Parental Considerations in the Allocation of
Places at Secondary Colleges at Form Three Level -
An ethnographic Study of the Placement of fifty
one children from State and Private Schools and
the thoughts of their families before placement.

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of a Masters Degree at Massey University 1984.

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Abstract.

The purpose of this educational research was to discover the relative influences of a child's family and the controlling educational authority upon the college placement of pupils and the degree to which this was related to family status and previous schooling.

During the year preceding their entry to college, I interviewed fifty-one families of children in two Form Two classes. One class was chosen from a State school and the other from an Independent Anglican school.

The ethnographic nature of the research was firmly placed in the Interpretative paradigm of the New sociology of Education. The families were questioned about their motivations for choosing a particular school and this information was related to the structural provision of educational facilities. The stated preferences and reasons were noted and related to an underlying theory of social class and status. The system of zoning within the Education Board area was considered in relation to the experiences of families from a range of social strata and the degree of importance that was placed upon the selection of college and the ultimate choice was seen in a context of a socially reproductive society.

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Abstract.

SECTION ONE.

SECTION TWO.

1. Questionaire Cue Sheet for the Interviews.

2. Letter to Parents.

3. Prospectuses of the Colleges and Enrolment Form
      for State College.

4. Open Evening for Parents of Third Formers.
   Newsclippings concerning Intake Procedural Change
      during 1983.

The Theoretical Underpinings of the Research.

The motive for carrying out a piece of grounded research such as this , surely must be the use to which the findings of the research can be put. The explication of the workings of societal processes, must lead to a greater understanding of the reality of the world in which we live and must present the possibility of the creation of alternative universes. At the level of macro-social research, one can only stand in awe of the multiplicity of problems that face the potential researcher. If the findings of the research are to have any validity or predictive power, they have to be structured into an explanatory theory that has withstood the rigorous claims and counter-claims of theoretical analysts and the researcher must be fully cognizant of the potential pitfalls and the research quagmires that path the way forward into useful research.

Once the researcher has come to terms with the theoretical basis of his work, he then has to make sense out of the mass of complexity that evolves from research in the area of human interaction. The problem of truth and validity is not only philosophic it is also intensely practical. When one finds that the answers given to the researcher by respondents in an interview situation are biased or couched in intentionally misleading ways, it becomes difficult to accept the literal responses as realistic when the interpretations that can be placed upon them are multifarious. People give the answers to questions according to what they think you will want to hear. They deliberately avoid areas of their lives that are probably the most telling and explanatory as far as the interviewer is concerned. It is not unsurprising that people wish to appear in the best possible light.

The third area where the greatest misinterpretation could occur is the area of researcher bias. We all have a world view that has been expanded through experience into a composite personal interpretation of how the world functions and the major factors that bring about change. Although there may be a fair degree of

unanimity amongst people as to exactly how this operates, there
is certainly no general agreement and the most difficult area to
research can be precisely at this point where the question of
values and personal and public morals,conflict.

Every piece of research is carried out within the researcher's
logical framework of explanatory motives and in the next sub-section,
I intend to make clear my own theoretical position and my own
methodological approach to the study. The enquirer, is not only
engulfed within the theoretical debate that forms the basis for
his practical work, but is also immersed in the practical problem
of making sense of his findings and presenting a valid interpretation
of them that forms a composite picture useful for others who are
working in the same field.

> anyone who tries to conduct research in field settings
> is continually impressed with the complexity, emotionality
> and pressure that exists in everyday life .[1]

The complexity of field research, is further complicated
by the necessity to relate it to the theoretical perspective that
best explicates it.

> theories must be judged ultimately for the adequacy
> they display to the understanding of the phenomenon
> they purport to explain- not to themselves .[2]

Finally,when one has brought together the most useful
theoretical model with the fundamentals of the research, an inter-
pretation is presented that may have some relevence for current
sociological theory and may, additionally have some predictive
importance for practical application and social intervention.

1. Cris Argyle in 'Inner Contradictions of Rigorous Research"
   Academic Press 1980 New York Page One.

2. Willis - Learning to Labour page 194.

My own Theoretical Stance.

My own research was firmly aligned with the ethnomethodologist tradition of looking at a problem at grass roots level and using the respondents contributions as valid interpretations of the world (Garfinkel, Sacks and Leiter). As researcher, I was starting at the social base where the decisions were taking place at a practical level, the hope being that by amassing this type of personal explanation at the family level, I would perceive trends and purpose behind the social frameworks, that would somehow relate to an explanatory social theory.

> The sensitivity of British sociologists to the negotiation
> of everyday life within schools and classrooms has
> tended to obscure relationships between schooling and
> local culture, local social structure and so on. [3]

By observational study and by looking at the minutae of social situations, my research was closely allied to the anthropological tradition of social science research, that has been a determining force behind much of the American research for example in the works of Murray, Wax and Dumont[4]. I have also kept in mind the sociological tradition as epitomised in the ethnology of classroom studies currently in vogue in the work of British sociologists. (Lacey, Stubbs and Willis[5] Willis' work especially seemed to hold the most promise of interpretative accuracy, and my research is in the style if not the theoretical completeness of Willis' work. There is a firm grounding of the theory in the practical participant observer tradition with specific examples chosen to emphasise a point and tendancies and trends explained through the research material as they arise.

3. Sara Delamont. British Journal of Sociology of Education 1980,
   Volume one Number two. page 148.

4. Wax, Murray, L. et al eds "Anthropological Perspectives of
   Education" New York. Basic Books 1971.

5. See Sara Delamont and Paul Atkinson, British Journal of Sociology
   of Education. Vol. No. 2 1980 " The two traditions in Educational
   ethnography - sociology and anthropology compared".

In this way the study is closely allied to the suggested approach advocated by Glaser and Strauss[6] , however, it is not true grounded theory, as my research was not wide scale enough to go beyond the stage of generating theory from the grounded research. A more powerful study may well have generated the theory and then gone back to the research to select more examples to corroborate the generated theory and would have gone back into the field to provide more supportive examples. In my case, I went into the research knowing these limitations and hope that the critics of this research will recognise and understand the small interpretative scale of this investigation.

In particular, the ethnographic account, without always knowing how, can allow a degree of the activity, creativity and human agency within the object of study to come through into the analysis and the reader's experience [7].

It is this statement by Willis that I find consoling and hope that this 'creativity' and 'human agency will be apparent in my study.

Although I was concerned with parental decision making, I could not explain this without a systematic interpretation of the societal forces that were acting upon parents to lead them to make certain choices.

Educational sociologists of the neo-Marxist leaning could have a field day in this study by showing the results as

6. esp. as outlined by Barney Glaser in "Theoretical Sensitivity"- advances in the methodology of Grounded theory" University of California 1978.
7. Willis 'Learning to Labour' page 3.

providing evidence that there is a determinism behind educational placement and that this supports the thesis on reproduction theory. Structural functionalists would probably say that we have known all along on a societal level that this is the case i.e. that poor families get the worst deal at school. Others of a more liberal persuasion may ask some deeper questions as to why the status quo is important to all levels of society (a factor that was apparent in my research) and may ask some pertinent questions about the causes and the necessity for change. I don't want this study to be a propounding of Marxist doctrine, although it could be used as such. I intend it mainly as the presentation of the views of fifty one individual families all trying to make the best of their worlds and as an accurate statement of the way that families interpret their choices of school for their children. In a limited resource world of imperfection and competition, it is difficult to see alternative arrangements that would prove to be a benefit to all society. I have tried not to place these value-judgements upon the outcomes of my research. Personal jealousy or sympathy would not enhance an explanatory essay of this sort. As mentioned in the third point made about the difficulties of this type of research, the researcher can be threatened by competing theories, but a far more disasterous fate can lie in the realm of personal judgements and the the transference of ones own system of beliefs and values onto the lives of others.

Although I used participant observation techniques, the central data was obtained through interview and rather than only standing back and observing, I was also required to be involved with the respondents in an interaction situation which had the potential of sullying the purity of my results.

This interactional analysis makes an interesting corollary or alternative to positivistic and statistical analysis of systems. The approach used by many current theorists is to concentrate

firstly upon the gross impression and the grand theory and then expect the smale scale research to correspond with the predictions made. Bourdieu, in 'School as a Conservative Force', is concerned with the larger considerations of inequality and injustice and the generalized reproductive nature of society. Boudon has moved away from this stance into a consideration of behavioural science and a critical analysis of the forces acting upon people within the given structure of society. It is this area of the actions of individuals and groups within the constraining structures of society that has the most relevance for this type of research, especially the way that social policy can be related to educational change.

Well meaning actions either in the form of remedial activities and positive discrimination has sometimes led to adverse reactions within the system and the hoped for results are not always as wished. The proclivity to place trust in large scale educational interventions has not resulted in the improvements projected. This can be witnessed for example by the relative failure of the "Sesame St.," type remedial programmes that even with massive injections of state and private funds, produce results that unfortunately do not measure up to the initial hopes held by their instigators. There is a danger of extrapolating the findings of small scale research into societal analysis and it is simplistic to relate small scale educational interventions to societal change.

Other Research on the Topic of School Placement.

There has been a great deal of research at the level of
classroom interaction and at the level of classroom ethnography.
Participant observers like Stubbs, have recorded the intricate
cadences of classroom language and have made comprehensive
transcriptions of the interchanges between pupils and teachers.
Bernstein has transposed these findings onto perceived differences
between pupils. Other educational sociologists like Willis, have
related what goes on in the schools to the wider social melee and
have investigated the inextricably intertwined nature of the social
processing that goes on inside the school. In recent years, this has
evolved through papers like Bowles and Gintis 'Schooling in
Capitalist America' and is seen in the work of Passeron and Bourbieu
on Class structure and reproduction. I found the social theory
of Bourdieu and the social action theory of Boudon as particularly
influential upon my own thought development on this topic.

> Individual action and the product of individual action
> constitute the only and ultimate reality with which a
> sociologist has to deal [8]

Boudon's book 'The Unintended Consequences of Social Action'
was especially influential and I was at all times aware of the im-
plications for my study of his belief in reasoned choices within
the interactionalist paradigm and his view that the key to the
educational opportunity lies out of the school. The perverse
effects of social change, made an interesting foil for the, at
times, pessimistic neo-Marxist interpretations that I was

8. Raymond Boudon - 'Individual Action and Social Change' page 14.

irresistably drawn towards during my research. It is easy to share his belief that 'meaningful analysis will only come through interaction type paradigms' (9).

Background readings in the Karabel and Halsey volume were influencial in the direction of the research in this study as it includes many examples of the current interest shown by sociologists in the reproductive tendency of educative agencies. The concern with how ruling class ideologies are transmitted and perpetrated through the schooling system and through the wider social structure are of crusial importance in this study which concentrates upon the comparison of a prestigious elite Private school and a State school.

The reproduction from one generation to the next of the social relations of production and the cultural symbols ordering those relations are as essential to the maintenance of society as biological reproduction itself (10)

Apart from the work of the American and English sociologists, there is very little that is available in the Pacific region.

Sociological Research into Education in New Zealand is virtually non-existant (11).

Recent work by Connell in Australia has been the most useful and I am certainly in concordance with him when he is discussing the themes of cultural domination and heirarchy in their historical contexts.

9. Raymond Boudon "Individual Action and Social Change" page 202.
10. Roy Nash "Education"-'A New Zealand Sociological Perspective' p.60.
11. R. Bates - 'Directions for Research in New Zealand' page 17.

Groups within society do act to maintain their relative positions of status and power and his historical account that emphasises this link was worthy of consideration in assessing the current situation.[12]. In this sense , he is close to the true Marxist analysis, when he links the historical evolution of society into conflict situations generated through internal contradictions. There are however many contradictions within historicism and any historical interpretation is inevitably value-laden.

In New Zealand writings we have a few works on social class as shown in David Pitt's edited volume ' Social Class in New Zealand, Richard Bates ' New Sociology of Education - Directions for theory and research and more recently the work of Richard Harker ' On Reproduction, Habitus and Education', where we find a New Zealand sociologist using the work of Bourdieu to propound structural theories in society. Up till now however, there is a pronounced absence of any works in New Zealand that actually tackle the problem of the way that new Zealand schools are inter-connected with the wider social structure. How is the 'habitus' (the culture embodied in the individual) inculcated through the school system? How is this related to the choice of schools? Research on the long term effects of schooling upon the social structure are sparse and it is only in America with large scale research like Coleman's that we are presented with demographic evidence that can be used to support the theoretical social interpretations of society.

12. Connell and Irving - ' Class Structure in Australian History' (especially the introduction).

Recent longitudinal studies in England have been very much in the structural functionist mode and can be faulted on the grounds that they are dated by the time they are presented.[13] It is not difficult to see why this type of study is sparse,as the results that prove large scale inequity would certainly not advance the cause of the academic who propounded these views.

> You may search the textbooks in vain for penetrating empirical studies of the motives, attitudes and personality hang-ups of those who have great power to do damage to our society ..... these are quite exempt from such 'scientific' probing and assessment [14]

It has proved to be safer to operate on the theoretical level using the ideas of major theorists to propound a viewpoint. Richard Harker does precisely this for example in interpreting the work of Bourdieu.

> the school he (Bourdieu) argues, takes the cultural capital of the dominant group as the natural and the only proper sort of capital [15]

This sort of appraisal at one remove avoids the dangers that have been well outlined in Alex Carey's work. The research at primary levels is therefore avoided with the end result that there is a paucity of supportive evidence for the Grand theory.

Comparative studies of education provide another source of information for theoretical work. Writings by Holmes [16] in London, and other individuals commentating upon their own countries are

13. F. Rutter et al (1979) Secondary Schools and their effects on children, (Fifteen thousand hours), London, Oen Books.

14. Alex Carey - 'The Lysenko Syndrome' Had interesting discussion with Alex at McQuarie University in 1982 regarding the difficulty of access to the power elites of society. See also Australian Phychologist. Volume 12 No. 1 March 1977 page 29).

15. Richard Harker - ' On Reproduction , Habitus and Education' pge 2.

16. "Politics and Educational Change" ed.Patricia Broadfoot, Colin Brock, Tulasiewitcz - pub. Croom Helm London 1981.

another source of insightful analysis that can demonstrate the cross-cultural nature of the heirarchical structures across societies and cultures.

What research there is in New Zealand of the participant observer type, for example Vellecoop, Baldock, Webster (1973), Prenter and Stewart(1972), show a tendency to operate solely within the school setting. There is no New Zealand research that relates the school with the society in a way that moves the participant observer from the classroom out into the family of the pupil.

Apart from two books by Royston Lambert and an article on the Ritual Nature of Caning in Private schools[17], there was no other available research that focussed directly in an ethnomethodological way upon life in Private schools. Even this type of work is severely limited by the containment of the research within the schools and the absence of any relationship of what goes on in the school to what goes on in society or more especially in the families of the children who attend these schools. Royston Lambert, does however provide accurate transcriptions of the discourse and the routines within this type of school in England and it proved interesting reading for this study. There is a distinct lack of participant observation of this type of school in New Zealand.

The ethnographic style that I used, although of a similar type to that used by Stubbs, Delamont and Atkinson[18], is located in a different area of the educational matrix. I made use of the techniques proposed by Hammersly and Wood (1976) and David Hargreaves albeit in a simple and small scale way; I directed my focus on

17. J. Mercurio. Christchurch New Zealand thesis.
18. See Delamont. Footnote 5 page 3.

the reported thoughts and feelings of the families with pupils
in the school system.

Social Class Factors and School Choice.

The 'embourgeoisement' of the mass of society to accept
differentiated schools for different class groups is another inter-
esting consideration. Thorsten Veblen (1931), emphasised that in
many societies in the past and in the present, the working class
and the lower orders have tended to support the upper classes,
emulating fashions, activities and lifestyles and even providing
political support. The elitism within New Zealand society, although
apparent in many of the pressure groups, political organizations,
'boss and worker' mentalities and income statistics, is conspicuously
absent in the research literature of New Zealand life. Even though
it is known for example that many of our politicians and leading
figures in the economic life of the country are ex-pupils of a
select group of Private schools (this has been better researched
in England and America. - see footnote   ) There is still a
belief commonly accepted by the population of New Zealand that
we are an egalitarian state. My interest came with a wish to know
how parents at an individual level accomodated their ideas on
wanting the best for their children (which over 90 percent of
my respondents claimed they wanted),with the fact that many of
their children were already failing within the education system.

Elites perpetuating themselves shown in'The Civil Servants' 1980
-Peter Kellner.

I found out that parents do not realise that their child is failing until it is too late to intervene in the situation. (All the families thought that their child was performing to the best of their abilities in my sample and therefore judged the school experience as being successful for their child. One child was,"doing well in the special remedial class").

When children are segregated off into elite schools early in their careers, the parents of other children rationalize this by saying that the State schools are equally as good and that the parents paying those high school fees are really wasting their money as they have the belief that the education given in those schools is the same as that given in the Private schools. The children who begin to fail in the course of their education in the state schools are generally those from the lower strata of society. These are the children who leave school at the earliest stage. Their families have little recourse to blame the system,as the schools have continuously emphasised the fact that the child is at fault and the parents are led to believe that their child has not got what it takes for success within the educational system. Later, the children of the more vociferous families are 'cooled out' through the examination system and by this time, the children have been thoroughhly inculcated with the idea of 'success' and 'failure' in terms defined by the school. Parents, in general, maintain their belief in their children until the last moment and when the failure eventually comes, the final rationalization is made, which is, that the child has been successful in relation to the family norms and in relation to the education of the parents. The children are weaned away from the school system at the level where they can be successful in their own social group, in the work place and with their friends. Social success and job success at this point take over from the academic criteria of success. Those children who have been filtered out into the private schooling system meanwhile progress

along their separate track having success at school without the
hurdles and competition that are a natural part of the State education
process. (This is not to say that there are not other obstacles
and problems for the private school pupils to face;-but that they
are different).

Blau and Duncan claim that:

superior status cannot be anymore be directly inherited
but must be legitimated by actual achievements that are
socially acknowledged [19]

The achievements they refer to are however made much
more accessible through the convolutions of inheritance. When 100%
of the families in my sample who had parents who had both attended
Private school also had a child at a Private school and when the
wealth of many of these families has been traditional in most
cases for generations, we cannot ignore the fact that the school
must facilitate the transmission of cultural capital, or at the
very least not take part in altering the heirarchical nature of
our society. In one Private school, Vellecoop in 1968 says only
1% of the boys were from Working Class homes between the years
1918-1968.[20] The position would not have changed today from
my small sample. The whole area of Social class research becomes
intimately tied up with the findings of my research, in that,
although I was looking at the choices that the families were making
when selecting secondary education, it was impossible to ignore
the obvious relationship that became apparent between the type
of school chosen and the class and status of the family.

20. C. Vellecoop "Social Stratification in New Zealand" 1968. Ph.D
        Canterbury Thesis.

19. Peter Blau and Otis Duncan : 'The American Occupational Structure'
        Wiley, New York 1967.

The information that I was uncovering was an area difficult to
substantiate with other supporting evidence for as David Pitt
says:

> Poor groups and the very wealthy do not readily appear
> in the income statistics either for census or income
> tax returns, which show overall an egalitarian structure .[21]

Pitt goes on to say on page 13 of the same chapter that:

> Residential segregation was also reflected in school
> segregation and Private Education was (in the late seventies)
> becoming an important part of the upper class lifestyle,
> even if the rationale for the parents was the better education
> and academic record that came with smaller classes and
> better equipment. The elite Private schools were run
> by the churches, especially the Protestant church (which
> resisted integration), and there were also a small
> number of elite state schools or classes. The alumnae
> of these schools often moved on through the Old Boy
> network into prestige jobs . (21).

This situation seems to be unchanged in the 1980's. The
concept of what I term 'clout' which I use as refering to the influence
and power that is available for the potential use of a person,
surfaced as an important factor to be considered. The political
and social 'clout' of the most powerful families seemed to have
a direct influence upon the type of school the child of the family
attended and probably more importantly upon the persuasive force

21 David Pitt 'Social Class in New Zealand' page 8.

that the family could bring to bear upon the school organization
and the school controllers.

Some of the most influential families were able to make the life
of a headmaster very difficult, if he did not conduct his school
and the education of the parents children in the manner that the
parents wished.

School Choice and Parental Influence in practice.

The effectiveness of the intervention of the parent in
the running of the schools came out in two particul r instances,
one;where the parents said that they were trying to get the head-
master of the local country primary school shifted into one of
the town schools and two; the private school parents who said that
they were able,with the support of other parents, to have a large
say in the length of tenure of the headmasters of one of New Zealand's
most prestigious colleges. The threat of withdrawing their children
and the withdrawal of the financial support that this represented,
would be a big blow to the school board and if a group of parents
did not see eye to eye with the headmaster, they could bring very
effective force to bear upon the school governors to get things
changed. In this respect, the Private schools were in a completely
different situation to the State schools, where the unpopularity
of a particular school does not bring the same degree of condemnation
upon the Headmaster. The State school has an immobile clientele and
therefore there is not the same drastic effects upon ᵤₚₒₙ the school
through unpopularity. The head can be paid and his interests protected
beyond the wishes of the parents, especially if the school represents
the well-disciplined, authoritarian and more conservative aspects
of the community. The liberal Headmaster in the State school, who
is progressive in his approach to learning and who is also unpopular
with the most influencial members of the community is in a different

position and Rising Hill school in London and the recent demise of
the Christchurch 'Four Avenues' school show that headmasters in
the State system can have pressure brought to bear upon them by
higher authorities, however, it is not as immediate as the Private
school experiences, because the Private school is not buffered to
the same degree by the delaying factors of Inspectorates, Education
Boards, Unions and the Department of Education.

Apart from the obvious factor that most of the families
who sent their children to Private schools were richer and were
better positioned in life than those families whose children went
to State schools, I also wanted to know what constituted the most
important differences between the family's philosophy and their
differing lifestyle that could relate to the ultimate choice
of college. It soon became apparent whilst carrying out the research,
that my original title using the word 'choice' was a misnomer
as there was no effective choice being shown, so I altered the
title to include the word 'allocation' rather than 'choice'.

The recent controversy over the placement of pupils in
the Palmerston North area, the ensuing court case and the successful
outcome for the plaintiff (five parents who were dissatisfied with
the schools allocated to their children), is an interesting corollary
to my study, as the Palmerston North Education Board effectively took
away all choice from the parents as regards the placement of
pupils in different schools. The parents who send their children
to fee paying schools are exempt from these procedures. My study would
predict that (without knowing these individual parents) they
would be the ones who found that their child was not being allowed
to attend the school that is most like the one that the parents
attended, in terms of being single sex, well disciplined or
close to home. Because the area in which I carried out my study
did not operate this same type of rigid placement, there were no

really dissatisfied parents. This w s allied to the fact that
the possible schools available in my sample were valued as being
very much like each other by the parents and therefore the level
of discontent was reduced. There were no other types of school
and no great variation of standards across school to provide a
comparison for the parents.

As a general statement, it seemed that the families of
all the children in my sample were quite accepting of the way the
system was operating in Napier. This corresponds with the comment
by Ramsey,Sneddon, Grenfell and Ford[22], that

> we did find in our interviews with parents, conducted
> subsequent to the observational section of the research
> reported here, that they placed an almost pathetic faith
> in the ability of the school to promote social mobility

In my study the parents exhibited a general feeling that
the system was organized in the best way possible and the similarity
in what the schools had to offer made the move into secondary
education a non-controversial issue. Most of the families in the
Napier Intermediate sample did not know how the enrolment procedure
was organized and had not made any specific enqiries as to other
possible schools apart from the one that they had assumed their
child would be attending. There was no realization on the part of
these families that there was a differentiated private school
system of any consequence and no stated awareness of differentiated
class-based life chances. There was no voiced resentment about the
better chances that were available to some children who were
educated outside of the State system and there was an inherent faith

22. Ramsey, Sneddon, Grenfell and Ford - A.N.Z.J.S. Vol. 19 No. 2 1983.
(also see page 9 in same journal 'Talking to Families"

shown in the school system in its present form. I have to emphasise
that the sample was not typical or representative of other areas
in New Zealand, as there was a strong bias towards the stable family in
a fairly prosperous area of the country, with no unemployed
breadwinners in the families interviewed. It cannot be said
that the research results could be interpreted as being
representative of the rest of the country.

Some General Theory and related comments upon the research.

As the research progressed, some preconceived ideas as to what the results might have been, needed to be revised. The belief that there might be some dissatisfaction expressed by the parents about the school system proved to be unfounded. There was no resentment about the way the allocation of places to secondary school was organized. I believed from my experience teaching in other more'deprived'area of New Zealand, that there would be an increasing resentment of the system the further down the social heirarchy a family was placed and I thought that there would be a much greater mobility and varience between the educational experience of the parents and the educational experience of the child. In fact this was not the case, there was very little vertical or horizontal mobility and I found that the majority of the parents had attended the same school as their child. There was very little geographical mobility in this sample of families. There was a general feeling of all being well with the educational system as it was arranged at the moment. The schools, they felt were doing the best for their children and there was no feeling of animosity towards the more successful families even those with children at the fee paying schools. Most state school parents had no knowledge about the workings of the Private school system.

During the research, I found that there weresome clear differences between the families with children at State school and families with children at Private school. The Private school parents had given more thought over a much longer period to their childs education and were attributing their child's eventual success to the school and were exhibiting an air of personal responsibility for the childs educational experience. It is pertinent to mention Sharp and Green's statement that success accrues to children

of well-informed families.

> the good parent must be knowledgeable about the way the
> school operates... and .. the successful parent is one
> who is interested in the child's education and is motivated
> for his child to succeed (23)

The Private school families were more likely to say that
the school was providing an education in line with what they
philosophically required for their child. This was not exclusive
to the Private school parents however. I also found evidence to
support Sharp and Green's comment that:

> "Whilst a very high proportion were pleased that their
> children were'happy'at school, only a very small minority
> regarded the happiness of the child as a measure of the
> schools effectiveness (24).

About one quarter of the families mentioned the factor
of 'happiness' as being a significant indicator as to the success
of the school in my sample. Whereas the State school parents tended
to view happiness and academic success as an 'either', 'or', Private
school parents considered that both factors were equally essential
in the school and saw to it that their children received both.

23. R. Sharp & A. Green - 'Education and Social Control' pub
Routledge and Kegan, London. Page 198.
24 As above page204.

Private schools in the New Zealand Context and their
Pertinence to the study.

Although there is no readily available research about the

Private fee paying school inNew Zealnd,there have been many

comments made about the nature of this type of education, its

societal implications and its relative merits and faults. It is

difficult to evaluate these comments without specific research on

the topic. As it is impossible to justly evaluate this type of

education without this information, much of the criticism, that

is aimed at the schools is in the form of value-judgements about

the philosophy of education in general and the effect that these

schools have upon the egalitarian goals of society . There is

no research of the form and content of Private school education

in New Zealand. The assumption that abolishing this type of school

would lead to greater egalitarianism is also speculative and even

if the connection between schooling and social structure could be

proved, there is still the societal and governmental attitude

that fosters and supports these schools.

> The Commission feels constrained to state from the beginning
> that the ultimate resolution to this problem.. is to be
> found rather within the realms of politics and of community
> attitude and belief than of pure logic or educational
> theory (25).

There is still no real desire on the part of government to

be seen either supporting or disbanding these schools. The high

tuition fees are said to make them socially exclusive and they are

25. The Commission on Education 1962 page 698.

accused of sectarianism and fostering privelege:

> Public schools in New Zealand have never stood for a
> particular form of learning, but for a particular form
> of environment [26]

In the same volume page 61 they point out that in February 1970,
'the joint cabinet caucus committee on state aid for Independant
schools stated financial assistance was increased from 1,000,000
dollars to 2,500,000 dollars from 1st February with further per-
centage increases over a seven year period. This would take the
form of cheap loans, teacher training, capitation grants and part
of the pay for teachers',

The continued growth of the Private schools in the
intervening years and the present unsatisfied demand for places
at the top independant schools bears witness to the fact that
there has been no real effort on the part of governmental agencies
to incorporate the Private schools into the public system. There
is a reticence on the part of the government to intervene in the
present structure where it represents deeper class divisions .

Many writers have argued for the abolition of Private
schools on the grounds that they are class maintaining institutions.
The fact that there is a correspondance between the two factors
does not however mean that there is a dependance of one upon the
other.

The type of Secondary school attended, remains important

as a determinant of the length of one's school career
26. Baron in 'Education in a Small Democracy by Ian McLaren p.57.
    and 137.

and hence on one's examination success [27]

It is also claimed that having different types of school adds educational to class rigidity and that the private market starves the state schools of the resources they need to attain high standards. Assumptions of this type, for which there is no factual proof, typify the often impassioned response that some commentators use to discredit or support Private schools

Jencks says that :

the difference between state and private primary schools seem to have little measurable effect upon any measurable attribute of those that attend them.

At a higher level in the system this may not be the case however, as attributes are certainly not all measurable and the qualities of personality and character that Private schools profess to inculcate, may not be noticeable until later in the educational career of the pupil. If we are to have greater social equality as an aim and I have sympathy for that outcome, then I tend to agree with Hauser that :

reductions in societal and economic inequality are not likely to be accomplished by such indirect means as the equalization of opportunities for schooling [28]

The inequalities are manifestations of our society that will not be eradicated through the actions of the schools, especially as these inequalities are not viewed as a social ill by a large percentage of the population. (At least in the 51 families in my sample).

7. Halsey, Heath and Ridge -'Origins and Destinations', Oxford 1980.
8. Hauser, Robert - "on Boudon's model of social mobility' page 911 American Journal of Sociology Vol. 81 No.4 1976.

Despite the emphasis on equality, there exists in
New Zealand, as everywhere, social strata and membership
in a social stratum had serious consequences. Available
data shows that occupation, education and income are
closely inter-related and determine an individual's
position or social stratum membership. This in turn
has an important effect on an individual's ability
to achieve the tangible and the intangible rewards of
life' [29]

The Private schools are part of this system of inequality
and can be shown to support particular class groups within society.
This is not to say however that they do this to the detriment
of other groups necessarily and it could be shown that the sel-
ection of children into schools suited to the wishes of the
parents was a good policy for all schools and worked to the
effect of reducing class conflict. The private schools are
entrenched within the society and are synptomatic of it. Change
will only come through societal action. The parents of the
dominant families will, at all costs, fight to retain their
relative status, no matter what the system.

"In an open society, the possibility of downward mobility
for their children, galvanize high status parents into
frenzied activity"[30]

My research supported the view that upper strata parents
spent more time time considering the investment potential of

29. Collette and Webb 'New Zealand Society - Contemporary
     perspectives' Wiley and son Sydney 1973.

30. Musgrove - 'School and the Social Order' 1980
     quote from 'The Family, Education and Society' page 3. 1971.

education and began the planning for their child's education
at an earlier age. The parents with children at Private schools
were more concerned with the end product of education and the
part that their son was to play in the world. If the Private
schools did not exist there would be other alternatives for
these families. One parent said that he was seriously considering
broadening his son's education by taking him on an extended world
trip. Some would engage private tutors and others would be
educated outside the country. It therefore seems quite facile
to try and attempt a reduction in class privilege through an
attack on the Private school system.

> A well-placed family unit will on the other hand, strive
> (I ought to add; more often than not) to push the child
> so that he does'nt fail (even if he does'nt enjoy a great
> success). I am therefore led to advance as quite central
> to the explanation the notion that the social situation
> of the family effects the structure of the system of
> preferences'.(31)

All families however make a rational and considered
appraisal of the value of education to their child. In its
most obvious form, this is seen in the decision as to whethet
they should allow their child to stay on longer at school. The
decision making process is more in the form of a constant
appraisal, in most cases, where increasing failure experiences,
convince the family and the child that he is not achieving well
enough to carry on in the system. Some families, with the
resources to do so, will transfer their child into another

31. Raymond Boudon ' The Unintended Consequences of Social Action'
        pub 1977 MacMillan 1982.

track that will lead to more successful outcomes either in the Private school system or in different schools in the state system.

> If previous performance at school does not bode too well for the future, a child's family may well decide that there is too much of a risk involved ...... faced with a decision about schooling, a family have at least some notion as to how useful of valuable the different options are, it will consider the risks involved in choosing one or other of the paths and will also appreciate the risks involved in basing such a decision, more or less decisively on the prior performance of the child at school [32]

The complex relationship between society and education is highlighted in Boudon's recent work, where for example he considers the problem of the Prisioner's Dilemma. He tries to show that the actions of individuals may produce societal results that prove to have outcomes that are in direct opposition to the desired outcome, This idea is further developed by Musgrove[30] where he shows a move to try and achieve greater egalitarianism. for example abolishing the 11plus examination,can lead to even greater inequality. It is not a simple matter of altering the the educational opportunity arrangements, the families with the advantages of economic and cultural capital will make the best informed choices.

In the case of families sending their children to Private colleges there is very little risk. They know, as they

32. Boudon ibid page 190.

themselves attended this type of school, that the school will
be a successful experience for their child. The investment in
this type of education has been a part of the family life of
the upper stata of New Zealand society since the schools were
first established in this country. Some of the families in
my sample had had four generations of their family attending the
same private school. One family that I recorded said that the
great-great grandfather had been a foundation member of Christ's
College Christchurch and as the owner of one of the largest·
sheep stations in Canterbury had provided a large part of the
initial funds for the initial setting up of the school. The
investment for these families goes far beyond the provision of
school fees. They are very often patrons of the school, providers
of special funds for building purposes and financial members
of Old Boys Associations. They have a strong belief in the value
of this type of education and want the schools to give their child
a thorough grounding in that strange mixture of co-operativeness
and competitiveness that constitutes the life of Private schools.
The college where two thirds of the private school class were
transferring (Wanganui Collegiate) was part of the family
tradition in all of the cases.

The children at the state school were also attending the
same school as their parents and it is as well not to lose
sight of this fact when considering the force of tradition in
school choice. All the parents in the sample were in fact
sending their children to the traditional family school. It would
have been unlikely for a child to go against this trend whether
he was at State or Private school. There is as little antipathy
towards the Private schools by State school parents as there
is antipathy by Private school parents towards the State school
families. The reference made to 'alienation'and ' false
consciousness' in neo-Marxist writings was difficult to support

in this research. In these interviews, the families were aware
of social differentiation and their own limited social opportunities,
but the overall impression was that they liked the system as it
was and felt that they were making real decisions based upon
their experiential view of the world. (whether that experiential
view is any less accurate or realistic than the view of the
elite members of society is questionable). The 'false consciousness'
can often be a simple lack of understanding about something
that is common knowledge to the social science researcher. Perhaps
this comment from Boudon needs further consideration:

> Many contemporary analyses of the relation between social
> origins and aspirations has recourse to deterministic models
>
> which consider family behaviour patterns as false choices
>
> imposed by social structures which are described as being
>
> lived as authentic choices by introducing the more of
>
> less complex complex hypothesis of 'alienation' or'false
>
> consciousness·

He continues:

> ·....the same vulgate has it that socio-professional
>
> status or the professional level reached by a particular
>
> individual are the result of social determinisms. But the
>
> usually weak statistical correlations upon which this
>
> interpretation is based do not in any way imply an
>
> elimination of the notions of choice and freedom [33]

Explaining why people do not make the choices that are available
to them is a difficult task. It may not be enough to say that

33.   ibid page 191 and 201 Boudon.

they do not make a choice because of a lack of real understanding of how the world operates, or because they have been misled to believe the inevitability of the capitalist system as it is. There seems to be more involved as to why for example some people who have large resources do not send their children to Private schools (there were two in my sample) and why three parents who were in poor financial straights sacrificed there own livestyle to enable their children to attend the Private school.

The resource factor and the personal wealth of the parents was a major determinant in the placement of a child at a private school, but it was not the only factors. Some rich people sent their children to State schools and some poorer people sent their children to Private colleges. Do these examples justify saying that the Private schools are exclusive and encouraging of sectarianism as claimed in 'Class and Destinations'? or is there sufficient evidence to allow us , along with Salganik and Karweit for example[34] to say that,

> Other factors besides social class, however, also
> differentiate public and private school students, so that
> social class is at best an imperfect control. More importantly
> even if one were able to determine and measure all the
> factors leading parents to choose a Private education,
> the comparison would still be problematic. Choice effects
> not only the population of the private school, but also
> important characteristics of the school environment

34. Salganik and Karweit Sociology of Education Vol 55 No. 2/3
    April/July 1982 page 158. 'Voluntarism and Governance
    in Education' This journal is devoted to this topic as a
    response to the latest Coleman Report on Private and
    Public Schools.

Also in their article on'Voluntrism and Governance in education',we find another statement that I think underlies the essential difference between Private and Public schools and explains why the two types of school will never be like each other even without social class differences.[35] The argument hinges on the fact that Private schools have a choice in who they educate:

> Public schools are different from Private schools
> because they must take all students including the
> disinterested and the unmotivated and those for whom
> schooling seems to hold little value or purpose. Public
> schools are different from Private schools because they
> have an unwilling clientele, a lack of role commitment
> and fragmented authority for establishing and maintaining
> social order within the school. Public schools are also
> different to Private in that they lack the effective
> means of eliminating those students who won't or can't
> learn within the system. (page 159)

35. James Coleman, Thomas Hoffer and Sally Kilgore 'Cognitive
     Outcomes in Public and in Private Schools. See page 65
     Sociology of Education April/ July 1982 Vol 55 No. 2/3.

Class and Power.

"A Relational analysis of schools becomes meaningful only
if it is accompanied by an understanding of how power and
knowledge link schools to the inequalities produced in the larger
social order (36)

A study of this kind which is concerned with the differential
provision of education is sure to become enmeshed in the defin-
itional problems of class and power. Some writers have tried
to define these terms, others, including Marx and Gramsci do not
give such definitions but allow the meaning of these terms to
arise from the discussion of the machinations of social and
economic life that form part of the capitalist society. It
is, in practice, very difficult to assign a particular family
to a particular class according to any of the definitions. I
used the word 'clout' as an element that is intricately tied
up with the placement of pupils in Private or Public schools
and I think that this is valid as I see in this word, a
combination of the Weberian idea of power which is the stratification
notion that in theory could place people in a heirarchy one
above another. In practice, it is what is done with the power
that is of prime importance. The word 'clout' refers to the
combination of potential and kinetic power, the latent possibility

36. H. Giroux -'Schooling and the Myth of Objectivity'. McGill
    Journal of Education XVI, 3 page 294.

and investiture of power within the person combined with the
practical use and interpretation of that power. In this sense,
'clout' relates to the concepts of Michael Apple and his
consideration of the importance of economic as well as political
forces exerted by pressure groups and individuals within the
society. It refers to those people who are 'determining'of
their life status compared with those who are presented with
more 'predetermined' life chances.

Also within this notion of 'clout' there is a belief that
constraint mechanisms are at work. The ideology of the ruling
elite being superimposed over the ideologies of other groups.
This may be as Willis describes a working class recreating
itself in opposition to the capitalist order, or it may be a
broadly based conflict of interests throughout the system. I
tend not to place emphasis upon the proposition that the division
is a conflict between classes so much as to view conflict as
the product of human nature as well as a conflict between
dominant groups (not necessarily only of the Capitalist order.)
In the interviews of this research, the greatest conflict of
interest was often within the top echelons of the power elite.
There was also the same type of conflict between the less powerful
families. This leads me to wonder about the practicality of
the definitions of class that rely upon the concept of class
self-identity, a concept that pervades Willis' work for example.
It may be that one way to avoid the pessimism and fatalism that
can be engendered through a belief in self-perpetuating social
rigidity is to underplay this definition of class, in favout
of the economic and power definitions. At least the economic
and political have the propensity for change that would
be more rapid than the deeply-embedded social predetermination
theory. The idea of power accounts for the actions of individuals

and groups, it does not necessarily explain social change
or change within the social structures as a whole, as this can
be the result of perverse effects and counter moves by other
individuals and groups.

In accepting Michael Young's interpretation of power
and ideology; perhaps more emphasis could be placed upon the
practical implications of the exercise of power and the relation-
ship of power to social change.

> dialectical relationship between access to power and
> the opportunity to legitimise certain dominant
> categories, and the process by which the availability
> of such categories to some groups enable them to assert
> power and control over others [37]

How do the mass of the population rationalize power
relationships? Is there a reasoned acceptance that is not
only historical in its modern manifestations, but also
advantageous to society in general? In true Mannheim tradition,
education can be seen as part of wider society. The socializing
of pupils into the ideologies of the dominant elites often
results in conflicts with humanitarian and egalitarian principles.
The form/context distinction made by Dale for instance is
important to this study as the consideration of the diverse types
of school and the social reproductive function of education,
underlies most of the research.

37 M.F. D. Young 1971 page 8.

Richard Harker says:

·there are emerging distinctive life styles between

certain groups in New Zealand society and ....social position

is increasingly dependant upon occupation, and occupation

is increasingly dependant upon educational achievement,

which in turn, is loaded in favour of children from

homes which already have high status, then the scene

is quite clearly set for the emergence of a class system

of stratification in New Zealand·[38]

My research supports the existance of social class in
the more crystalized form that is predicted by McGee but would
show that the phenomenom is a stable structure and not a form
emergent from an egalitarian past. It is also rather simplistic
to relate these class differentials to occupational structure
as the upper elite are seldom part of the occupational statistics
and if they are, they are recorded with occupational groups that
are misleading as to the families true social position, for
example,'deer farmer' or 'land agent'could signify that they
were involved as workers in the labour process. The fact that
they may also be Directors of large companies and owners of
vast resources is a factor lost in the statistics.

Another point to consider is that people have a view
of reality and ideological assumptions that are in accordance
with their own experiences. We must not underestimate the
logical and reasoned deductions of all classes of people to select

38. Richard Harker ' Social Differentiation and Schooling'
    page 336.
        P.D. K Ramsey - ed. The Family and the School in
        New Zealand Society, Carlton Vic. 1975 (Streaming
        and Social Class - Richard Harker).

the best possible 'corresponding' world (I use correspondence here
as meaning the agreement amongst truth and validity statements).
It is also a fact that few theorists consider, that individual
action as we know from psychology and Skinnerian techniques,
is more prone to re-occur and not be extinguished through the
process of intermittant reinforcement. A world that provides
a constant ideology may not be the most resistant to potential
change.

Any analysis of the ideological basis used as the central
arbitrator by the ruling class can only be researched using an
eclectic approach. The ideology incorporates the whole of
man's social knowledge. It is in the interpretation and the selection
from amongst this corpus of knowledge that the impetus for change
will occur.

Section Two.

TALKING TO THE FAMILIES.

SECTION TWO

Personal Thoughts on Approaching the Study & Methodology.

In the first section of this study, I tried to explain my own
particular theoretical stance and to explain how my interests in this
topic evolved.   In this second section I will write up the method-
ology that I used for the study, outline the preparation and
present the results.

My intention was to make an ethnographic study of the families
of two classes at Form Two level and through a process of personal
interviews in the homes of the children, attempt to produce some
findings that would uncover the major factors involved, when the
family gave consideration to the choice of college for their child.
I had a personal interest in finding out exactly what was occurring
at this important time of the child's educational career as my own
son was transferring to college at the end of the 1983 year and I
realised the important soul-searching that many families had to go
through in making this choice. My own readings in educational
studies and my own teaching experience (ten years at this level
of schooling), had led me to believe that there were many possible
factors that would be operative in this decision making process.
Exactly what these factors were in practice and how much they were
determining factors was an objective of the study.   I had surmised
that economic factors, class power and status relationships,
religion, tradition and the knowledge and experience of the parents
would all be important factors in the final choice of school.
I wished to discover the relative importance of these factors in
parental decision making. The absence of related empirical
research in the field of the family's contribution to school
selection was a motive for this study.

There seem to have been many assumptions made by the providers
of education services about exactly what parents are looking for
in college education. These are mostly expounded by media comments
and often do not go beyond the newspaper letter type factors such
as uniforms, discipline and corporal punishment, sex education and
so on. I believed that there were much more important fundamental
factors that were underlying the choices being made by parents
and that these choices were in reality not sensationalist, but
were more firmly rooted in an underlying social theory. Was there
then a common factor that was a determinant of parental choice,
that lay outside of purely school considerations?

Another reason why I decided to tackle this study in this way
was that I consider there is a decided lack of any similar research
that actually involves the researcher going into the home of the
informant to discuss the schooling of their children. Generally
this research can be shown to be questionable in that it is either
carried out by those with a special interest in sponsoring a
particular system, or the research is limited by the fact that it
concentrates on one particular section of the population and does
not include representative elements of various races, classes or
gender.

In my study, I tried to overcome some of these difficulties by
selecting two classes, one from the local Intermediate school and
another from a private school. I certainly do not claim that the
study was representative as it was limited to fifty-one families,
but it does have the advantage of being one of the only studies
that I have come across that actually includes in-depth interviews
with some of the families of the 'elite' members of society.
Generally sociologists look 'down' rather than 'up' - empirical
research is more common amongst lower social orders. As a piece
of grounded research it proved to be effective in that it asked
questions of families that were already being considered by family
members, and asked the questions at a time when the answers were

uppermost in the minds of the respondents. To many of the families
interviewed, the thought that they had given to the choice of college
was very apparent, even though in many cases the actuality of the
outcome was almost a foregone conclusion. Most of the families
considered that they were involved in a conscious decision-making
process and were happy to assist with my questionnaire. In fact
my major problem with the interviews was restricting the length
of interview. I calculated that an hour would be long enough to
discuss the points raised in the questionnaire. In most interviews
I had to consciously think about the passing of time, as many
families were quite willing to participate at length and encouraged
the discussion to continue for two to three hours. As well as
noting the responses made to the questions, I also wrote out notes
at length about the family environment, family commitment to educ-
ation and other factors that I thought seemed to have a relevance
to the choice of college. In one or two cases these factors arose
out of the research and were incorporated into the succeeding
interviews. For the first half of the interviews, I also made
a tape recording of the last question on the questionnaire, which
was a general summary question. However, I found that this was not
a particularly satisfactory thing to do because it tended to inhibit
the rest of the interview, (having a tape-recorder present) and also
the summary question invariably turned out to become an addition
to what had already been said. Together with difficulties that I
experienced with the technical aspects of recording and the making
of notes from the replay, I came to the conclusion that it was better
to concentrate upon the written summary of the interview that I
made as soon after the interview as possible, and the later notes
that were made the following day. This tended to coalesce some
of the main factors by bringing together the factual answers given
by the families with the other observation factors that I, as
researcher, built into the composite picture. In this way, when
I came to type out the results of each families' responses the

final result was an overall picture of the families objective and subjective views, a combination of the reasons that the family had for choosing a particular school, as well as a consideration of the structural factors, possibilities and limitations that were acting upon the family as it made the choice.

Preparation for the Study.

Initially, I spent some time reading recent writings in the area in which I was to conduct the study and the first term was spent organising my own ideas as to how to carry out the research. I looked at various possible approaches to the study and decided that an ethnographic, participant observer approach would probably provide the most fruitful results in the time at my disposal. In this sense I was limited in that the study was to be completely self-financed and was to be very much of a lone exercise. If there had been others involved in the work, as there often are in observational studies, it may have enhanced the study by allowing a greater cross-flow of ideas. As it was, I had to read thoroughly and hope that my perspective and grounding were based in a generally acceptable tradition. The help and assistance of Dr. Roy Nash, who conferred with me during this initial stage should be mentioned at this point as being of the upmost importance for pointing the study in the right direction. At times when I began to doubt my own theoretical sensitivity, it was stabilizing to have the feet firmly placed back on the ground and to be guided into the essentials of my study area.

When I had decided how to tackle the study, I set about arranging the practical details of conducting interviews. In the first place permission was obtained from the District Senior Inspector of schools for the Hawkes Bay region, permission was obtained from the principals of both the schools where the research was based and contact and assistance was made with the teachers of the two classes that I would be using for the study. It was then a matter of writing to the parents of each child in the class, an introductory letter

that explained the purpose of the study, my credentials and telling them that I would be making phone contact with them during the following month to arrange more specifically when it would be convenient for me to call and see them in their homes and to explain any further queries they had at the time (Appendix 2). I felt that it was very important to reassure the parents that the information was being used for a purpose that was not official in the sense of a compilation of statistics, but was more a talk with them, during which they could respond to some questions and which would provide me with the ideas that would generalise with the other interviews into a composite picture of the thoughts of families as to the choice of Secondary school.

The two classes chosen were the Form Two class at the local State Intermediate school and the Form 2A Class at an Independent school. Both were located in the Napier/ Hastings area. Both of the schools were very glad to assist me with this research and were very helpful in the compiling of class lists and addresses of all the pupils in each class. Both the teachers were personal acquaintances of mine and this made this part of the work much easier. I then proceeded to map out the locations of all the children on the two maps of Napier and Hawkes Bay. Two maps were needed as some of the pupils were from well outside the immediate Napier confines. The Napier map included the residential location of most of the State Intermediate homes apart from a few at Clive (a small village five miles towards Hastings) and Bay View (which is a coastal village ten miles to the North of Napier). The other map of the Hawkes Bay and Havelock North included the location of the seven pupils who attended the State Intermediate and did not live in Napier as well as the Private school boys, apart from the three who lived in Napier. The State Intermediate catchment was located in the central City and business area including the prestigious Hill area, whilst the Private school, although also located in a prestigious area, collected most of

its pupils from a wider geographical area although there were a
large number living within the zone that extended ten miles from
the school. Some of the pupils at the Private School were travelling
over 100 miles from their home to attend this school.

Once the locations of the pupil's homes had been plotted on the maps,
it was easier to tackle the interviews as they could be grouped into
geographical locations. For each batch of interviews (five or six),
I could then phone the family, have further discussion with them
about the questionaire and a convenient time when they would be
available for interview was arranged. During the next week or two,
I would then interview all of these families. The questionaire that
I used as a prompt sheet for the interviews can be seen as Appendix
One of this study.

Some Notes Concerning the Questionaire.

In designing the questionaire, I had in mind that it should be
concise, relevant to the precise information that I required from
the analysis of the answers and also capable of providing starting
points for any further discussion that the parents thought necessary
in reporting the factors that were affecting their family in choosing
a college for their child. In this, I tried to shape the questionaire
so that its eight basic items were developed from the first straight-
forward choice selection, increasing in involvement and complexity
until the last questions that required a viewpoint or opinion to be
given.

The Questions - Their Purpose and Correspondence with the Theoretical Model as well as Comments upon Trends in the Responses.

Question One was designed primarily to discover the colleges that
had been considered as possible choices for the child. The list
included all the possibilities in the Hastings/Napier area. There were
15 schools in all, including the Catholic Colleges and the Rudolf
Steiner school. The list did not include the various Private schools
outside of this area which were the choices of many of the parents of
the   children at Private school. In practice the schools zoned, so

that the State Intermediate had a choice of the five Napier Colleges.
For a boy this meant either 'Tamatea', 'Napier Boys High', 'Colenso'
or 'Taradale' and for a girl, 'Tamatea', 'Napier Girls High', 'Colenso'
or 'Taradale'. The parents then had a choice of either co-educational
schools or single-sex colleges and a choice between the older established
Napier High schools or the New Tamatea college. A study of the prospectus
of each of the colleges shows that there is a remarkable uniformity
between the subjects offered by the schools and great similarity in
the ways that the colleges are run (Appendix 3). The Napier Boys
college was a boarding facility but the total educational package
would not prove to be significantly different from the day boys education
and is certainly not to any degree different when compared with the
Private school offering. The boarding aspect of the Private education
system was an important consideration for the elite members of society
who chose this type of school for their child.

None of the State Intermediate families interviewed were going to
send their son to a college outside of the five that were offered by
the local education authority, even though two families had said
that at some time they had seriously considered 'St. John's' college for
religious reasons and 'Rudolf Steiner' for the different kind of
education offered.

The fact remains that all of the families chose from a very limited
sample of the possibilities and by far the majority chose the school
that was the closest - in most cases, the same school that they them-
selves attended. The parents seemed to have a fair knowledge of the
local schools as far as which had the best academic record, but this
did not seem to effect their choice in practice.

The first question concerning their knowledge of the possible
colleges was important to discover the amount of thought that the
family had attached to the choice, how long the family had been
considering the matter and the depth and breadth of their knowledge of
the colleges that were the potential choices for their children. It

was also a good starting point, as all the members of the family
present at the interview could air their views and begin making
contributions to the research responses. It was also a guide to
who would be making the major responses to the questions; who was
keen to discuss the choices, and what restrictions were placed upon
the family members by other members of the family as to how much
they could contribute to the discussion. As a warming up question
Question One worked well although it was largely irrelevant for
most of the families in the Private sub-sample as their choices
lay outside of the list presented, and no consideration had at any
time been given to any of the schools mentioned. The fact was that
the choice given by the Education Board in Napier had no relevance
to the parents of the Private School families and in the light of the
subsequent analysis the 'choice' was not a real one for the families
of the local Intermediate and it seemed more a case of democracy
being apparent, freedom of choice being seen as a possibility
and presenting an appearance of guiding the placement of children
in the various state colleges.

All the research with the families was carried out during the
middle term of the 1983 year and so all the families were in a
position where they were going to have to make a choice of college
for their child within the following two months. The families, I
discovered, were in various stages of readiness for making this
decision, with some saying that they were going to make up their
minds after the school had held its yearly 'Open Evening', when
parents could go along to each of the colleges and see what sort
of programme they were offering. (See Appendix 4.) This, in the
case of the Napier Intermediate parents who gave this sort of answer,
in fact, meant going and sitting in an assembly hall whilst the
headmaster and staff reported to the parents en masse about the
offerings at their college. Other parents were not even considering
the matter consciously as they had made the assumption that their
child would follow a pattern that they had themselves followed and

move through the school system along with the largest group of
children who move straight from the Napier Intermediate to the
Napier Girls or Boys High or the Colenso College. These three
colleges in practice, were the only choices that the parents made
in the total sample. Location and tradition seemed to be the major
factor for the parents of the children at the local Intermediate.
In the case of the Private school the choice was a much more
consciously thought about decision and although the choice of college
was still very much a tradition, I felt that there was more room for
negotiation. If the school that had been chosen from birth for
example, was in the doldrums, the parents had hedged their bets by
having their sons booked into an alternative prestigious college.
This would have been a last ditch move however, as the first
alternative for the parents who saw their chosen school on the decline
was to get things changed at the school either by getting a new
headmaster or generally putting pressure on the school for change,
something they could easily do by their influence in the community
and through the 'Old Boys' networks, the school governors and the
trustees. There was no sense of the parents of the Intermediate
school pupils having this effect apart from in one case where the
father was an older parent with grown up children and where he had
developed a thriving building business in Napier. He, through his
representation on the High School Board in Napier, could exercise
some influence and in this case it had obviously paid off, as his
elder daughters had been very successful at school, had very good
jobs in banks and local government and the family had a strong
personal friendship with the headmistress of the Napier Girls College
and had direct access to her at all times. This family was one of
the most aware as far as knowing the reputations of the various
High schools were concerned and were well enough informed to say
that the best school was the Girls High. It had been best for their
older daughters and had the best discipline and academic standards.
In general though, this type of expert knowledge of the standing of

each school was rarer in the families of children at the Intermediate
than it was in the families of the pupils at the Private school.
The Private school families as a group were very aware of the status
and standing of the schools that their children were most likely to
attend even though they may have resided hundreds of miles away.
It was still a fact that none of the Private school families had
altered their original choice of college in practice.

From the very start of the interviews, it became apparent that
there was developing a necessity to define terms exactly. Many
of the current cliches about education that refer to sex differences,
attainment levels and types of discipline & control   were in need
of specificity. The definition that each family had of these terms
and what exactly was 'good' education, almost needed fifty-two
differing definitions. The need, often expressed for firm discipline,
for instance, could mean anything in the range of the severest
corporal punishment regimes to being given extra prep., fairly
innocuous duties, or 'a talking to'. The other point that became
more apparent as the interviews continued was the fact that discipline
over work habits was very different from the other interpretation
of discipline over behaviour. In general, working class parents
saw discipline in terms of behavioural problems that they had at
home with the child, whereas higher status families tended to see
discipline more as an encouragement of good personal academic and
social work skills. Success in the competitive fields as laid
down by the school was of paramount importance to the upper class
parents whereas staying out of trouble and compliance within a
failure situation seemed to be more the punishment criteria for the
working class families.

In the case of the two families living in Clive there was an
interesting choice decision being made, in that the family nearest
to Havelock were actually in the zoned area for Havelock High School
(the most prestigious state school in the area) and yet their son was
going to go to the Napier Boys High as he had been a pupil of the
Napier Intermediate, whereas the othe family who lived on the

other side of Clive were within the catchment area for Napier Boys
High, yet the parents really wanted their child to be able to go
to the Havelock North High School because the child's local friends
were going to that school and because of its better reputation.
This family had written to the Education Board several times about
this possibility but were not having much success at the time of
the interview. They were seeking other ways of circumventing the
rules by using the Grandmother's address in Hastings for example
and were quite determined to succeed in their endeavour to get the
school they wanted. It would be interesting to see if they actually
did get their choice at the time of enrolment.

As a consumer of the system myself, I decided to ask the local
Education Board for enrolment forms for my own son who is in Form
Two, and to apply for admission to the Private schools that were
chosen by the parents, so that I had covered all the available
schools mentioned and chosen by the parents. As a parent rather
than purely a researcher, it became apparent that completely
different criteria applied to the admission to the private school
system than to state schools. The letters from the individual
private schools were personally addressed, were offering a service
that was acknowledged as a consumer/parent choice and were presented
in the form of a full account of all the social and sporting as
well as academic and traditional attributes of the schools. As a
comparison the prospectuses for four schools in the Napier zone were
requested. Three were sent from the Education Board with a note
that the other could be obtained from the college concerned. The
prospectus forms were remarkably similar to each other in their
offerings and the application forms in particular seemed to be more
a legal signing over of parental rights to the administration of
the schools concerned. They created the impression that the pupil
was subservient to the school's rules and discipline procedures
and that the parent took a background position in this regard, once
the forms had been signed.

"It is our intention that our daughter/son be
enrolled at .... High school and I/we
agree that I/we and my/our child will abide by the
conditions of entry laid down by the High School
Board and the Principal of the school selected.

        .... Mother

        .... Father

Date .... 19 ..   .. Guardian "

(This was not so obvious in the Tamatea College Prospectus which
was not issued by the Education Board and obtained directly from
the school.)

  The phrasing of the prospectuses are decidedly more authoritarian
in the case of the State schools, a fact which may set the tone of
all parents considerations of the schools.

   'We are prepared to allow ....' 'cannot be accepted....'

   'must be worn....' 'must take a signed note ....'

   'we expect that..' 'parents will exercise formal

   control, support the school.....' and so on.

These were all taken from one prospectus of one of the state colleges
at just a casual glance. I think that the point is made however.
The parents of state school pupils are expected to have a completely
different relationship with the school than are the parents who send
their children to Private Colleges.

   "the children of managers and professionals are

   taught reliance within a broad set of constraints;

   the children of production workers are taught obedience"

               F.N.1.

Footnote 1. Samuel Bowles - Unequal Education and the Reproduction
      of the Social Division of Labour.

This also has repercussions in terms of total parental involvement which was much higher for Private school families. The Private schools utilized the resources of its parents more comprehensively than the State school.

> "The successful schools had also developed harmonious home-school relations (p290). Successful schools had utilized community resources very fully. This was reflected in the higher rate of parental involvement than was achieved elsewhere." F.N.2.

This two way inter-action between school & home probably has important implications for the relative success of each type of school.

Some of the parents who said that they had at some stage given thought to another school were generally those who had some years before moved to a different area and planned the education of their children along with their overall family plans some time in the past. None of the parents had given any real consideration to the choice in the last year and therefore the choice was a fait accompli and non-controversial. A pattern that started to come out of the study even at the earliest stages, was that most parents were satisfied with the system and there was very little criticism of the present structure. Most parents work under the assumption that all the schools offer the same, therefore their child has an equal chance with every other child of that age group. Even with the two parents who said 'every school is as bad as another', there was still that tacit assumption that the educational offerings were basically egalitarian. There was very seldom a criticism of the school, even when the particular child was failing in the system. It was generally explained as a failure because of the lack of dedication of the

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Footnote 2. P. Ramsey, D. Sneddon, J. Grenfell and I. Ford -
Successful & Unsuccessful Schools. p.290.

pupil and it was often expressed that a good school was one that
would make the child buckle down and work and that the individual
effort expended by the child was the only factor that had any bearing
upon the academic success and life chances of the pupil.

Even the parents who had failed within the school system themselves
and who at the present time had children failing comparatively with
other children, would voice the opinion that it was an explainable
and unavoidable failure and in general had an accepting attitude
towards the situation. This could be part of a 'false consciousness'
or a matter of psychological 'self-deceit'. Probably the poorest
family that I visited for example, even though they lived in very
basic conditions in the worst part of Napier and even though the
father was often out of work at the freezing works and two of his
daughters had been unemployed for some time (though not at the
moment), the father was still able to 'swear by' the Napier Girls
College. There was no connection made between the time spent in
school and the experience of later life chances on the part of the
majority of parents. This of course did not apply to the families
who were sending their children to Private schools or families
that had very successful children within the state system. One
interpretation of my findings could be that amongst the Working
Class families, who were precisely the ones that were going to
produce most of the children to fill working class jobs, there was
no sense of the school reproducing society in its present form and
there was no thought given of the heirarchical structures that
were emphasised within the school system. The higher status families
probably had a better understanding of the possibilities within the
structural arrangements of society and it was precisely these
families that were able to guide their children into the success
channels of the societal structure.

Question Two.   Who Decides?

The second question asked of the parents was, 'who influenced the choice of college'. I had assumed that the mother, father, the child itself, relations and friends would have the say and that I would be able to distinguish who had the most say. As it happened I found that there was an important category that I did not specify and this was the influence in the choice of brothers and sisters. Older brothers and sisters were quite influential in assisting in the decision making although they were not the final arbitrator. As a general rule here, I found that the parent who had most of the say at the interview seemed to be the decision-maker, although in nearly all cases the decision was not arrived at without some discussion with other members of the family. The parent who had the most successful education themselves seemed to be the person at the interview who contributed the most to the discussion. In other respects this seemed to be an arbitrary factor. Some of the families were able to say immediately who made the decision, for example in the case of the long distance truck driver, the father was away from home and the mother made the decision for the children without any recourse to the husband. In other families there was some discussion about the matter with an agreement along the lines of the mother making the basic decision, but with the father being able to over-ride her if he wanted to (which he never seemed to). In most of the upper class families, it was a decision made by the father or mother and both parents were always in agreement about the decision. It proved to be impossible to grade the contribution of each family member to the decision making process. Most of the advice that was received into the family came as hearsay from other neighbours and friends in the case of the working class families and there seemed to be a status difference here too, in that the responders in the private school group were more likely to say that it was a decision made strictly within the family or with some

'advice from the wider family' - namely the grandparents.

The role of tradition and the previous educational experiences of the parents is discussed later in the study. I agree completely with the account given by Connell in 'Making The Difference' concerning the logical complexity of the choice made by upper class families and am in agreement with him as to the importance that the choice of college has to the continuation of the status position of the family, the concept of cultural capital and the ideas of maintenance of hegemonic tradition.

> "Her father's account of the decision revealed a
> remarkably sophisticated analysis of the merits and the
> recent histories of the two schools, in which the
> decision finally went for the Private school because
> he felt the push for egalitarianism in the state
> system resulted in less of a commitment to the very
> brightest students."   F.N. 3.

One of the parents who was very lucid about what his philosophy of education was, expounded this view in great detail. As one of the few parents who had been upwardly mobile from the upper middle class to the elite class, (he was Paediatrician for the Hawkes Bay with a prestigious private practice,) made it quite clear that the schools of recent years had pandered far too much to the less able children and to those children who were not prepared to make a real effort and make personal sacrifice. The remedial programmes of the state school were a complete waste of the tax payer's money and the thrust of educational provision should, in the country's interests, be in the direction of the pursuit of excellence. This belief in the value of rigid streaming and concentrating of

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Footnote 3.   R.W. Connell, D.H. Ashenden, S. Kessler & G.W. Dowsett -
"Making the Difference" Schools Families and Social
Division. p.135.

the kids in the top stream were symptomatic of the views of many
parents in the elite group that I visited.

After I had looked at who made the choice of college, I then
turned my attention in the third question to the <u>factors influencing
the decision</u>.

Question 3.   Factors Influencing the Decision

The three broad categories of:- economic considerations,
geographic location, and social considerations were used in the
questionnaire as a basis for discussion with the parents. I tried
to determine which of these factors was most important and in many
ways this question proved to be the crux of the interview as the
family could expand the question into detailed discussion of each
of the factors or concentrate on the one particular factor of
importance to them.

In working class families, the economic factors were discussed
within the choice-possibilities that were realistically open to them.
For instance, it would not have been a consideration to a family to
consider the opportunity cost of private school fees when they were
discussing economic problems in providing a school uniform at the
state school, or being able to afford the bus fare to send their
child an extra few miles down the road to an alternative school.

The economic factor was on a more basic, but none-the-less
just as determining level, in working class families, as it was in
families with greater economic means, who were discussing economic
factors in terms of the problem of having four or five children at
Private school at the same time and facing a cost of over twenty
thousand dollars per year, or one family's consideration of whether
it would not be better to send their child on 'a round-the-world
trip' which would cost about the same as the school fees, an experience
which they thought might provide a more relevant education. Other
families who were marginal to the elite class were in the process
of deciding how to get the maximum benefit from a large but limited
amount of finance and were making choices like - should the school

fees at college be avoided by using the state system and thereby
having the extra resources later on, when their child reached the
seventh form and then being able to use the finance to support
their child through tertiary education.

The third question concerned general factors influencing choice
of college and the second part of this question asked about the
importance of the geographic location of the college in relation
to their home and whether this had any bearing upon making a decision.
In the case of many of the families of girls there was comment made
that the family liked to have their daughter close by as the dangers
of getting to and from school were an important factor. It seemed
important that the school was at least within biking range and in
all cases the family chose the college that was geographically
closest for their daughters. It would have been interesting to
have interviewed some elite families and to have found out what
they had decided for their daughters. As it was, I could not make
any comparisons here, only to say that location played a more
significant part in choosing colleges for working class girls than
it does for boys. For the boys, location was only important to the
working class families due to its connection with the cost of
transport to and from school (the bus fares would be higher) and the
fact that having to travel further required more time and where the
boy had a part-time job on a milk run or delivering papers, then
travel could interfere with the more important task of keeping his
job. In a couple of cases it seemed that school was just an
unavoidable activity that interrupted the part-time work as far as
the child was concerned.

With the children of upper class parents, geographical consid-
erations were of relatively minor import. The decision as to which
college to attend had often been made many years before and the
transport arrangements had to be organised to complete the school
choice already made. Some families were sending their children to

Christs College in Christchurch, others to Auckland Grammar.
Many had considered both of these and the geographical location
had little part to play in the choice. The only relevant factors
about location for these families were if there were any relatives
or family back-up in the area in which the school was based. One
family said that they had sent their first child to Wanganui
Collegiate and had relatives in that area but would quite like to
visit a different area for their son, as they spent a lot of their
time going to the school for exeats and social and sporting functions.
They had seen and done everything in Wanganui. If they actually
make the choice of Rathkeale which was their second choice, it
would be an interesting example of a family that does not abide
by the rule of sending their child to the traditional school. I
don't think they are likely to finally make this decision and if
they do, I believe that there were other factors operating within
the family that an even more in-depth interview might have divulged.

The locational choice of the mass of families however is shaped
by the zoning provisions of the local education board. Although
offering more choice than some Boards around the country, they still
tended to blinker the eyes of parents to the other alternatives
outside of the four schools offered. I think they would do well
to consider -

    "What is a zone to the Department is an educational

    life sentence to a working class child." F.N. 4.

For the great mass of children, they are fed into a system at an
early age and are stamped from the start with a route until they
are fed out of the other end of the educational system. It is
the exceptional child that manages to run the race without blinkers
and it is the elite who manage to run the inside position.

Footnote 4.   R.W. Connell, D.J. Ashenden, S. Kessler & G.W. Dowsett.

        "Making the Difference" Schools Families and

        Social Division. p.71.

"Among students whose parents have attained a high
education level school achievement is not a very
sensitive indicator of aspiration level.   The
lower the educational level of the parents (hence
on average the lower the social status,) the greater
the sensitivity of the aspiration level with respect
to school achievement."   F.N. 5.

Within the third area of question three, I looked at the social
considerations that might have a bearing upon the ultimate choice,
and I found this to be the most interesting area of study of the
three considered. The question brought strong responses from some
families and in working class families brought some eloquent
contributions from some of the girls especially. The upper class
families saw these considerations as of great importance, but here
it was the judgement of the parents that was important. With some
of the working class girls there was a definite tendency for them
to want to go on to college with their friends and where the split
had developed between Colenso and Napier Girls High because of the
geographical considerations, there was a strong pull for the child
to want to go to the school where most of her friends were going
or where two or three of her best friends were going. In all cases
the parents also thought that this was an important consideration
and thought that their daughter would be 'better-off' and 'happier'
with her friends. Other girls chose the college on the basis of
older friends whom they associated with and who were already
attending a college and could tell them about it.

Footnote   5.   Raymond Boudon. - Education, Opportunity and
                 Social Inequality. pp 26/27.

This factor did not seem so important to the boys in the sample
and only two mentioned the fact that they had thought about the
college where their friends were going. The fact that the school
was single-sex or coeducational did not seem to concern any of the
children, although it was difficult to judge this when the child
was making comment in front of his parents. The question of single
sex or co-education assumed more prominance when the parents were
explaining their social reasons for choosing one school rather than
another. The general feeling was that the single-sex school had
more to offer the child educationally and that the fewer distractions
of that type of environment was better for the child's academic
progress. Also the discipline was seen as stronger in that type
of school (also a prerogative of better work standards in the eyes
of most parents). One or two parents put forward the view that
the social benefits of co-education were good for their child -
in both cases the family had all male children and the school was
seen as a way of their children getting a balanced introduction to
members of the opposite sex. This was not a very important
consideration however in choosing the college. By far the more
important consideration was choosing the college that would make
the child buckle down to concentrated school work and work to the
best of their ability, and this favoured the Napier Girls High
and the Napier Boys High schools.

In the interviews with the upper class families, it became apparent
that the social factor was probably the most important consideration
in choice of school. All the parents knew where all the other
children in the class were going the following year (the parents
of the working class children mostly did not even have an acquaintance
with more than three other pupils in their child's class). The
parents of the elite group were very knowledgeable about what the
various private and state colleges had to offer their child socially.
In the cases where the son was going to leave the private school

system and go state, the parents were very concerned about the
influence that other pupils at the state school would have upon
their child. They had checked up to make sure that the discipline
and control system within the college was sufficient to enable their
child not to be bothered by 'rabble-rousers' and they had checked
to see that there was a system of 'streaming' that would allow
their child to *avoid associating* too much with the 'riff-raff'
and the children who are 'not at school to learn'. It became clear
that these parents would soon move their children back into the
private system if they found that their wishes were not being met
(some had done so before at Contributing school level, others at
Intermediate and others said that they would do this if necessary).
Private school is very much a system of people of the upper group
in society being able to remove their children from the influence
of the 'slacker' members of society.

Some upper class parents expressed this as a way of protecting
their children from the 'fourth form toughies'. It is a notable
factor *that* the private school that I surveyed had no violence of a
physical kind between the children. The parents would have been
very outspoken in preventing any of this type of aggression or
bullying. Aggression had always to be formally channelled through
organized contact sports and was generally frowned on by staff,
parents and pupils alike; 'self-control' being the operative words.
In choosing a private college, the parents were very concerned that
their children should be amongst others of a like kind, who shared
the same value system. Two parents voiced the opinion that they
had been confirmed in their choice of Wanganui by virtue of the fact
that that college had a pupil intake *which* was from a wider strata
of occupational groups and from broader backgrounds than the pupils
of Rathkeale for instance. They thought that Rathkeale concentrated
more on providing a good education for those with a more agricultural
background. Most of the pupils at that college came from what they

considered a rather limited area of the economy. It was important, they thought, that their child should be introduced to children whose fathers were business people, professional people and city people, as well as the farmers whom they already knew. There was still a strong sense of the 'Townies' and those from the country being different races of people, who had to be introduced to each other and made aware of the needs of the other. This was expressed by the farmers, who constituted ninety percent of the private school parents. It was not expressed by the 'townies'. The townies in the sample also wanted their children to meet up with the professional class at the college level of education. This process seemed important to them for the prime purpose not of joining the ranks of the professionals (as they had no need to lower their status), but purely to give them a range of contacts through the 'Old Boy Network' and to establish themselves amongst the social strata in their rightful position. The 'Old Boy Network' still has some influence on the every-day affairs of the ex-pupils of prestigious colleges. This fact was seldom mentioned, although it became obvious at the social functions to which parents were invited and where the parents had very strong social networks and associations. One mother said that her husband had maintained three good friends since leaving 'Christs' twenty years ago, who called in to see him when they were in Napier and whom he called to see when in other parts of the country. The biggest benefit of this network seemed to be when the parent moved to another area of the country and could contact ex-school friends and immediately have influential contacts in his new area. It was unusual for these families to move very much, so this process never became a burden on the generosity and friendship of school 'chums'.

The other aspect of friendships for upper class families was that the private school was very often seen as an extended family situation. The children board at the school and therefore their relationships were of necessity more bound up with their 'schoolchums'. Also to be considered is the fact that the staff at the private

schools were on very different terms with the families of pupils.
The staff were sometimes considered friends of the family or at least
as persons well known to them, especially, as often happens, the
staff retains members who were at the school whilst the father or
mother was there or were pupils at the school themselves. The school
is therefore a much closer knit community for the upper class families,
whereas when considering the friendship patterns of children in state
schools, it is more a question of friends within quite small peer
groups. There was certainly nothing like a family relationship
between the staff of state schools and the families of working class
children.

It can be seen from my comments made on the three sections of
question three that all the factors had a certain degree of influence
upon the choice of college, but that the choice was in effect a
complex amalgamate of them all. They could not, however, be
regarded as the main factors influencing the ultimate choice, as
there were over-riding factors that were intimately tied up with
the social melee'. These factors as discussed at the interviews,
were really those that applied after the major choices had been made.
Finance decided the choice between fee-paying or state schools in
combination with the force of tradition and the parents experience
and understanding of the societal structures. Once this over-riding
decision had been made, then the parents made some sort of choice
within their available options. As a general rule however, the
choice, even within the limited offerings for each level of society,
was limited by what could be called the extreme conservatism or
avoidance of change that all families seemed to exhibit to a high
degree.

At this point in the interviews the discussion tended to broaden
out into wider issues and often the personal situation of each family.
Many families were extremely open about their status and their hopes
and desires for their own futures and the future of their children.
The child was seen in most families as the central consideration,

although in the upper class families there seemed to be an important
emphasis upon the success of the father and the enterprise in which
he was engaged. This area, of how much emphasis the family placed
upon the schooling of their children, would I feel be another
illuminating area of study, as I came to the opinion, that although
the upper classes in absolute terms placed much emphasis upon their
child's education, than did the working class families, I sensed
that in comparative terms, in relation to the other calls for family
concern and effort, they attached less importance to education than
to their entrepreneurial enterprises.   This point is, however,
very impressionistic and I would certainly not like to support the
claim based upon the limited evidence that I have. It could be an
interesting area for further research if it did show that the best
way to gain benefit for your child educationally is to raise the
status of the family and improve its goals and aspirations in other
areas (for example by the parents obtaining more status through a
more prestigious job). As Boudon says (p.114) stratification
determines people's decision 'parameters' for education.

> "A policy of economic and social equality might
>
> contribute toward reducing the effects of stratification.
>
> Even if economic inequality is but one dimension of
>
> social stratification (those other dimensions being
>
> prestige, power, etc.,) it is correlated with most
>
> of the others ."   F.N. 6.

This again takes us back to the question of definitions of concepts
and words, as in this sort of research, it becomes apparent that
what some families mean by 'devoting all their efforts to the child's
education'; can be quite different from another family's definition.
When the researcher goes inside the share definitions of various
groups within society, it is difficult coming out of the experience
with findings that might have relevance to the shared realities

Footnote 6.   Raymond Boudon. - Education, Opportunity and
            nd Social Inequality. 1973 p.114.

of clearly defined and separate groups within society. Two families
whose raison d'etre stand in direct conflict to each other, may
very often share language but not meanings.

The fourth question was concerned with:-
The Extent to which the Education of the Parent had a Direct Influence
upon the Education of the Child.

In most cases the parents had no complaints about their own
education and so there was no impediment to the child being able
to go to the same school as the adult. In fact the only criticism
that came out of the study was one parent saying that his parents
were to blame for not sending him to a private school when his
father had attended one. He said that if he had had firmer guidance
and an insistence from his father against his own wish to go to the
state school, then he would have achieved much more. He saw this
as his mistake as well as his father's. The schooling was never
seen to be at fault by any of the parents. The parents all seemed
to consider that they had got their just deserts at school and that
any explanation of relative failure was a matter of them leaving
early, or their own lack of effort and ability. To this extent
they were, as a group, quite happy to send their child to the same
school, something which was done by the majority of all the parents
interviewed, whether they were part of the state system or the
private school system. The parents who expressed views on this
question seemed to consider that the colleges were the same as when
they attended them. They were not aware of any curriculum changes
or any major changes in the organization and discipline systems
within the schools.

The parents of the children at private school seemed to have a
better and more up-to-date knowledge of patterns of change within the
private school to which they were sending their child. This was
probably due to the fact they had kept up contact with the school
during the time since when they left and when their child starts
at the school, through Old Boys Associations, friends and social

occasions. The Headmaster of Wanganui for instance made frequent trips to the Hawkes Bay area and spent some time there talking to parents individually and at social 'wine and cheeses', as well as addressing functions at the boys and girls private schools. He seemed to foster stronger and, I would suggest, more humble interactions with the community from which his prospective pupils would come than was the case with the state school headmasters. The state school headmasters come across to the public at large as almost godlike figures who are not really answerable to anyone but the Education Board and that they are in lifetime positions that are beyond any threat of replacement. On the other hand, the private school headmasters seemed more aware that their jobs were dependent upon results. They were out to foster good relations with the clientele as well as their individual school boards. The feeling was that they were providing a service to the consumer and were in a competitive market.

The parents in my survey, were not consciously considering their own schooling when making a decision for their child. There was, if anything, a positive incentive for this factor to encourage the family to send their child to the same school they attended.

Question Five
Would the Parents Prefer their Child to be Attending a Different School

Question Five for many of the parents was irrelevant, as in the case of private school pupils they had complete freedom of choice and although some of the parents expressed a wish that their child could be exposed to certain offerings of other schools, it did not counteract the fact that they thought that they were getting the best deal at the school they had chosen.

Only one parent said that finance was a factor in not being able to send their son to the school that they would have liked. These parents were Catholic and they would have liked their son to attend the St John's College in Hastings, but because of the bus charges and the extra uniform expenses they could not afford it.

One or two of the parents said that they liked some of the attributes of other schools but it was a matter of choosing the college that had the best composite advantages. This was apparent when some parents said that they would like their child to be studying Computer Studies in the third form, but found it was not offered at the school they had chosen. As most of the core subjects were identical in all the state colleges there was no need to desire a different school because of the subjects offered. In the very narrow range of options offered there was some element of choice needed, but because of the over-all similarity between the state schools in curriculum areas, this was not a factor in choice of college.

The social area was a stronger factor in making parents and children consider alternative schools, but the strongest reason for actively considering another alternative school was the location and the reputation that the school had with neighbours and friends whose judgements they trusted.

Question Six.

How Important do the Parents Rate the Decision Relating to Choice of School?

Question six asked the family how important the decision that they were making would be for their child's future. We discussed how their choice would effect their child's progress at college and what effect the choice of college would have upon the later life chances of their child in terms of career and life satisfaction. All parents had strong views on this question. Some were cynical about the school having any effect on their child's education and job, others saw the college experience as being crucial to the life chances of their child. With many of the upper strata families there was an acceptance that their child was going to be successful in whatever

field he chose and that by application at the'right' school he would achieve his goals. There was no sense that the child could ever experience any form of downward mobility. Other families had children who had already decided upon a career. This was more common in working class families and they had an idea of what subjects they would require at school and were aware of the knowledge that had to be obtained to reach this goal. The careers were stated as Veterinarian, Marine Biologist, Fisherman, Post Office, Government Department Officer, Engineer and Teacher. None of the upper class families seemed to have a career mapped out although one said that their son was currently Hawkes Bay Tennis champion and they thought that he could represent New Zealand and become a professional tennis player. Even when the child expressed an interest in one field, the parents saw this as a passing phase unless it was farm related and they assumed that career choice would be made at a later stage when the qualifications and the 'right' schooling process was completed. Many of the upper class families assumed that their son would be going on to University. One family said that they expected their son to finish at private college and then go on to Lincoln 'Marriage Guidance University'. However the entry to university seemed a foregone conclusion and it was assumed that their child would attend one of the universities even though there was no specific career in mind. It was more a matter of getting a full education. The lower class tended to talk about further education after school in terms of leading to a specific job or career and as a possibility rather than a foregone conclusion. The idea was often expressed by these families that you need higher and higher qualifications to get into any 'good' job. Some of the working class families were well aware that the relevance and practical necessity of these qualifications was suspect, but realised the necessity for obtaining the 'bit of paper'. One father who worked in the Post Office said that he thought it was ridiculous that some of the new entrants that they were getting into the Post Office telecommunication branch had to have languages as

part of their entry requirements and he said that some of the girls he was getting with French and German degrees were useless and languages were irrelevant to the skills needed in the type of jobs that they were training for. Working class families do know about the forms of knowledge and in this survey tended to like those that were practically linked to a specific job and tended to want these available to their children earlier in the educational system. The parents of upper class families also wanted the practical skills of a career taught to their child but were more prepared to wait until later in the child's education. Most of these children were getting the skills in farming as they grew up in the holidays and at weekends from their parents and therefore these same children were able to sail through the agricultural courses at university level. The working class child is not exposed to the father's work-place in the same way and therefore does not have much prior knowledge about the chosen job when they start. The occupation for upper class families is often an integral part of their life. They often live in a farm atmosphere and are immersed in agriculture experience whereas many of the working class children are not exposed to the father's job simply because the father has usually had quite enough of it at work without bringing his problems home with him.

Overall there was an acceptance by all families that the choice that they were making this year for their child's college education was a crucial one, and many were aware that their children were already in a mould that was shaping their futures. The ones whose children were in the right mould were quite happy about the situation. (This represented ninety percent of the sample,) the others were not in a position to be able to do much about the situation and exhibited a resigned acceptance. There was a general acceptance of the system and structure of society as it is, but some of the families knew how to use the system to their advantage and to make upward progress through the heirarchical structures of society for their children.

"Formally we can say that any school system whatever

its apparent feasibility forces the individual, at

x times in his schooling, to decide whether to

remain on the royal road to college, to aim for

the more prestigious institutions of higher

education and so on."   F.N. 7.

The upper-class families also seemed to have a better under-
standing of the way that subject-choice acted as a barrier to
future progress in the academic structure. The subjects that the
children would be studying at University level required certain
pre-requisites that the parents of some of the children were well
aware of. The skill of keeping options open for as long as possible
and making sure that their children had the academic pre-requisites
was all part of the advantages available to some children by parental
advice and knowledgable guidance through the academic curriculum.

Question Seven
What should College Provide for the Pupil?

Question Seven asked about what the college should provide for the
child educationally and socially. By the time we arrived at this
question, the interview had usually taken well over an hour and the
parents had already put forward their views on this matter in
answering the previous questions. In explaining why they had preferred
one school more than another for instance, they had recorded their
views on what sort of things the colleges should be offering. Most
parents did not see the college as offering any more than they did
at the moment. The parents of the state school system did not want
the social or academic offerings of the private school system and
the private school parents did not particularly desire that their
children should be exposed to the offerings of the state system.
The private school parents were looking for a social content to

Footnote 7.   Raymond Boudon - Education, Opportunity & Social
                Inequality.(p. 108)

education that emphasised the whole child and its all round development. They saw the school as equally responsible for the inculcation of attitudes and acceptable behaviour patterns. This seemed to take precedence over the academic (so long as the academic was up to par, - which they all thought it was). The state school family tended to regard the schools as a means to a job and to this end the prime requirement was for the school to inculcate the work habits that were important for work and the attitudes that would be best for obtaining a job in the first instance. One parent said that he thought that it was important for the school to be up-to-date with the job market and as he himself was working in a new field (video electronics), he thought that it was important for the child to be exposed and trained in the latest technology. He said that he would be inclined to send his daughter to a different school if he found that the staff of the nearest school were made up of 'old biddies'. The importance of young staff who were in touch with the rapidly changing world was important for his daughter's education. Other parents of working class children emphasised the need to have a firm practical base for education and said things like 'I think sewing and cooking are important for my daughter to learn at school'. This was more prevalent in families with daughters although some of the boy's families also mentioned the need for work skills and 'survival skills'. "Its a tough world out there" said one father, "and nobody is going to give you anything." The competitive nature of life was well understood by many families. This particular father mentioned above, was torn between advising his son to get out of school and go for the big money in the oil rigs, or to plod on and increase his qualifications up to U.E. level so that he could get a secure Government job. They knew someone whom they said had made a lot of money in a few years by taking risks, but they themselves were sitting securely in Government jobs, which they had held for the past sixteen years.

The over-all impression of the responses to this question was
that the schools were providing what the parents wanted for their
children and although some parents could think of marginal areas
that could be modified within the school organization and curric-
ulum, there was a general air of almost complacent contentment
in the provision of educational and social learning within the
colleges.

Question 8.

Occupation and Status.

The last question on my prompt sheet asked the parents their
occupation. Although this was a necessary question for the parent
of children at the State Intermediate school, it was almost
superfluous for many of the Private school families. With the
Private school families, the basic occupation was obvious in
most cases, for they were clearly farmers, and the environment
in which they lived bore witness to this. Often they lived in the
old Homesteads that were a part of the farm and the talk always
gravitated to agricultural topics long before I came to this
question. It was, in another way, more difficult to place these
parents in an occupational group as some of the parents had
other sources of income with private businesses as well as farms,
investments to manage, leased properties and so on. It was cleare
in the case of the few professional fathers, as they were simply
'orthopaedic surgeon' or 'chartered accountant'. I was surprised
that in the whole sample there was not one person unemployed as
the unemployment figure for the Napier region is very high (appr
10%). From this figure, I would have expected to find at least
five families faced with unemployment. The answer to this is
that the sample is obviously biased in that half the sample were
from the monied classes and the pupils from the State Intermediat
are drawn from the Hill area which is a prestigious residential
area. There were very few families from the estate areas like
Maraenui and Tamatea and therefore the sample cannot be said to b
representative of the range of population classes, as the

working class was significantly under-represented statistically.

As I have said, it was easier to pin down the occupations of
the parents of the Napier Intermediate pupils in that they could
often tell you in a few words what they did.   This could range
from groundsman, and Whirinaki labourer to Probation Officer and
Pensioner.   It was usual for the occupation to fill the basic 40
hour working week for these parents.   In the case of the *Private school*
parents, the occupation was much more difficult to pin down in that
although many were farmers, there were responses like:-

'I work this hobby farm in the Havelock foothills and have a
National employment bureau and control a property development
company in Taranaki.'

From this it seemed not to be a very good guide to status to
use the occupation of the father unless it was fully explained in
each case, which would be very difficult to do in a research project
of this nature.   I come back to this point in the discussion of the
interviews in the next section where I suggest a possible alternative
breakdown of status and power relationships which are not on purely
occupational grounds.

Overall Consideration of the Effectiveness of the Questions

The questions that I first formulated proved to be a good start-
ing point for my study, but were found to be more inadequate as the
study progressed and the necessity for finer tools to unravel the
complex influences that go into making a family choose a particular
type of school for their child.   I came to realise more and more,
that the answers to the questions that the family was providing
were a product of the family's view of reality.   It was often
difficult to distinguish the borderline between what the parents
were saying as being important and what they actually did.   The
practical action in making a choice was one act that was at the end
of a line of theoretical and practical realities for that family

and which were idiosyncratic to that particular child in many
respects and yet had connections through societal structures to
the world in which they lived.

In analysing the data, I often felt the need for other information.
As the study showed up the connections between the selection of
school and the status and power of the families, it would have been
useful to have had information on whether each family had connections
with social, political and community organizations. I had this
information in many cases (although very little on political
associations), but it would have assisted my research to have had
a response to this question from every family. In the same manner,
when I found that the phrase 'firm discipline' was frequently
cropping up in the interviews, I would like to have had more inform-
ation available about what they considered as firm discipline.
To this end it would have helped me to know if they used corporal
punishment in the home and what other forms of control the parents
used on their children. I believe that this would have proved
another fruitful area for categorising families' choice of schools.
Most of the other factors that were required for my interpretation
of the research were generated from the responses to the questionnaire
through the extended questions and answers and overall, I believe
that the questions I chose were well selected and produced the
answers to the basic question I set out to investigate. The next
section is concerned with the discussion of the interviews as a
whole. By interviewing the parents in their homes, the environment
and the interview situation often provided/pertinent food for thought
more
than the questions themselves. What was said was often not as
important as what was left unsaid.

Some Comments on the Interviews of a General Nature.

An important factor in my research was that I made strenuous efforts to obtain interviews with all the parents of every child in the two Form Two classes. I believed this to be important because I was concerned, after reading other research statistics, that many of the projected samples had to be omitted through non-responses to questionnaires. I feel that an analysis of these non-responses would show that many were omitted to the detriment of representative accuracy. I felt that some families at the extremes of the social scale (for example class 1 and six on the Elley scales) were the ones who were choosing not to make responses. With my study, I was determined that I would interview all the sample in their own homes. This I managed to do. The only families left out were two from the Intermediate class who had moved out of the district during the year and two of the Independent Private school class who because of their location (North Gisborne and Taihape) proved to be too remote for me to arrange visits within the time available for the research. The Interviews were all carried out in the middle term of the 1983 school year and I was able to complete 51 interviews in that time. Some of the arranging took considerable time especially when two or three phone calls were needed to find a time suitable to visit the household. A number of visits needed to be carried out at weekends, during the week and during the evenings when it was possible to interview the whole family. In many cases it was only possible to obtain some of the immediate family, but in most interviews at least two members of the family were present. Later in the term I had trouble arranging times with farming families due to lambing and docking which was a time consuming activity for some fathers. However, the interviews were all completed by the end of September. October and November were used for collating the research findings and writing up the results.

I had read widely on the topic of class and various ways of grouping research respondents according to social class position. I was not happy with any of the breakdowns that depended solely on occupational status and this proved to be an opinion supported by my research, which found families with high status in lower paid positions and some families with low status in higher paid positions. Wealth and Class position were not always in correspondance with status. For example, a well respected teacher at the Private school referred to one of the richer members of the farming community as a 'turnip trotter'. Another parent was a rich builder but was not really an accepted part of the elite structure because of his lower class origins. It seems to take at least three generations for a family to be mobile between status groups within Hawkes Bay.

It is sociologically convenient to be able to place people into class and status groups for ease of reference, and in fact, I continually refer to the Upper and the Lower class during this study. I found that a good working definition of the Upper Class, was that group of the population who felt that they shared a style of life similar to others in their class and for the purposes of this study, could be classified as having resources that were sufficient to provide for them and their families into the forseeable future without having to get a job. In fact, I would place ten of the sample that I researched into this category as they held assets of well over a Million dollars. The rest of the population who needed to work for a living at a paid employment (even if the family would not have been destitute for some time even without a job), these, for the purpose of this study I term Working Class. I found it difficult to try and distinguish a middle group within my sample that might have been termed Middle Class and therefore I do not use this term in the study. It is important to remember that there are as many different families as there are children in the sample. There are important differences between all families and in trying to group them into classes, it is really a process of grouping families together on a rather arbitrary basis as there are as many similarities

between the lifestyle of families in different classes as there are
differences. Economic factors are certainly a constraining variable
for many families but there are many other constraining variables
such as age, physical health, family support and so on. The economic
factor was important as a predictor of choice between private school
and state school in this study, but it was not an absolute predictor
that could lead you to state that only rich people go to private
school or poor people to go state school. There were cases where
this was not so. However, the tendency was that the above statement
would be accurate in most cases.

After visiting many families in their homes, it became easy to
predict the type of school that the children of the home were
attending from my first contact with the family's home and environ-
ment. The contrast was obvious after having driven along two or
three miles of private roads to reach the house and to be welcomed
into an atmosphere of handcrafted and antique furniture, drawing
rooms and quiet stability, compared with the welcome at the mortgaged,
state-styled home where the interview took place in the only living
room with kids watching T.V. and the mother smoking, with hair in
rollers. These are extreme examples but they do exist in the real
world and these were actual cases in the study. I mention this
not in a peremptory sense but only as an example of the range of
household types.

From the first phone call, it was often apparent which type of
family I was dealing with. The 'educated voice', the reference to
the appointment book and the list of directions to the home were
often a good hint reflecting the status of the family. An example
of a typical telephone conversation with a private school family
went like this:-

> "Ah yes, I do recollect the letter that Andrew brought
> home from school last exeat. I have it amongst my
> papers. It certainly sounds to be a very interesting
> study. What is the exact purpose of the investigation? ..

I'm sure I can arrange a time when we would be
able to have a chat. I'll just check in my
appointments diary." (pause) "Well I'm attending
some meetings in Taranaki for the rest of this week.
I think next week could be fine. We could make it
one morning next week perhaps. Perhaps you could
ring me next Monday and we could firm up a time
then." (Transcript of Tape)

On the Monday the phone response would be:-

"Yes that's fine. My wife will be here and I
think that I might be able to be around on Wednesday.
Now, directions - you drive five miles out along the
Te Awanga Rd. until you see the turning to Haumoana.
On the left you will see a private drive with the
name .... Turn up here and carry on until you
have crossed five cattle stops. Its about five miles.
The house is set amongst trees. Just ask if you get
lost, most people know the place. See you next
Wednesday then.....Looking forward to it. Goodbye."

(Transcript of Tape)

A response to another family was:-

"Hello" ("Is your mum there?") "She's here. MUM:"
(A few yells. "There's someone on the phone." (After
another wait, the mother comes to the phone.) "Hello -
Interview. No I don't know nothing about that. Did
you bring a letter home from school Sharon? You want
to talk to us? About college for Sharon? Yes. Dad's
away all this week on a long distance delivery. 6.00p.m.
on Tuesday will be fine. Sharon just wait a minute.
O.K. Bye." (Transcript from tape)

I cite these two interview phone calls, not to cast aspersions

on one family or another, but to emphasise the point that there
are differences in homes that are apparent from the first contact
with them and these differences are intimately related to the
success or failure of the child of the family in the school system.

> "The level of cultural and material provision
> in the home has a major and long term influence
> upon children's school progress .... and on
> their scholastic motivation and social adjustment." F.N.8.

The interviews themselves, only served to highlight these differences.
The broader experiences that were integral to the upper class
families contrasted markedly with the paucity of experience in
many of the working class households. Clearly home and school
factors in interaction, become very powerful determinants of the
course of children's education development and given a suitable
curriculum, adequate resources and a policy of active partnership
with parents, there is every hope that school can significantly
alleviate the handicapping educational effects of cultural disadvantage.
I realise the difficulty I am faced with here in describing a
'paucity' of experience, but it relates to the lack of contacts
outside of a small circle of geographically and hereditary close
families; a limited second-remove social exchange via the T.V.
and not having the educational guidance and support within the
home. A situation that is typical of many of the working class
families in the sample.

Footnote 8.   Theo Cox - 'Disadvantaged 15yr olds' in Journal
              of Education Studies Vo. 8. No. 1 1982. p.11.
              See alsok Marjoribanks, 1979 -   'National Children
              Development Study' - Fogelman   1978.

The interviews themselves were all of great interest not only for what the families did in making a choice of school, but also for being able to see the picture that the family presented of their own social reality. The rationality of them making choices within a constraining system and the way that the family made the choice its own. In some of the interviews I sat in a sitting room and listened to a tirade of educational philosophy and personal beliefs about the meaning, purpose and the way to live life. In another interview, I might be kept standing in the hall and have to conduct the interview there with a rather annoyed family member who was missing a good T.V. programme and we had to stand in the hall so as not to interfere with the viewing in the other room so that we could be heard away from the din of the kids, T.V. and other household noises. An important difference between the upper class families and the working class families households (at least when I was present) was the air of order and quiet discipline where people took turns to speak and the adult always had preference. In some working class households the kids held sway in the house and had equal rights to join in the conversation as they chose. The parents of upper class children were more inclined to invite their child to say a few words and ;showed the respect to hear them out. When the child had a say in some other households it was often a case of interjecting a few words, or when asked to speak, the parent often finished off the child's ideas for him. The linguistic exchanges would have proved to be an interesting study in their own right and the different linguistic styles were as predictive of college choice as any other factors. I did not include this factor in my research but recognise this area as being crucial to any definitive study of choice of educational career.

Parents exhibited differing attitudes towards the interviews, although there was an overall willingness to participate, especially when they could fully express their feelings about education matters.

In some houses, I was welcomed with a beer or spirits, in others
we had tea or coffee as we talked. Some were formal until the
interview had progressed some distance, others were relaxed and
informal from the beginning. Many families made a point of all
being present at some stage of the interview, with the parents
often introducing the children individually, others gave clear
instructions to the children to close the door and to go to another
part of the house as the interview was a parental activity only.
Some parents saw the interview situation as an ideal sounding
board for their own ideas on education and others confided personal
thoughts that they considered as being matters of the utmost secrecy.
Some acted as if their views were almost heretical, like "I don't
go along with the feeling of most of society that there are shades
of right and wrong. To me, everything is either black or white.
I don't like grey areas".

> or   "I've been trying to get the headmaster of that local
> school shifted out of our rural area into Hastings
> as he is too old."

This very often took the form of criticism of the state school
or more accurately, the way the school was being run. Others
expressed a disenchantment with society at large and one parent said,

> "We have had enough of New Zealand. As soon as we
> can save enough money for the fares for us and the
> four kids, we are going back to England."

Although there was this type of criticism, it must be emphasised
that the criticisms formed a very small part of the total interview
time, and was often added as an aside to a question. The questions
were designed in a positive way so that the level of discontent
could not be judged from the results of this survey.

The interviews required a great deal of sensitivity, as entering
a situation cold, one had to be careful not to interfere with the
natural communication networks of the family. It was interesting
to note who was the first to speak, who monopolised most of the

conversation, who seemed to have the casting vote in the household and who introduced new topics into the conversations. In this respect, the interviews were a mine of social information. I was only able to scrape the surface of these complex social interactions that were so varied between homes.

Children were often invited to speak on issues that directly affected them, such as what career they were considering or the importance of friends in choosing a college.

There was a difference in the degree to which families tried to answer questions in the way that the interviewer wanted, or they thought he wanted. This was more prevalent in the lower status families,as in the elite families, the parents were certainly confident enough to give their own views and to be relatively unconcerned about how much their comments were in agreement with the interviewer or how much they were in agreement with the orthodox views of society at large. There was a greater willingness to express views on wider social issues in some of the elite families and at the same time try to determine the views of the interviewer. The impartiality of the interviewer was important in these interviews. I hope I maintained this impartiality.

Another point that became apparent as I progressed with the interviews, was the way that I had grouped the interviews geographically, showed up the relationship between the area in which a family lived and the class and status of the family. There were clearly defined areas where working class families lived and there were country areas near Havelock and out on rural farms where elite families lived. A researcher who made use of a finer class and status measure than I used, could probably have placed people accurately into six classes based upon the area and type of accommodation in which the family lived. My simple division of class into elite upper class and working class showed this distinction clearly and it was noticeable that apart from two of the Private school group, the houses occupied by these families were larger, set in large

grounds and better furnished than all but one family of the Napier Intermediate sample. (F.N. 9)

I completed the interviews before the start of the third term 1983 and had probably travelled over 1,000 miles. Some of the Private School interviews needed me to travel to farms in Central Hawkes Bay, others 50 miles south down the East Coast from Napier and West as far as Cheltenham in the Manawatu area. Others were in Waipukurau and I travelled North to Patoka. The Napier interviews were mostly in the central area of Napier and on the hill, although there were some at Clive and north of Napier at Bay View.

The greatest problem that I encountered was at the mid point of the middle term when the Headmaster of the State Intermediate was replaced on retirement and the District Senior Inspector also retired, both of whom had given good support to me in the preliminary arrangements for the study. The replacement Headmaster of the Intermediate had a different attitude and I had to repeat my arrangements more or less from the start as he was not happy about the study and the information it could reveal or the knowledge that might be exchanged which might reflect upon his school. The Private School authorities were extremely helpful at all points and another factor that I realised from carrying out this study was how easy it was to operate a research programme with the co-operation of the Private school authorities and how difficult it was contacting and arranging to carry out research in the Government Education Department and the State school. I was required to have lengthy interviews with six officials of the schools in the state system before I could proceed. I only had to arrange with the one headmaster in the case of the Private school research.

Footnote 9. R.W. Connell - p. 67 on Social Class Arrangement of City and Houses.

What then did I learn from the study and can I make any inferences about the choices that are made by parents at the Form Two level when choosing a college for their child? Has the information gained any relevance to the way that the Education authorities and the schools arrange and conduct this crucial changeover time in the life of the children in its schools? These questions, I try to answer in the next section.

The Practical Implications of these Findings.

It became apparent from my study that the Educational establishment which the child attended in-so-far as it was private or state, was closely related to the home environment of the child. The families of the private school child were richer and better educated than those of state school pupils. The parents had generally been to private colleges themselves and had stayed on at school much longer than the parents of state school pupils. Most of the parents of the private school pupils had graduated from New Zealand Universitie were of private means and showed great interest in their child's education.

> "It is one of the most firmly established findings
>
> of the sociology of education that parental interest
>
> and encouragement effect a child's academic attainment." F.N.1

These two groups can be seen as distinctly different within the total educational structure. Within the state school system there was a professed choice being made between the various state schools. This was related to demographic and organizational criteria. There was a difference between the number of colleges that were an actual choice for parents and this depended upon the area in which they lived.

Footnote 10.   Heath & Clifford - 1981. p.33 'The Measurement
                and Explanations of School Differences,' in
                Oxford Review of Education. pp.33-40.

The Havelock North parents only had the one state college in the
area and so their real choice was limited to this school. The
parents in the Hastings area had a bigger choice but were not
allowed to choose Havelock High which was the college in the area
with the best reputation. In the case of the Napier parents, their
choice was restricted to four colleges which were, Napier Boys/Girls
High, Colenso, Taradale and Tamatea. The travelling distance between
the colleges and the difficulty that pupils would have commuting
between the colleges restricted these effectively as real choices.
None of the Napier parents had chosen the 'Tamatea' or 'Taradale'
colleges which were the furthest away.

As a general rule the families chose the college that was the
easiest to travel to. This may have been in terms of distance,
but was more likely/in terms of safety, especially if the two
colleges were equidistant from the family home. The parents could
be seen as not really exercising any real choice within the state
system and the tendency was for the child to go to the same ;type
of school as the parent attended, without much thought about any
changes in the educational practices that may have occurred in the
school since the parents had attended it as pupils. The tradition
and conservative factors were strong throughout the private and
state system with very little movement of pupils between the two
types of education. Parents were happy with the system as it exists.
The upper class families who were more prepared to make choices
between private schools or at least were prepared to let it be known
to the school authorities that they were preparing for this eventually,
were able to influence the college of their choice through this
type of threat withdrawal. It rarely eventuated this way in practice.
The state colleges were not exposed to the same veto effect, as
the by-laws defined the structure in which they were to take part,
e.g. zoning. However, there was the mediating action of reputation
to an extent that the parents who were active in school politics

could bring some pressure to bear through school committees and by
withdrawing their children from that school over time and weakening
the reputation of the school - these tended to be the academically
inclined pupils, and therefore there was the possibility of a
creaming-off effect. Coleman plays down this aspect in his recent
study of private and state schools. F.N. 11.

Where there is a particularly well thought-of college in the area
there is a greater tendency for this to happen. In the Napier sampl e
there seemed to be an agreement that all the four colleges offered
about the same education, with only minor differences that were not
to do with the basic curriculum or teaching proficiency. None of
the parents said that the teachers were any better at one particular
college. The impression was, that teachers were good at all the
schools. The differences were seen in the way that the schools were
run. The headmaster being the most important factor along with
knowledge about the type of child attending the school.

The 'best' area was Havelock North as far as quality of housing
and general standard of living and it was symptomatic that this area
had the college with the best reputation. There was great community
support. (For example the community has just completed an Olympic
swimming complex development at the school) and there is great parent
involvement in the running of the school. The poorer the area in
which the college is situated then the lower the reputation. The
parents of the area in which the college is located very rarely
complain about the college as they must realise that their own
child's education is intricately tied up with the reputation of
the school and as there is very little real effective choice of
college for the parents, then it is in their interest to maintain
the good name of the school.

Footnote 11. J.Coleman - Cognitive Outcomes in Public and Private
           Schools by James Coleman, Thomas Hoffer and Sally Kilgore.
           in Soc. of Education p 65. April/July 1982 Vol.55 No. 2/3

       and   Public and Private Schools Report - Spring 1981. National
    Centre for Educational Statistics - University of Chicago.

The colleges in the Napier region tend to place great emphasis
upon the number of examination passes that are obtained from each
college and these are published in the local paper each year. The
headmasters often write to the letters columns of the papers on
issues like discipline and school tone, and this is a major source
of the public's impression of the college. The other major source
of public awareness is the network of informal talk that goes on
in the community about incidents at the colleges. These often trivial
episodes that may be a very small part of the activities of the
college are often magnified by parents as being symptomatic of the
school's effectiveness. One parent for example said that she did
not want to send her son to a certain college because she spoke
to a class at the school for part of a lesson and found them to be
unruly. Another father said that he had seen a certain college
turn out at a rugby match and was put off by their untidiness, so
he would not send his son there. Many of these instances could have
been in effect a psychological justification for a decision already
made, as if there was no obvious reason for choosing a particular
school, it is sometimes easier to emphasise a negative aspect of
another school which in reality would have been as good a choice for
their child.

The college placement/selection system for children in Napier is
potentially parentally chosen. Although there is a potential to
choose another college within the state system, very few parents
actually take part in a decision making process. The parents are
generally accepting of the system as it is and there was no feeling
of resentment that some members of the community were able to send
their children to private colleges. Whether this was a question of
awareness being un-developed, or an acceptance of the status quo
was difficult to decide.

"The real mechanisms at play .... are

covered over and mystified and hidden from

view by the way in which the dominant ideology

and the meritocratic view of what happens in

schools for instance really do seem to assume

that all are trying to achieve broadly the

same aims in life."   F.N. 12.

Most parents did not consider any other college apart from the
nearest and the best known. I did not enquire whether the family
had thought about private education if their child was at the state
school, as the new headmaster (of Napier Intermediate) was concerned
that some parents might interpret this sort of questioning as
stirring up matters which were best left unquestioned. Even the
richer end of the working class group did not show any desire to
choose a private school for their child. The clientele of private
and state schools remain very much separate groups of people in
the community, with very little movement between the two systems.
Where there is an example of a parent moving their child out of
the traditional state school sector into the private school sector,
it is usually only for a part of the child's education as an avoid-
ance of what is seen as a poor state school. By-and-large the
families who have spent their educative years at exclusive private
schools are the same families that send their children to these
schools. In this way the separate system is very much a part of a
ruling class hegemony that is in accordance with systems of class
privilege.

The last statement concerning private schools being bastions of
class privilege, does not infer that there is a better type of

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Footnote 12.   Willis - "Learning the Labour."   p.147.

education going on in the schools, e.g. teachers have higher
qualifications, (although that position could be argued, as it is
by Coleman,) - it is more a case of the segregation of a certain
type of motivated child with supportive families. The system may
be no better in egalitarian terms by having all the children at
one type of school, however, because the advantages that ensure the
continuance of class position are generated within the larger social
and economic framework of society.   In the cases where upper class
children of my study were being shifted into the state system, it
was only in the cases where the parents were sure that their child
was going to benefit from that system; where they had control over
the organization and philosophy of the college and where their
child was very very likely to come out on top of the state system.
If the child was not going to reach the top in the state system,
the parent of the richer group would not send their child to that
type of school. It therefore does not seem to matter in which way
the system is structured, the predominant factor influencing the
success or failure of a child in the educational structure, is
the status and class of the family to which he/she belongs.
Changing the school through enforced structural change would probably
not alter the situation. Allowing mobility in practice between
schools for all children would be a movement at ground roots level
to make the system more egalitarian, (if for example the government
paid school fees for children no matter which school the parents
chose). The finance that this would require would not make this
a cost-effective measure to bring about greater equality, as I
believe (as did Coleman in 1966) that schools themselves do not
mediate to any extent in the societal sifting that goes on to place
people into occupational and social groupings. Greater egalitarian-
ism, would only be attained through societal and governmental action
of a radical kind that was engendered through changing public
awareness and the public's philosophy towards equity, fairness,

freedom and other underlying values that are the building blocks
of our everyday existence.

The schools can be seen as a preserving force in maintaining
class and status relationships, and the findings of this study
seem to be general support for the view that people are supportive
of education as it is, or at least acquiesce to the status quo,
and are content with the activites of the colleges in carrying
out their present societal function.

This research was about the enrolment of pupils into secondary colleges at the age of twelve years. It was concerned with the thinking of parents as they considered the placement of their children into different schools. I have considered how this transfer process is related to a general theory of education, (albeit often simplistically and superficially) and I have thought about how the resultant placement of the pupils is part of the broader structural arrangements of our society. The main factors uncovered, in what is admittedly a small scale study, are that parents who are better placed in the society as regards wealth and status made an active choice to avoid the state system of education. The lower the social ranking of the family, the more likely they are to make use of the state provided education. Once the decision as to private or state is made however, it is a matter of tradition which particular school is chosen.

Most parents are prepared to allow or actively make the decision to send their child to the same type of school as they themselves attended. In my sample, the majority of children went to exactly the same school as their parents. The rest went to the school that was closest to the type of school that the parents had attended.

The factors preferred by the parents as to why they were inclined towards one type of school rather than another were:-

(a) LOCATION - being close to the school was a reason given by most parents. In the case of the girls this was especially so. There was an obvious wish to avoid travel expense and traffic dangers.

(b) FRIENDSHIPS - Friendship patterns amongst the children were important in the families where the children had an active say in their own lives and girls more often than boys said that they chose a school because their friends were attending or would be attending a particular school.

(c) TRADITION - The school that the child eventually
     attended was the same as the parents in most cases.

(d) REPUTATION - The reputation of the school in the community
     was important for some parents, especially those border-
     line families vacillating on the dividing line between
     state schooling and private schooling.

(e) OTHER FACTORS - Factors like courses offered,size of
     school, single sex or co-education, had little effect on
     the eventual placement.

(f) DISCIPLINE - Discipline was mentioned by 80 percent
     of the parents as being important, but the parent's
     definition of what was meant by discipline and its
     practical enforcement varied widely.

Some of the Research findings about Private Schools.

(1) Only the top four private colleges were considered by the
     parents of the private school group.

(2) Over ninety percent of the pupils going on to private
     college had been booked in to the school before two
     years of age. Most were booked in from before birth.

(3) Two thirds of the class from the private school were
     going on to Wanganui Collegiate.

(4) Most of the mothers had attended private school. Several
     had attended the same college.

(5) In every case, if both parents had attended an elite
     boarding college, then the son would be attending
     'Wanganui Collegiate' or 'Christs College'.

(6) The private school pupils were in the main happy to go
     along with the wishes of the parents who had made the
     choice of school for them. There was a general air of
     agreement between the son and the adults of the family
     as to the benefits of attending an elite boarding college.

(7)   The children of this group had an overall attitude of
      responsibility and gave the impression of self reliance
      and formal manners in their home environments.

Some of the Research Findings in Relation to State Schools.

(1)   Girls and Boys in the State school went to the same
      school as their father and mother if it still existed
      and they lived in the same area even when theoretically
      there was a choice available.

(2)   Parents are 90 percent satisfied with the schools as
      they are.

      The parents are essentially conservative in both types
      of school and there was no real sense of change being
      necessary apart from two families with children at the
      the state school, who considered one school to be as
      as bad as another.

(3)   With the predictability of school placement and choice,
      it is probably wise to ask if there is really a practical
      and viable choice available. Is the fact that there is
      no choice being exercised sufficient justification to
      say that there is no effective choice available?

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(a) There will be periods of gradual
     change and refinement.

(b) At times there will be periods when
     the total existing structure is
     overthrown.

(c) That research development, theory
     construction, the entire act of thinking
     about problems takes place and is conditioned
     by our social, economic and historical
     environment.

Due to the significance of these factors, that knowledge
is not objective, and that man cannot avoid his/her
own subjectivity, the application of Kuhn's work to
accounting will be discussed in more detail.

The Application of Kuhn to Accounting

Traditional views of theory development have argued
that the development has been evolutionary *"the
evolutionary view of accounting theory formulation
has considerable appeal."* [57] The thrust of this
approach is that the accepted methods and structures
respond to change and anomalies via the resolving of
issues and incorporation into the old structure. This
is based on the acceptance of an existing theoretical
structure and implies that if a misfit between the
structure and reality is to be avoided then the structure
must be constantly changing and responding.

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(57) American Accounting Association, Statement of
      Accounting Theory and Theory Acceptance, A.A.A.
      1977, p.41.

The American Accounting Association[58] has argued
that the fundamental structure may change in such a
way as to no longer provide the foundation for the
achievement of its original goals. The response will
then be a series of ad hoc adjustments to meet
anomolous positions. Clearly, examples of this are
seen in depreciation allocation techniques (see NZSA
SSAP No. 3). Due to these problems the American
Accounting Association looked beyond the traditional
boundaries of accounting in search of a better
framework for development. The result was an embracing
of Kuhn's thesis.

Kuhn maintains that knowledge does not advance through
accumulation but via a number of 'tradition   shattering
revolutions' when an established theory is discarded
in favour of a replacement that is incompatible with
the first.

Thus new structures are considered unique with respect
to the previous ones and are not an additive factor but
a replacement factor;   "... *seldom or never
just an increment to what is known.*"[59]

The movement from one complex of ideas to the next is
via a specific series of steps. Wells[60] outlines these
as :-

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(58)   Ibid.
(59)   Ibid,p. 7.
(60)   Wells, M.C. op cit, p. 472.

"(1)   Recognition of anomalies.
(2)   A period of insecurity.
(3)   Development of alternative sets of ideas.
(4)   Identification of schools of thought.
(5)   Domination of new practices or ideas."

There are alternative pathways from (2) above, these being:-

(a)   Continue via, (3), (4), (5) above.

(b)   The old disciplinary matrix may take account of the changes and incorporate within the existing structures.

(c)   There may not be the development of alternative schools of thought and/or if there is, dominance may not be achieved. This results in the breaking down of the discipline and the period of competing paradigms continuing into the future.

If change does occur it will only be after the old disciplinary matrix is shaken to the core by fundamental change and problems. However, the basis of Kuhn's thesis is the revolutionary nature of change rather than the idea of the disciplinary matrix.

The key to the concept of the disciplinary matrix is found within the individual's own perception of his/ her reality and relationship to their environment. Kuhn says that the individual perceives reality via a

*"... conceptual perspective which determines in
large part which questions are worth investigating
and what sorts of answers are acceptable; the
perspective provides a way of thinking ..."* [61] It
is for this reason that Kuhn is considered a weltanschauungen
analyst.[62]

Different accounting writers have considered accounting
to be in different stages of the process, and some
accounting writers do not even consider that it is
applicable.

Wells considers that accounting is in a state of
crisis with well defined alternative structures, and is
thus approaching a revolutionary phase. He argues
that the period of accounting principle formation saw
the establishment of a normal science of accounting.
Since then there has been a gradual building and growth
of the basic model since the work of writers such as
Edwards and Bell, Chambers, Baxter, Gynther, Jones et al.
Today we have several competing paradigms in the form
of:-

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(61) Suppe, F., Op cit, p. 138.
(62) Several severe criticisms of Kuhn's methodology have been made and these
include:-

(1) Kuhn confuses the three forms of relativism (subjective, group and objective
and although this does not undermine his theory it does raise questions over
the reasoning.

(2) Kuhn uses historical justification to support his thesis which may also be
used to counter it.

(3) His model is considered as a process structure with causal elements, however
it might be maintained that it is in fact merely correlative.

"(1) *Price-level adjusted accounting,*

(2) *Replacement cost accounting,*

(3) *Deprived value accounting,*

(4) *Continuously contemporary accounting,*"[63]

which Wells argues can only be accepted as a matter of faith based on the underlying assumptions.

The American Accounting Association (SATTA)[64] agrees with Wells that there are substantive divisions in the views of accountants with respect to the historical cost model. However, they say that competing paradigms are not sufficiently defined. They do, however, make a plea for accountants to "*... accept one of the competing paradigms and begin to do puzzle-solving and mopping up operations of normal science.*"[65]

Peasnell[66] is unsure of the fit and considers that the discipline either fits into the pre-paradigmatic stage or that Kuhn's thesis is not applicable at all to accounting.

What can be said of Kuhn and Accounting? The arguments for a revolutionary nature of accounting are not convincing[67] and other writers besides Peasnell share this view.[68] In fact, Danos argues that accounting cannot even be discussed as part of the Kuhnian model as what is being observed is a development within proto-science.[69]

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(63) Wells, M.C., op cit, p. 478.

(64) A.A.A. op cit.

(65) Ibid, p. 45.

(66) Peasnell, K.V., "Statement on Accounting Theory and Theory Acceptance - A Review Article, Accounting and Business Research, Autumn, 1978, pp 287-297.

(67) Ibid, p. 218.

(68) - Tilley, I., "Accounting as a Scientific Endeavour - Some Questions the Americal Theorists Tend to Leave Unanswered", Accounting and Business Research, Autumn 1972, pp 287-297.

  - Danos, P., "A Revolution in Accounting Thought? - A Comment?" The Accounting Review, Volume 52, No. 3, 1977, pp 746-747.

(69) Ibid, p. 746.

However, this writer maintains that Wells and others have missed the essential ingredient of Kuhn's work that is applicable to accounting, that being the concept of the paradigm or disciplinary matrix.

The disciplinary matrix implies a cultural setting that goes beyond the material of the discipline whether it be physics or accounting. The setting, elements of which are quite unrelated in a strict sense to the discipline, provides a much wider model with which to perceive accounting. The model is of society itself with accounting being determined by (and to a small extent determining) societal presence in the general sense. Thus, when Solomons [70] and Gerboth [71] discuss accounting as being no longer non-political but subject to the national and local political and economic structures due to the importance and impact of accounting information, there is an implication of accounting being more than an arms length reporting mechanism. Solomons said on the political implications:- [72]

> *"Accounting rules therefore affect human behaviour ... It is then only a short step to the assertion that such rules are properly to be made in the political arena, by counting heads and deciding accounting issues by some voting mechanism."*

(70) Solomons, D., "The Politicisation of Accounting", The Journal of Accountancy, November 1978, pp 65-72.

(71) Ibid, p. 65.

(72) Ibid, p. 72.

From this and other writers it is seen that accounting must act within the goals of society just as the institution within which accounting operates must do so. Does this imply however that accountants should do what politicans require them to, as the politican may argue that he/she is the mouthpiece for the majority wishes? Solomons sees no choice at all in that the long run survival and good of the profession is what is important, and in his view this can only be fostered (using a cartography example) when accountants:-

> "... make the best maps we can. It is for others, or for accountants acting in some other capacity, to use those maps to steer the economy in the right direction."[73]

It is a nice idea that the role of accountants should not be constrained by the political environment, as if we were physicists dealing with 'fixed' relationships; however, the writer considers that this approach is avoiding questions of reality and we are not ostriches.

Clear indications in other writings[74] indicate a level of increasing social involvement and concomitant with this, increasing political and economic interaction. Thus accounting theory construction must be seen in light of its political, social and economic parameters, and can no longer be perceived as existing in vacuo. This view will obviously constrain the outcome of epistemological methods and research.

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(73) Ibid, p.
(74) Examples include:-
       A.A.A. SATTA op cit
       Watts, R.L. & Zimmerman, J.L. op cit.
       Kelly-Newton, L., Accounting Policy Formation the Role of Corporate Management, Addision-Wesley Publishing Coy, Reading, 1980.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has addressed the question of alternative approaches to accounting theory formulation with the view to recommending an appropriate approach for the future. The writer would not pretend to be able to force closure on an area that has attracted a plethora of writings from some of the finest minds in the discipline. However, there is a need for a statement of future direction and of likely avenues for future research.

It has been seen that there is no single accepted approach to the establishment of a conceptual base for accounting, in fact many writers have argued that this is not relevant, due to the nature of the discipline (Littleton (1956) in particular). However, there are theoretical aspects of accounting that cannot be avoided, and no matter how practical the discipline, there must be conceptual matters and considerations. Once it is accepted that there are conceptual matters, then the question of how best to deal with them should be raised.

In the accounting context there have been many approaches which for the purpose of this paper were classified under five broad headings. To some extent these categories are an abstraction and do not do justice to the large number of writings that fall within them. It should also be noted that some works have been classified in one area when a strong argument could be mounted for inclusion in another. This is found especially in the following two groups: conventions and rules, and, induction and deduction.

None of these approaches has been able to establish
its credibility as the appropriate vehicle for
accounting theory development, and in many ways these
alternatives have polarised writers and resulted in
clearly alternative camps being perceived. In this
sense the development of appropriate methodologies
in accounting better fits the Kuhnian model of
competing disciplinary matrices than does the competing
methods of price level adjusted accounts, (as argued
principally by Wells[75] and SATTA).[76]

Few accounting writers have argued for a composite
approach to the methodology formulation problem with
the exception of Goldberg[77]when he maintained that a
mix between induction and deduction was necessary. The
criticism of Goldberg is that researchers had been mixing
the two approaches, covertly if not overtly for some
time. Nevertheless, Goldberg's approach was an improvement
over that of the pragmatists.

The pragmatic approach is seen most clearly in the
rules and standards setting area where a specific
response is made to a specific problem, and particularly
in the Accounting Research Bulletins, Accounting
Principles Board Opinions and later in the Financial
Accounting Standard Board Statements and Interpretations.

To a large extent this approach has been successful
in the setting of desired practice and in establishing
benchmarks for the industry (accounting). The approach
is not born out of a striving for a more integrated

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(75) Wells, M.C., op cit, entire article.
(76) SATTA, op cit, entire article.
(77) Goldberg, L., "An Inquiry into the Nature of Accounting
     A.A.A. Monograph No. 7, 1965.

theory or structure of accounting, however, but
arises from specific anomalies and/or problems.   To
many this approach is ideal and all that is necessary
- yet severe criticism of it may be raised, and
these include:-

(a)   that rules and standards typically do
      not lay a framework for the future since
      they respond to present and past problems;
      thus they do not help to direct change
      and merely attempt to keep up with it;

(b)   the setting of rules and standards takes
      place in a political environment whereby
      decisions may be made more for political
      reasons than for rational reasons
      concerning the practice of accounting,
      per se.

         "... an accounting rule making body
         will not succeed on its technical
         competence but rather on its political
         competence."[78]

(c)   Since rules and standards are problem
      specific they do not provide a sound
      conceptual structure but tend to be
      fragmented with few linkages between
      different standards.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, the raison d'etre
of accounting lies in the business environment and to
succeed there it must cope on a day to day basis, and
in this respect a rules and standards setting approach
for all of its problems (and conceptually they are
great) fulfills an essential role.

(78) Gerboth, D.L., "Research Intuition and Politics", Accountin
     Review, July 1973, p. 479.

The conventions and principles approach was one
step more abstracted from that of rules and
standards, and involved the statement of more
general relationships:-

Practice --- Rules --- Conventions --- Theory[79]
                &
            Standards

This approach was invariably based on a review
of practice and derivation of conventions from
practice.   The principle benefits of this method
were that general statements could be derived and
used as benchmarks against which practice and/or
rules could be judged;   in other words, a series
of criteria were established.   Secondly the determining
of conventions demonstrated to many in the profession
that there remained very real problems in the theoretical
structure of accounting.   These problems resulted
from the derivation of conventions prior to the
specification of overall goals and aims of accounting.

Thus conventions were drawn up as distillates of
practice, but in vacuo of goals and fundamental
structure.   This meant that anomalies were evident
and that conventions could result in contradictions
when applied to practice as in:-

---

(79)   It is realised that this diagram could be more detailed
       via tighter definitions and the inclusion of such terms
       as postulates;   however, the purpose of the diagram
       is merely to show the place of rules and conventions
       in the practice-to-theory progression.

- conservatism and objectivity clashing when
  inventory is valued, via the lower of cost
  or market rule.

- objectivity and cost conventions clashing
  when term assets are considered for
  valuation under inflationary times.

This second pragmatic approach has received strong
support from practicing accountants as they perceive
it to be a theoretical basis and to provide justification
for their actions. However, this is not so, conventions
were derived in similar fashion to the work of Sanders,
Hatfield and Moore[80] and were no more than generalisations
from practice. The question must be raised that if
conventions were to provide some theoretical basis due
to the inadequacies and problems of practice, then any
derived conventions must embody these same inadequacies
but at a more generalised level.

The principle of conventions as benchmarks for practice
is undoubtedly sound; it is the derivation of these
conventions that has not been sound. Instead of deriving
convention from practice they should be derived from a
cohesive conceptual structure. Thus if meaningful
conventions can be derived then they would be of
enormous benefit to practitioners.

The inductive approach, essentially a method of
research based upon "scientific" methods, was
espoused as a way of defining accounting in a more rigorous
manner. There is no question that the scientific approach,
as a method, has yielded extremely rewarding results,
yet many of the claims made for it are unjustified. It
might also be suggested that some accountants saw the use

(80) Sanders, I.H., Hatfield, H.R. & Moore, U., op cit.

of "scientific" techniques as a way of lending
credibility to accounting, i.e. borrowing 'mana'
from such areas as astronomy and physics.

Unfortunately accounting moved to the "method of
science" at a time when within the traditional
sciences, the method was largely refuted as having
any rational basis. Thus accounting took it on
board when other areas had already, or were in the
process of, rejecting it. The major criticisms
of the method itself are briefly contained in the
text, but it must be stressed that although the
method of science is itself not rational (and can
only be accepted as a matter of faith) the use of
the method is justifiable on rational grounds as it
is the best method we have available for research.
Popper has said:-

> *"knowing full well that science often errs
> and pseudoscience may happen to stumble
> on the truth."*[81]

This statement is considered by the writer to go
to the essence of the debate around the use of the
"scientific" approach.

The real benefit for accounting has been an
upsurge in empiricism and hard nosed research[82]
seen particularly in finance, management accounting
and investment analysis. Increasingly, therefore,
the view seems to be one of research, measure and

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(81) Popper, K.R., <u>Conjectures and Refutations</u>, 1974
        p 33, op cit.
(82) The writer would not argue that the upsurge was
        entirely due to the espousing of "scientific" methods
        in accounting but that it was of some contributory
        effect.

quantify, wherever possible. Of all the approaches
this one can offer paybacks via an increase in our
stock of knowledge. However there are many areas
where an empirical approach is not readily amenable,
due to the complexity of the variables and it is here
that the deductive method has had real benefits.

Hendriksen has defined deduction as the "... *process
of starting with objectives and postulates and, from
these, deriving logical principles that provide the
bases for concrete or practical applications.*"[83]

And Nelson has described the 1960s as:-

> "*A golden age in the history of a priori
> research in accounting ... certainly no ten
> year period has brought forth an outpouring
> comparable to that of the 1960s.*"[84]

The normative deductive approach is characterised by
two writers in particular, Chambers and Mattessich,
who advocated an approach based on the initial
statement of goals and aims followed by the derivation
of specifics. This approach sets aside existing
practice and states what should be, or what one is
trying to achieve. In other words, it makes a break
from existing extrapolation of practice to theory
and derives practice from theory and this is its
major advantage.

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(83) Hendriksen, E.S., Accounting Theory, 3rd Ed., Irwin,
     1977, p.7.
(84) Nelson, C.L., "A Priori Research in Accounting", in
     Dopuch, N. & Revsine , L., Accounting Research: 1960-
     1970: A Critical Evaluation, Centre for International
     Education and Research in Accounting, Monograph No 7,
     University of Illinois, 1973, p.4.

This approach has been criticised for being
abstracted and not in touch with reality, but to
deny the use of conceptualisation is to deny
the use of thought itself, since by definition
thought is conceptualisation. These criticisms
are only valid if the structures concerned
are so abstracted as to be worthless in practice,
and only in this case would the writer give
credence to the critics' views. The normative
approach has meant a fresh look at accounting,
its aims and its role, resulting in such works
as Chambers' continuously contemporary accounting
and Mattessich's works on axiomatised foundations.
Leaving aside technical criticisms of the method
(see section V "The Normative Deductive
School") the approach has provided few
tangible benefits: it has nevertheless produced
many new ideas and much debate, in short it has
made some accountants think anew about problems.
This must be in the long-term interest of the
profession as a whole.

The other major result has proceeded from the deductive
approach itself. Deduction begins with a statement
of objectives or goals which are gradually refined
until operational procedures are constructed. This
a priori need for a statement of goals resulted (in
the financial accounting area) in several alternative
ideas as to the goals. For example, the goals of
an area that had apparently 'obvious' goals of merely
producing financial information for unspecified
users. Thus the work of Trueblood[85]and later the

(85) Study Group on the Objectives of Financial Statements,
     Objectives of Financial Statements, New York, AICPA, 19

Financial Accounting Standard Board [86] attempted
to produce a definitive statement of the aims of
financial reporting. When these aims are coupled
with efficient market hypothesis we are left in an
interesting position with respect to a priori methods,
that is, if a premise is unsound then the conclusions
may be incorrect. Thus the normative statements on
aims of financial statements may not be in line with
what empiricism would suggest. (This area has yet
to be resolved).

Thus deduction has the benefit of starting without
an existing structure, from a clean slate, and
building a fresh and new structure. This approach
has had real benefits, in that it has provided a
'breath of fresh air' in an area that has traditionally
been somewhat stultified by an overemphasis on practice.

The final approach in this study of epistemology is
the weltanschauungen view. This says that accounting
exists within a social matrix, and cannot be considered
as objective, 'arms length', nor absolute. It is only
recently that this view has begun to gain some degree
of limited acceptance. Kelly-Newton[87] when discussing
standard and policy formation argues that standard
setting is increasingly becoming a political factor
and not the result of accounting arguments, per se.

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(86)   FASB Statement of Financial Accounting Concepts No. 1
       Objectives of Financial Reporting by Business
       Enterprises F.A.S.B. Stamford, 1978.
(87)   Kelly-Newton, L., op cit.

"The F.A.S.B. derives a significant amount
of its legitimacy from the S.E.C. and must
respond to Congressional investigations into
its activities. The S.E.C. on the other hand,
is directly dependent on Congress for its
standard setting authority. Thus ultimately
both policy boards are subject to the juris-
diction of the legislative branch of the U.S.
Government."[88]

Thus accounting standard setting in the U.S.A. (and
the author maintains, internationally), is subject to
political considerations of a direct nature. It is
also a product of the cultural, social and economic
environment.

Mankind exists within his own subjectivity, experience
and perceptions (see Heidegger and Kierkegaard)[89] and
therefore cannot treat any item as objective, rational
and at 'arms length'. 'Reality' can only be perceived
via participation and involvement of the individual,
and the individual is to a large extent the product
of his/her upbringing. This being the case then a
'social science' type discipline like accounting must,
to a large extent, be moulded by the cultural and
economic base of society. A conceptual structure of
an absolute nature cannot exist, since any structure
will itself be a product of the same cultural and
economic base. The writer would not go so far as to
advocate the total acceptance of a Marxian model of
accounting theory development despite the many
similarities. In particular, accounting concepts and
structures, in different countries and cultures, seem
to be very much a function of the economic base of that
culture.

(88) Ibid, p.7.
(89) See Russell, B., History of Western Philosophy and its
Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from
the Earliest Times to the Present Day, Allen and Unwin,
1957.

The result of these observations must be that:-

(a)   No single conceptual basis exists in
       what could be termed an absolute sense,
       since accounting is the product of the
       cultural, economic and political
       environments of the particular country.

(b)   Given similarities between cultures,
       for example, Australia, United Kingdom,
       and U.S.A., the methods adopted in these
       different countries will have many
       similarities, but at the same time will
       have differences that will tend to take on
       a cultural distinctiveness.

(c)   There are many ways of improving the
       performance of accounting, one of which
       is the striving for a conceptual framework.
       The movement towards the framework has
       taken several forms, none of which has been
       able to force closure on the area. Each
       of the approaches however, has made
       significant contributions to the development
       and practice of accounting.

(d)   The scientific-empirical approach for all
       of its problems provides the greatest
       advantage to researchers, and must be
   recommended.

The position is thus reached where accounting must
be viewed in a cultural context, that accounting theory
construction methodology has taken several forms,
from a very pragmatic to a highly conceptual, and, that
each of these approaches has provided practice with real

benefits. Finally accounting does not have any absolute
nature nor principles, and is in a constant state of
flux. The question posed at the beginning of the paper
is repeated, 'what methodological prescriptions are
recommended for the future?' The answer can only be
that no one method of theory construction can be
absolutely recommended, however the scientific approach
is the 'best' tool available. In the past, accounting
knowledge has been derived from numerous sources and
it would appear that it will continue to do so in the
future. Thus methods should be evaluated on their
output 'the goods that they produce', and as long as
a method is useful, whether it be normative or
pragmatic, borrowed or derived, then this must be the
criterion.

There will in the author's view be methods of
knowledge-gathering that will tend to be more
productive than others, in particular, empirical research
and the scientific approach. However, in the foreseeable
future accounting must draw from whatever sources of
knowledge it can, so as to best meet the needs of the
marketplace and in the longterm society as a whole,
thus a weltanschauungen view of accounting is advocated.

APPENDIX ONE

Periods of importance of the various approaches to theory
formulation.
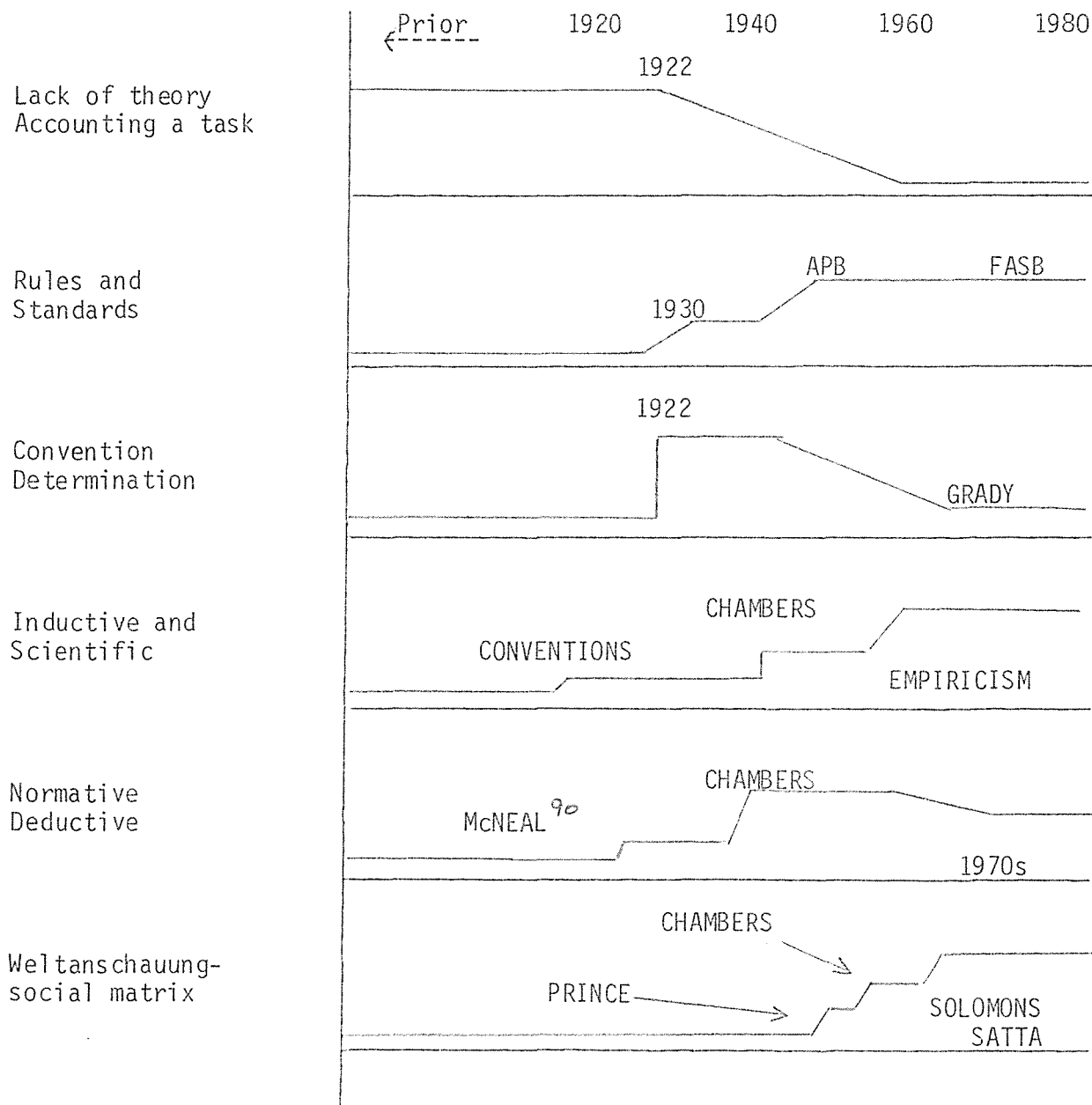
At all times there are elements of all the approaches present, it is the relative
weights of the different approaches that is of interest.

90   MacNeal, K., Truth In Accounting, University of
     Pennsylvania , 1939.

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Appendix One.

Questionaire Prompt Sheet for the Interviews.

Massey University, Education Department.

Thesis Investigation. Parental and pupil considerations made in choosing a secondary college education.

Questionaire:

Have you considered any of these schools for your child next year?

	considered	given serious thought	chosen
Colenso			
Havelock North			
Lindisfarne			
Iona			
Napier Boys High	~		
Napier Girls College			
St Johns College			
Karamu High			
Hastings Boys High			
Hastings Girls High			
St Josephs Maori Girls			
Tamatea High			
Taradale College			
Sacred Heart Girls College			
Rudolf Steiner School			
Others. Please name.			

2. Who influenced the decision as to choice of school?

  Little influence 1 ————————10 Most Influence

Mother 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   (please circle)
Father 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   "
child 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   "
relations 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   "
friends 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   "

experiences of elder brothers & sisters

3. Which factors most influenced decision about choice of school?

  Not important 1 ————————10 Very important

Economic/Money considerations 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Geographic/location of school 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   (please)
Social considerations   (circle)
    (friends, single sex etc.) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   .

If you as parents had the greatest influence on the choice
of school, was your decision based upon your own experience?
In what way? -

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Would you prefer your child to be attending a different school?
Which one and why?.

_____

How important do you think the decision made now will be upon
your childs future educationally and in later life? Will it
have any effect upon his/her career etc.?

_____

What should college provide for your child educationally and
socially in your estimation?

Occupation of adult members of family -

Appendix Two.

Letter to Parents.

Department of Education

Dear Parents,

I am hoping that you will be able to assist me in an investi-
gation I am conducting into your child's future college education.
I hope to visit all the parents of F.2 pupils in your child's
class during the next two months. Your assistance, will be of
benefit to all children. I will telephone you in the near
future to explain further details and to answer any questions that
you may have.

The interview will be informal and anonymous and will be
arranged at a time that is convenient to you. We could discuss
this over the telephone.

Thanking you in expectation.

Yours faithfully,

D. Scott
(Researcher)

April,1983.

Appendix Three. *(wallet)*

Prospectuses of the Colleges and Enrolment
   Form for the State Colleges.

Appendix Four.

Newsclippings: Open evening for Parents of Third
    Formers. Intake Procedural change.

High schools alter intake procedure

Enrolment procedures for next year's third form intake at Napier's five secondary schools have changed.

Last week the principals of Napier Boys' and Girls' High, Colenso, Taradale high and Tamatea High met to find a formula for enrolling third formers.

In the past, each high school had its own system for recruiting pupils, sometimes resulting in friction between the schools.

Tamatea principal Mr John Ryan, who hosted the meeting, said five schools would hold public meetings in late July and early August with parents and pupils.

In that two week period, parents and pupils can visit all five high schools.

"People can shop around for a high school to send their son or daughter to," he said.

A standard application for enrolment form will be sent out to intermediates. After filling in details of the child, the parent then nominates a secondary school.

Mr Ryan said application forms would no longer have information about options available to each school "so people do not make judgments about schools before they have a closer look at them".

NAPIER STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT INFORMATION MEETINGS

Parents of Form II students are advised that meetings to provide parents with information relating to secondary education in the school concerned will be held on the following dates:

Tamatea High School — **Tuesday, July 26, 7.30pm** (Library)

Napier Boys' HS — **Wednesday, July 27, 7.00pm** (Hall)

Colenso High School — **Thursday, July 28, 7.30pm** (Hall)

Napier Girls' HS — **Tuesday, August 2, 7.30pm** (Hall)

Taradale High School — **Wednesday, August 3, 7.30pm (Hall)**

The Principal and senior staff from the appropriate school will explain course structures and administrative routines and then operate as a panel to answer questions from parents.

The relevant school prospectus or information sheet will be available at the meeting for those parents who have not yet obtained one.

Parents may of course attend more than one meeting if they wish.

NOTE:

1. Each High School or Intermediate School Office has copies of the relevant prospectus or information sheet and these are available on request.

2. The actual application for enrolment form will be issued by the Form II teachers on August 8, and then should be completed and returned to them by Friday, August 12.

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ween the Gov-
the association, it
uncumbent to ensure that
school students were taught, instructed, helped, guided and assisted in accordance with New Zealand's statutes he said.

"Therefore, whatever action the teachers opt to take next year the Government will ensure that the University Entrance examination is properly conducted and administered in accordance with Parliament's wishes."

Mr Wellington said if some teachers wanted to convert classrooms into factory floors they could try — but would not finally succeed.

"I say that because in the event of an acceleration of such approaches and tactics there

will be a commensurate acceleration of movement by parents to send their young people to private schools.

"Despite emotive comment to the contrary the balance between private integrated and state education as expressed in number has remained roughly constant. This balance will inevitably alter if the association and its docile membership continues to shuffle along blinkered and cloth-capped."

Mr Wellington said the union could, therefore, continue to subtly campaign for its "pupil retention scheme."

"If it does, but not because of government action, it will lose an increasing number of young people to the private sector."

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3RD FORM ENROLMENT, FUND

ATTENTION parents of present and future 3rd formers.

Parents who are fighting to change the present 3rd form enrolment system have opened a public fund to help them fight a court appeal.

On December 20, 1983, a High Court decision deemed the present High School Enrolment Scheme invalid and an appeal has been lodged by the High School Boards. Unless the appeal is contested the present system and all its anomalies will continue.

This is your opportunity to have a say in your child's secondary education.

TEAR OFF   *Dec. '93*