-skilled manual worker, e.g. secretary, warehouse worker, postal worker, coach driver, lorry driver, agricultural worker		
Skilled manual work, e.g. tradesman, supervisor of manual workers, self employed with no workers, cook		
Non-manual work, e.g. nurse, journalist, salesperson, supervisor of non-manual workers		
Employer or manager, e.g. owner/manager of a small business, manager of a section of a large business, engineer		
Professional, e.g. doctor, dentist, general manager of a large company, architect, lawyer, airline pilot		

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

PARENTAL CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL
NOTES ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Form 1

1. This questionnaire aims to find out how you will go about choosing a secondary school for your child. It is part of a research study carried out at the Institute of Education in the University of London. The information gained should enable schools to, in future, better meet the wishes of parents.

2. Please do not put your name on the questionnaire. That way, all of your answers will be strictly confidential.

3. Answer each question by either ticking, or numbering, the appropriate box or by writing a brief answer to the question. If you feel that you can not answer one or two of the questions, then please leave them out, but still answer the rest of the questions.

4. You may use the back of this page to write anything else that you would like to add but were unable to write as you answered the questionnaire.

5. Would you please complete the questionnaire as soon as possible, seal it in the envelope provided and return it to your child's school.

4th June 1990

Barry Bastow
Researcher
Institute of Education

OPTIONAL

This page is included for you to make any further comments about those things that you believe are important when expressing a preference of secondary school for your child or any other issues relating to the secondary transfer process or to this questionnaire.

Parental Choice Questionnaire

Form 1

When answering this questionnaire please think in terms of your child who brought it home.

A1 In which year will this child commence their secondary schooling? Sept 199___

A2 Is this child a boy or a girl? (Please tick one of the boxes.) Girl ☐ Boy ☐

A3 What is the name of the secondary school which is closest to your home? (Please name only one school.)

_____

B1 How likely are you to choose the **closest** secondary school as **the** preferred school for your child?

	Tick one box
Certain to choose the closest school (100%)	
Very likely to choose the closest school (71% to 99%)	
Reasonably likely to choose the closest school (30% to 70%)	
Not very likely to choose the closest school (1% to 29%)	
Will not choose the closest school (0%)	

Please answer either Question B2 or B3 but not both.

B2 If you are certain or likely to select the closest school for your child then please say **why** you are likely to choose this school. (Please be specific. For example, don't just say it is a good school or the best school, but say why it is good or the best.)

_____

_____

_____

B3 If you are unlikely to or will not select the closest school for your child then please say **why** you are unlikely to choose this school. (Please be specific. For example, don't just say it is not a good school, but say why it is not good.)

_____

_____

_____

B4 Which secondary school are you most likely to chose for this child? _____

B5 Do you have an older child for whom you have previously selected a secondary school? Yes ☐ No ☐

Secondary schools hold open nights and produce school brochures to provide information and to help parents choose a school for their child. When selecting a school for your child:

C1 How many open nights would you expect to attend? _____

C2 How many brochures would you expect to read? _____

Please go to page 2

Listed below are some of the things that may influence parents when choosing a secondary school for their child. Please indicate their order of importance for you when you have to express your preference for a school for your child.
Please <u>do not</u> rank them equally.

Please be sure to number each box.

Geographic Factors

The school should be:

D1 Close to our home .....
D2 Easy/safe/convenient for travel to and from school .....
D3 In no danger of closure .....

Write the numbers 1 to 3 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Academic Factors

The school should have:

E1 Good courses and standards in Design and Technology .....
E2 Good courses and standards in English .....
E3 Good courses and standards in Foreign Languages .....
E4 Good courses and standards in the Humanities .....
E5 Good courses and standards in Mathematics .....
E6 Good courses and standards in Science .....

Write the numbers 1 to 6 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Reputation and Recommendations

The school:

F1 Is recommended by students already attending the secondary school .....
F2 Has a good reputation in the community .....
F3 Is recommended by other parents .....

Write the numbers 1 to 3 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Physical Factors

The school should have:

G1 Clean, attractive and well maintained buildings .....
G2 Good general facilities .....
G3 Good facilities for sports and games .....
G4 Good facilities and courses for Art and Design .....
G5 Good facilities and courses for Music and Drama .....
G6 Good facilities and courses for Computing .....
G7 Good facilities and courses for Technical Studies .....

Write the numbers 1 to 7 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Staff Factors

The school should have:

H1 Caring and enthusiastic teachers .....
H2 Competent and well qualified teachers .....
H3 Good relationships between teachers and students .....
H4 A competent and respected headteacher .....

Write the numbers 1 to 4 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Child/Family Factors

Your child:

I1 Wants to attend the school .....
I2 Has friends who will attend the school .....
I3 Has older brothers or sisters attending the school .....
I4 Will be happy at the school .....
I5 And your family, are made to feel part of the school .....

Write the numbers 1 to 5 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Please go to page 3

Other Factors

The school should:

J 1 Offer extra activities/clubs/hobbies ☐
J 2 Have good overall exam results ☐
J 3 Have good discipline ☐
J 4 Have a happy, warm and caring atmosphere ☐

Write the numbers 1 to 4 in these boxes to show their order of importance. Number 1 is most important.

Listed below are some of the things that you may, or may not, look for in the secondary school that you select for your child. Please indicate next to each of the statements, by ticking one of the five boxes, whether you strongly disagree, disagree, don't mind, agree or strongly agree with it.

The school should:	Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	Don't Mind	Agree	Strongly Agree
K 1 Emphasise academic *and* practical/creative subjects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
K 2 Have an academic bias or ethos	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
K 3 Have a practical and creative bias or ethos	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
K4 Cater for students with special needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
L 1 Group students according to their ability from the beginning of the first year	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
L2 Have a relatively small number of students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
L3 Have both boys and girls	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
L4 Be a denominational (Church) school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M 1 Offer a wide range of courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M2 Give regular homework	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M3 Have all students wearing school uniform	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M4 Have a good pastoral/house/student support system	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
M 5 Any other (Please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Of all of the things, about a secondary school, that you consider important for your child, which five are the **most** important? You may list any things from this questionnaire or any others that you feel are important. Use the code (e.g. D7, K5 etc.) if you wish.

N1 Most important factor _____
N2 Second most important _____
N3 Third most important _____
N4 Fourth most important _____
N5 Fifth most important factor _____

Parents gain information about secondary schools in a number of different ways. Please tick one of the boxes in each line to show how much you were influenced by each of the following

	Large Influence	Some Influence	No Influence
01 The school's brochure or prospectus	☐	☐	☐
02 Your visits to the school (including open night)	☐	☐	☐
03 Talks with parents who have children at the school	☐	☐	☐
04 Published examination results	☐	☐	☐
05 Newspaper articles and reports	☐	☐	☐
06 Staff at the child's primary school	☐	☐	☐
07 Other family members attending the school	☐	☐	☐
08 Other sources (Please indicate)	☐	☐	☐

Please go to page 4

For questions P1 to P5 please tick the appropriate box.

P1 Will your child be driven to or from school by car? Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No ☐

P2 How many cars are there in the household? No Car ☐ One Car ☐ ☐

P3 Will your child have a room to themselves for the completion of homework?
The child will share a room ☐ The child will have a room of their own ☐

P4 Do you expect to be still living at your present address when your child enters secondary school? Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No ☐

P5 Do you rent or own your present home? Rent ☐ Own ☐

Q1 What is the **highest** level of education of the child's parents? Please tick the box that best describes your level of education. (Mother and father are to be taken as the female and male head of the household in which the child normally lives.)

	Mother	Father
No formal qualification		
A Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) or clerical or apprenticeship qualification, or equivalent		
A pass in one or more subjects at O-level, or equivalent		
A pass in one or more subjects at A-level, or equivalent		
A higher education diploma, certificate, etc., or equivalent		
A University degree, or equivalent		

R1 In what type of employment are you usually involved? Please tick the box that best describes, or is most similar to, the type of work that you do.

	Mother	Father
Presently not in paid employment		
Unskilled manual worker, e.g. caretaker, waiter/waitress, shop assistant, cleaner, kitchen help, porter, labourer		
Semi-skilled manual worker, e.g. secretary, warehouse worker, postal worker, coach driver, lorry driver, agricultural worker		
Skilled manual work, e.g. tradesman, supervisor of manual workers, self employed with no workers, cook		
Non-manual work, e.g. nurse, journalist, salesperson, supervisor of non-manual workers		
Employer or manager, e.g. owner/manager of a small business, manager of a section of a large business, engineer		
Professional, e.g. doctor, dentist, general manager of a large company, architect, lawyer, airline pilot		

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

APPENDIX 3

NUMBERS OF QUESTIONNAIRES DISTRIBUTED AND COLLECTED FROM EACH OF THE TWENTY TWO PARTICIPATING PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Primary School Number	Year of Secondary Entry 1990	1991	1992	Total Number Distributed	Total Number Returned	Percentage Response Rate
1	52	47	45	144	91	63.19
2	14	9	9	32	24	75.00
3	29	30	27	86	36	41.86
4	31	28	27	86	59	68.60
5	51	48	30	129	61	47.29
6	51	61	52	164	92	56.10
7	21	18	14	53	29	54.72
8	28	29	22	79	61	77.22
9	43	37	28	108	67	62.04
10	55	34	31	120	96	80.00
11	59	45	39	143	75	52.45
12	31	28	26	85	47	55.29
13	51	39	31	121	67	55.37
14	14	18	15	47	37	78.72
15	26	21	16	63	32	50.79
16	62	46	52	160	90	56.25
17	31	28	21	80	44	55.00
18	28	26	12	66	51	77.27
19	24	23	20	67	57	85.07
20	30	25	21	76	57	75.00
21	27	27	25	79	59	74.68
22	24	12	7	43	23	53.49
Totals	782	679	570	2031	1255	61.79

Table A3.1: Numbers of questionnaires distributed and collected from each of the twenty two participating primary schools.

APPENDIX 4

LIST OF ALL REASONS AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS CITED BY PARENTS

Code number	Reason or school characteristic
	<u>Geographic factors</u>
101	Close to home
102	Easy, safe, convenient travel to and from school
103	In no danger of closure
	<u>Academic/Curriculum factors</u>
104	Good courses and standards in design and technology
105	Good courses and standards in English
106	Good courses and standards in foreign languages
107	Good courses and standards in humanities
108	Good courses and standards in mathematics
109	Good courses and standards in science
110	Science and/or humanities are not taught as separate subjects
111	School does not teach Latin
112	School does no teach elocution
113	School doesn't teach the basics well enough
114	Equal opportunity for boys and girls in all courses
115	Low percentage of girls studying science and mathematics
116	School has a good remedial system
117	School offers a wide range of courses
	<u>Recommendation factors</u>
118	School is recommended by students already attending the school
119	School has a good reputation in the community
120	School is recommended by other parents
121	Rumours of a drug problem and glue sniffing
122	Just don't like the school or a 'gut feeling'
	<u>Physical factors</u>
123	Clean, attractive and well maintained buildings
124	Good general facilities
125	Good facilities for sports and games
126	Good facilities and courses for art and design
127	Good facilities and courses for music and drama
128	Good facilities and courses for computing
129	Good facilities and courses for technical studies
130	A large percentage of money spent on beautiful gardens and not on education
131	Too much graffiti in the toilets

(Continued over)

Table A4.1: Reasons and school characteristics cited by parents as important in the selection of a school for their child.

Code number	Reason or school characteristic
	<u>Staff factors</u>
132	Caring and enthusiastic teachers
133	Competent and well qualified teachers
134	Good relationship between teachers and students
135	Headteacher is competent and respected
136	Headteacher is not impressive
137	Teaching staff is stable
138	Large staff turnover
139	Headteacher is a male
140	Staff are too militant
141	Staff are young and easy going
	<u>Child/Family factors</u>
142	Child wants to attend the school
143	Child has friends who will attend the school
144	Child has older brothers or sisters attending the school
145	Child will be happy at the school
146	Child and the family are made to feel a part of the school
147	Parent attended the school
148	Parents work at the school
149	There is good and regular contact between teachers and parents
	<u>Extra curricular activities</u>
150	School offers extra activities, clubs, hobbies
151	School has a good treatment of sex and drug education
152	School encourages competitive sport
153	School emphasizes rugby instead of football
	<u>School Results</u>
154	Good overall examination results
155	Not many students go on to university as school doesn't encourage it
	<u>Discipline</u>
156	Good discipline
157	School rules are good
158	Poor standard of dress and behavior when students going to and from school
159	There is no bullying at the school
160	Poor behaviour of students on Open Night
161	All students wear school uniform

(Continued over)

Table A4.1: (Continued) Reasons and school characteristics cited by parents as important in the selection of a school for their child.

Code number	Reason or school characteristic
	<u>School Philosophy and Ethos</u>
162	School has a happy, warm and caring atmosphere
163	School not friendly and helpful
164	Onus is on the student to work
165	Students should receive individual attention and care
166	A traditional education, like when parent attended school
167	Provides a grammar school education or want a grammar school education
168	School encourages children to be self reliant and independent
169	School should instill a love of learning
170	School should make learning fun
171	School has high expectations of students
172	Students learn to respect others
173	School brings out the best in its students
174	School has a holistic approach to education
175	School has a multicultural population
176	School uses rewards and privileges instead of just punishment
177	School emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects
178	School has an academic bias
179	School has a practical and creative bias
180	School cares about its reputation, and engenders school spirit and pride
181	School has a good pastoral, house, student support system
	<u>Elitism and Selectivity</u>
182	School is too elitist.
183	School oversubscribed so select a school that I have a chance of getting into
184	Make-up of the student population.
	<u>School Organization Factors</u>
185	Want a private or boarding school
186	School is single sex and the wrong sex
187	School is a single sex school
188	Don't like the system in the other county or don't want a three tier system
189	School is well organized
190	School has links with the community and industry
191	School has a large sixth form and good facilities for sixth form
192	School has poor facilities or few students in the sixth form
193	School has small classes or a small pupil teacher ratio
194	School caters for children with special needs
195	Students grouped according to ability in the first year

(Continued over)

Table A4.1 (Continued): Reasons and school characteristics cited by parents as important in the selection of a school for their child.

Code number	Reason or school characteristic
	<u>School Organization Factors (continued from previous page)</u>
196	School is relatively small
197	School has both boys and girls
198	School is denominational
199	Very little effort was made on open night
200	Students out of school at lunchtime
201	Students not grouped according to ability
	<u>Other Factors</u>
202	School is likely to opt out
203	School provides transport
204	School puts a lot of effort into fund raising
205	School has recently had a good HMI report
206	School has interesting and stimulating courses
207	School has good facilities for career counselling
208	School provides good school meals
209	School gives regular homework
210	There is no need for homework at this school

Table A4.1 (Continued): Reasons and school characteristics cited by parents as important in the selection of a school for their child.

APPENDIX 5

FREQUENCY TABLES OF THE PARENTS' RESPONSES TO EACH QUESTION ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

QUESTION A1

NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENTERING SECONDARY SCHOOL EACH YEAR

Preferred secondary school	Entering secondary school in September 1990	Entering secondary school in September 1991	Entering secondary school in September 1992	Total for each school
A	27	27	30	84
B	38	30	16	84
C	3	22	26	51
D	7	17	13	37
E	24	27	12	63
F	34	18	17	69
G	86	59	28	173
H	30	22	22	74
I	35	36	30	101
J	6	10	4	20
K	18	17	17	52
L	72	44	27	143
M	76	34	30	140
N	3	5	3	11
O	6	9	4	19
P	5	1	7	13
Q	8	5	4	17
Total	478	383	290	1151

Table A5.1: Summary of the parents' responses to Question A1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION A2

NUMBER OF CHILDREN OF EACH SEX

Preferred secondary school	Girls	Boys	Total for each school
A	29	55	84
B	28	56	84
C	24	27	51
D	22	15	37
E	30	33	63
F	37	32	69
G	79	94	173
H	37	37	74
I	55	46	101
J	13	7	20
K	28	24	52
L	0	143	143
M	140	0	140
N	11	0	11
O	13	6	19
P	8	5	13
Q	10	7	17
Total	564	587	1151

Table A5.2: Summary of the parents' responses to Question A2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION A3

CLOSEST SECONDARY SCHOOL TO THE CHILD'S HOME

Closest secondary school / Preferred secondary school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total for each school
A	41	11	0	2	1	0	12	0	0	0	0	2	3	7	1	0	1	81
B	27	32	0	3	0	3	11	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	83
C	15	24	1	2	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	51
D	10	10	0	9	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	37
E	12	8	2	7	12	0	5	3	1	6	0	1	2	0	1	0	2	62
F	5	4	0	11	17	10	8	0	0	0	3	3	4	0	4	0	0	69
G	27	7	1	10	6	1	86	1	0	0	0	10	17	3	0	0	0	169
H	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	41	4	3	0	9	4	5	0	0	4	73
I	4	9	1	1	3	0	1	18	43	10	0	2	4	0	3	0	2	101
J	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	5	0	5	3	2	0	0	0	19
K	0	0	0	10	8	0	7	0	0	1	20	2	2	1	0	0	0	51
L	7	12	0	2	6	0	24	3	7	4	0	73	1	0	0	1	1	141
M	5	6	1	2	1	3	24	5	10	0	0	4	71	4	1	0	3	140
N	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	11
O	0	0	0	0	12	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	19
P	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	2	13
Q	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	16
Total	160	124	7	59	68	18	196	78	68	31	23	116	115	30	18	2	23	1136

Table A5.3: Summary of the parents' responses to Question A3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION B1 (1991/92 SECONDARY ENTRANTS)

LIKELIHOOD OF PARENTS CHOOSING THE CLOSEST SECONDARY SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Certain to choose the closest school	Very likely to choose the closest school	Reasonably likely to choose the closest school	Not very likely to choose the closest school	Will not choose the closest school	Total for each school
A	13	11	13	8	11	56
B	5	8	10	10	13	46
C	3	5	11	9	18	46
D	5	5	5	4	11	30
E	6	4	3	9	17	39
F	3	2	7	3	20	35
G	15	18	15	21	17	86
H	12	7	8	6	10	43
I	17	12	12	13	12	66
J	4	1	3	2	4	14
K	9	5	2	8	10	34
L	25	16	7	7	16	71
M	14	16	11	5	18	64
N	2	2	1	2	1	8
O	0	1	1	5	6	13
P	0	1	0	4	3	8
Q	0	0	1	0	8	9
Total	133	114	110	116	195	668

Table A5.4: Summary of the parents' responses to Question B1 (Form 1) of the questionnaire.

QUESTION B1 (1990 SECONDARY ENTRANTS) AND QUESTION B4 (1991/92 SECONDARY ENTRANTS)

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO PREFER THEIR CHILD TO GO TO THE CLOSEST SCHOOL TO THEIR HOME

Preferred secondary school	Preferred school is the closest school	Preferred school is **not** the closest school
A	53.2	46.8
B	43.9	56.1
C	32.7	67.3
D	47.2	52.8
E	25.8	74.2
F	15.9	84.1
G	50.9	49.1
H	55.4	44.6
I	51.5	48.5
J	25.0	75.0
K	40.4	59.6
L	51.7	48.3
M	50.4	49.6
N	63.6	36.4
O	21.1	78.9
P	7.7	92.3
Q	0.0	100.0
Total	44.0	56.0

Table A5.5: Summary of the parents' responses to Question B1 (Form 0) and Question B4 (Form 1) of the questionnaire.

QUESTION B2

REASONS GIVEN BY PARENTS FOR SELECTING THE CLOSEST SCHOOL TO THEIR HOME FOR THEIR CHILDREN

Reason or school factor	Number	%
Good overall examination results	120	13.0
Child has older brothers or sisters attending the school	99	10.7
School has a good reputation in the community	94	10.2
School is close to home	72	7.8
Easy, safe, convenient travel to and from school	67	7.3
Good discipline	66	7.2
Good general facilities	48	5.2
School offers a wide range of courses	34	3.7
The school is a single sex school	27	2.9
Good facilities for sports and games	24	2.6
Child wants to attend the school	24	2.6
A happy, warm and caring atmosphere	24	2.6
Good facilities and courses for music and drama	17	1.8
School has a good pastoral, house, student support system	16	1.7
Caring and enthusiastic teachers	14	1.5
School offers extra activities, clubs, hobbies	11	1.2
The school has both boys and girls	11	1.2
Child has friends who will attend the school	10	1.1
Emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects	9	1.0
A competent and respected headteacher	8	0.9
School has an academic bias	8	0.9
Competent and well qualified teachers	7	0.8
Child and the family are made to feel a part of the school	7	0.8
Many students go on to university and school encourages it	7	0.8
The school is well organized	7	0.8
The school caters for children with special needs	7	0.8
School is a denominational school	7	0.8
Parent attended the school	6	0.7
School has a large sixth form and good facilities for sixth form	6	0.7
Child will be happy at the school	5	0.5
School is relatively small	5	0.5

Note: Only those reasons given by five or more parents are included in this table.

Table A5.6: Summary of the parents' responses to Question B2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION B3

REASONS GIVEN BY PARENTS FOR NOT SELECTING THE CLOSEST SCHOOL TO THEIR HOME FOR THEIR CHILDREN

School factor	Number	%
Overall examination results	99	10.3
Discipline is not good	98	10.2
School does not have a good reputation in the community	85	8.8
The school is a single sex school	70	7.3
It is not the school that older brothers or sisters attend	58	6.0
School is too large	51	5.3
School is a denominational school	44	4.6
The school has both boys and girls	43	4.5
The headteacher is not competent and respected	25	2.6
Not easy, safe, convenient travel to and from school	23	2.4
School is single sex and the wrong sex	22	2.3
General facilities are not good	21	2.2
Child does not want to attend the school	19	2.0
The make-up of the student population	18	1.9
The school has an academic bias	16	1.7
There is not a happy, warm and caring atmosphere	15	1.6
The buildings are not clean, attractive and well maintained	15	1.6
School does not offer a wide range of courses	14	1.5
Very little effort was made on Open Night	13	1.4
The teachers are not competent and well qualified	11	1.1
The school does not cater for children with special needs	11	1.1
Students exhibit poor standard of dress and behavior when going to and from school	11	1.1
Just don't like the school or a 'gut feeling'	10	1.0
Want a private or boarding school	10	1.0
Child's friends will not be attending the school	9	0.9
Students do not wear school uniform	9	0.9
Emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects	8	0.8
The school is in danger of closure	7	0.7
The facilities and courses for music and drama are poor	6	0.6
Teachers are not caring and enthusiastic	6	0.6
School has a practical and creative bias	6	0.6
There is a large staff turnover	6	0.6
The school is too elitist.	6	0.6

Note: Only those reasons given by six or more parents are included in this table.

Table A5.7: Summary of the parents' responses to Question B3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION B4 (1990 SECONDARY ENTRANTS)

ALLOCATED SECONDARY SCHOOL

Allocated secondary school / Preferred secondary school	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	Total for each school
A	24	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	27
B	0	34	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	38
C	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
D	1	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	6
E	0	1	0	0	14	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	24
F	0	2	0	0	0	30	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	34
G	9	4	1	2	2	0	65	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	85
H	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
I	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	29	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	35
J	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
K	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
L	0	3	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	63	0	0	1	1	0	72
M	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	9	0	2	0	76
N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
O	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
P	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	4
Q	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
Total	37	49	5	6	23	31	69	29	31	7	19	66	61	14	7	10		474

Table A5.8: Summary of the parents' responses to Question B4 (Form 0) of the questionnaire.

QUESTION B5

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF SECONDARY TRANSFER AND SELECTION

Preferred secondary school	Percentage of parents with previous experience of secondary transfer and selection	Percentage of parents WITHOUT previous experience of secondary transfer and selection
A	44	40
B	44	39
C	23	27
D	18	19
E	37	26
F	30	39
G	89	84
H	41	33
I	49	52
J	11	8
K	25	27
L	83	59
M	68	71
N	9	2
O	8	11
P	7	4
Q	10	7
Total	596	548

Table A5.9: Summary of the parents' responses to Question B5 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION C1

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO ATTENDED DIFFERENT NUMBERS OF OPEN NIGHTS

Preferred secondary school	No open nights	One open night	Two open nights	Three open nights	Four open nights	Five or more
A	3.6	24.1	21.7	14.5	16.9	19.3
B	1.2	13.4	24.4	17.1	17.1	26.8
C	0.0	4.0	12.0	26.0	14.0	44.0
D	2.7	13.5	18.9	18.9	24.3	21.6
E	4.8	25.8	6.5	25.8	12.9	24.2
F	0.0	8.8	7.4	13.2	20.6	50.0
G	0.0	11.7	11.7	19.9	23.4	33.3
H	4.2	19.4	20.8	22.2	13.9	19.4
I	5.0	12.9	14.9	22.8	15.8	28.7
J	0.0	26.3	31.6	31.6	5.3	5.3
K	2.0	19.6	21.6	13.7	13.7	29.4
L	0.7	12.8	10.6	21.3	18.4	36.2
M	2.9	8.7	10.1	21.0	26.1	31.2
N	0.0	9.1	18.2	27.3	27.3	18.2
O	0.0	0.0	21.1	31.6	10.5	36.8
P	8.3	41.7	0.0	25.0	16.7	8.3
Q	0.0	17.6	11.8	11.8	23.5	35.3
Total	2.0	14.2	14.5	20.3	18.8	30.2

Table A5.10: Summary of the parents' responses to Question C1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION C2

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO READ DIFFERENT NUMBERS OF SCHOOL BROCHURES

Preferred secondary school	No brochures read	One brochure read	Two brochures read	Three brochures read	Four brochures read	Five or more
A	6.0	19.3	16.9	8.4	15.7	33.7
B	1.2	7.3	17.1	18.3	12.2	43.9
C	0.0	6.0	4.0	24.0	16.0	50.0
D	2.7	13.5	8.1	16.2	27.0	32.4
E	6.5	19.4	9.7	16.1	8.1	40.3
F	1.5	5.9	5.9	13.2	17.6	55.9
G	0.6	9.4	10.0	18.8	18.8	42.4
H	1.4	16.7	12.5	22.2	16.7	30.6
I	5.9	11.9	7.9	26.7	13.9	33.7
J	5.3	10.5	31.6	26.3	5.3	21.1
K	2.0	17.6	19.6	7.8	13.7	39.2
L	2.1	9.2	8.5	17.7	21.3	41.1
M	5.1	7.2	8.7	16.7	18.1	44.2
N	0.0	9.1	9.1	36.4	27.3	18.2
O	0.0	5.3	10.5	15.8	26.3	42.1
P	0.0	38.5	7.7	23.1	15.4	15.4
Q	0.0	17.6	11.8	11.8	17.6	41.2
Total	2.8	11.5	10.8	17.9	16.9	40.0

Table A5.11: Summary of the parents' responses to Question C2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION D1

IMPORTANCE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL BEING CLOSE TO HOME

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important
A	12.5	26.3	61.3
B	6.1	29.3	64.6
C	6.1	22.4	71.4
D	10.8	29.7	59.5
E	9.7	29.0	61.3
F	14.5	20.3	65.2
G	5.5	24.8	69.7
H	9.9	15.5	74.6
I	20.2	17.0	62.8
J	5.3	31.6	63.2
K	3.9	27.5	68.6
L	12.9	21.6	65.5
M	11.1	14.8	74.1
N	30.0	20.0	50.0
O	5.3	21.1	73.7
P	15.4	7.7	76.9
Q	0.0	5.9	94.1
Total	10.3	22.0	67.6

Table A5.12: Summary of the parents' responses to Question D1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION D2

IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL BEING EASY, SAFE AND CONVENIENT FOR TRAVEL

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important
A	52.5	42.5	5.0
B	50.0	43.9	6.1
C	44.9	55.1	0.0
D	51.4	40.5	8.1
E	50.0	43.5	6.5
F	42.0	50.7	7.2
G	47.3	47.3	5.5
H	40.8	53.5	5.6
I	26.6	63.8	9.6
J	52.6	42.1	5.3
K	43.1	51.0	5.9
L	43.9	50.4	5.8
M	34.8	58.5	6.7
N	30.0	60.0	10.0
O	68.4	31.6	0.0
P	38.5	53.8	7.7
Q	41.2	58.8	0.0
Total	43.5	50.5	5.9

Table A5.13: Summary of the parents' responses to Question D2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION D3

IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL NOT BEING UNDER THE THREAT OF CLOSURE

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important
A	35.0	31.3	33.8
B	43.9	26.8	29.3
C	49.0	22.4	28.6
D	37.8	29.7	32.4
E	40.3	27.4	32.3
F	43.5	29.0	27.5
G	47.3	27.9	24.8
H	49.3	31.0	19.7
I	53.2	19.1	27.7
J	42.1	26.3	31.6
K	52.9	21.6	25.5
L	43.2	28.1	28.8
M	54.1	26.7	19.3
N	40.0	20.0	40.0
O	26.3	47.4	26.3
P	46.2	38.5	15.4
Q	58.8	35.3	5.9
Total	46.1	27.4	26.4

Table A5.14: Summary of the parents' responses to Question D3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION E1

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COURSES AND STANDARDS IN DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important
A	6.3	2.5	19.0	22.8	35.4	13.9
B	9.8	7.3	14.6	19.5	24.4	24.4
C	6.1	2.0	22.4	20.4	24.5	24.5
D	8.8	0.0	14.7	17.6	29.4	29.4
E	3.2	3.2	17.7	30.6	19.4	25.8
F	1.5	4.5	20.9	16.4	26.9	29.9
G	7.5	5.0	14.5	25.2	29.6	18.2
H	2.9	1.4	21.4	32.9	30.0	11.4
I	9.9	6.2	8.6	24.7	30.9	19.8
J	0.0	5.6	16.7	22.2	44.4	11.1
K	2.0	3.9	19.6	25.5	25.5	23.5
L	3.1	2.4	7.1	19.7	26.8	40.9
M	4.9	2.4	4.9	17.9	31.7	38.2
N	9.1	9.1	18.2	18.2	27.3	18.2
O	0.0	5.3	10.5	42.1	10.5	31.6
P	0.0	7.7	0.0	7.7	53.8	30.8
Q	6.7	0.0	6.7	20.0	33.3	33.3
Total	5.4	3.8	13.8	22.7	28.7	25.7

Table A5.15: Summary of the parents' responses to Question E1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION E2

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COURSES AND STANDARDS IN ENGLISH

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important
A	56.7	22.2	6.7	2.2	0.0	12.2
B	47.1	16.7	10.8	3.9	2.0	19.6
C	50.8	14.8	6.6	3.3	4.9	19.7
D	50.0	15.9	6.8	4.5	0.0	22.7
E	51.9	18.2	5.2	2.6	1.3	20.8
F	43.7	16.1	9.2	5.7	2.3	23.0
G	58.0	15.4	5.3	4.8	1.1	15.4
H	57.7	19.2	7.7	2.6	2.6	10.3
I	44.3	21.6	12.4	3.1	2.1	16.5
J	60.0	5.0	20.0	5.0	0.0	10.0
K	52.4	20.6	6.3	1.6	0.0	19.0
L	30.5	16.4	16.4	5.1	2.3	29.4
M	42.0	12.4	11.2	5.9	0.6	27.8
N	76.9	0.0	7.7	0.0	0.0	15.4
O	50.0	16.7	4.2	0.0	4.2	25.0
P	47.1	5.9	17.6	0.0	5.9	23.5
Q	52.6	15.8	5.3	0.0	0.0	26.3
Total	48.0	16.4	9.5	3.9	1.6	20.5

Table A5.16: Summary of the parents' responses to Question E2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION E3

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COURSES AND STANDARDS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important
A	1.3	6.3	15.2	26.6	20.3	30.4
B	1.2	6.1	12.2	35.4	25.6	19.5
C	2.0	12.2	18.4	28.6	24.5	14.3
D	0.0	11.8	5.9	32.4	20.6	29.4
E	4.8	4.8	19.4	17.7	22.6	30.6
F	0.0	4.5	20.9	28.4	26.9	19.4
G	0.0	3.8	17.0	25.2	31.4	22.6
H	0.0	2.9	14.3	25.7	24.3	32.9
I	1.2	6.2	30.9	21.0	21.0	19.8
J	0.0	11.1	22.2	22.2	16.7	27.8
K	0.0	2.0	7.8	23.5	43.1	23.5
L	0.8	3.9	14.2	40.2	25.2	15.7
M	1.6	8.1	16.3	36.6	23.6	13.8
N	0.0	9.1	9.1	9.1	45.5	27.3
O	0.0	10.5	15.8	26.3	42.1	5.3
P	0.0	7.7	15.4	30.8	15.4	30.8
Q	0.0	20.0	13.3	13.3	26.7	26.7
Total	0.9	6.0	16.5	28.7	26.1	21.7

Table A5.17: Summary of the parents' responses to Question E3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION E4

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COURSES AND STANDARDS IN HUMANITIES

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important
A	1.3	1.3	7.6	17.7	29.1	43.0
B	4.9	1.2	7.3	14.6	24.4	47.6
C	2.0	0.0	12.2	4.1	26.5	55.1
D	0.0	2.9	8.8	23.5	32.4	32.4
E	3.2	6.5	9.7	22.6	27.4	30.6
F	7.5	1.5	7.5	11.9	31.3	40.3
G	1.9	0.6	8.2	12.6	25.8	50.9
H	4.3	1.4	7.1	14.3	27.1	45.7
I	2.5	0.0	7.4	17.3	22.2	50.6
J	0.0	5.6	5.6	27.8	27.8	33.3
K	3.9	3.9	17.6	13.7	27.5	33.3
L	2.4	2.4	3.1	15.0	35.4	41.7
M	4.1	4.1	4.1	15.4	30.9	41.5
N	0.0	0.0	9.1	18.2	27.3	45.5
O	5.3	5.3	10.5	5.3	26.3	47.4
P	7.7	7.7	15.4	15.4	15.4	38.5
Q	6.7	0.0	13.3	26.7	20.0	33.3
Total	3.2	2.2	7.7	15.2	28.1	43.6

Table A5.18: Summary of the parents' responses to Question E4 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION E5

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COURSES AND STANDARDS IN MATHEMATICS

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important
A	25.3	59.5	10.1	3.8	1.3	0.0
B	22.0	53.7	15.9	3.7	2.4	2.4
C	22.4	59.2	10.2	6.1	2.0	0.0
D	26.5	61.8	8.8	2.9	0.0	0.0
E	24.2	54.8	8.1	8.1	1.6	3.2
F	29.9	53.7	9.0	3.0	1.5	3.0
G	18.2	61.6	13.2	4.4	1.9	0.6
H	28.6	60.0	7.1	2.9	1.4	0.0
I	24.7	54.3	9.9	3.7	7.4	0.0
J	22.2	66.7	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
K	25.5	60.8	7.8	3.9	0.0	2.0
L	35.4	48.8	11.0	3.9	0.8	0.0
M	17.1	55.3	22.8	2.4	2.4	0.0
N	0.0	81.8	18.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
O	26.3	52.6	10.5	0.0	10.5	0.0
P	23.1	46.2	23.1	7.7	0.0	0.0
Q	20.0	53.3	13.3	13.3	0.0	0.0
Total	24.2	56.7	12.4	4.0	2.1	0.8

Table A5.19: Summary of the parents' responses to Question E5 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION E6

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COURSES AND STANDARDS IN SCIENCE

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important
A	1.3	5.1	40.5	26.6	13.9	12.7
B	3.7	11.0	36.6	22.0	20.7	6.1
C	4.1	8.2	28.6	36.7	16.3	6.1
D	0.0	2.9	52.9	17.6	17.6	8.8
E	0.0	8.1	38.7	17.7	27.4	8.1
F	4.5	14.9	29.9	32.8	10.4	7.5
G	3.8	10.7	40.9	27.0	10.1	7.5
H	0.0	12.9	41.4	21.4	14.3	10.0
I	8.6	7.4	28.4	29.6	16.0	9.9
J	11.1	5.6	22.2	22.2	11.1	27.8
K	3.9	3.9	39.2	31.4	3.9	17.6
L	15.7	19.7	41.7	14.2	8.7	0.0
M	14.6	13.0	36.6	19.5	10.6	5.7
N	0.0	0.0	36.4	54.5	0.0	9.1
O	5.3	5.3	47.4	26.3	5.3	10.5
P	7.7	23.1	23.1	38.5	7.7	0.0
Q	0.0	6.7	46.7	26.7	20.0	0.0
Total	6.2	10.8	37.7	24.5	13.0	7.7

Table A5.20: Summary of the parents' responses to Question E6 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION F1

IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL BEING RECOMMENDED BY STUDENTS ALREADY ATTENDING

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important
A	26.3	16.3	57.5
B	17.3	34.6	48.1
C	14.0	20.0	66.0
D	21.6	43.2	35.1
E	18.0	31.1	50.8
F	14.7	20.6	64.7
G	19.1	33.3	47.5
H	22.2	31.9	45.8
I	27.8	25.6	46.7
J	27.8	16.7	55.6
K	11.8	29.4	58.8
L	11.9	34.1	54.1
M	15.2	32.6	52.3
N	9.1	36.4	54.5
O	5.3	21.1	73.7
P	7.7	46.2	46.2
Q	11.8	29.4	58.8
Total	17.8	29.7	52.5

Table A5.21: Summary of the parents' responses to Question F1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION F2

IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL HAVING A GOOD REPUTATION IN THE COMMUNITY

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important
A	42.5	36.3	21.3
B	40.7	29.6	29.6
C	46.0	42.0	12.0
D	59.5	21.6	18.9
E	45.9	31.1	23.0
F	67.6	20.6	11.8
G	56.2	21.6	22.2
H	59.7	22.2	18.1
I	51.1	28.9	20.0
J	50.0	22.2	27.8
K	51.0	31.4	17.6
L	66.7	20.0	13.3
M	52.3	28.0	19.7
N	72.7	27.3	0.0
O	68.4	31.6	0.0
P	30.8	38.5	30.8
Q	52.9	23.5	23.5
Total	54.1	26.8	19.1

Table A5.22: Summary of the parents' responses to Question F2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION F3

IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL BEING RECOMMENDED BY OTHER PARENTS

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important
A	31.3	47.5	21.3
B	42.0	35.8	22.2
C	40.0	38.0	22.0
D	18.9	35.1	45.9
E	36.1	37.7	26.2
F	17.6	58.8	23.5
G	24.7	45.1	30.2
H	18.1	45.8	36.1
I	21.1	45.6	33.3
J	22.2	61.1	16.7
K	37.3	39.2	23.5
L	21.5	45.9	32.6
M	32.6	39.4	28.0
N	18.2	36.4	45.5
O	26.3	47.4	26.3
P	61.5	15.4	23.1
Q	35.3	47.1	17.6
Total	28.1	43.5	28.4

Table A5.23: Summary of the parents' responses to Question F3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION G1

IMPORTANCE OF CLEAN, ATTRACTIVE AND WELL-MAINTAINED BUILDINGS

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important	Seventh most important
A	16.5	19.0	10.1	17.7	10.1	8.9	17.7
B	14.6	17.1	8.5	15.9	7.3	11.0	25.6
C	16.0	44.0	0.0	6.0	8.0	12.0	14.0
D	27.8	41.7	2.8	2.8	8.3	11.1	5.6
E	26.2	31.1	3.3	9.8	11.5	6.6	11.5
F	22.7	22.7	7.6	7.6	12.1	7.6	19.7
G	19.6	27.8	7.6	12.0	12.0	10.1	10.8
H	20.8	23.6	5.6	11.1	5.6	6.9	26.4
I	22.5	17.5	7.5	16.3	11.3	8.8	16.3
J	22.2	27.8	16.7	0.0	5.6	5.6	22.2
K	21.6	17.6	3.9	13.7	9.8	5.9	27.5
L	12.3	15.4	7.7	14.6	10.8	5.4	33.8
M	10.2	14.2	9.4	10.2	12.6	10.2	33.1
N	27.3	27.3	9.1	9.1	0.0	0.0	27.3
O	21.1	31.6	5.3	10.5	5.3	0.0	26.3
P	38.5	7.7	0.0	15.4	0.0	0.0	38.5
Q	18.8	43.8	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	12.5
Total	18.4	22.8	7.0	11.9	9.9	8.2	21.7

Table A5.24: Summary of the parents' responses to Question G1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION G2

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GENERAL FACILITIES

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most imp-ortant	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important	Seventh most important
A	35.4	16.5	17.7	15.2	6.3	5.1	3.8
B	56.6	6.0	8.4	10.8	6.0	8.4	3.6
C	66.0	18.0	0.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	6.0
D	55.6	22.2	16.7	0.0	0.0	2.8	2.8
E	50.8	18.0	8.2	14.8	0.0	6.6	1.6
F	56.1	25.8	4.5	6.1	0.0	3.0	4.5
G	61.4	13.9	8.2	5.1	1.3	8.9	1.3
H	58.3	16.7	5.6	1.4	2.8	11.1	4.2
I	51.3	22.5	8.8	2.5	5.0	3.8	6.3
J	44.4	27.8	11.1	5.6	5.6	5.6	0.0
K	43.1	17.6	9.8	7.8	2.0	15.7	3.9
L	60.8	11.5	9.2	7.7	2.3	4.6	3.8
M	57.5	15.7	6.3	3.9	3.1	9.4	3.9
N	36.4	27.3	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	0.0
O	42.1	10.5	26.3	5.3	0.0	10.5	5.3
P	61.5	23.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.7	7.7
Q	56.3	25.0	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	12.5
Total	54.9	16.4	8.6	6.4	2.8	7.1	3.7

Table A5.25: Summary of the parents' responses to Question G2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION G3

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD FACILITIES FOR SPORTS AND GAMES

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important	Seventh most important
A	6.3	6.3	17.7	16.5	26.6	15.2	11.4
B	4.8	7.2	13.3	19.3	28.9	10.8	15.7
C	4.0	12.0	0.0	20.0	22.0	16.0	26.0
D	5.6	8.3	27.8	2.8	27.8	11.1	16.7
E	6.6	6.6	27.9	14.8	13.1	14.8	16.4
F	3.0	4.5	22.7	13.6	21.2	18.2	16.7
G	1.9	7.6	16.5	16.5	24.1	12.0	21.5
H	5.6	6.9	19.4	13.9	19.4	20.8	13.9
I	7.5	12.5	20.0	8.8	17.5	13.8	20.0
J	5.6	0.0	0.0	16.7	22.2	44.4	11.1
K	2.0	5.9	17.6	15.7	39.2	13.7	5.9
L	3.1	14.6	19.2	19.2	16.9	14.6	12.3
M	3.1	5.5	13.4	16.5	26.8	16.5	18.1
N	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.2	36.4	18.2	27.3
O	0.0	5.3	15.8	15.8	26.3	21.1	15.8
P	0.0	23.1	15.4	15.4	23.1	23.1	0.0
Q	6.3	6.3	31.3	18.8	6.3	6.3	25.0
Total	4.0	8.2	17.2	15.7	23.1	15.3	16.4

Table A5.26: Summary of the parents' responses to Question G3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION G4

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD FACILITIES FOR ART AND DESIGN

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most imp-ortant	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important	Seventh most important
A	0.0	2.5	12.7	13.9	15.2	36.7	19.0
B	4.8	2.4	18.1	8.4	24.1	31.3	10.8
C	4.0	10.0	0.0	22.0	28.0	20.0	16.0
D	0.0	8.3	13.9	5.6	13.9	38.9	19.4
E	1.6	6.6	16.4	19.7	13.1	36.1	6.6
F	1.5	3.0	13.6	22.7	16.7	28.8	13.6
G	1.3	3.8	11.4	19.0	20.3	29.7	14.6
H	1.4	8.3	13.9	16.7	20.8	30.6	8.3
I	1.3	6.3	10.0	17.5	18.8	32.5	13.8
J	5.6	11.1	11.1	38.9	22.2	5.6	5.6
K	2.0	2.0	13.7	21.6	19.6	37.3	3.9
L	0.0	1.5	6.2	13.1	26.9	32.3	20.0
M	3.9	5.5	14.2	23.6	14.2	24.4	14.2
N	9.1	0.0	18.2	18.2	18.2	27.3	9.1
O	5.3	5.3	0.0	10.5	31.6	36.8	10.5
P	0.0	7.7	23.1	7.7	15.4	30.8	15.4
Q	0.0	0.0	12.5	0.0	31.3	43.8	12.5
Total	2.0	4.6	11.9	17.2	20.0	30.7	13.6

Table A5.27: Summary of the parents' responses to Question G4 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION G5

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD FACILITIES FOR MUSIC AND DRAMA

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most imp-ortant	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important	Seventh most important
A	0.0	3.8	6.3	7.6	10.1	27.8	44.3
B	3.6	1.2	4.8	15.7	15.7	22.9	36.1
C	4.0	2.0	0.0	10.0	20.0	34.0	30.0
D	0.0	5.6	2.8	0.0	19.4	25.0	47.2
E	0.0	8.2	4.9	9.8	11.5	23.0	42.6
F	6.1	9.1	12.1	10.6	21.2	19.7	21.2
G	0.0	1.3	3.2	8.9	19.6	28.5	38.6
H	0.0	8.3	4.2	11.1	25.0	15.3	36.1
I	5.0	6.3	10.0	13.8	17.5	16.3	31.3
J	0.0	5.6	0.0	5.6	22.2	27.8	38.9
K	0.0	2.0	7.8	15.7	11.8	13.7	49.0
L	3.1	11.5	9.2	11.5	20.0	23.8	20.8
M	6.3	15.0	16.5	14.2	22.8	12.6	12.6
N	9.1	0.0	0.0	36.4	9.1	18.2	27.3
O	5.3	10.5	0.0	15.8	15.8	15.8	36.8
P	0.0	0.0	15.4	30.8	23.1	7.7	23.1
Q	12.5	0.0	12.5	18.8	6.3	25.0	25.0
Total	2.7	6.4	7.3	11.8	18.2	21.7	31.9

Table A5.28: Summary of the parents' responses to Question G5 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION G6

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD FACILITIES FOR COMPUTING

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most imp-ortant	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important	Seventh most important
A	36.7	19.0	19.0	11.4	10.1	1.3	2.5
B	7.2	57.8	14.5	9.6	7.2	3.6	0.0
C	0.0	0.0	96.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
D	8.3	2.8	8.3	80.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
E	9.8	9.8	23.0	9.8	37.7	4.9	4.9
F	6.1	21.2	27.3	15.2	13.6	15.2	1.5
G	8.9	29.7	28.5	18.4	8.9	3.8	1.9
H	9.7	26.4	30.6	16.7	9.7	4.2	2.8
I	11.3	17.5	33.8	12.5	16.3	7.5	1.3
J	22.2	16.7	27.8	16.7	5.6	5.6	5.6
K	27.5	23.5	25.5	15.7	0.0	5.9	2.0
L	16.9	21.5	27.7	19.2	9.2	3.1	2.3
M	13.4	25.2	22.8	18.1	7.9	11.0	1.6
N	18.2	27.3	27.3	0.0	18.2	0.0	9.1
O	21.1	15.8	36.8	10.5	10.5	5.3	0.0
P	0.0	30.8	23.1	15.4	7.7	23.1	0.0
Q	6.3	18.8	6.3	37.5	18.8	6.3	6.3
Total	13.3	23.6	28.1	17.2	10.4	5.5	2.0

Table A5.29: Summary of the parents' responses to Question G6 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION G7

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD FACILITIES FOR TECHNICAL STUDIES

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important	Sixth most important	Seventh most important
A	5.1	32.9	16.5	17.7	21.5	5.1	1.3
B	8.4	8.4	32.5	20.5	9.6	12.0	8.4
C	6.0	14.0	4.0	36.0	18.0	14.0	8.0
D	2.8	11.1	27.8	8.3	30.6	11.1	8.3
E	4.9	19.7	16.4	21.3	13.1	8.2	16.4
F	4.5	13.6	13.6	24.2	15.2	7.6	21.2
G	7.0	15.8	24.7	20.3	13.9	7.0	11.4
H	4.2	9.7	20.8	29.2	16.7	11.1	8.3
I	1.3	17.5	10.0	28.8	13.8	17.5	11.3
J	0.0	11.1	33.3	16.7	16.7	5.6	16.7
K	3.9	31.4	21.6	9.8	17.6	7.8	7.8
L	3.8	23.8	20.8	14.6	13.8	16.2	6.9
M	5.5	18.9	17.3	13.4	12.6	15.7	16.5
N	0.0	18.2	36.4	9.1	9.1	27.3	0.0
O	5.3	21.1	15.8	31.6	10.5	10.5	5.3
P	0.0	7.7	23.1	15.4	30.8	7.7	15.4
Q	0.0	6.3	31.3	12.5	31.3	12.5	6.3
Total	4.8	17.9	20.0	19.8	15.5	11.4	10.6

Table A5.30: Summary of the parents' responses to Question G7 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION H1

IMPORTANCE OF CARING AND ENTHUSIASTIC TEACHERS

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important
A	19.0	20.3	32.9	27.8
B	25.3	33.7	18.1	22.9
C	18.0	24.0	38.0	20.0
D	24.3	27.0	24.3	24.3
E	21.0	24.2	37.1	17.7
F	16.7	21.2	28.8	33.3
G	25.5	19.9	25.5	29.2
H	17.1	40.0	25.7	17.1
I	18.9	37.8	16.7	26.7
J	27.8	22.2	5.6	44.4
K	21.6	21.6	27.5	29.4
L	16.7	31.8	28.8	22.7
M	16.7	24.2	34.1	25.0
N	27.3	18.2	36.4	18.2
O	16.7	22.2	27.8	33.3
P	23.1	38.5	23.1	15.4
Q	12.5	18.8	18.8	50.0
Total	20.1	26.8	27.4	25.7

Table A5.31: Summary of the parents' responses to Question H1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION H2

IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENT AND WELL QUALIFIED TEACHERS

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important
A	27.8	32.9	21.5	17.7
B	15.7	36.1	22.9	25.3
C	42.0	24.0	20.0	14.0
D	29.7	18.9	27.0	24.3
E	11.3	35.5	25.8	27.4
F	30.3	31.8	21.2	16.7
G	32.3	28.0	16.8	23.0
H	28.6	17.1	27.1	27.1
I	32.2	22.2	25.6	20.0
J	33.3	27.8	22.2	16.7
K	31.4	31.4	21.6	15.7
L	41.7	32.6	11.4	14.4
M	25.8	36.4	22.0	15.9
N	9.1	45.5	36.4	9.1
O	22.2	22.2	27.8	27.8
P	46.2	15.4	7.7	30.8
Q	37.5	31.3	0.0	31.3
Total	29.7	29.7	20.6	20.1

Table A5.32: Summary of the parents' responses to Question H2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION H3

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important
A	25.3	25.3	27.8	21.5
B	16.9	20.5	43.4	19.3
C	18.0	24.0	34.0	24.0
D	10.8	29.7	32.4	27.0
E	37.1	24.2	21.0	17.7
F	15.2	18.2	33.3	33.3
G	10.6	31.1	37.3	21.1
H	24.3	28.6	28.6	18.6
I	11.1	14.4	38.9	35.6
J	16.7	16.7	50.0	16.7
K	21.6	21.6	23.5	33.3
L	7.6	19.7	40.9	31.8
M	14.4	20.5	33.3	31.8
N	27.3	27.3	9.1	36.4
O	11.1	38.9	27.8	22.2
P	7.7	23.1	46.2	23.1
Q	12.5	25.0	56.3	6.3
Total	16.1	23.3	34.6	26.0

Table A5.33: Summary of the parents' responses to Question H3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION H4

IMPORTANCE OF A COMPETENT AND RESPECTED HEADTEACHER

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important
A	27.8	21.5	17.7	32.9
B	42.2	9.6	15.7	32.5
C	22.0	28.0	8.0	42.0
D	35.1	24.3	16.2	24.3
E	30.6	16.1	16.1	37.1
F	39.4	28.8	15.2	16.7
G	31.7	21.1	20.5	26.7
H	30.0	14.3	18.6	37.1
I	37.8	25.6	18.9	17.8
J	22.2	33.3	22.2	22.2
K	25.5	25.5	27.5	21.6
L	34.1	15.9	18.9	31.1
M	43.2	18.9	10.6	27.3
N	36.4	9.1	18.2	36.4
O	50.0	16.7	16.7	16.7
P	23.1	23.1	23.1	30.8
Q	37.5	25.0	25.0	12.5
Total	34.3	20.2	17.4	28.2

Table A5.34: Summary of the parents' responses to Question H4 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION I1

IMPORTANCE OF THE CHILD WANTING TO ATTEND THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important
A	57.0	22.8	12.7	6.3	1.3
B	41.0	37.3	15.7	2.4	3.6
C	36.7	51.0	10.2	2.0	0.0
D	21.6	54.1	16.2	8.1	0.0
E	51.6	24.2	11.3	11.3	1.6
F	50.7	25.4	14.9	7.5	1.5
G	54.0	28.8	11.0	4.3	1.8
H	50.7	35.2	8.5	4.2	1.4
I	44.0	27.5	18.7	8.8	1.1
J	50.0	16.7	16.7	11.1	5.6
K	49.0	25.5	21.6	3.9	0.0
L	54.7	29.2	12.4	3.6	0.0
M	48.1	34.4	12.2	3.1	2.3
N	36.4	45.5	18.2	0.0	0.0
O	26.3	42.1	10.5	21.1	0.0
P	30.8	30.8	23.1	15.4	0.0
Q	35.3	29.4	17.6	11.8	5.9
Total	47.9	31.5	13.6	5.6	1.5

Table A5.35: Summary of the parents' responses to Question I1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION I2

IMPORTANCE OF THE CHILD HAVING FRIENDS WHO ATTEND THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important
A	0.0	22.8	30.4	32.9	13.9
B	4.8	16.9	28.9	33.7	15.7
C	0.0	22.4	30.6	24.5	22.4
D	5.4	10.8	29.7	35.1	18.9
E	3.2	22.6	24.2	27.4	22.6
F	4.5	17.9	28.4	28.4	20.9
G	2.5	17.2	23.9	36.2	20.2
H	1.4	11.3	26.8	42.3	18.3
I	0.0	14.3	31.9	26.4	27.5
J	5.6	11.1	38.9	16.7	27.8
K	3.9	9.8	17.6	43.1	25.5
L	4.4	13.9	32.8	32.8	16.1
M	3.8	14.5	32.8	33.6	15.3
N	9.1	27.3	27.3	18.2	18.2
O	5.3	5.3	42.1	26.3	21.1
P	0.0	7.7	23.1	38.5	30.8
Q	0.0	5.9	23.5	23.5	47.1
Total	2.9	15.7	28.8	32.6	19.9

Table A5.36: Summary of the parents' responses to Question I2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION I3

IMPORTANCE OF HAVING OLDER SIBLINGS ATTENDING THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important
A	13.9	13.9	6.3	10.1	55.7
B	7.2	8.4	6.0	12.0	66.3
C	8.2	4.1	10.2	20.4	57.1
D	16.2	10.8	8.1	10.8	54.1
E	17.7	8.1	14.5	11.3	48.4
F	13.4	9.0	9.0	10.4	58.2
G	11.7	9.8	12.9	12.3	53.4
H	11.3	9.9	16.9	23.9	38.0
I	17.6	7.7	11.0	16.5	47.3
J	22.2	22.2	0.0	22.2	33.3
K	17.6	9.8	5.9	15.7	51.0
L	8.8	8.8	8.0	15.3	59.1
M	3.8	3.1	9.2	16.8	67.2
N	27.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	72.7
O	5.3	0.0	21.1	5.3	68.4
P	15.4	0.0	15.4	23.1	46.2
Q	5.9	5.9	5.9	47.1	35.3
Total	11.6	8.3	9.9	15.0	55.2

Table A5.37: Summary of the parents' responses to Question I3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION 14

IMPORTANCE OF THE CHILD BEING HAPPY AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important
A	25.3	38.0	27.8	8.9	0.0
B	43.4	26.5	25.3	4.8	0.0
C	55.1	20.4	16.3	6.1	2.0
D	56.8	21.6	13.5	5.4	2.7
E	25.8	33.9	25.8	11.3	3.2
F	29.9	41.8	17.9	9.0	1.5
G	30.1	35.6	23.9	9.8	0.6
H	36.6	36.6	22.5	2.8	1.4
I	37.4	36.3	17.6	8.8	0.0
J	22.2	44.4	16.7	5.6	11.1
K	29.4	45.1	17.6	7.8	0.0
L	31.4	40.9	19.7	8.0	0.0
M	43.5	38.2	16.0	2.3	0.0
N	27.3	27.3	18.2	27.3	0.0
O	57.9	31.6	5.3	0.0	5.3
P	53.8	23.1	23.1	0.0	0.0
Q	41.2	47.1	11.8	0.0	0.0
Total	36.0	35.8	20.3	7.0	0.9

Table A5.38: Summary of the parents' responses to Question 14 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION I5

IMPORTANCE OF THE CHILD AND FAMILY BEING MADE TO FEEL PART OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important	Fifth most important
A	3.8	2.5	22.8	41.8	29.1
B	3.6	10.8	24.1	47.0	14.5
C	0.0	2.0	32.7	46.9	18.4
D	0.0	2.7	32.4	40.5	24.3
E	1.6	11.3	24.2	38.7	24.2
F	0.0	6.0	29.9	46.3	17.9
G	1.8	8.6	28.2	37.4	23.9
H	0.0	7.0	25.4	26.8	40.8
I	1.1	14.3	20.9	39.6	24.2
J	0.0	5.6	27.8	44.4	22.2
K	0.0	9.8	37.3	29.4	23.5
L	0.7	7.3	27.0	40.1	24.8
M	0.8	9.9	29.8	44.3	15.3
N	0.0	0.0	36.4	54.5	9.1
O	5.3	21.1	21.1	47.4	5.3
P	0.0	38.5	15.4	23.1	23.1
Q	17.6	11.8	41.2	17.6	11.8
Total	1.5	8.7	27.4	39.9	22.5

Table A5.39: Summary of the parents' responses to Question I5 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION J1

IMPORTANCE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL OFFERING EXTRA ACTIVITIES, CLUBS AND HOBBIES

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important
A	3.8	3.8	15.0	77.5
B	1.2	1.2	16.9	80.7
C	0.0	8.0	12.0	80.0
D	2.7	8.1	18.9	70.3
E	0.0	12.9	17.7	69.4
F	2.9	2.9	18.8	75.4
G	0.6	3.6	12.7	83.0
H	2.8	5.6	15.3	76.4
I	1.1	9.0	14.6	75.3
J	0.0	5.6	11.1	83.3
K	0.0	2.0	23.5	74.5
L	1.5	5.2	14.2	79.1
M	3.8	2.3	22.7	71.2
N	0.0	18.2	9.1	72.7
O	5.3	0.0	10.5	84.2
P	0.0	7.7	15.4	76.9
Q	5.9	17.6	11.8	64.7
Total	1.8	5.2	16.2	76.9

Table A5.40: Summary of the parents' responses to Question J1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION J2

IMPORTANCE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL HAVING GOOD OVERALL EXAMINATION RESULTS

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important
A	28.8	22.5	38.8	10.0
B	33.7	28.9	28.9	8.4
C	36.0	32.0	28.0	4.0
D	21.6	21.6	35.1	21.6
E	22.6	19.4	37.1	21.0
F	29.0	30.4	30.4	10.1
G	30.9	31.5	30.9	6.7
H	27.8	27.8	31.9	12.5
I	31.5	27.0	32.6	9.0
J	22.2	16.7	55.6	5.6
K	21.6	43.1	23.5	11.8
L	57.5	21.6	18.7	2.2
M	47.7	31.8	16.7	3.8
N	27.3	18.2	54.5	0.0
O	47.4	21.1	21.1	10.5
P	38.5	15.4	30.8	15.4
Q	35.3	11.8	35.3	17.6
Total	35.2	27.3	28.9	8.6

Table A5.41: Summary of the parents' responses to Question J2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION J3

IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL HAVING GOOD DISCIPLINE

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important
A	37.5	43.8	16.3	2.5
B	31.3	51.8	14.5	2.4
C	34.0	36.0	24.0	6.0
D	40.5	43.2	16.2	0.0
E	38.7	37.1	19.4	4.8
F	40.6	40.6	15.9	2.9
G	35.8	41.2	19.4	3.6
H	41.7	36.1	20.8	1.4
I	40.4	30.3	21.3	7.9
J	44.4	38.9	11.1	5.6
K	49.0	35.3	13.7	2.0
L	26.9	53.0	16.4	3.7
M	28.8	37.9	22.0	11.4
N	45.5	27.3	0.0	27.3
O	26.3	52.6	15.8	5.3
P	23.1	30.8	38.5	7.7
Q	29.4	41.2	23.5	5.9
Total	35.4	41.2	18.5	4.9

Table A5.42: Summary of the parents' responses to Question J3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION J4

IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL HAVING A HAPPY, WARM AND CARING ATMOSPHERE

(PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH EACH RANKING)

Preferred secondary school	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Fourth most important
A	30.0	30.0	30.0	10.0
B	33.7	18.1	39.8	8.4
C	30.0	24.0	36.0	10.0
D	35.1	27.0	29.7	8.1
E	38.7	30.6	25.8	4.8
F	27.5	26.1	34.8	11.6
G	32.7	23.6	37.0	6.7
H	27.8	30.6	31.9	9.7
I	27.0	33.7	31.5	7.9
J	33.3	38.9	22.2	5.6
K	29.4	19.6	39.2	11.8
L	14.2	20.1	50.7	14.9
M	19.7	28.0	38.6	13.6
N	27.3	36.4	36.4	0.0
O	21.1	26.3	52.6	0.0
P	38.5	46.2	15.4	0.0
Q	29.4	29.4	29.4	11.8
Total	27.6	26.3	36.5	9.6

Table A5.43: Summary of the parents' responses to Question J4 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION K1

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD EMPHASISE ACADEMIC, PRACTICAL AND CREATIVE SUBJECTS"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	0.0	1.3	12.8	51.3	34.6
B	0.0	0.0	7.3	42.7	50.0
C	0.0	0.0	0.0	45.1	54.9
D	0.0	0.0	0.0	54.1	45.9
E	0.0	0.0	13.1	47.5	39.3
F	0.0	1.5	4.4	45.6	48.5
G	0.6	0.0	5.9	48.8	44.7
H	1.4	0.0	2.9	50.0	45.7
I	0.0	0.0	5.1	41.8	53.1
J	0.0	0.0	0.0	47.4	52.6
K	0.0	0.0	12.0	48.0	40.0
L	0.0	2.9	8.6	42.1	46.4
M	0.0	0.0	4.4	43.0	52.6
N	0.0	0.0	18.2	54.5	27.3
O	0.0	0.0	11.1	38.9	50.0
P	0.0	0.0	0.0	38.5	61.5
Q	6.3	0.0	0.0	31.3	62.5
Total	0.3	0.5	6.4	45.7	47.1

Table A5.44: Summary of the parents' responses to Question K1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION K2

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE AN ACADEMIC BIAS OR ETHOS"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	1.3	11.8	38.2	38.2	10.5
B	3.8	14.1	21.8	34.6	25.6
C	0.0	12.5	16.7	45.8	25.0
D	5.6	22.2	11.1	47.2	13.9
E	3.4	16.9	18.6	40.7	20.3
F	0.0	19.1	13.2	42.6	25.0
G	3.1	17.5	22.5	42.5	14.4
H	4.4	19.1	20.6	41.2	14.7
I	0.0	20.6	17.5	47.4	14.4
J	0.0	12.5	25.0	50.0	12.5
K	2.1	16.7	16.7	45.8	18.8
L	0.0	12.0	9.0	42.1	36.8
M	0.8	12.0	10.4	42.4	34.4
N	20.0	10.0	30.0	30.0	10.0
O	0.0	17.6	29.4	29.4	23.5
P	0.0	7.7	7.7	61.5	23.1
Q	0.0	18.8	12.5	37.5	31.3
Total	1.9	15.6	18.1	42.2	22.2

Table A5.45: Summary of the parents' responses to Question K2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION K3

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE A PRACTICAL AND CREATIVE BIAS OR ETHOS"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	0.0	11.8	39.5	43.4	5.3
B	3.8	19.2	24.4	42.3	10.3
C	0.0	12.5	16.7	62.5	8.3
D	5.6	16.7	13.9	52.8	11.1
E	1.7	19.0	24.1	46.6	8.6
F	0.0	22.7	22.7	43.9	10.6
G	3.1	19.8	24.1	43.8	9.3
H	7.4	17.6	29.4	38.2	7.4
I	2.1	21.9	20.8	46.9	8.3
J	0.0	18.8	12.5	56.3	12.5
K	2.0	16.3	20.4	53.1	8.2
L	1.5	29.2	24.8	36.5	8.0
M	0.0	23.0	20.6	47.6	8.7
N	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0	0.0
O	0.0	23.5	41.2	23.5	11.8
P	0.0	30.8	38.5	30.8	0.0
Q	0.0	25.0	6.3	56.3	12.5
Total	2.1	20.6	24.2	44.5	8.6

Table A5.46: Summary of the parents' responses to Question K3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION K4

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD CATER FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	1.3	3.8	10.3	42.3	42.3
B	0.0	2.4	13.3	37.3	47.0
C	2.0	10.2	18.4	46.9	22.4
D	0.0	2.7	29.7	32.4	35.1
E	3.2	4.8	9.7	40.3	41.9
F	4.5	3.0	20.9	44.8	26.9
G	1.2	2.9	11.2	42.9	41.8
H	0.0	1.4	15.3	40.3	43.1
I	0.0	1.0	23.0	42.0	34.0
J	0.0	15.8	5.3	47.4	31.6
K	2.0	10.0	6.0	36.0	46.0
L	5.7	4.3	30.5	41.1	18.4
M	3.0	5.2	25.9	43.7	22.2
N	9.1	0.0	9.1	45.5	36.4
O	0.0	0.0	27.8	44.4	27.8
P	0.0	0.0	30.8	53.8	15.4
Q	0.0	0.0	12.5	37.5	50.0
Total	2.1	3.9	18.4	41.7	33.9

Table A5.47: Summary of the parents' responses to Question K4 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION L1

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD GROUP STUDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR ABILITY FROM THE FIRST YEAR"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	1.3	22.5	8.8	40.0	27.5
B	7.2	19.3	6.0	39.8	27.7
C	12.0	20.0	6.0	42.0	20.0
D	8.1	13.5	27.0	29.7	21.6
E	11.5	16.4	8.2	29.5	34.4
F	2.9	25.0	11.8	41.2	19.1
G	12.7	30.1	10.8	24.1	22.3
H	4.2	14.1	11.3	39.4	31.0
I	13.1	32.3	11.1	27.3	16.2
J	10.5	42.1	0.0	36.8	10.5
K	3.9	19.6	3.9	49.0	23.5
L	10.1	38.1	9.4	28.8	13.7
M	11.8	27.9	14.0	29.4	16.9
N	0.0	18.2	0.0	36.4	45.5
O	0.0	11.1	11.1	55.6	22.2
P	7.7	30.8	7.7	30.8	23.1
Q	5.9	11.8	35.3	23.5	23.5
Total	8.8	25.6	10.5	33.2	21.8

Table A5.48: Summary of the parents' responses to Question L1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION L2

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF STUDENTS"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	1.3	8.8	25.0	36.3	28.8
B	1.2	2.5	19.8	46.9	29.6
C	2.0	2.0	13.7	41.2	41.2
D	0.0	2.7	21.6	43.2	32.4
E	1.6	8.1	12.9	38.7	38.7
F	0.0	9.1	22.7	43.9	24.2
G	1.8	12.5	29.8	28.6	27.4
H	0.0	8.5	22.5	43.7	25.4
I	1.0	9.1	13.1	46.5	30.3
J	0.0	16.7	11.1	38.9	33.3
K	0.0	2.0	15.7	54.9	27.5
L	1.4	9.2	27.0	43.3	19.1
M	2.2	13.3	20.7	37.8	25.9
N	0.0	0.0	0.0	63.6	36.4
O	0.0	0.0	16.7	38.9	44.4
P	0.0	7.7	15.4	30.8	46.2
Q	0.0	0.0	31.3	50.0	18.8
Total	1.2	8.4	21.4	40.7	28.4

Table A5.49: Summary of the parents' responses to Question L2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION L3

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE BOTH BOY AND GIRL STUDENTS"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	3.8	5.0	11.3	42.5	37.5
B	1.2	6.1	22.0	37.8	32.9
C	0.0	4.0	26.0	46.0	24.0
D	2.7	10.8	27.0	27.0	32.4
E	1.6	9.7	8.1	46.8	33.9
F	0.0	4.4	14.7	42.6	38.2
G	0.0	1.2	12.4	40.0	46.5
H	0.0	1.4	11.1	33.3	54.2
I	0.0	2.0	11.1	34.3	52.5
J	0.0	0.0	27.8	55.6	16.7
K	2.0	2.0	13.7	62.7	19.6
L	15.8	25.2	48.2	9.4	1.4
M	18.7	21.6	47.8	9.0	3.0
N	18.2	18.2	27.3	9.1	27.3
O	0.0	0.0	16.7	61.1	22.2
P	15.4	23.1	23.1	30.8	7.7
Q	0.0	17.6	23.5	52.9	5.9
Total	5.2	9.1	23.3	33.4	29.1

Table A5.50: Summary of the parents' responses to Question L3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION L4

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD BE A DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOL"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	21.5	32.9	38.0	2.5	5.1
B	17.3	29.6	46.9	2.5	3.7
C	14.3	34.7	42.9	8.2	0.0
D	19.4	41.7	36.1	2.8	0.0
E	16.1	35.5	35.5	9.7	3.2
F	14.9	23.9	59.7	1.5	0.0
G	21.8	29.4	42.4	4.7	1.8
H	18.3	33.8	39.4	7.0	1.4
I	10.1	19.2	52.5	13.1	5.1
J	0.0	5.6	16.7	38.9	38.9
K	3.9	2.0	33.3	37.3	23.5
L	18.8	34.8	39.1	5.1	2.2
M	18.5	30.8	45.4	4.6	0.8
N	54.5	27.3	9.1	9.1	0.0
O	11.1	27.8	38.9	16.7	5.6
P	23.1	0.0	53.8	23.1	0.0
Q	5.9	47.1	35.3	11.8	0.0
Total	17.0	28.7	42.3	8.1	3.8

Table A5.51: Summary of the parents' responses to Question L4 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION M1

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD OFFER A WIDE RANGE OF COURSES"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	0.0	1.3	1.3	46.8	50.6
B	0.0	0.0	0.0	47.0	53.0
C	0.0	2.0	0.0	51.0	47.1
D	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.5	59.5
E	0.0	3.2	1.6	50.0	45.2
F	0.0	1.4	5.8	37.7	55.1
G	0.0	0.6	1.2	33.5	64.7
H	0.0	0.0	2.7	41.1	56.2
I	0.0	2.0	4.1	36.7	57.1
J	0.0	0.0	0.0	38.9	61.1
K	0.0	0.0	2.0	42.0	56.0
L	0.0	0.0	4.2	45.5	50.3
M	0.0	0.7	3.7	42.6	52.9
N	0.0	0.0	0.0	36.4	63.6
O	0.0	5.6	5.6	61.1	27.8
P	0.0	0.0	7.7	23.1	69.2
Q	0.0	0.0	11.8	23.5	64.7
Total	0.0	0.9	2.7	41.7	54.8

Table A5.52: Summary of the parents' responses to Question M1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION M2

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD GIVE REGULAR HOMEWORK"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	1.3	3.8	6.3	47.5	41.3
B	0.0	0.0	2.4	53.0	44.6
C	0.0	0.0	4.0	62.0	34.0
D	0.0	5.4	10.8	43.2	40.5
E	0.0	1.6	8.1	50.0	40.3
F	0.0	2.9	7.4	51.5	38.2
G	1.2	4.1	5.8	45.6	43.3
H	0.0	2.7	5.5	53.4	38.4
I	0.0	1.0	5.0	50.0	44.0
J	0.0	5.6	11.1	38.9	44.4
K	0.0	0.0	4.0	40.0	56.0
L	0.0	0.0	2.1	42.6	55.3
M	0.0	0.7	4.4	44.9	50.0
N	0.0	0.0	9.1	54.5	36.4
O	0.0	11.1	0.0	33.3	55.6
P	0.0	0.0	7.7	30.8	61.5
Q	5.9	0.0	0.0	41.2	52.9
Total	0.4	2.0	5.1	47.3	45.4

Table A5.53: Summary of the parents' responses to Question M2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION M3

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE ALL STUDENTS WEARING SCHOOL UNIFORM"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	1.3	2.5	11.3	38.8	46.3
B	0.0	1.2	4.8	27.7	66.3
C	0.0	0.0	6.0	30.0	64.0
D	0.0	2.7	10.8	37.8	48.6
E	3.2	1.6	6.5	38.7	50.0
F	0.0	3.0	1.5	25.4	70.1
G	1.2	2.9	4.7	32.2	59.1
H	0.0	2.8	9.7	38.9	48.6
I	0.0	3.0	3.0	28.3	65.7
J	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0
K	0.0	0.0	4.0	40.0	56.0
L	0.7	0.7	4.3	46.1	48.2
M	2.2	0.7	5.1	38.2	53.7
N	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	90.9
O	0.0	0.0	5.6	38.9	55.6
P	0.0	0.0	7.7	30.8	61.5
Q	5.9	0.0	17.6	11.8	64.7
Total	0.9	1.7	5.6	35.1	56.7

Table A5.54: Summary of the parents' responses to Question M3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION M4

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENT "THE SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE A GOOD PASTORAL, HOUSE, STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEM"

Preferred secondary school	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly agree
A	0.0	0.0	17.5	47.5	35.0
B	0.0	0.0	11.1	46.9	42.0
C	0.0	2.0	16.0	50.0	32.0
D	0.0	0.0	16.2	35.1	48.6
E	0.0	1.6	11.3	50.0	37.1
F	0.0	0.0	9.0	47.8	43.3
G	0.0	1.8	7.7	30.8	59.8
H	0.0	2.9	8.7	49.3	39.1
I	1.0	0.0	10.2	36.7	52.0
J	0.0	5.6	0.0	44.4	50.0
K	0.0	0.0	12.0	50.0	38.0
L	0.0	0.7	7.1	52.9	39.3
M	0.0	0.0	9.0	42.1	48.9
N	0.0	0.0	54.5	36.4	9.1
O	0.0	0.0	16.7	55.6	27.8
P	0.0	7.7	15.4	15.4	61.5
Q	0.0	5.9	5.9	52.9	35.3
Total	0.1	1.0	10.7	43.8	44.5

Table A5.55: Summary of the parents' responses to Question M4 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION N1

THE SCHOOL FACTOR THAT PARENTS CONSIDER MOST IMPORTANT WHEN SELECTING A SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR THEIR CHILD

Reason or school factor	Number	%
Child will be happy at the school	160	14.0
Good overall examination results	118	10.3
Good discipline	93	8.1
Child wants to attend the school	74	6.5
A happy, warm and caring atmosphere	74	6.5
Competent and well qualified teachers	74	6.5
Emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects	68	5.9
A competent and respected headteacher	58	5.1
Caring and enthusiastic teachers	51	4.5
School offers a wide range of courses	43	3.8
School has an academic bias	40	3.5
Easy, safe, convenient travel to and from school	34	3.0
Good relationship between teachers and students	27	2.4
School has a good reputation in the community	23	2.0
The school caters for children with special needs	18	1.6
Good courses and standards in English	18	1.6
Close to home	17	1.5
Good general facilities	16	1.4
School has a good pastoral, house, student support system	14	1.2
The school is a single sex school	11	1.0
School is relatively small	10	0.9
In no danger of closure	9	0.8
Students grouped according to ability in the first year	8	0.7
Good courses and standards in Mathematics	8	0.7
The school brings out the best in its students	8	0.7
School is a denominational school	7	0.6
Child has older brothers or sisters attending the school	5	0.4
The children should receive individual attention and care	5	0.4

Table A5.56: Summary of the parents' responses to Question N1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTIONS N1 TO N5

THE SCHOOL FACTORS THAT PARENTS CONSIDER AMONG THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT WHEN SELECTING A SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR THEIR CHILD

Reason or school factor	Number	%
Good discipline	528	46.1
Good overall examination results	430	37.6
Competent and well qualified teachers	361	31.5
A happy, warm and caring atmosphere	312	27.2
Child will be happy at the school	302	26.4
Caring and enthusiastic teachers	262	22.9
A competent and respected headteacher	257	22.4
School offers a wide range of courses	254	22.2
Good general facilities	243	21.2
Emphasizes academic and practical and creative subjects	231	20.2
Easy, safe, convenient travel to and from school	204	17.8
Good relationship between teachers and students	190	16.6
Child wants to attend the school	170	14.8
School has a good reputation in the community	123	10.7
School has a good pastoral, house, student support system	115	10.0
All students wear school uniform	103	9.0
The school gives regular homework	96	8.4
School is relatively small	92	8.0
School has an academic bias	88	7.7
The school caters for children with special needs	80	7.0
In no danger of closure	74	6.5
Good courses and standards in English	72	6.3
Good facilities for sports and games	68	5.9
The school has both boys and girls	66	5.8
Close to home	64	5.6
Students grouped according to ability in the first year	61	5.3
Good courses and standards in Mathematics	60	5.2
School offers extra activities, clubs, hobbies	59	5.2
Clean, attractive and well maintained buildings	48	4.2
Good facilities and courses for computing	28	2.4
Child and the family are made to feel a part of the school	26	2.3
The school is a single sex school	24	2.1

Table A5.57: Summary of the parents' combined responses to Questions N1 through N5 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION 01

THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF "SCHOOL BROCHURES" ON PARENTS' CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Large Influence	Some Influence	No Influence
A	9.7	72.2	18.1
B	22.4	71.1	6.6
C	9.5	76.2	14.3
D	15.2	69.7	15.2
E	17.5	70.2	12.3
F	20.0	71.7	8.3
G	22.8	65.2	12.0
H	21.9	70.3	7.8
I	17.6	70.6	11.8
J	22.2	61.1	16.7
K	22.7	63.6	13.6
L	26.6	63.3	10.2
M	22.8	68.3	8.9
N	0.0	77.8	22.2
O	23.5	76.5	0.0
P	30.8	61.5	7.7
Q	23.5	58.8	17.6
Total	20.5	68.3	11.2

Table A5.58: Summary of the parents' responses to Question O1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION 02

THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF "VISITS TO THE SCHOOL" ON PARENTS' CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Large Influence	Some Influence	No Influence
A	61.8	34.2	3.9
B	73.7	23.7	2.6
C	71.4	23.8	4.8
D	78.8	21.2	0.0
E	75.9	22.4	1.7
F	82.3	14.5	3.2
G	78.8	19.4	1.9
H	78.1	17.2	4.7
I	73.3	24.4	2.3
J	73.7	21.1	5.3
K	65.9	34.1	0.0
L	68.5	28.5	3.1
M	84.0	13.6	2.4
N	81.8	9.1	9.1
O	77.8	16.7	5.6
P	90.9	9.1	0.0
Q	88.2	11.8	0.0
Total	75.4	21.9	2.7

Table A5.59: Summary of the parents' responses to Question O2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION 03

THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF "TALKS WITH PARENTS WHO HAVE CHILDREN AT THE SCHOOL" ON PARENTS' CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Large Influence	Some Influence	No Influence
A	32.9	55.3	11.8
B	39.0	48.1	13.0
C	34.1	61.4	4.5
D	29.4	67.6	2.9
E	35.0	48.3	16.7
F	44.6	49.2	6.2
G	42.9	47.2	9.8
H	30.4	55.1	14.5
I	42.2	51.1	6.7
J	26.3	63.2	10.5
K	47.8	43.5	8.7
L	50.0	41.2	8.8
M	51.2	42.4	6.4
N	36.4	36.4	27.3
O	36.8	63.2	0.0
P	50.0	41.7	8.3
Q	23.5	58.8	17.6
Total	41.3	49.2	9.5

Table A5.60: Summary of the parents' responses to Question O3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION 04

THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF "PUBLISHED EXAMINATION RESULTS" ON PARENTS' CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Large Influence	Some Influence	No Influence
A	33.3	46.7	20.0
B	46.8	40.3	13.0
C	51.2	41.9	7.0
D	27.3	54.5	18.2
E	32.8	46.6	20.7
F	44.4	49.2	6.3
G	43.1	43.8	13.1
H	25.8	60.6	13.6
I	41.4	47.1	11.5
J	27.8	55.6	16.7
K	40.0	51.1	8.9
L	64.4	32.6	3.0
M	68.0	26.4	5.6
N	27.3	54.5	18.2
O	38.9	50.0	11.1
P	33.3	41.7	25.0
Q	29.4	52.9	17.6
Total	45.5	43.2	11.3

Table A5.61: Summary of the parents' responses to Question O4 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION 05

THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF "NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND REPORTS" ON PARENTS' CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Large Influence	Some Influence	No Influence
A	15.1	23.3	61.6
B	11.8	42.1	46.1
C	7.0	48.8	44.2
D	0.0	43.8	56.3
E	13.8	39.7	46.6
F	1.6	41.0	57.4
G	12.8	55.1	32.1
H	4.8	38.1	57.1
I	5.7	40.9	53.4
J	27.8	22.2	50.0
K	6.5	45.7	47.8
L	12.0	37.6	50.4
M	10.6	35.0	54.5
N	0.0	27.3	72.7
O	0.0	44.4	55.6
P	8.3	41.7	50.0
Q	5.9	35.3	58.8
Total	9.6	40.7	49.7

Table A5.62: Summary of the parents' responses to Question O5 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION 06

THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF "STAFF AT THE CHILD'S PRIMARY SCHOOL" ON PARENTS' CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Large Influence	Some Influence	No Influence
A	21.6	44.6	33.8
B	16.0	29.3	54.7
C	11.9	57.1	31.0
D	6.3	37.5	56.3
E	7.0	45.6	47.4
F	9.5	42.9	47.6
G	8.3	36.3	55.4
H	16.7	31.8	51.5
I	17.0	36.4	46.6
J	16.7	38.9	44.4
K	15.2	50.0	34.8
L	14.3	45.9	39.8
M	17.1	43.1	39.8
N	9.1	54.5	36.4
O	0.0	57.9	42.1
P	16.7	25.0	58.3
Q	5.9	41.2	52.9
Total	13.4	41.1	45.5

Table A5.63: Summary of the parents' responses to Question 06 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION 07

THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF "OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS ATTENDING THE SCHOOL" ON PARENTS' CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Large Influence	Some Influence	No Influence
A	43.5	23.2	33.3
B	44.4	18.1	37.5
C	42.5	47.5	10.0
D	53.1	18.8	28.1
E	45.6	19.3	35.1
F	37.9	13.8	48.3
G	36.1	24.5	39.5
H	48.4	25.8	25.8
I	36.9	22.6	40.5
J	72.2	22.2	5.6
K	45.0	22.5	32.5
L	35.4	14.2	50.4
M	19.8	25.9	54.3
N	45.5	9.1	45.5
O	38.9	22.2	38.9
P	23.1	23.1	53.8
Q	41.2	41.2	17.6
Total	38.6	22.4	38.9

Table A5.64: Summary of the parents' responses to Question O7 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION P1

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO WILL BE DRIVEN TO SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Child will be driven to school	Child will sometimes be driven to school	Child will not be driven to school
A	15.9	41.5	42.7
B	21.4	45.2	33.3
C	18.4	61.2	20.4
D	13.5	48.6	37.8
E	14.5	32.3	53.2
F	25.0	45.6	29.4
G	11.9	44.0	44.0
H	19.2	42.5	38.4
I	49.5	41.6	8.9
J	11.1	16.7	72.2
K	21.6	49.0	29.4
L	13.4	47.2	39.4
M	19.0	48.9	32.1
N	0.0	27.3	72.7
O	21.1	68.4	10.5
P	30.8	23.1	46.2
Q	29.4	17.6	52.9
Total	20.0	44.3	35.7

Table A5.65: Summary of the parents' responses to Question P1 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION P2

NUMBER OF CARS IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Preferred secondary school	No cars in the household	One car in the household	Two cars in the household
A	9.8	59.8	30.5
B	2.4	41.7	56.0
C	3.9	43.1	52.9
D	10.8	37.8	51.4
E	15.0	46.7	38.3
F	4.3	46.4	49.3
G	7.7	50.3	42.0
H	6.9	51.4	41.7
I	1.0	28.7	70.3
J	22.2	38.9	38.9
K	1.9	55.8	42.3
L	4.2	42.0	53.8
M	4.4	40.0	55.6
N	27.3	63.6	9.1
O	0.0	63.2	36.8
P	0.0	30.8	69.2
Q	5.9	41.2	52.9
Total	6.0	45.1	48.9

Table A5.66: Summary of the parents' responses to Question P2 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION P3

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN HAVING A ROOM TO THEMSELVES FOR THE COMPLETION OF HOMEWORK

Preferred secondary school	Child shares a room for study	Child does not share a room for study
A	34.9	65.1
B	19.0	81.0
C	11.8	88.2
D	27.0	73.0
E	27.4	72.6
F	15.9	84.1
G	22.5	77.5
H	23.3	76.7
I	12.9	87.1
J	27.8	72.2
K	13.5	86.5
L	12.0	88.0
M	13.3	86.7
N	45.5	54.5
O	21.1	78.9
P	15.4	84.6
Q	23.5	76.5
Total	19.3	80.7

Table A5.67: Summary of the parents' responses to Question P3 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION P4

LIKELIHOOD OF THE FAMILY REMAINING AT ITS PRESENT ADDRESS UNTIL THE CHILD ENTERS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Preferred secondary school	Will remain at present address	May remain at present address	Will not remain at present address
A	85.5	13.3	1.2
B	82.1	13.1	4.8
C	64.7	29.4	5.9
D	83.8	10.8	5.4
E	83.3	13.3	3.3
F	91.3	7.2	1.4
G	84.7	12.4	2.9
H	89.2	9.5	1.4
I	84.2	10.9	5.0
J	77.8	16.7	5.6
K	86.5	13.5	0.0
L	84.5	9.9	5.6
M	86.6	7.5	6.0
N	81.8	18.2	0.0
O	94.7	5.3	0.0
P	61.5	23.1	15.4
Q	76.5	23.5	0.0
Total	84.1	12.1	3.8

Table A5.68: Summary of the parents' responses to Question P4 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION P5

TENURE OF THE FAMILY HOME

Preferred secondary school	Family home is rented	Family home is owned
A	34.1	65.9
B	20.7	79.3
C	14.0	86.0
D	16.2	83.8
E	44.1	55.9
F	10.3	89.7
G	13.7	86.3
H	38.9	61.1
I	15.2	84.8
J	17.6	82.4
K	26.9	73.1
L	8.5	91.5
M	9.0	91.0
N	72.7	27.3
O	15.8	84.2
P	23.1	76.9
Q	35.3	64.7
Total	19.5	80.5

Table A5.69: Summary of the parents' responses to Question P5 of the questionnaire.

QUESTION Q1 (MOTHER)

PERCENTAGE OF MOTHERS AT EACH EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Preferred secondary school	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
A	32.9	20.3	32.9	2.5	7.6	3.8
B	16.9	20.5	30.1	7.2	13.3	12.0
C	9.8	23.5	29.4	13.7	15.7	7.8
D	29.7	10.8	21.6	8.1	21.6	8.1
E	32.8	22.4	22.4	5.2	10.3	6.9
F	10.1	7.2	43.5	8.7	13.0	17.4
G	17.9	17.3	31.5	6.2	18.5	8.6
H	16.4	24.7	32.9	2.7	8.2	15.1
I	14.4	14.4	25.8	7.2	19.6	18.6
J	12.5	6.3	31.3	12.5	12.5	25.0
K	18.0	24.0	32.0	10.0	14.0	2.0
L	9.9	13.4	27.5	9.9	12.7	26.8
M	9.1	12.1	25.8	12.1	20.5	20.5
N	45.5	9.1	36.4	0.0	9.1	0.0
O	10.5	26.3	52.6	5.3	5.3	0.0
P	23.1	0.0	7.7	7.7	38.5	23.1
Q	6.7	13.3	13.3	6.7	33.3	26.7
Total	16.7	16.5	29.6	7.8	15.3	14.1

Table A5.70: Summary of the parents' responses to Question Q1 (Mother) of the questionnaire.

QUESTION Q1 (FATHER)

PERCENTAGE OF FATHERS AT EACH EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Preferred secondary school	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
A	34.3	17.1	18.6	10.0	10.0	10.0
B	20.3	12.7	26.6	11.4	16.5	12.7
C	18.0	12.0	16.0	8.0	18.0	28.0
D	36.1	11.1	11.1	8.3	16.7	16.7
E	23.2	26.8	12.5	12.5	7.1	17.9
F	6.3	14.3	20.6	9.5	15.9	33.3
G	17.3	18.5	24.7	6.8	19.8	13.0
H	21.7	21.7	11.6	10.1	20.3	14.5
I	10.8	12.9	16.1	5.4	19.4	35.5
J	18.8	31.3	6.3	12.5	6.3	25.0
K	29.8	17.0	25.5	10.6	10.6	6.4
L	8.5	9.2	15.6	12.1	13.5	41.1
M	12.4	11.6	17.8	5.4	13.2	39.5
N	45.5	9.1	36.4	0.0	0.0	9.1
O	26.3	21.1	26.3	5.3	5.3	15.8
P	16.7	0.0	0.0	8.3	25.0	50.0
Q	15.4	23.1	7.7	0.0	15.4	38.5
Total	17.9	15.2	18.5	8.6	15.1	24.7

Table A5.71: Summary of the parents' responses to Question Q1 (Father) of the questionnaire.

QUESTION R1 (MOTHER)

PERCENTAGE OF MOTHERS AT EACH OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL

Preferred secondary school	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
A	28.4	17.3	21.0	7.4	17.3	4.9	3.7
B	23.2	12.2	22.0	6.1	24.4	8.5	3.7
C	33.3	7.8	17.6	11.8	25.5	0.0	3.9
D	32.4	5.4	18.9	10.8	24.3	2.7	5.4
E	41.4	10.3	19.0	6.9	10.3	8.6	3.4
F	20.6	2.9	20.6	8.8	23.5	11.8	11.8
G	20.2	12.3	26.4	9.2	20.2	3.7	8.0
H	19.4	19.4	19.4	4.2	16.7	12.5	8.3
I	34.3	9.1	12.1	8.1	20.2	5.1	11.1
J	11.1	11.1	22.2	5.6	27.8	11.1	11.1
K	21.6	11.8	25.5	2.0	29.4	3.9	5.9
L	26.8	4.9	14.8	1.4	23.9	11.3	16.9
M	35.8	2.2	19.4	1.5	17.2	10.4	13.4
N	36.4	18.2	9.1	9.1	27.3	0.0	0.0
O	21.1	5.3	21.1	21.1	10.5	21.1	0.0
P	23.1	0.0	15.4	0.0	30.8	23.1	7.7
Q	31.3	12.5	18.8	0.0	12.5	0.0	25.0
Total	27.4	9.3	19.6	6.1	20.7	7.7	9.1

Table A5.72: Summary of the parents' responses to Question R1 (Mother) of the questionnaire.

QUESTION R1 (FATHER)

PERCENTAGE OF FATHERS AT EACH OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL

Preferred secondary school	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
A	2.8	2.8	11.1	45.8	5.6	26.4	5.6
B	0.0	1.3	7.9	22.4	6.6	48.7	13.2
C	0.0	0.0	8.0	22.0	10.0	40.0	20.0
D	0.0	2.7	8.1	24.3	10.8	45.9	8.1
E	5.3	0.0	17.5	15.8	7.0	35.1	19.3
F	0.0	0.0	6.5	17.7	6.5	37.1	32.3
G	0.0	1.9	8.8	35.6	14.4	28.8	10.6
H	1.4	1.4	15.9	30.4	13.0	26.1	11.6
I	1.1	0.0	6.3	15.8	7.4	40.0	29.5
J	0.0	6.3	12.5	31.3	6.3	18.8	25.0
K	0.0	4.1	18.4	28.6	4.1	34.7	10.2
L	2.2	1.4	2.9	10.1	10.1	38.1	35.3
M	0.8	0.0	5.3	19.8	6.1	38.9	29.0
N	11.1	11.1	22.2	33.3	11.1	0.0	11.1
O	0.0	0.0	5.3	42.1	10.5	31.6	10.5
P	0.0	0.0	8.3	0.0	8.3	50.0	33.3
Q	0.0	0.0	15.4	15.4	15.4	7.7	46.2
Total	1.1	1.3	8.8	23.9	9.0	35.2	20.6

Table A5.73: Summary of the parents' responses to Question R1 (Father) of the questionnaire.

QUESTIONS P1 TO R1

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS IN EACH SOCIAL STATUS GROUP

Preferred secondary	Social status group 1	Social status group 2	Social status group 3
A	33.8	49.2	16.9
B	20.5	43.8	35.6
C	19.1	44.7	36.2
D	33.3	36.1	30.6
E	30.8	42.3	26.9
F	13.1	34.4	52.5
G	20.8	44.8	34.4
H	34.8	34.8	30.3
I	14.0	41.9	44.1
J	13.3	46.7	40.0
K	32.6	39.1	28.3
L	8.8	28.7	62.5
M	13.2	33.9	52.9
N	55.6	33.3	11.1
O	31.6	42.1	26.3
P	8.3	16.7	75.0
Q	23.1	23.1	53.8
Total	20.6	38.6	40.8

Table A5.74: Summary of the parents' responses to Question P1 to Question R1 of the questionnaire.

APPENDIX 6

PARAMETER ESTIMATES AND STANDARD ERRORS FOR MULTILEVEL MODELS WITH THE PROPORTION OF PARENTS FOR WHOM THEIR PREFERRED SCHOOL IS ALSO THEIR CLOSEST SCHOOL AS THE RESPONSE VARIABLE

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.196	
Mothers' Educational Level 2	0.428	0.219
Mothers' Educational Level 3	0.550	0.195
Mothers' Educational Level 4	0.919	0.297
Mothers' Educational Level 5	0.577	0.229
Mothers' Educational Level 6	0.871	0.246

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.191	0.0997
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.233	0.0107

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.8014	0.04983
School G	-0.3960	0.02355

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
0.69	0.70	0.59	0.99	0.74	0.80

Table A6.1: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, mothers' educational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.0166	
Fathers' Educational Level 2	0.274	0.219
Fathers' Educational Level 3	0.185	0.209
Fathers' Educational Level 4	0.323	0.267
Fathers' Educational Level 5	0.438	0.224
Fathers' Educational Level 6	0.695	0.212

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.192	0.0993
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.235	0.0107

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.7962	0.05000
School G	-0.3916	0.02334

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
0.67	0.71	0.67	0.89	0.73	0.68

Table A6.2: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, fathers' educational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	0.13	
Mothers' Occupational Level 2	-0.25	0.241
Mothers' Occupational Level 3	0.203	0.188
Mothers' Occupational Level 4	0.00852	0.276
Mothers' Occupational Level 5	0.443	0.192
Mothers' Occupational Level 6	0.283	0.267
Mothers' Occupational Level 7	0.545	0.260

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.186	0.097
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.235	0.0107

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.8087	0.04930
School G	-0.3887	0.02342

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
0.64	0.89	0.70	1.02	0.71	1.00	0.98

Table A6.3: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, mothers' occupational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.916	
Fathers' Occupational Level 2	-1.271	1.685
Fathers' Occupational Level 3	1.146	0.75
Fathers' Occupational Level 4	0.975	0.729
Fathers' Occupational Level 5	1.404	0.75
Fathers' Occupational Level 6	1.383	0.726
Fathers' Occupational Level 7	1.417	0.732

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.182	0.0955
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.233	0.0106

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.7856	0.04876
School G	-0.3707	0.02347

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
2.72	5.74	0.93	0.65	0.94	0.60	0.72

Table A6.4: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, fathers' occupational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.056	
Mothers' Educational Level	0.169	0.0605

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Constant/constant	0.194	0.14
Mothers' Ed'n Level/constant	-0.022	0.0412
Mothers' Ed'n Level/Mothers' Ed'n Level	0.0219	0.0183
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.232	0.0107

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual for intercept	Variance	Residual for slope	Variance
School A	-0.3340	0.06897	0.1554	0.01345
School F	0.5184	0.09584	0.1307	0.01170
School G	-0.0357	0.04894	-0.1927	0.00702
School I	-0.4447	0.07334	0.05065	0.00844

Table A6.5: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, mothers' educational level, is fitted in the random part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.0174	
Fathers' Educational Level	0.136	0.0391

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Constant/constant	0.0849	0.0939
Fathers' Ed'n Level/constant	0.019	0.0195
Fathers' Ed'n Level/Fathers' Ed'n Level	0.00173	0.00724
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.235	0.0108

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual for intercept	Variance	Residual for slope	Variance
School E	0.2971	0.02222	0.07004	0.000325
School F	0.5385	0.01201	0.09149	0.000355
School G	-0.3701	0.003129	-0.03750	0.000897
School H	-0.2340	0.01543	-0.05377	0.000470

Table A6.6: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, fathers' educational level, is fitted in the random part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	0.0528	
Mothers' Occupational Level	0.103	0.0517

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Constant/constant	0.355	0.195
Mothers' Oc'n Level/constant	-0.0559	0.0446
Mothers' Oc'n Level/Mothers' Oc'n Level	0.0188	0.0135
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.231	0.0106

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual for intercept	Variance	Residual for slope	Variance
School A	-0.4990	0.09695	0.1390	0.009826
School B	0.4274	0.09518	-0.1831	0.008837
School F	1.0579	0.1223	-0.08143	0.008932
School G	0.01304	0.0538	-0.1749	0.005562

Table A6.7: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, mothers' occupational level, is fitted in the random part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.491	
Fathers' Occupational Level	0.191	0.0592

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Constant/constant	0.22	0.316
Fathers' Oc'n Level/constant	-0.0352	0.0695
Fathers' Oc'n Level/Fathers' Oc'n Level	0.0141	0.0177
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.234	0.0177

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual for intercept	Variance	Residual for slope	Variance
School A	-0.3690	0.1360	0.09169	0.009861
School B	0.09148	0.1627	-0.03879	0.008734
School F	0.3204	0.1736	-0.09937	0.008558
School G	0.2659	0.1159	-0.1685	0.007101

Table A6.8: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, mothers' occupational level, is fitted in the random part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.423	
Mothers' Educational Level	0.105	0.0447
Fathers' Occupational Level	0.119	0.0518

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.194	0.10
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.233	0.0107

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.7914	0.05050
School G	-0.3761	0.02346

Table A6.9: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variables, mothers' educational level and the fathers' occupation level, are both fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.723	
Social status index	0.0647	0.0127

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.204	0.104
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.231	0.0105

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.7716	0.05219
School G	-0.3766	0.02360

Table A6.10: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, the social status index of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.814	
Social status index	0.0713	0.0169

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Constant/constant	0.354	0.371
Social status index/constant	-0.0158	0.0216
Social status index/Social status index	0.00143	0.00144
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.229	0.0105

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual for intercept	Variance	Residual for slope	Variance
School A	-0.4696	0.1799	0.03378	0.0008755
School B	0.3733	0.2305	-0.02860	0.0008810
School F	0.3993	0.2621	0.02095	0.0008407
School G	0.5079	0.1565	-0.06120	0.0006403

Table A6.11: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, the social status index, is fitted in the random part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom their preferred school is also their closest school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.16	
Social status group 2	0.511	0.162
Social status group 3	0.81	0.176

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.191	0.099
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.232	0.0106

School Residuals:

School	Residual	Variance	School	Residual	Variance
School A	-0.1163	0.04834	School I	-0.3801	0.03726
School B	-0.02641	0.04398	School J	0.1714	0.1119
School C	0.2897	0.05963	School K	0.1236	0.06077
School D	-0.1198	0.07164	School L	-0.4382	0.02728
School E	0.5424	0.05635	School M	-0.3005	0.02956
School F	0.7646	0.05073	School N	-0.2125	0.1323
School G	-0.3702	0.02345	School O	0.4331	0.1007
School H	-0.3611	0.04676			

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.48	0.44	0.48

Table A6.12: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who prefer their closest school. The explanatory variable, the social status group, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

APPENDIX 7

PARAMETER ESTIMATES AND STANDARD ERRORS FOR MULTILEVEL MODELS WITH THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL BROCHURES READ BY PARENTS AS THE RESPONSE VARIABLE

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school brochures read by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	3.521	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.0627	0.105

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0506	0.0323
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.165	0.0985

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.2628	0.02107
School H	-0.2554	0.02028

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.23	0.23

Table A7.1: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school brochures read by parents. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school brochures read by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.058	
Mothers' Ed'n Level 2	0.597	0.162
Mothers' Ed'n Level 3	0.416	0.144
Mothers' Ed'n Level 4	0.932	0.204
Mothers' Ed'n Level 5	0.606	0.167
Mothers' Ed'n Level 6	0.859	0.172

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0356	0.0259
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.097	0.0953

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
0.45	0.44	0.35	0.62	0.47	0.48

Table A7.2: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school brochures read by parents. The explanatory variable, mothers' educational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school brochures read by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.180	
Fathers' Ed'n Level 2	0.407	0.163
Fathers' Ed'n Level 3	0.383	0.157
Fathers' Ed'n Level 4	0.274	0.195
Fathers' Ed'n Level 5	0.404	0.165
Fathers' Ed'n Level 6	0.684	0.150

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0374	0.0267
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.125	0.0966

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
0.44	0.46	0.43	0.60	0.47	0.40

Table A7.3: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school brochures read by parents. The explanatory variable, fathers' educational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school brochures read by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.455	
Mothers' Oc'n Level 2	-0.409	0.183
Mothers' Oc'n Level 3	0.122	0.138
Mothers' Oc'n Level 4	0.571	0.207
Mothers' Oc'n Level 5	0.188	0.137
Mothers' Oc'n Level 6	0.164	0.194
Mothers' Oc'n Level 7	0.256	0.178

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0407	0.0281
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.127	0.0967

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
0.40	0.63	0.44	0.73	0.44	0.68	0.62

Table A7.4: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school brochures read by parents. The explanatory variable, mothers' occupational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school brochures read by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.881	
Fathers' Oc'n Level 2	0.575	0.627
Fathers' Oc'n Level 3	0.287	0.473
Fathers' Oc'n Level 4	0.623	0.455
Fathers' Oc'n Level 5	0.764	0.471
Fathers' Oc'n Level 6	0.674	0.451
Fathers' Oc'n Level 7	0.928	0.456

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0355	0.0260
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.142	0.0974

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
1.67	1.67	0.65	0.41	0.62	0.36	0.44

Table A7.5: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school brochures read by parents. The explanatory variable, fathers' occupational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school brochures read by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.845	
Social status index	0.0439	0.00854

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0346	0.0255
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.116	0.0962

Table A7.6: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school brochures read by parents. The explanatory variable, the social status index of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school brochures read by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.167	
Social status group 2	0.446	0.12
Social status group 3	0.626	0.126

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0325	0.0247
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.119	0.0963

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.30	0.25	0.27

Table A7.7: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school brochures read by parents. The explanatory variable, the social status group, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

APPENDIX 8

PARAMETER ESTIMATES AND STANDARD ERRORS FOR MULTILEVEL MODELS WITH THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL OPEN NIGHTS ATTENDED BY PARENTS AS THE RESPONSE VARIABLE

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school open nights attended by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	3.246	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.0588	0.106

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.11	0.0554
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.082	0.0947

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.28	0.28

Table A8.1: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school open nights attended by parents. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school open nights attended by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.915	
Mothers' Ed'n Level 2	0.297	0.160
Mothers' Ed'n Level 3	0.253	0.142
Mothers' Ed'n Level 4	0.763	0.201
Mothers' Ed'n Level 5	0.568	0.165
Mothers' Ed'n Level 6	0.749	0.170

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0936	0.0486
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.024	0.0920

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.4281	0.02480
School H	-0.4295	0.02364

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
0.50	0.49	0.42	0.66	0.52	0.53

Table A8.2: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school open nights attended by parents. The explanatory variable, mothers' educational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school open nights attended by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.977	
Fathers' Ed'n Level 2	0.263	0.161
Fathers' Ed'n Level 3	0.283	0.154
Fathers' Ed'n Level 4	0.163	0.192
Fathers' Ed'n Level 5	0.372	0.162
Fathers' Ed'n Level 6	0.621	0.149

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0878	0.0463
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.048	0.0931

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.3940	0.02457
School H	-0.4188	0.02345

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
0.48	0.50	0.48	0.63	0.51	0.45

Table A8.3: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school open nights attended by parents. The explanatory variable, fathers' educational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school open nights attended by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.164	
Mothers' Oc'n Level 2	-0.317	0.180
Mothers' Oc'n Level 3	0.0852	0.135
Mothers' Oc'n Level 4	0.470	0.204
Mothers' Oc'n Level 5	0.283	0.134
Mothers' Oc'n Level 6	0.0761	0.191
Mothers' Oc'n Level 7	0.316	0.175

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0976	0.0501
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.048	0.0931

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.4321	0.02528
School H	-0.4012	0.02409

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
0.46	0.67	0.50	0.76	0.50	0.71	0.66

Table A8.4: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school open nights attended by parents. The explanatory variable, mothers' occupational level, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school open nights attended by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.178	
Fathers' Oc'n Level 2	1.019	0.614
Fathers' Oc'n Level 3	0.824	0.464
Fathers' Oc'n Level 4	0.969	0.446
Fathers' Oc'n Level 5	1.306	0.462
Fathers' Oc'n Level 6	1.134	0.443
Fathers' Oc'n Level 7	1.328	0.447

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0884	0.0466
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.050	0.0933

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.4046	0.02465
School H	-0.4041	0.02352

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
1.66	1.65	0.68	0.47	0.65	0.42	0.50

Table A8.5: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school open nights attended by parents. The explanatory variable, fathers' occupational level is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school open nights attended by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.034	
Social status index	0.0478	0.00846

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0824	0.0441
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.023	0.092

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.3528	0.02392
School H	-0.3984	0.02284

Table A8.6: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school open nights attended by parents. The explanatory variable, the social status index of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school open nights attended by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.842	
Social status group 2	0.498	0.118
Social status group 3	0.724	0.124

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0766	0.0419
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.019	0.0918

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School F	0.3397	0.02338
School H	-0.3833	0.02235

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.33	0.29	0.31

Table A8.7: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school open nights attended by parents. The explanatory variable, the levels of social status group, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the number of school open nights attended by parents of transferring students.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.915	
Social status group	0.349	0.082

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Constant/constant	0.0815	0.0665
Social status group/constant	-0.0174	0.0392
Social status group/social status group	0.0358	0.0342
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.004	0.0917

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual for intercept	Variance	Residual for slope	Variance
School A	-0.2521	0.03165	0.1843	0.02234
School D	-0.08224	0.04376	0.01092	0.02489
School F	0.3427	0.04910	-0.004845	0.02068
School J	-0.1949	0.05931	-0.1944	0.02908

Table A8.8: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the number of school open nights attended by parents. The explanatory variable, social status group, is fitted in the random part of the model.

APPENDIX 9

PARAMETER ESTIMATES AND STANDARD ERRORS FOR MULTILEVEL MODELS WITH THE PROPORTION OF PARENTS INFLUENCED BY KEY SOURCES OF INFORMATION AS THE RESPONSE VARIABLE

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom the school visit had a very large influence on their choice of school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.694	
Social status group 2	-0.724	0.207
Social status group 3	-0.637	0.211

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0368	0.0501
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.994	0.0495

School Residuals:

School	Residual	Variance
School L	0.2340	0.02142
School M	-0.1749	0.02192

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.45	0.43	0.43

Table A9.1: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) for whom the school visit had a very large influence on their choice of school. The explanatory variable, the levels of social status group, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom talks with other parents had a very large influence on their choice of school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	0.871	
Social status group 2	-0.367	0.195
Social status group 3	-0.757	0.197

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0187	0.0335
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.999	0.0497

School Residuals:

School	Residual	Variance
School H	0.09189	0.01522
School M	-0.1299	0.01267

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.45	0.34	0.35

Table A9.2: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) for whom talks with other parents had a very large influence on their choice of school. The explanatory variable, the social status group, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom published examination results had a very large influence on their choice of school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	0.507	
Social status group 2	-0.174	0.184
Social status group 3	-0.466	0.191

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.187	0.101
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.955	0.0476

School Residuals:

School	Residual	Variance
School H	0.4771	0.05316
School M	-0.7449	0.03047

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.52	0.46	0.47

Table A9.3: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) for whom published examination results had a very large influence on their choice of school. The explanatory variables are the levels of social status group and are fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents for whom talks with other family members had a very large influence on their choice of school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.594	
Social status group 2	-0.138	0.192
Social status group 3	0.288	0.196

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.179	0.0101
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.988	0.0493

School Residuals:

School	Residual	Variance
School C	-0.6671	0.07064
School M	0.6787	0.03246

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.53	0.47	0.47

Table A9.4: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) for whom talks with other family members had a very large influence on their choice of school. The explanatory variables are the levels of social status group and are fitted in the fixed part of the model.

APPENDIX 10

PARAMETER ESTIMATES AND STANDARD ERRORS FOR MULTILEVEL MODELS WITH THE REASONS GIVEN BY PARENTS FOR PREFERRING THE CLOSEST SCHOOL AS THE RESPONSE VARIABLE

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school has a good reputation' as a reason for preferring their closest secondary school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	-1.92	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.379	0.313

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.15	0.164
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.131	0.00928

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School B	-0.3079	0.09750
School G	0.3939	0.05922

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.63	0.57

Table A10.1: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school has a good reputation', as a reason for preferring their closest secondary school. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school has good general facilities', as a reason for preferring their closest secondary school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	-2.395	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.193	0.406

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.62	0.44
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.0852	0.00606

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School G	1.2873	0.1226
School L	-0.6178	.1763
School M	-0.6227	0.1763

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.88	0.88

Table A10.2: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school has good general facilities', as a reason for preferring their closest secondary school. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'good overall examination results', as a reason for preferring their closest secondary school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-1.839	
Social status group 2	0.708	0.327
Social status group 3	0.866	0.351

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.432	0.281
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.169	0.012

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School A	-0.5857	0..1674
School L	1.1592	0.06925

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.90	0.78	0.85

Table A10.3: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'good overall examination results', as a reason for preferring their closest secondary school. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

APPENDIX 11

PARAMETER ESTIMATES AND STANDARD ERRORS FOR MULTILEVEL MODELS WITH THE REASONS GIVEN BY PARENTS FOR NOT PREFERRING THE CLOSEST SCHOOL AS THE RESPONSE VARIABLE

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school has poor examination results', as a reason for **not** preferring their closest secondary school.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-2.96	
Social status group 2	0.703	0.702
Social status group 3	1.746	0.667

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.114	0.111
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.112	0.00657

School Residuals:

School Code	Residual	Variance
School E	0.2342	0.06330
School L	-0.4846	0.06773

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
1.85	0.76	0.45

Table A11.1: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school has good examination results', as a reason for **not** preferring their closest secondary school. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

APPENDIX 12

PARAMETER ESTIMATES AND STANDARD ERRORS FOR MULTILEVEL MODELS WITH THE PARENTS' RANKINGS AND RATINGS OF THE SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS LISTED IN QUESTIONS D THROUGH M OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS THE RESPONSE VARIABLE

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who ranked 'the reputation of the school in the community' as the most important characteristic in Section F of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	0.411	
Social status group 2	0.034	0.181
Social status group 3	-0.557	0.188

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0887	0.0623
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	4.056	0.202

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.45	0.39	0.41

Table A12.1: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who ranked 'the reputation of the school in the community' as the most important characteristic in Section F of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who ranked 'the need for a competent and respected headteacher' as the most important characteristic in Section H of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	-0.411	
Gender of the child (Boys)	-0.397	0.156

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.037	0.0429
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.226	0.0112

School Residuals:

School	Residual	Variance
School B	0.1991	0.02429
School C	-0.2277	0.02764

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.28	0.31

Table A12.2: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who ranked 'the need for a competent and respected headteacher' as the most important characteristic in Section H of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who ranked 'the need for good relationships between students and teachers' as the most important characteristic in Section H of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-1.196	
Social status group 2	-0.824	0.255
Social status group 3	-0.675	0.263

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0716	0.0807
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	8.085	0.402

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.59	0.49	0.52

Table A12.3: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who ranked 'the need for good relationships between students and teachers' as the most important characteristics in Section H of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who ranked 'the school offers extra activities, clubs and hobbies' as the most important characteristic in Section J of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	-3.216	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.919	0.354

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.205	0.169
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.0527	0.00262

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.82	0.48

Table A12.4: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who ranked 'the school offers extra activities, clubs and hobbies' as the most important characteristic in Section J of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who ranked 'the need for good discipline' as the most important characteristic in Section J of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.513	
Social status group 2	0.163	0.179
Social status group 3	-0.377	0.197

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0115	0.0313
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.226	0..0113

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.41	0.32	0.39

Table A12.5: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who ranked 'the need for good discipline' as the most important characteristics in Section J of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who ranked 'the need for a happy, warm and caring atmosphere' as the most important characteristic in Section J of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-1.057	
Social status group 2	-0.124	0.210
Social status group 3	0.296	0.202

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0496	0.0512
Level 1		
Additional factor for binary data	0.192	0..00956

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.48	0.39	0.38

Table A12.6: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who ranked 'the need for a happy, warm and caring atmosphere' as the most important characteristics in Section J of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to design and technology by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	4.613	
Gender of the child (Boys)	-0.362	0.105

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0571	0.0346
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.805	0.0899

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.23	0.24

Table A12.7: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to design and technology by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to English by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	1.614	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.217	0.0787

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0112	0.0116
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.106	0.0551

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.15	0.15

Table A12.8: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to English by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to foreign languages by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	4.258	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.247	0.0889

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0159	0.0154
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.398	0.0696

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.17	0.17

Table A12.9: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to foreign languages by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to science by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	3.593	
Gender of the child (Boys)	-0.212	0.095

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0511	0.03
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.474	0.0734

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.21	0.22

Table A12.10: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to science by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to design and technology by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	4.309	
Social status group 2	0.0239	0.121
Social status group 3	0.338	0.126

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0399	0.0279
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.816	0.0904

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.30	0.26	0.27

Table A12.11: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to design and technology by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to English by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	1.587	
Social status group 2	0.0308	0.0937
Social status group 3	0.354	0.0962

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0048	0.00878
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.098	0.0546

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.21	0.17	0.18

Table A12.12: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to English by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to foreign languages by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	4.733	
Social status group 2	-0.403	0.105
Social status group 3	-0.577	0.107

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2 Between-school variance	0.00	0.00
Level 1 Within-school variance	1.377	0.0679

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.23	0.18	0.19

Table A12.13: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to foreign languages by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to humanities by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	4.701	
Social status group 2	0.418	0.112
Social status group 3	0.305	0.115

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.00682	0.0124
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.555	0.0774

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.25	0.21	0.22

Table A12.14: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to humanities by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to mathematics by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	1.952	
Social status group 2	0.0722	0.079
Social status group 3	0.127	0.0812

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.00439	0.00668
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.778	0.0387

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.18	0.15	0.15

Table A12.15: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to mathematics by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to science by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.745	
Social status group 2	-0.145	0.108
Social status group 3	-0.564	0.112

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0337	0.0229
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.439	0.0717

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.27	0.24	0.24

Table A12.16: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to science by parents when responding to Section E of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to facilities for sports and games by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	4.743	
Gender of the child (Boys)	-0.27	0.119

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.013	0.022
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.684	0.134

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.22	0.22

Table A12.17: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to facilities for sports and games by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to facilities for art and design by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	4.849	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.233	0.105

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.00156	0.0139
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.223	0.111

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.18	0.18

Table A12.18: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to facilities for art and design by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to facilities for music and drama by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	5.072	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.507	0.129

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.187	0.0898
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.608	0.13

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.34	0.35

Table A12.19: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to facilities for music and drama by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to facilities for technical studies by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	4.217	
Gender of the child (Boys)	-0.505	0.126

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0398	0.0341
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.777	0.138

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.25	0.25

Table A12.20: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to facilities for technical studies by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to 'clean, attractive and well maintained buildings' by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.284	
Social status group 2	0.544	0.187
Social status group 3	0.741	0.214

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.134	0.0852
Level 1		
Within-school variance	4.685	0.233

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.50	0.44	0.46

Table A12.21: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to 'clean, attractive and well maintained buildings' by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to facilities for music and drama by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	5.732	
Social status group 2	-0.317	0.144
Social status group 3	-0.853	0.151

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.141	0.0723
Level 1		
Within-school variance	2.562	0.128

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.42	0.38	0.39

Table A12.22: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to facilities for music and drama by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to 'the family is made to feel part of school' by parents when responding to Section I of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	3.814	
Gender of the child (Boys)	-0.173	0.0715

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0158	0.0121
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.874	0.0435

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.14	0.15

Table A12.23: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to 'the family is made to feel part of the school' by parents when responding to Section G of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the gender of the child, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to 'your child wants to attend the school' by parents when responding to Section I of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	1.715	
Social status group 2	0.101	0.0832
Social status group 3	0.226	0.0864

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0154	0.0118
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.0859	0.0428

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.20	0.17	0.18

Table A12.24: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to 'your child wants to attend the school' by parents when responding to Section I of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is average rank given to 'your child will be happy at the by parents when responding to Section I of the questionnaire.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.218	
Social status group 2	-0.255	0.0832
Social status group 3	-0.381	0.0864

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0162	0.0122
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.858	0.0427

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.21	0.18	0.18

Table A12.25: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the average rank given to 'your child will be happy at the school' when responding to Section I of the questionnaire. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should emphasize academic, practical and creative subjects'.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	4.189	
Social status group 2	0.228	0.0569
Social status group 3	0.338	0.0579

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0	0.0
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.406	0.02

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.12	0.10	0.10

Table A12.26: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should emphasize academic, practical and creative subjects'. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should have an academic bias or ethos'.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.416	
Social status group 2	0.196	0.0919
Social status group 3	0.441	0.0955

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0205	0.0152
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.048	0.0522

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.23	0.20	0.20

Table A12.27: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should have an academic bias or ethos'. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should cater for students with special needs'

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	4.254	
Social status group 2	-0.265	0.0807
Social status group 3	-0.379	0.0843

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.032	0.0181
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.804	0.04

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.22	0.20	0.20

Table A12.28: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should cater for students with special needs'. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should group students according to ability from the beginning of the first year'.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.729	
Social status group 2	-0.318	0.114
Social status group 3	-0.503	0.119

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0737	0.0396
Level 1		
Within-school variance	1.593	0.0794

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.32	0.28	0.29

Table A12.29: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should group students according to ability from the beginning of the first year'. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should have a relatively small number of students'.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	3.929	
Social status group 2	0.101	0.0854
Social status group 3	-0.148	0.0884

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0119	0.0106
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.905	0.0451

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.20	0.17	0.18

Table A12.30: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should have a relatively small number of students'. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should be denominational'.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	2.503	
Social status group 2	0.212	0.0831
Social status group 3	0.0858	0.0875

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.219	0.0846
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.844	0.0421

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.37	0.36	0.36

Table A12.31: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should be denominational'. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should give regular homework'.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	4.224	
Social status group 2	0.179	0.0604
Social status group 3	0.209	0.0618

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.00142	0.00338
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.456	0.0227

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.13	0.11	0.11

Table A12.32: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should give regular homework'. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should have a good pastoral care, student support system'.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	4.155	
Social status group 2	0.125	0.0611
Social status group 3	0.295	0.0635

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.00893	0.00662
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.462	0.023

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.15	0.13	0.13

Table A12.33: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable as the level of agreement by parents with the statement 'the school should have a good pastoral care, student support system'. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

APPENDIX 13

PARAMETER ESTIMATES AND STANDARD ERRORS FOR MULTILEVEL MODELS WITH THE SCHOOL CHARACTERISTIC CONSIDERED BY THE PARENTS TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT AS THE RESPONSE VARIABLE

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the child will be happy at the school',- as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	-1.554	
Gender of the child (Boys)	-0.575	0.201

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0226	0.0553
Level 1		
Within-school variance	8.653	0.407

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.36	0.36

Table A13.1: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the child will be happy at the school', as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important. The explanatory variable the gender of the child is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school should emphasize academic *and* practical and creative subjects', as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	-3.097	
Gender of the child (Boys)	0.642	0.294

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0426	0.115
Level 1		
Within-school variance	18.47	0.869

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.52	0.52

Table A13.2: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school should emphasize academic *and* practical and creative subjects', as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important. The explanatory variable the gender of the child is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school has a competent and respected headteacher', as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant (Girls)	-2.563	
Gender of the child (Boys)	-0.811	0.327

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.134	0.174
Level 1		
Within-school variance	21.52	1.011

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Boys
0.61	0.61

Table A13.3: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school has a competent and respected headteacher', as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important. The explanatory variable the gender of the child is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school should emphasize academic *and* practical and creative subjects', as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-3.457	
Social status group 2	0.942	0.545
Social status group 3	0.920	0.566

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.14	0.141
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.0558	0.00263

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
1.48	0.56	0.69

Table A13.4: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school should emphasize academic *and* practical and creative subjects', as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'good overall examination results', as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-2.47	
Social status group 2	0.0848	0.342
Social status group 3	0.633	0.329

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.31	0.198
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.0943	0.00445

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.89	0.70	0.65

Table A13.5: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor cite the factor, 'good overall examination results', as the school characteristic they consider to be the most important. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

APPENDIX 14

PARAMETER ESTIMATES AND STANDARD ERRORS FOR MULTILEVEL MODELS WITH THE SCHOOL CHARACTERISTIC CONSIDERED BY THE PARENTS TO BE AMONG THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT AS THE RESPONSE VARIABLE

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school has good examination results', as one of the school characteristics they consider to be among the five most important.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-0.798	
Social status group 2	0..431	0.177
Social status group 3	0.490	0.196

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0988	0.0651
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.232	0.0109

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.48	0.37	0.44

Table A14.1: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school has good examination results', as one of the school characteristics they consider to be among the five most important. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school should emphasize academic *and* practical and creative subjects', as one of the school characteristics they consider to be among the five most important.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-2.230	
Social status group 2	1.067	0.315
Social status group 3	1.153	0.324

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0	0.0
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.159	0.00746

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.83	0.30	0.37

Table A14.2: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school should emphasize academic *and* practical and creative subjects', as one of the school characteristics they consider to be among the five most important. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school has a good pastoral care system', as one of the school characteristics they consider to be among the five most important.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-2.713	
Social status group 2	0.403	0.369
Social status group 3	0.822	0.365

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0528	0.0821
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.0852	0.00401

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.93	0.52	0.50

Table A14.3: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school has a good pastoral care system', as one of the school characteristics they consider to be among the five most important. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.

PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

Response Variable is the proportion of parents who cite the factor, 'the school has good relationships between teachers and students', as one of the school characteristics they consider to be among five most the important.

Fixed Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	-1.385	
Social status group 2	-0.394	0.203
Social status group 3	-0.586	0.256

Random Part of the Model:

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error
Level 2		
Between-school variance	0.0513	0.0628
Level 1		
Within-school variance	0.126	0.00596

Confidence Intervals:

Cons	Group 2	Group 3
0.44	0.44	0.62

Table A14.4: Full set of parameter estimates and standard errors for the multilevel model with response variable the proportion of parents (using a logit transformation) who cite the factor, 'the school has good relationships between teachers and students', as one of the school characteristics they consider to be among the five most important. The explanatory variable, the social status group of the family, is fitted in the fixed part of the model.