THE MAIN REALITY
Transition from School to Work - Final Report to SSRC.

PAUL WILLIS

SP38 35p.
Final report on the SSRC project entitled
'The Transition from School to Work'

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Description Relating to Collective Activity

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Final Report

We were first led to an interest in the school and the experiential passage of working class boys into the work situation, by an awareness of a long standing omission in the Centre's work. Dr. Willis' previous work at the Centre (1) had been typical of the traditional cultural studies perspectives in that it concentrated more or less exclusively on the leisure time activities of young people. Since one of the main focuses of the Centre's work was Working Class Culture, it became increasingly clear that the study of young working class people should involve some knowledge, precisely, of that zone of their lives which lends its name to the general class description, and which is likely to be the single most important area of involvement and experience for young people - work. Furthermore, we felt that even our studies of the leisure activities of the young might be vitiated by the complete absence of any consideration the work dimension. Though chronologically separate, we felt that leisure activity was by no means a separate domain of experience from work activity. Even in leisure it was felt that some central meanings and values might have been derived from the work situation, or have developed in specific kinds of relation to the work situation.

We were impelled, therefore, by this general interest, towards the symbolic and cultural patterns which go to make up the world of work, and the place within it of the young adult or adolescent. The double articulation of the interest in youth, and the interest in work, promised a rich vein of research which would throw into high relief some of the crucial elements of the culture of work - because viewed through the innocent eyes of the neophyte, and which would illuminate more general aspects of the culture of the young - by adding a dimension of their existence ignored till now.
When we came to examine the literature (2) concerning the transition from school to work, we found a considerable omission which was curiously complementary to the omission we had noted in our own work. Certainly the literature dealt with work and the transition to work, and we accepted the central if negative findings which emerged from so many studies: that the entry into work was a problematic experience for most school leavers; that the formal agencies of guidance were relatively ineffective — that social class, the home, the school were the crucial background determinants of job choice.

But this treatment of work and the young man's passage into it, was virtually without any insight derived from a cultural perspective. What was missing was a presentation and discussion of the actual experience of the subjects as they made their passage, and an exposure and discussion of the located culture and its often hidden meanings, through which the subjects actually lived.

The original objective of our research was, therefore, to draw back something of the opacity of the transition from school to work. Instead of marking it as a 'problematic' experience, we wanted to know the nature of the internal dynamics of the situation as experienced by the participants. Instead of stopping at the acceptance of the (accurate) description of the official agencies as ineffective, we wanted to discover what were the schemes, and sources of meanings by which the subjects were in fact guided. Instead of charting the objective causal relationship between job choice, class, school and home, we wanted to know how these structural determinants actually worked at the personal and subjective level. How did the individual perceive these factors, and how did they influence the immediate cultural world by which and through which we supposed the school leavers would actually make their minds up? The principle concept with which we proposed to pursue our objectives were those of 'subjective meaning' and the 'informal culture of work'. The nature of our interest determined the use of qualitative methods (see next section).

Though we hoped that our chosen methodology would allow a much fuller and a more varied set of 'results' than a mere validation or not of prior theoretical models, it was possible to frame our interest in two basic and formally stated research hypotheses. These formed the basis for a submission to Research Council to support a project on 'The Transition from School to Work.'

1) In the construction of this perspective (on the world of work and his future in it), the working class school leaver will frame his definition of the situation primarily with reference, not to the formally organised sources of meaning about the world of work, but to the 'informal culture of work'.

2) The transition from school to work is more adequately understood from the 'subjective meaning' perspective of the actor than by the adoption of more institutional viewpoints.

Research Programme and Methods

We made plans to test, explore and further investigate our hypotheses by mounting case studies in the field. We were successful in gaining ESRC support for our project, and work began in April 1973.

After a preliminary two month stage of observation and enquiry, and a crude survey of possible case study groups, a friendship group of twelve working class, average ability boys was selected from the fourth form of a non-selective Secondary School in the Birmingham area (3). The particular school was selected because it was in the heart of, and drew from, a stable and traditionally working class, industrial area and was equipped with a Youth Wing on the school site which was well attended by the fourth year. We felt that preliminary approaches to the group could be made best through the more informal and relaxed setting of the Youth Wing in the evenings.
rather than in the more disciplined setting of daytime school. The
particular group was chosen amongst other things for its cohesion,
willingness to respond, and its congruence to our pre-set parameters -
working class, average ability, white, non-academic. Staff at the
school and the local Careers Officers were most helpful, and willing
to accept the researcher’s presence. During late May, 1973 the
chosen group was approached through the Youth Wing of the school.
Great care was taken by the researcher to adopt a role of maximum
openness and informality with the boys, though the nature of the
research interest, and researcher’s identity, were never concealed.
This crucial contact phase of the project was successfully completed
and the group came to accept the researcher fairly readily. For the
balance of that term, and for the whole of their next and last
school year, the researcher moved on to regular discussions with the
group some of which were taped; in-depth individual taped interviews;
general informal observation around the school; and attendance at
a range of normal classes, including the complete run of careers
classes.

During the same period a careful analysis was made of careers
teaching materials used in the school, and of the formal information
concerning careers that was supplied to the boys. Materials and
teaching techniques of all the main subject areas constituting the
regular timetable for our group, were also studied. Parents of all
individuals in the group were contacted and interviewed on tape
in depth.

One other group in the same school, and four other groups
of a similar age in a range of different schools within the Birmingham
conurbation were selected and contacted to give a comparative dimension
to the main study across the dimensions of class, ability and
attitudinal stance to the school. These comparative groups were
also due to leave in Summer 1974. Discussions were recorded
with all of them.

Although it should become clear from the much fuller treatment
of the results of the research in the next section, we should mention
here that there was some shift in our objectives during the course
of this stage of the research. This happened as our theoretical
concepts were progressively exposed to the field. Firstly, it
became clear very early on that the friendship group was more important
than we had allowed for - and we did always intend to base our main
case study on a friendship group - because it was the main support
of the pupil culture of the school and the main location and
determinant of individual subjective experience. Though we were
still very much concerned with subjective experience, we located
it more and more at the group level rather than at the simply
personal.

Secondly, it became clear very early on that working class kids
going through their last year at school could not be considered as one
large homogeneous group. Even amongst those kids who could be
considered of average to low ability, there was a clear division
between those with a positive adaption to school and those with a
negative adaption to school. (3) It was also clear that those kids
with a negative adaption to school were also those who were most
influenced by the situated informal culture we were interested in,
and were also the ones destined for those semi-skilled and unskilled
jobs which we held to be at the heart of working class culture proper.

We determined, therefore, to base our main case study on a friendship
group of anti-school working class kids. Our most important comparative
case study became that of a friendship group drawn from those with a
positive orientation to school. Both of these groups were located
in the same school. It may be argued that our progressive refinement
of our target group to a friendship group, and a negatively orientated
group, vitiates its representativeness for the general body of average to low ability working class school leavers. However, we would argue that such friendship groups constitute the single most important structure for those experiencing their last year at school and facing the passage into work, and that, as such, they have great importance even for those not directly involved in those specific groups. Understanding the processes at play in such a group will allow us to make comments and suggestions about the situation of all working class early school leavers.

Thirdly, it became increasingly apparent as we got further into the field work that we had started out with a somewhat mechanical, rigid and restricted notion of the 'informal culture of work'. Firstly and most obviously, the informal culture of the boys as it is related to work prospects and choice could not be dissociated from the general informal culture of the boys at school. This culture was not a series of static, discrete, quantum of knowledge, but a dynamic situational process which, just because it was orientated towards different situational problems at different times coming up with different sorts of response, should not therefore be broken up into geographic-type pieces. We were really concerned, therefore, not with the 'informal culture of work', but with the informal culture in school and how it related to the world of work.

Secondly, and in a related way, we came to see that we had started out with an implicitly inanimate, information-flow-type, model of informal cultural arrangements. As we progressed in our work it became clear that this informal culture was based less on re-interpretations and selection of provided information, official and otherwise - which was how we had foreseen it - and more on what might be termed creative, group based processes which generated oppositional values attitudes and practices from materials which were certainly provided, but in no sense handed on unchanged or in the same form. The school was not only - as we had foreseen - a source of materials for the boy's developing self understanding and configuration of future work roles, it also had to be understood as a dynamic, complex, contradictory process occurring in a varied and uneven structure. This structure held certain spaces, or facilitating tendencies, which - perhaps unintentionally - encouraged alternative, group based generation of practices, skills and values which were far more than transposition of content from other sources. Alongside a certain shift of our interest from the individual to the group, there was also, therefore, a change in emphasis from a notion of informal culture as something into which information flowed from the outside, to a more structured notion of informal culture - where and when and how was the culture located in terms of the organization of the school - and to a more dynamic and transformative notion of culture as made and supported by the social group.

These shifts in focus allowed us to define more exactly the kind of group we were interested in and upon which we wanted to base a case study, and they also allowed a more exact and thought-out marshalling of the methods most appropriate to our material.

As set out in our original application we had foreseen that we would use a range of quantitative methods:

- Participant Observation
- Observation
- 'Just Being Around'
- Group Discussions
- Recorded Group Discussions
- Informal Interviews
- Formal Interviews
- Diaries

In fact all of these methods were used in the field, although our developing interest in the group and its processes, and in the dynamic aspects of cultural organization, impelled us more to the
The researcher, committed as he was to a more qualitative flow of data, chose to negotiate these problems in the 'main' case study by a combination of a pronounced lean towards the kids in the situation coupled with a strategy of making clear explanations to staff in private. For the researcher this meant, in effect, taking great pains not to act like, or to be seen as, a teacher, as well as making other teachers not to treat him as a colleague. He took care never to sit in front of a class, or to be caught in a position where he might be expected to direct or control the boys. Out of class, in and around the school, and in the recorded group discussions, he took care to avoid an authority role and made no comments about smoking, bad language, rough or lawless behaviour.

He told the kids that he was interested in 'Explaining the experience of school, and how you find a job, from your side', and staff that he wanted, 'To get their feelings and reactions as they are expressed, and as they are shared, amongst the group, when staff are not around.'

By and large this strategy worked from the point of view of the relationship with the kids. Whilst not accepting the researcher as a group member, they certainly accorded him a privileged third party status. He was not a teacher, was easy to talk to, and most of all would not 'shop' them. In our experience it is always surprising the extent to which subjects will accept a researcher on the basis of his simply expressed interest and demonstrated trustworthiness.

Towards the end of the school based field work the researcher was able to gain sufficient acceptance from the group to enable him to join them for complete day cycles - that is, during classes and for their free time - so that, in these highly difficult circumstances, something approaching genuine participant observation was achieved.
Furthermore, as the relationship with the kids developed, the recorded group interviews became very much more spontaneous, fuller and richer, so that they began to serve not merely as reporting sessions, but also as examples of group-based cultural processes at work.

There was, then, a degree of success in the chosen research strategy. This did not relieve the method, however, of its internal stresses and contradictions — nor did it lessen the feelings of tension and anxiety within the researcher. Other researchers contemplating the use of genuinely qualitative methods in a structured context such as the school, should be well aware of the of the problems and understand the nature of the choices they must make. For the nature of our research strategy was to elect for a commitment to the boys really, and as it was perceived, at the expense of such loyalty and conformity to staff standards as is conventionally expected of a 'responsible' adult. These costs can be minimized by clear statements of purpose to staff, but there is always a balance of disavantages and advantages. No teacher likes another adult in his class, especially when that adult is not only observing the proceedings, but has also made it clear that he will not act as an ally in a crisis. The researcher experienced many awkward situations in classes where there was a lack of trust. Whilst neither encouraging, nor taking part in this 'messing about', he could not help the teacher to control the kids. The most acute and awkward situations occurred where the researcher had witnessed, or had first hand knowledge of, misdeeds in such a way that staff might reasonably have supposed him to be witness for the prosecution. Of course, even if it had been attractive, any such role would have subverted the researcher's standing with the informal group. Silence had to be kept, there was no way to remain impartial in the way that conventional tenets of 'neutrality' might suggest. Such silences, where they ran in the face of counter knowledge in the staff, could be interpreted as complicity in wrong doing, and as subversion of the school's discipline.

This possibility held further concern for the researcher, since his subject group might have taken his loyalty in these matters, and his close interest in what was happening to them, as encouragement to further misbehaviour, and even to the positive putting on of a show. This is, of course, the classic danger — the 'Hawthorne Effect' — of social research. However, this risk had to be taken.

Careful questioning of staff — when the case study group were well out of sight — revealed that there was no observable difference between the behaviour of the lads when he was around and when he was not around. Most staff thought that the behaviour of the group was no more extreme than had been expected of them before the researcher's appearance, and was no worse than that of other similar groups who had passed through their hands. For the lads they assumed the researcher that things were quite 'normal' when he was around, and that they had quite soon ceased to notice whether he was around or not.

At any rate, it should be clear that whilst a more qualitative methodology yields the most relevant data for a study of located subjective meaning and its immediate context of cultural patterns and symbols, it is also an extremely difficult method to manage in the field. This is especially true of qualitative field work in a structured context where the regular participants of the on-going situation will not allow a non-aligned position to the researcher. It is a tribute to the tolerance, understanding and openness of the staff, and particularly to the Head and Deputy Head of the school
in which we based our main case study, that the field work was carried out successfully and our objectives satisfied without any major reactions or confrontations.

An important secondary problem that arose during this period of research should be mentioned briefly. This concerned the difficulty of getting tape recordings of kids, staff, parents, and careers officers transcribed in sufficient numbers or at a sufficiently high standard. It is inherently difficult to analyse verbal material, and the rolling nature of our empirical and theoretical interests meant that selection criteria were liable to change during the course of the research. It is highly desirable that all taped materials should be transcribed, analysed, sorted and stored in a written fashion. The sum of eight hundred and fifty pounds which we budgeted for this task was quite inadequate, and the organizational basis of its administration - casual secretary help - quite inappropriate. Casual secretaries cannot be supervised properly, and rarely have the commitment to produce satisfactory work. During the course of this project we have used ten different secretaries, have failed to transcribe all the material which was available, and have produced usable texts only at the expense of several hundred hours extra work from the full time researcher.

We strongly suggest, therefore, that any one using similar techniques to our own should budget for a full time secretary over a fairly long period in order to be sure of making the best use of the material they expect to generate.

More generally, the only area from which we had a disappointing data flow in this period was that of the lads' leisure time activities. This was foreseen, of course, in our original application, and was the direct result of the limitation of the project to one researcher. However, some material relating to leisure activities was collected.

The researcher spent a number of 'free evenings' with the group. A lot of information was collected from day time discussion groups about their leisure activities, self-placement in the larger symbolic system of Youth Culture and their preferences in pop music and materials broadcast by the main media, etc. The diary method in conjunction with the group discussion proved a useful technique here. Although the written standard of the diaries was often how they provided some kind of framework within which the boys were able to, more systematically than they could in a spontaneous group discussion, to recall patterns of behaviour.

Four of the 'main' group left at Easter, 74, and eight at Summer. The second stage of our research programme was to follow all twelve of these boys, as well as three selected boys from comparative groups cut into the work situation. This was successfully completed in all cases. Two days were spent actually working alongside each subject. At the end of each period the researcher interviewed the subject in depth on tape. The aim here was both to get something of the sense of the 'shop floor culture' into which the lads were moving, and also to see how the lads had responded to this situation, that kind of adoption they were making and how the school had actually helped or hindered their transition. An attempt was also made to interview various people at work in positions of authority about their perspective on 'the promising worker' and how the transition from school to work was best accomplished.

Surprisingly enough, the methodological problems of this stage of research were less severe than those of the previous stage.

To start with, the period of field work in each case study was quite short. This meant that, although PO was used, there was simply no time to worry about the finer points of the method.
Generally, it had a large intermixture of more straightforward observation, since it was not really possible in the time available to form close relationships with quite new social groups. On the other hand, a surprisingly varied and rich flow of data was achieved considering the short time spent in each situation. The researcher's involvement in these situations amounted to far more than the formal visit of the outside expert.

We think the unexpected smoothness of this stage of the research arose from the closeness of our contact with the locals. In effect, and with deceptive ease, this contact satisfied some of the main conditions for entry into the field work situation. It gave the researcher a patron in the shop floor group; it provided him with a feasible and comprehensible account of his presence; and perhaps most important, established a mode of ease and naturalness with one group member so that kind of general participation in the life of the group became possible in a very short time. The range of material gathered about cultures of the work place was a substantial and unexpected benefit of our long term research strategy and the emphasis we placed on working in close to a small number of people over a protracted period. (5)

The main difficulties during this period of the research were in the setting up and planning of the field work sessions. Very often managers found our request to work alongside chosen lads - rather than simply come into interview them in the Personnel Manager's office - rather strange. Our requests were frequently pressed on or delayed for long periods. The most successful strategy was to identify by phone the manager who could actually make a decision about the researcher's entry, write to him in detail about the research and its objective, then follow up again by phone until a concrete arrangement for a face to face meeting had been made. Once this contact had been achieved, the manager's advice, or more often that of his first line manager, was invaluable in helping to plan the precise details of the researcher's working situation. It is vital for the researcher to have some real task on the shop floor, or he gets in the way and everyone becomes embarrassed. On the other hand, it is clearly vital to be as close as possible to the subject, and whatever group he is part of, and to come into functional contact with this group as much as is possible. It is also important to make sure that the researcher is not given VIP treatment or carried off to meet senior management for long periods. The same structures that apply to the structured situation of the school also apply to the working situation. It is vital to avoid being perceived as 'a boozing man'.

It was crucial to have the sympathy and help of managers in planning how to deal with these problems. Certainly, any researcher contemplating similar work should not be tempted to compress or short circuit the necessary stages of planning and negotiation. Although one of the keystones of the qualitative method is naturalism, the mechanics of mounting the method in a period of field work are far from obvious and natural.

The second stage of the field work was completed successfully by January 1975. Our fundamental objectives remained unchanged through this period, and the form and mix of our methodology remained virtually as we had planned it.
Before coming to the detail of our findings it is worth stating certain central themes that have emerged in a more formal manner.

It is clear that our original interest in 'informal culture of work', and 'subjective' orientations within it, has to be specified and located in a more structured context. The 'informal culture of work' can only be considered as an aspect of the informal culture of the school generally. This is the central formation which responds to a number of situations and choices: subject choice, job choice, relations to staff, relations to girls, relations to peers, types of leisure involvement. It is absolutely necessary to understand this unified informal culture before proceeding to specified areas such as orientation to work.

This culture cannot, however, be considered alone or in isolation. Most basically, we argue it has to be located with respect to the informal group, and in particular with respect to informal groups with a negative orientation towards the school. Certainly it was always our intention to site our case study on a friendship group, but we did not properly foresee that as well as being a privileged level of entry into cultural and subjective meanings, this kind of group was also the main organisational unit, the main bearer, and ultimately the main generator of those meanings. In terms of intra-group processes we found - and it is a finding which surprised us - what can only be called a genuine creativeness. At the outset of the research we had expected to find an informal culture amongst the pupils, but we had thought that the content of this culture would have been largely drawn from the outside - attitudes, values, practices drawn via parents and neighbours from the wider working class culture, or places taken straight even if inverted, from the official culture and communications of the school. Now whilst the attitudes and practices of the informal group did draw from outside sources, and may be seen as part of the wider working
class culture, they were in no sense mere reflections or imitations of these things. The informal group developed its own distinctive, intricate and organized practices and abilities. It did not take over simple, inert communications from the outside, but appropriated whole spaces within the institutional structure and shaped them for their own purposes.

The internal functioning of the anti-school group could not, however, be understood entirely with respect to itself. The group had to be placed within the larger context of the school as Institution and against the other informal groups that went to make up the internal cultural topography of the school. The particular location of a group within this matrix school/other groups, was crucially important to its internal processes. In our study and in the case of the anti-school group we found that the crucial co-ordinates of this kind were opposition to the school as Institution, and rejection of other groups of pupils - particularly that large group identified as conformist to the institutional norms of the school. It is only in relation to these cross-holding factors that we will understand the formation of the informal group; the types of content it generated at a cultural level, and the perspectives it develops on job choice and the world of work.

To come, now, to our case study work, we identified two main groups in school - the conformists and the non-conformists. It was the latter group which interested us and on which we based our 'main' case study. It was the group which was likely to include those less of average to low ability in terms of achievement at any rate, who were not going to get leaving paper qualifications, and who were destined for basic un-skilled or semi-skilled working class jobs. In the terminology of such lads the two groups were the 'boys' and the 'ear-oles'. These two groups formed the poles for the internal landscape of the year, if not of the school. The 'boys' largely either rejected the overt aims of schooling and the legitimacy of teachers to guide them, or were deeply ambiguous about what they thought the school was trying to do - mainly it boiled down to 'pushing us about'.

The 'ear-oles' largely took the school in its own terms and accepted the legitimacy of the teachers. For the 'boys' they were "heroes", "army-creepers", 'teacher's pets' and generally despiseful for their conformism to school norms, for their lack of assertiveness, for their inability to show any autonomy, and most of all for their inability to create 'fun' for themselves - to 'have a larf'.

Paul: (...) why not be like the ear-oles, why not try and get C's or E's?

Derek: They don't get any fun do they?

Derek: Can they get pets like, one kid he's got on his report now, he's got five A's and and one B

Birchall: Who's that?

Derek: Birchall

Spanky: I mean what will they remember of their school life? What will they have to look back on. Sitting in a class room, sweating their balls off, you know, while we've been... Look back on, fighting on the fields, fighting on the field... Some of the things we've done on teachers, it'll be a larf when we look back on it.
Percy
Like you know, he don’t get, he don’t get much fun, well say Spankney plays about all day, he gets fun. Bennett’s there sweating, sweating his bollocks off all day while Spankney’s doing fuck all, and he’s enjoying it.

Spankney
In the first and second years I used to be brilliant really, I was in 3a, so you know and when I used to get home, I used to lie in bed thinking, ‘Ah, school tomorrow’, you know, I hadn’t done that homework, you know... ‘Got to do it’
- Yeah, that’s right, that is

Spankney
But now when I go home, it’s quiet, I ain’t got nothing to think about, I say, ‘Oh great, school tomorrow, it’ll be a lark’, you know.

Will
You still never fucking come!

Spankney
Who?

Will
You.

/laughter/

^...

You can’t imagine

- You can’t imagine (inaudible) going into the plough and saying, ‘A pint of larger please’.

Fred
You can’t imagine Bookley goin’ home like with the misuse, either, and having a good snail on her.

- I can, I’ve seen him!

- He’s got a bird, Bookley!

- He has

Fred
I can’t see him getting to grips with her, though, like we do you know.

In terms of their structural location, the most crucial feature of the ‘boys’ and their culture was entrenched and personalized opposition to the school and its agents.

^ in a discussion on teachers and vandalism

Joey
(... they’re able to punish us. They’re able to punish us, they’re bigger than us, they stand for a bigger establishment than we do, like, we’re just little and they stand for bigger things, and you try to get your own back. It’s er’s resenting authority I suppose.

Eddie
The teachers think they’re high and mighty ‘cuz they’re teachers, but they’re nobody really, they’re just ordinary people ain’t they?

^ in a general discussion about notes and boredom

Joey
It’s sort of a challenge, coming to school thinking, ‘How can I outwit the teachers today’?, like. The teachers are the establishment, they’ve done things to you, you don’t like what they’ve done, how can you get back?

^ in a general discussion about teachers in their school

Bill
Teachers think they’re everybody. They are more, they’re higher than us, but they think they’re a lot higher and they’re not.

Spankney
Wish we could call them first names and that... think they’re God.

Pete
That would be a lot better.

FW
I mean you say they’re higher. Do you accept at all that they know better about things?

- Yeah

- Yeah

Joey
Yes, but that doesn’t rank them above us, just because they are slightly more intelligent.

Bill
They ought to treat us how they’d like us to treat them.

^ ...

Joey
(... the way we’re subject to their every whim like. They want something doing and we have to sort of do it, ‘cos, er er, we’re just, ‘cuz, er... we’re under them like. We wear a woman teacher in here, and one or two of them bangles, like he’s got one on, and out of the blue, ‘like, for no special reason, she says, ‘take all that off’.

FW
Really?

Joey
Yeah, we say, ‘One won’t come off’, she says, ‘Take yours off as well’. I said, ‘You’ll have to chop my finger off first’.

FW
Why did she want you to take your rings off?
Joey

just a sort of show like. Teachers do this, like, all of a sudden they'll make you do your rice up and things like this. You're subject to their every whim like. If they want something done, if you don't think it's right, and you object against it, you're down to a Simmondsley to the headl; or you get the canoe, you get some extra work tonight.

Pv

You think of most staff as kind of enemies (..)?

- Yeah

- Yeah

- Most of them

Joey

It adds a bit of spice to yer life, if you're trying to get him for something he's done to you.

The 'boys' opposition to the school and its agents, and their scornful rejection of the 'ear'ole' - not least because of their acceptance of the legitimacy of the school - were very powerful determinants of what amounted to an anti-school alternative or counter culture within the school. Membership of this culture, or the manner of your relationship to it, was very much more important to the non-academic working class lad than was the achievement of any formal aims of education, or the satisfaction of any other independent or 'free' form of social connection. It was the spine around which their day and thoughts were organized; the dichotomy 'boys'/ 'ear'ole' was the most basic organizing structure of school life.

Will (..) like in the first and second years, you can say 'em..., you're a bit of an ear'ole right. When you want to try what it's like to be ear, say one of the boys like, you want to have a taste of that, not an ear'ole, and so you like the taste of that

One of the interesting things the research brought to light was that, in terms of individual biographies at least, the split between the two groups and the development of the 'boys' culture could be easily traced. By and large it seemed that all children entered the first year as 'ear'oles', even if they had been in some form of non-conformist group in the Junior School (and there was evidence that these did exist). In the second, or more commonly the third year and sometimes the fourth year, a process occurred amongst some of the lads which might be termed differentiation.

This was where the mental and social support of the teacher, and the acceptance of the legitimacy of his proclaimed aims, were decisively withdrawn. The essence of this scepticism was a refusal to accept the teacher as automatically better than the children in all cases. The institutionally prescribed aims of gaining self esteem were - sometimes quite suddenly - seen as not the only grounds for gaining self esteem: that doesn't rank then above us, just because they are slightly more intelligent'. For parallel with the disaffection from the teacher - sometimes seen as a cause of it - was an affiliation with a group of peers marked out precisely by the attempt to develop modes of activity and schemes of values which gave alternative grounds for self-respect and a viable identity.

Diligence, deference, respect - these became things which could be read in quite another way.

Fred

If you don't do what the others do, you feel out

Pv

You feels cut yeah, yeah. They sort of, you feel, like, thinking the others are...

Joey

- In the second years

Evans (the Careers Master said you were all being very rude, (..) you didn't have the politeness to listen to the speaker during a Careers Session...)

He said why didn't you realize that you were just making the world very rude for when you grow up and God help you when you have kids 'cos they're going to be worse.

What did you think of that?
Joey  They wouldn't. They'll be outspoken. They wouldn't be subservient fucking little. They’ll be outspoken, upstanding sort of people

Spankney  If any of my kids are like this, here, I'll be pleased.

It is during the stage of differentiation when the individual joining the 'boys' first develops an analysis of his social position vis-à-vis the school and the people in it. The teachers are trying to enforce patterns of behaviour and standards which are seen, essentially, as impositions. The other kids of his own age - the 'ear'oles' - accept these standards, collude in their maintenance, and judge their own worth and progress with these official measures.

A value laden social map of the school year emerges on which virtually everyone can be placed.  

[In a discussion about what groups they will find at work]

Will  (...) we see each other every day, don't we, at school (...)  

Joey  That's it, we've developed certain ways of talking, certain ways of acting and we developed disregard for Paddock, Jamaican and all different, for all the scrubs and the fucking ear'oles and all that (...)  

Many things which were confused and uncertain before - whether to speak to and no, why somebody has always attracted you, why someone else has always been faintly boring - became clear in this stage of 'coming out.' This social mapping was very much more a product of the self-elected 'boys' group than it was of the indicated 'ear'ole' group. Members of the conformist group had a less developed sense of disliking people, and reacted to the 'boys' more on the individual basis, disliking of being called 'boy': resentment when troublemakers stopped the class working smoothly: jealousy of the social and sexual accomplishments of certain individuals. The very nature of the derogatory title, 'ear'ole', with its connotations of passivity, absurdity and inexpressivity - to the 'boys' it seemed that the 'ear'oles' were always listening never doing - indicates quite clearly which group was doing the signifying of the social landscape. The conformist group did not generate any counter terms to either identify, or evaluate differently, the major social groupings. Apart generally, and specifically, usage of conventional words, were the product of the 'boys' and decisively not of the 'ear'oles'.

Members of the counter school group could remember quite clearly when they first joined the 'boys' and what changes had ensued.

[In a discussion on 'ear'oles']

Will  In the first and second years, I used to come you know, in the fifteenth, no lower than fifteenth, I used to be you know, what you would call brashly really, and then the third years and I was in 3A and I got to know Bill then, we, you know, (...) I started goin' to dances and that, like you know, even if it wasn't only up to Youth Club and that, that was a dance like you know, and then you started to get more, um, how can I put it or..., how can I put it?

Spankney  -Cooky more, like ...

Will  Cooky, I suppose you could put it like that.

Fred  It's the second year I went astray. No and Spike first, I used to come, I came twelfth in the first years or twelfth in the second years and then I met Bill and all them (...) we went out with them one night, picked up a big circle of bleeding bitches, Bill and them did. I thought if I don't do it they're goin' to think I'm a right wanker... Picked up a crate of bottles, threw them, me and Spike you know, shit ourselves like, we was down the end of the road before they'd even started running, and then Bill threw bricks and all this you know, and scratching ears, fucking hell.

The research was focused upon working class schools, so, at least in this context, there were no systematic differences in the class background of our two groups. There was certainly, however, a difference in the kind of aspirations the two groups had. The
"ear'oles" were likely to be academically motivated, interested in going on to do GCEs at the end of the fifth and very careful about their choice of subjects. The 'boys' were not academically motivated, were much less interested in taking GCEs, chose particular subjects on the basis of the 'easy option', and regarded their final year at school, if not all the years beyond the point at which they had learned to read and write, as a waste of time.

There was some evidence that the parents of the conformist group were themselves more conformist and that they took more interest in the progress of their children, were less fatalistic, protected them more and were more likely to have plans for their son's futures than the parents of the non-conformist group. This study is not suited to supply statistical answers to these questions, but the following two quotes from parents - the first of one of the 'boys' the second of one of the 'ear'oles' - gives some indication of the kind of parental attitude which was often associated with a certain kind of pupil orientation.

Mr. A. (a metal polisher) This is probably one factor you don't... People don't probably think it's important, is money today. There's a group of charge here, they go out every day (1), then there's little kids, 'cos he goes to school, he has to rely on me to give him a pound. I can't afford to give him any more but how does he feel amongst them others. Education's ware by the board now, you're not there ain't they. Somewhere to go, a discotheque orsomething, they go and buy sandwiches, ice cream, cake...or does he get it, he's the same age as them or he might be a five months younger you know... (1) Education is right at the back of their minds you see. Their pocket they see, that's in their minds.

Mr. A. (.1) he's talked about something, what he wants to do, he definitely wants a job that he can learn what he likes (1), painting and decorating and I think he will be interested in that job, I know it's a job he can do

Mrs. A. He's looking around though isn't he? He's looking at the other jobs like, plasterers, bricklayers. He's watching it, see, see what goes on like you know, he was telling us wasn't he.

Mr. A. He'll pick a job out.

Mrs. A. He'll pick a job out of that kind of thing.

Mrs. B. (husband a coventry) We keep discussing that into them - don't get into trouble, don't let us down in that respect. Whatever you want, ask us what you want and within our means we'll get it you. All I go out to work for is to give you a good home, make it comfortable so that they'll always stay. They won't drift off, and whatever they ask we... not spoiling them, but we give them what they want, like, he wanted a drawing board and things for school which really, you know, paying for this house and all the other things...we had it, I mean like track suits and things that he's asking for he's had.

Mrs. B. Well I suggested it and Tony's been... ever since I suggested being a loyal designer he's been all for it, you know, loyal designer

Mrs. B. How long ago was it when you first...

Mrs. B. Two years ago

Mrs. B. And was it a kind of casual thing while you were doing something else or...?

Mrs. B. No

Mrs. B. So it's still in your mind a little bit?

Mrs. B. Yes

Mrs. B. No, it was when we went to school one day and there was... he's a prefect and he was herding the kids... you know, 'Come on in here you got to go over there, get over there' and this bike was there, he said oh...
Mrs. B. You'd make a wonderful policeman
Mr. B. You'd make a smashing policeman
Mrs. B. One of the teachers (..) says, clean, and they're honest looking. You're clean, you get your money and you get an house as well like.

Certainly for the 'boys' there was a widespread sense that their behaviour, in particular their opposition to the school and scorn of the weak and conformist, fitted into a larger pattern, was expected of them in some way, and was part of an alternative pattern of being supported and protected by their parents over against more official views much in the way that they collectively supported their own alternative culture against the pressure of the school.

[In a discussion on 'car'oles'.]

Spankney (..) you know, he ain't a mastermind [his dad] you know. He was a ruffian when he was younger you know, he's a larf you know, I couldn't, I don't think he'd like to see me, his kids, you know, me or our Barry or our little sister, 'car'oles', you know what I mean.

Will Yeah, and with me, our old man, he was brainy like, but soon as he left school, started to work at the brewery, used to get the booze down him like you know I dare say, that influenced me.

Spankney What's that school on the way to the football. Petty Cott Lane, something like that, that was a real rough school that was, in our dad's time, you know what I mean, and he's rough.

Although this question of parental influence is important and our qualitative findings indicate that there was indeed a pattern of influence, we felt that this element should not be exaggerated. For one thing, the parents of both groups were equally clearly working class - from manual and semi-skilled occupations - and perhaps more important, the significance of the creative and self-directed element of the 'boys' culture made us wary of imputing its causation to outside factors to any great degree. It is too easy to assume that this group and its typical practices and values come about through inevitable continuities with outside pressures, and conformity to family and environment. Too often, as well, it is assumed that this group's culture comes about as a reaction to defeat, as an attempt to forestall the obloquy of academic failure and rejection by teachers. Reforms in teaching have anyway taken the emphasis off purely academic achievement, and it is now possible for a kid to earn his spurs in other ways, from excellence in sport to liveliness in social studies classes. Perhaps more important, it is by no means only the stupid or unintelligent who join the 'boys'. One of the really interesting things about this group and its culture is that it has the internal life and vivacity to attract to its kids who could have easily taken the conformist road and succeeded in it. This culture does not recruit its members on the grounds of rejection by the formal system, but on its own grounds and for what it can offer.

The voluntary and independent nature of this group in this context must, therefore, be stressed. Though it has profoundly important continuities with the outside class culture upheld by parents, and though it is coterminous with the academic non-achievers, we should not seek to describe or explain its internal elements simply in terms of such factors.
What was the nature of this lively, creative culture for which we are claiming some autonomy — an autonomy which is usually denied or ascribed only pathological importance.

Most essentially this counter culture was organized around the colonization of symbolic spaces within the school — spaces left unpatrolled by the school or polyvalent in themselves. The nature of this colonization was an introduction of meanings and a social ambiance which subverted the school and its objectives on the one hand and established a living and practical ascendency over the 'ear'ched on the other. This involved the development of a system of practices, and in a set of evaluative criteria, opposed to those sanctified by the staff and aimed at the maximum distancing from, and ridiculing of, the 'ear'ched'. There were many elements within this cultural programme.

As the most visible, personalized and instantly understood element of opposition and ascendency clothes had great importance to the 'boys'. The first signs of a lad 'coming out' was a fairly rapid change in the appearance of his clothes and hair. The particular form of this alternative dress is determined by outside influences and in particular by fashions current in the wider symbolic system of youth culture. At the moment, and for the schools we worked in, the 'boys' look' would include longish well-groomed hair, platform-type shoes, wide-collared shirt turned over waistcoat or denim jerkin, plus still obligatory flared trousers. Whatever the particular form of dress, it was most certainly not school uniform, rarely included a tie (the second best for many Heads if uniform can't be enforced), and exploited colours calculated to give the maximum distinction from institutional drabness and conformity.

We might note the importance the wider system of commercial youth culture has here in supplying a lexicography of style, with already connected meanings, which can be adapted by the lads to an expression of their more located meanings. Though much of this style, and the music associated with it, might be accurately accused of arising from purely commercial drives, and representing no authentic aspiration of its clients, we should recognize that the way in which it is taken up and used by the young in located situations often has an authenticity and directness of personal expression quite missing from its original commercial generation.

We should also understand from this discussion of dress that it is no accident that much of the conflict between staff and students should take place on the grounds of school uniform/casual dress. To the outside it might seem aathetic argument about differences in taste. Concerned staff, and involved kids, however, know that it is a continuing struggle about authority, a fight between cultures, and ultimately a question about the legitimacy of school as an institution.

Closely related with the dress style of the 'boys' was the whole question of their personal attractiveness. Wearing smart and modern clothes gave them the chance, not only to differentiate themselves from school and from the 'ear'ched', but also to make themselves more attractive to women. It was a matter of objective fact that the 'boys' did 'go out' with girls very much more than did any other groups of the same age. A good majority of them were quite sexually experienced. A smaller proportion, though still substantial, had had sexual intercourse by the fourth year and often much earlier.

An important mark of 'differentiation', and affiliation with the 'boys' in the second, third and fourth years was successful sexual experience expressed precisely as achievement. If the lad had not
actually, 'gone all the way' he would certainly show interest in accomplishing such a feat, and join in speculation about with whom such a thing might possible. The 'ear-ee's' on the other hand had much less sexual experience and did not talk about girls in such salacious terms. That the sexual accomplishment of the 'boys' was real, and also successful in establishing a practice and value system different from - though in this case oddly parallel to its unofficial variety - the official one is shown by the manner in which staff, and especially the younger ones, commented - often admiringly - on the sexual adventures and successes of particular pupils.

If manner of dress is the main apparent cause of argument between staff and kids, smoking is the next most apparent cause of discontent. Again we find another absolutely distinguishing characteristic of the 'boys' against the 'ear-ee's'. The majority of them smoke, and perhaps more important are seen to smoke. There is great pride taken in having the courage to walk right up to the school gate smoking, stub it out and then walk in. A great deal of time is typically spent amongst the 'boys' planning their next smoke and, 'hopping off' lessons 'for a quick drag'. And if the 'boys' delighted in smoking and flaunting their impertinence with a little white stick, it drove staff absolutely crazy. There were usually strict and frequently publicized rules about smoking. If, for this reason, the 'boys' were spurned, almost as a matter of honour, to continue public smoking, the staff were incensed by the brazen challenge to their authority especially if it was allied to that other offence - the lie.

In a discussion on recent brushes with staff,

Spike
And we went in, I says, 'We warn't smoking', he says... and he went really mad. I thought he was going to punch me or some'at.
within the school, the adult world, specifically the adult male working class world, was turned to as a source of materials. This was obviously the case with drinking. Manifest drinking was an even more decisive signal to staff than public smoking that the individual was separate from the school and had a presence in a completely alternative, even superior and more mature, mode of social being. If a lad was going to smoke and, in particular, to drink this did anyway put certain adult type responsibilities on his shoulders because he had to pay for his indulgences. This led to part-time work as well as other practises we shall come to later and the whole experience of confronting the working world - which was itself maturing - from the need for money. Again a distinguishing feature of the 'boys' from the 'car'olen' was their much greater likelihood to have a part-time job or to be seeking one, and to recognize that there was a logic in their cultural choices which extended to quite firm adult-like commitments to a high income flow.

Accounts of staff sighting kids in pubs were excitedly repeated with much more relish than more smoking incidents, and inaction after being clocked 'boozing' was even more delicious proof of a traitor/sympathizer/weakling in the school camp than was the blind eye to a lighted 'fag'. Their perception of this particular matrix of meanings put some younger and more progressive members of staff in a severe dilemma, and some of them came up with bizarre solutions which remained incomprehensible to the 'boys'. This incident involved a concerned and progressive young teacher.

Derek says, 'Alright sir!', in a discussion on staff...
many contradictions and ambiguities.

\[
\text{[\text{in a discussion on recent urges by the staff]}]
\]

Derek

(...). They say you're adults and that and yet, some things they, they'll say you're adults and then they'll say you're responsible and all this, and then the next thing they'll turn around and say or... "Walk down the corridor quietly in line", and they'll treat us like children.

...]

FW

(...). Is it true, in fact, that you're playing up more than ever?

- Yeah,

- Oh yeah

- Oh yeah

- You've got to oppose, you can't.

FW

What's causing what? Did you start playing up and the discipline came, or did the discipline come and then you started playing up?

Joey

Ch, we was loyal in the first few days, but when we got into all the things we knew we could do like, all the little cracks we could get up to, then we started playing up a bit, and they started getting, er'...

Fuzz

That's it. We was used to an easy life.

Joey

The first day in science he got, he says, 'If any of you want to come back till five o'clock lads, do some experiments...'. We all fucking pleased ourselves day in, we... He thought it was going to be, like the year before, we was all going to be, like, wanting to do it.

Since the 'boys' were non-academic, and any way aimed to 'skive', 'blag' or 'bag off' as much time as possible, they were in fact unsupervised, or left without any real work even in class for long periods. These comments were typical of our 'main' group of 12 'boys' and it should not be forgotten that these were drawn from a larger group of lads with a negative orientation to the school which accounted for something between a third and a quarter of the school year population.
Joey

The chief occupation when we're all in the hall is playing with all the little clippings that hold the chairs together. You take then off and you clip someone's coat to his chair and just wait until he gets up ... and you never really listen ... you have to be really discrete like, so as the Clark [the Deputy head] won't see yer, call you out, the other teachers don't matter.

FW

But do they make you sing? I didn't notice many of you singing.

-I was just standing there, moving my mouth.

We've only got one of them books between all our class. We've got one between twenty five.

-When we do sing we make a joke of it.

Puzz

Sing the wrong version ... So if you're supposed to be singing verse one, you're singing verse three.

/Laughter/

In class it was possible to make an apparent acceptance of the teacher's role and legitimacy, and within that structure, turn things to your own advantage for a "lark".

[in a discussion on teachers]

Joey

We got a big sheet of paper and, er, there are twenty two men on a pitch, you gotta mark it out how much area each defenders gotta defend. How much, you know how much space they've got each. So we see we gotta measure the pitch. So we fucking went up the one day and we just had a smoke and pissed about and we didn't get it done and he see next week 'what you gonna do we said 'we're gonna finish measuring the pitch' and we went up again and it went on for five weeks. We just went up and measured the pitch and just pissed about with the tape measure like using it as a discus and things like that.

[...]

Bill

Another thing we do in there, he likes talking about cars, so as soon as we get in there, ya know, we'll make some up so he'll talk all this. The other day I went in, I says 'Our dad's clutch...'
or sometimes viciously needed for long periods. Often it was
the same individual who was picked on repeatedly for the same
kinds of things: his supposed stupidity, or alleged sexual
practices (in one case for reportedly having sexual intercourse
during menstruation), or some eccentricity of clothing or appearance.
Language generally was much 'coarser' than was common amongst
the 'earl'oles' and seemed to make much more muscular use of the
local dialectic and specifically generated argot.

There was a general condensation of relations amongst the 'boys'
and an ability to be open and expressive about the things the boys
said about, and which clearly relied on certain characteristics of the
language they used.

WILL I think it would be easier talking to somebody that you
don't have to call 'Sir', or you can say, swear
in front of like, just act normal in front of,
instead of, when you see Clarkey come up the corridor,
walk on the other side, 'Watch it, here's Clarkey'
(...), I think if you can talk to somebody, like us
lot, I could call him a pret, I could call him
anythin', y'know what I mean, but you can still
talk to each other because, like, you're friends,
it's different, you can talk easier to somebody
that you can joke with and everything.

All of these practices, whether apparently cruel, or obviously
supportive, went to make the group into a cohesive social whole
with a frisson which made the 'boys' special. They had real
-cultural skills - conversation, reportage, quick wit, style,
confidence - which were lacking from the 'earl'oles' and decisively
marked them out as a force on the cultural landscape. The development
of a self-conscious sense of being a group and of a kind of
solidarity was clear and had identifiable elements.

Pete We just break the other rules.

Fuzz We ain't got no rules between us though have we?

WILL We ain't got rules but we do things between us,
but we do things that y'know, like er... say,
now if I wouldn't knock off anybody's muses or Joey's
misuse, and they wouldn't do it to me, y'know
what I mean? Things like that or, er... yer
give 'im a fag, you expect one back, like, or
summat like that.

Fred You You That's it, you

WILL (...), what would those understandings be?

Fred You wouldn't expect one of yer mates to grass
on yer either. Like if you was both smoking, say
me and Will were smoking in that room, I'd just
finished mine, and Simms' in and, and copped
him, I wouldn't expect him to say I was smoking
on yer.

Fred If one of us went home, and you asked, say I asked
Will to tell the teacher that I was doing a job,
which I do sometimes like, Say, 'Tell him I'm
doing a job', he'll say 'OK', and he'll tell
'Em and I'll be at home really

Fred We're as thick as thieves, that's what they say,
stick together.

Fuzz Tell you what, somebody want to say something like, 'I'm
looking, I want a cassette on the cheap like. Right,
we talk about it, one of us hears about a cassette on
the cheap, y'know, kind of do the deal for 'em and
then say, 'Ah, I'll get you the cassette.
The particular excitement and knowledge of belonging to the 'boys' came from more anti-social practices than those. It was these more extreme activities which marked them off most completely, both from the 'ear'oles, and from the school. There was a positive joy in fighting and in talking about fighting and about the tactics of the whole fight situation. It's interesting that many of their important cultural values were expressed through fighting. The solidarity of the group became perfectly obvious in the fight situation, the importance of quick, clear and not over-harsh thought comes out time and again. Most of all - and there was a kind of bravery in this - the fight puts you at risk and tests your conviction to betray the conventional morality and uphold, with a curious kind of honour, an alternative convention. It was in fighting with its own politics, dangers, scars, strange codes and illicit joys, that one was furthest from the reach of the school, most joyous in your celebration of truly independent and hard-won skills, and most sure of mastery over the 'ear'oles and those of similar tendencies.

FW

What do you feel when you're fighting? (...) (.)

Joey

( . ) it's exhilarating, it's like being scared... it's the feeling you got afterwards... I know what I feel when I'm fighting... it's that I've got to kill him, do your utmost best to kill him.

FW

Do you actually feel frightened when you're fighting though?

Joey

Yeah, I shake before I start fighting. I'm really scared, but once you're actually in there, then you start to co-ordinate your thoughts like, it gets better and better and then, if you're good enough you beat the geezer. You get his down on the floor and just jump all over his head.

FW

(after you've had a fight ... How do you feel then?)

Spankewy

Shaky

Bill

Funny feeling, don't you, sort of shaking

Joey

-It's all according, if you beat him

Forty feet tall

-Yeah

-You always do

-They might get the police or what, or a big mob

-No it ain't that

-Can't explain it, you're just shaking, naturally, you know.

FW

How do you feel about equal sides, if you can, you prefer to outnumber?

-Yeah

-Yeah

-Yeah

FW

Why's that?

Joey

There's no chivalry or nothing, none of this cobbler's know, it's just... if you're gonna fight, it's savage fighting anyway, so you might as well go all the way and win it completely by having someone else help ya or by winning the dirtiest methods you can think of, like poking his eyes out or biting his ear and things like this.

FW

Would you stop and fight knowing you were outnumbered? Because you felt it was important? Or would you usually try and get out?

Spankewy

If you was cornered and you had to, like a cat, you know.

Spike

I wouldn't run.

Joey

It's all according, how big the geezer is, if all these vans going to get me, I wouldn't run off, but if it was a big load of kids who were older than you like, no meaning then, off, straight away.
PW What do you think, are there kids in the school here that just wouldn't fight?

Spike It gets you sad, like if you hit somebody and they won't hit you back.

PW Why?

Eddie I hate kids like that.

Spanksey Yeah, 'I'm not going to hit you, you're my friend'?

PW Well what do you think of that attitude?

Joey It's all accurin' what you got against him, if it's just a trivial thing, like he give you a kick and he wouldn't fight you when it come to an end, but if he... really something mean towards you, like, whether he fights back or not, you still kill him.

(... When was the last fight you had Joey?)

Joey Two weeks ago, about a week ago, on Monday night, this silly rumour got around, it was daft actually; it shouldn't've got around to this gutter that I was going to bash him like and it hadn't come from me, so him not wanting to back down from it, just the word out he was going to have me, we had a fight and we was stopped. I marked him up. He give me a bit of a fat lip, and he dropped the nut on me, but he went to his nuts here, and I smashed his eye out with my thumb, split his head open, then after they pulled us off, I grabbed him and took him in the corner and I told him there that he know I wasn't scared of him and that I know 'em... I know I wasn't scared of him, he wasn't scared of me, that's an end of it. It was a sort of an, er'm... he was from a family, a big family like us, they're matters, they're fighters the Jones', and er'm... I didn't want to start anything between 'em, so I just grabbed him and told him what the strength is like.

The other main activity amongst the 'boys' which was quite beyond the conventional register, was stealing. Theft was exceptionally widespread both inside and outside school. Again what comes through most strongly is the 'boys' secret and delicious joy in defying authority, celebrating their own values, and most important and confirming both, getting away with it. Theft is clearly aimed directly against authority - especially if the theft, or what is very closely allied in this sense, vandalism, is against the school - and also an action quite beyond what the 'ear'ole' would even believe possible. That theft also brought extra money as an added, real and concrete advantage - sometimes the apparent intangible course which fitted in especially with the peculiar needs of the 'boys' for extra cash for smoking and drinking. The 'ear'ole' neither had the need for extra cash, nor the imagination to overcome the conventional morality, nor the quickness and shrewdness to carry through the deed. Altogether, though in a risky fashion, theft summed up many of the 'boys' values attitudes and most admired kills.

PW What interests me is why you do it (theft), what's enjoyable about it?

Bill It's just hopeless round here, there's nothing to do. When you've got money, you know, you can go to a pub and have a drink, but, you know, when you ain't got money, you've either got to stop in or just walk round the streets and none of them are any good really, So you walk around and have a look.

Joey It ain' only that it's enjoyable, it's that it's there and you think you can get away with it, you never think of the risks. You just do it. If there's an opportunity, if the door's open to the warehouse, you're in there, seein' what you can thrive and, then when you come out like, if you don't get caught immediately, when you come out you're really happy like.

Bill 'Cos you've showed the others you can do it, that's one reason.

Joey 'Cos you're defying the law again. The law's a big tough authority like and we're just little individuals yet we're getting away with it like.

Bill You do anything you can here to, you know, go against them. 'Nell I mean, you vandalize books.

Spike Yeah, you smash chairs up, take the screws out of...
Really afterwards, you think, 'Well, stuff me, our old lady paid for that lot out of tax, but at the time you're doing it, you don't think and you don't really care.

But do you think of it in the same way as smashing bottles or thieving?

It's opportunity, getting your own back on the teachers when you're cast or something. If you think, if you can get your own back on him, you'll do anything you can, revenge, sort of thing, getting revenge.

Paper, you nick a lot of paper

Exercise books. Yeah, we had about twelve packets of them.

Pair of earphones, the other week

From school?

Yeah.

We didn't tell anyone about... him breaking into the school and stealing money and goods.

Is there anybody here who don't know that, what I just said?

-I didn't know

-I don't know

No.

We only told, I think we told Joey I think day before yesterday.

How long ago was that?

Och it'd been about a year ago

About a year ago it was

Last year!

I mean, you're saying that, it gave you a kick obviously.

I say, it's not, it was

The fun is planning it all out, and it working out

It all worked out brilliantly apart from the nightwatchman. We still done it.

And it did give you a kick?

Yeah, it was brilliant.

If they had've got copped, it would have given then an even bigger kick

I mean, were you worried about getting copped?

I couldn't see how we was going to get copped. If you know, I could see how they'd catch us. The school had been recently broken into, was going to get copped, he was bust a door down and walked in. There was footprints all over the place, smash a window and shit all over the place, and pulling books off...

I mean we had gloves on and before we left his house, we even emptied our pockets out, to make sure there was nothing identifying. I left all my stuff at his house and he did, we just went then and I had, I had on a brown polo neck, me jeans and Fuzzy gloves you know and he had all black things on.

Polish on my race

No. Laughter. We was going to. Weren't we? We got the polish at your house, we was going to, but we thought, no.

Were you nervous when you were doing it?

Yeah.

Oh ah. Like this you know. Cause, it's er...I've always you know, I've pinched out people's pockets you know, I've seen the bobs lying about and I've gone, but I've never done anything like that before. I enjoyed it!

And I did, really enjoyed it

And after you know coming down the road we were just in a fit weren't we? We was that, you know, it was that closely worked out.

And we spent it all up the bleeding Fountain day'n we? Getting pissed down the Old Boat

Oh, are, I saved ten bob for the ice rink, remember?

Yeah

Why did you want to break into the school rather than anything else?

Got no fucking money

Cos, I mean, you knew the school?
Spanksey: We knew the school well and if you try and break in anything else like houses and that you know, you're not sure if there's anybody in it's a bit risky; you know what I mean, but the school you know there's nobody sleeping here you know there's almost no way you can get caught.

Fred: Just like breaking into your own home really, cos nobody's going to come and cop you breaking into your own home.

Essentially we can see the 'boys' culture as a separate and informal domain set over against the school and its formalised and distant logic. This domain was specifically and immediately responsive to their feelings and attitudes. The rationality and importance of living out your meanings within this domain with its distinctive ways of evaluating and acting was just assumed by the 'boys'. It needed no justification or explanation, though to many teachers and 'ear-eyes', even its existence was not all that clear. For the 'boys' there was what amounted to a genuine confusion about how it was possible to survive school without its help. This informal domain helped to insulate you from the official definitions of school. It helped you to withdraw trust from the school. The group and its culture was the main focus of, and influence on your identity so that the school became exposed more and more as empty.

It was not sensible to become committed to, or to see in relation to your own development. Exams and academic achievements were not stages in a careful internal advance plotted and aided by the school. Qualifications were just somehow baggage which some people contrived to pick up at school, and which made entry into certain jobs easier, but which in no way changed what you were.

Of course this domain was in no way functionally separate from the school, it developed in close articulation with the structure of the school, and in an interlinked dynamic with staff and other pupils. If this culture was fighting for its terms inside the school, it could establish itself more fully at night. It was interesting that a commercial dance was preferred to the Youth Wing in the school precisely because it allowed the fullest development of the elements of this culture.

PW: You think a commercial dance is better than the Youth Wing, why?

Will: There's different people there, there's different people there, than come up here.

Spike: If there's a bar there at a dance, it's good

Will: Yeah, I think if there's a bar there, you have to be more... watch what you're doing; not put about so much, 'cause some people what's got a bit of ale inside 'em might... (..) they see like a lot of birds there, and they think, I'll do a bit of chatin' off', and they'll go walkin' round, like harmless you know.

PW: Looking for a fight

Will: Yeah

PW: How do you start a fight, look at somebody?

Spike: No, somebody looks at you

Will: That's it, just walk around so somebody would look at you

Spike: Or if you walk past somebody, you deliberately lump into 'em and you swear blind that they nudged you

PW: So if you're at a dance and you want to avoid a fight, you have to look at your feet all the time do you?
Will

If you go to a dance where you don't know anybody it's rough.

Spade

The atmosphere ain't there at the Youth Wing in the School; there ain't a bar for one. You drink fuckin' fizzy pop, and eat Fabs bars all night.

Will

I think... this club, might, if they'd got some new kids we'd never see before

Spade

-It 'ad be good then

Will

It 'ud be good then, 'cos there'd be some atmosphere and you know, you'd be lookin' at each other, then you'd go back and say, 'I don't like that prat, look at the way he's look'n at us!' And there might be something goin' on outside after... but now you're always got Julie (the Youth leader) who was attached to the school during the day walk'n out or summat you know.

Still, the crucial case for us is the school, and the manner in which the 'boys' culture develops in relation to teachers and other groups. Perhaps the most crucial, telling and interesting moment of all is when the informal domain clashes or interacts with the formal one in living instances. Our field work threw up many examples of this particularly during lessons. It was here, most of all, where problems, tensions, discrepancies and crises arose as the two intersected. The particular balance of a class or interaction depended, of course, on the particular nature of the teacher.

The staff vary a lot then (..)

Will

Well, if you see different teachers comin' along you do different things really

How do you mean?
I do want a punch, I won't do the same again!

The 'boys' also had a

recognition of the
derivative tactics used by teachers,

"[in a discussion on corporal punishment]"

Joey

Here's a thing what Mr. Simmonds did now, now

some weeks back, what was it, we all went down

the playing fields, it was the end of the day,

and we had these bags of flour and things

laughter/

Well we were threatened with six like

Spike

We were shitting ourselves, I was).

Bill

And I was.

Joey

We got back to school and instead of coming in,

he talked to us and sort of made you feel ashamed

of what you'd done. Now if he'd 've called us

you'd have got out of his class, and you'd have

thought, 'Ah, the old git...we'll do it again

now the bastard's canned us.' But now, cr'm on,

he talks to you and you go out of class, and you

can't say nothing against him. You say, 'a bit

soft', like, but what can you do, you're stumped

..."

Spanksey

Some teachers try to get down to your level like,

and try to be like, you know...like Chapman, he

gets us all in the Gym.

Spike

He calls his Eddie

Eddie

Yeah, I can't stand that, a teacher to call me

Spanksey

He was talking to us, he was goin' 'Bloody' you

know, he was saying, 'The Booz', you know

Simmonds.

FW

What did you think of that?

Spanksey

We thought it was good at the time, you know,

now we realize he was only trying to bring us

round to his ways, you know what I mean? Split

us all up.

Fred

Deacon used to come over and sit by me and he

used to talk to us. I got really fed up with it

time. I just told him to fuck off. He says,

'Go to the Headmaster'; I had four wur a it."

Spanksey

What gets me about about teachers, when they try

and embarass you in class, like, Pure, for instance

Bill

In front of all your mates

Spanksey

They says to him you know 'I'll get a sand pit for

you next week', don't they

laughter/

Then they started reading my essay out and it was

really crap it was

Derek

Made it sound worse than it was

Their knowledge of different teaching techniques, and the

resources of their own culture allowed the 'boys' to 'ride' the

formal, and maintain their own objectives as well as accommodating

some of the teacher's. This practice fed directly into many other

skills which were being anyway developed by their culture.

The 'boys' understood the difference between the formal and the

informal often better than their teachers, and certainly understood

the techniques for playing one off against another better. Here

are the 'boys' talking about their classroom strategies. The

final example of the boys taking over the play and making up their

own lines is a splendid example of resting the initiative from

the teacher. In the actual situation which was observed by the researcher,

the lads took over the class completely and totally replaced the formal with

a rambling, violent, imaginary play of their own, interspersed by adverts

and slogans, culminating in a sequence of battle sounds and

crashes.

FW

(....) Just how far can you push the teacher around

without them coming right down on you

Joey

Really, it's an instinctive thing, really, actually,
you always know (....) Mr. Archer you don't play him

up 'cos you can have a laugh with him, but you don't

have to play up. He's, Mr. Bird, he's got a sort of

effort about him, like, he'll shout when you're playing

up and cr'm...we carry on talking when we go in his
Can you tell when you've gone too far?

You can tell by just looking at 'em, really by what he says to you, what you say back.

Or when they start getting mad, y'know like this in the face (straining).

Mr. Saunders, his knock was all real, it's his knock.

His knock, not his face, just about that far (indicating a point on his knock).

I mean when you say you can 'talk' to somebody are you really talking seriously or are you just playing them along a bit.

Playing along.

Playing along, trying to get on the good side.

That's it, you're just taking the piss out of them.

I mean how much is it just to keep the peace when you think things are really going to blow up.

Well, that's it, that's the point sometimes, people like Samuel, Samuel, you never really consider blaming him, 'cos you carry on and it gets even better, he gets really berserk, he went and fetched Clark one day, don't he, (...) but people like Sampson.

Keep 'im talking, pacify him, sort of, now and again, show interest.

(...). You started off reading the play properly, then you started putting in your own words.

(laughter).

There's a clump of blasted bushes in the way. Pete went, 'I can't see, there's a clump of brambles bushes in the way.'

Then you went on to whole lines that weren't in the book.

Eddie

Yeaa, 'I bought a new sink from the supermarket' (laughter).

Bill

And I said 'summat like, Did you, how much did it cost?' (...)

Joey

He knows he can't stop us.

Fuzz

Start reading 'em all wrong.

As a footnote to our description of the existence and development of this culture in the school, it is clear that the Raising of the School Leaving age in 1972 has had further encouraged the development of such cultures in school, and has dramatically exposed them in terms of a 'new problem'. The larger numbers of kids going on to the fifth, the greater length of time in which the cultural trajectory of the counter-group can continue, the added burden upon already hard pressed schools, the growing physical and social confidence of the lads, all aid the growth and strengthening of the counter-school culture. That an important element of this culture had always been opposition to authority, was proven and dramatized by the response of the lads to this extra year. They were, to say the least, the 'reluctant fifth'. In effect it was a compulsory extra year - it was widely presented as such by teachers - and the coercion of the state and its various agents were used to enforce it. It is hardly surprising then, that given their previous proclivities, the 'boys' should tune into this objective dimension of RSA and see it as further proof of the arbitrary power of the school, and of the need for redoubled efforts to oppose it at the level of cultural practice. In short RSA was a red flag to a bull in what was already seen as a bullring.

More generally, we would argue that it is a mistake to see problems associated with RSA in an isolated way. The problems did not suddenly appear in the new fifth, nor are they simply associated with the greater age of its members or the specialness of that one-off RSA group. They are a dramatic surfacing of the
form of 'a crisis' of a cultural configuration which has long been part of the internal landscape of the school. As future years adjust to the notion of five years at school, and are not presented — late on — with what seems to be a sudden and arbitrary decision, we may expect the 'problem' to subside somewhat. Then we reach this point, however, we should not assume that the learning in acuteness of 'the problem' changes, in any way, the underlying cultural processes of which they were, at one juncture, a dramatic expression.

More generally, we may add a footnote to our depiction of this culture concerning more organizational features of education. It is of some concern to educationalists that the generation of a school counter culture should be placed with respect to how the school is organized educationally (5). It has been widely claimed that streaming, traditional subject based curriculum planning, exams and general achievement orientation, is likely to be conducive to the emergence of anti-school or semi-dilrent groups.

Our small case study work cannot answer properly to the comparative dimensions of this problem, and the situation in further confused for us by the transitional nature of the school in which our 'main' case study was conducted (3). There are advantages, however, in considering a changing situation in depth. It is quite clear that oppositional groups had emerged under streaming by the end of their third year. However, after mixed ability grouping was introduced at the beginning of the fourth year, the counter-school groups developed and hardened in quite a strident a fashion as may have been expected under streaming. Furthermore, our work suggests that it was by no means only the least able who were involved in the counter-school group. Some of its really central members were highly articulate, clear sighted, assertive and able across a wide range of activities. Their ability, if not their capacity from high forms in the days of streaming. They had simply decided that, for them and at that stage, the life of the 'boys' offered more than the conventional road. Although continued streaming may have had a reinforcing effect on those of low ability in the 'ghetto' form with the orthodox effects we have been led to expect, we should also be aware that de-streaming can lead to a creative social mix which is developmental, not only for the overall social system of the school, but also and in particular for its informal, radical and oppositional wing. Where the traditional culture of the 'ghetto' form is enlivened by the yeast of a really quick wit, or a really able strategist of resistance, then it may become something much more dynamic and — to the school at any rate — more fearsome. And those verging towards the anti-school perspective were, if anything, aided in their trajectory by the new forms of mixed ability groupings, topic centred teaching, student centred teaching and the rest. There was obvious confusion caused by the high number of group changes during the course of the day compounded in particular by the sheer number of REA options open to the pupils on other counts, of course, a desirable thing. It was relatively easy for those so committed to take advantage of this confusion, either to 'slip off' altogether, or to attend 'fun' classes they had no business at. Either way, organizational features of the new more open and permissive regim lent themselves to exploitation by a counter-culture devoted to winning 'space' from the formal institution.

The evidence on this is, of course, equivocal and our case study work cannot present a definitive position on these issues. It does, however, open the question — especially in the light of what we say about basic class cultural processes later — of whether the particular organizational form of the school is, anyway, the most fundamental determinant of its internal social system.
Having understood the central importance of the 'boys' culture, its relation to school and to other groups, for the working class non-academic boy, it becomes possible to make more sense both of how official communications were received and how the non-academic individual made his actual job choice. All official communications about careers and work were importantly filtered through the group. By and large what might be termed as the denoted (6) message from teachers and careers officers was most heavily filtered. This was the manifest content of particular communications concerning either the practical details of specific jobs, or general principles about the best form of approach to work. Unless an individual had already decided to do a certain specific job, information about it was simply not taken in. It was certainly not true that new information was fed into rational grid system which matched job profile with ability profile, or life style/job/ambition profile. If things were remembered, they were picked up by some highly selective living principle of the counter-cultural school group. What is remembered after career's films and careers talks is certainly not what the producers hope to imprint on, what they seem so often to assume are eager, young minds.

\[\text{on Careers films}\]

Fuzz

I wonder why there's never kids like us in films, and what their attitude is to it? What they're like and what we're like.

PM

Well, what sort of kids are they in the films?

Fuzz

All goody goodies

Perce

All goody goodies
already forming in the group about the world of work. It was not meant to be part, and was not received as part, of the general model which was presented for rational career choices. It came from sheer exposure to a vast number of films where working class people were seen working; from the apparently bewildering variety of specific forms of jobs available; from film of machinery moving shot with a camera’s instinct for the compulsive; from the teacher’s impatience, from his implied or real flak of departure from the imparted professional consultant line – ‘it’s a hard world that doesn’t owe you a living and you’ll soon be on your own in it, so wake up and find a job!’

Actual job choice for such individuals was only rarely based on the materials supplied by the agencies, although they did act, sometimes, as useful intermediaries. Indeed the most important finding of the research in relation to job choice is that it may well be confusing and mystifying to pose the entry of unqualified working class kids into industry as a question of particularly job choices. Considered in one quantum of time – the last months of school = individual job choice does indeed seem random and unenlightened by any rational techniques or means/ends schemes. This is the main finding of previous work on the school/work transition (7), a finding which we accept and have replicated ourselves. However, if one takes a longer term view, and looks not so much at individual job choice but more at basic long term shifts in the whole pattern of what is expected from a working life, and what sort of work fits in with a whole constellation of attitudes, practices, activities and values which are developing in the much broader sweep of the social group and its culture, then one finds a more intelligible pattern. To start with, the division between the ‘boys’/’men’ and ‘girls’/’women’ cultures is also a division between different kinds of future, different kinds of gratification, and different
kinds of job that are relevant to these things. These differences, moreover, are not random or unconnected. On the one hand they arise systematically from intra-school group oppositions, and on the other hand, they relate to quite distinct job préconcees in the post-school situation. The 'cor'oles'/boy's division becomes the skilled/unskilled and white collar/blue collar division. This continuity between specifically school based inter-school groupings, and occupational groupings outside the school is of profound significance for us. The 'boy's themselves could transpose the divisions of the inter-cultural landscape of the school onto the future, and onto the world of work outside, with considerable clarity.

I'm a discussion on 'cor'oles'?

Joey

(...). We was live for now, wasn't live while we're young, wasn't live now, wasn't live now, and we think about five, ten, fifteen year's time when it comes, but other people, all people like the 'cor'oles', they're working, having no social life, having no fun, and they're waiting for fifteen year's time when they're people, when they've got married and things like that. I think that's the difference. We're thinking about now, and living a bit now, and they're thinking about the future and the time that'll be best for 'em.

Joey

I think they're (the 'cor'oles') the ones that have got the proper view of life, they're the ones that need it by the rules. They're the civil servants typc, they'll have 'em on and everything before us (...). They'll be the offia, I'll say they'll be the civil servants, tough, and we'll be the brickies and things like that.

Spanky

I think that we ... more or less, we're the ones that do the hard running but not them, they'll be the office workers. (...) I can't get no conditions, I've wanna have ... I just want to have a nice work, that I just do me through.

Joey

I don't see it's wise, I see it's better for us, people the likes of us, we've worked, we've worked, not the likes like, we've worked, you know, the cor'oles', we've worked, but when you're older. I think we've just like it too much, I know I do, anyway, I don't think you can take yourself off from it anyway, it's an apprenticeship for all that ... and not have much house.

Not only the opposition between these two main groups, but the internal development of the 'boy's' culture provides located and deeply influential values for the choice of final job. For the individual's affiliation with the non-revolutionist group carries with it a whole range of changes in his attitudes and perspectives and these changes also apply over time to more or less consistent view of what sort of people he wants to end up working with, and what sort of situation is going to allow the fullest expression for his developing cultural skills. The located 'boy's culture supplies a set of 'unofficial' criteria by which to judge, not individual jobs, but the intrinsic joys of particular kinds of work - indeed it is already assumed that all work is more or less hard and unrewarding - but generally judging of working situation is going to be most relevant to the individual. It will have to be work where he can 'be open about his feelings, his sexual feelings, his liking for beer', and his wish to 'have off' as much as in reasonably possible. It will have to be a place where people can be trusted and will not be on the look-out for 'foreigners' or 'snobbery stuff'. Previously there were the worst 'cor'oles'. Indeed it would have to be some where there was a boss, a 'boss and men', which always carries with it the danger of oppressive intermediation - the landscape would need to be familiar in this sense.

The experience of the division 'cor'oles'/boy's' in school is one of the most basic preparations for the still ubiquitous feeling in the working classes proper that there is a 'then' and an 'us'. It amounts to a cultural awareness of systematic differences in social attitudes
Not only does the 'pomp' culture provide these and only more criteria for the kind of job which is relevant to them, but it also possesses internal cohesion - the 'hiding', the 'plunder' the 'forced' - to enforce a certain view of what work is appropriate, what the rewards are, and how the individual is likely to be related to his work.

Waltzer

I wanna be a Jeweller

FW

A what?

Edie

A Jeweller

FW

And, what's the joke, 'That's funny about a Jeweller'

Edie

That's a cunt

He's a wishing.

Spike

He'd have half of the jewels to sell.

Derek

He'd put one in - ring and pin in his pocket

FW

Do you know anything about jewellery?

Edie

No

FW

Then you're into a job, you might not know nothing about it, how you can you learn your way as you go along... do you know about bricklaying?

Spencey

Aye

Do you know about bricklaying?

Edie

I'm not gonna be bricklayer

FW

That's not a cunt.

Spencey


Edie

No, well, you don't know anything about it.
and basic continuities between the anti-school culture and the shop floor culture, which smoothed the passage which the lads had already decided to embark upon. There was no 'shock', of anything the proportions we had imagined, when the lad reached the factory; rather there was recognition.

Another aspect which smoothed the entry of the lads into the working situation was the response of their employers to what they understood of the 'boys' culture already generated at the school. The reverse side of the 'them' and 'us' attitude of the boys' was an acceptance by them of prior authority relations.

Although directly and apparently geared to make some cultural interest and capital out of an unpleasant situation, it also accomplished a recognition of, and an accommodation to, the facts of power and hierarchy. In the moment of the establishment of a cultural opposition, was the yielding of a hope for direct, or quasi-political, challenge. The 'them' and 'us' philosophy was simultaneously a rescue and confirmation of the direct, the human and the social, and a giving up - at any conscious level - of claims to control the under-workings of these things: the real power relationships (9) This fact is of central importance in understanding the peculiar density and richness, as well as the limitedness and frequent short-sightedness, of counter-school and shop floor culture.

Now curiously enough those conformist lads who entered the factory unaided by cultural supporters, diversions, and typical, habituated patterns of interpretation, could be identified by those in authority as more threatening and less willing to accept the established status quo. For these lads still believed, as it were, the rubric of equality, advance through merit and individualism which the school, in its anonymity had more or less unproblematically
pressed on to him. Thus, although there was no overt opposition, no didactic style to induce a conventional outlook, there was also no secret panic, and in the realm of an oppositional style, to accept a timeless authority structure; a timeless 'we' and 'them'. Consequently, these were more likely to expect full participation from their work; to expect the possibility of advances through hard work; to accept authority relations, in the end, to reflect only differences in content. All these expectations, coupled frequently with a moralism in the individual unrelieved by a social discussion, made the conformist far more insecure and hard to deal with. In essential and semi-skilled jobs, these in authority often actively preferred the 'boys' type to the 'dandies' type. Furthermore, the resistance of the 'boys' was a realistic assessment of their position, an ability to get on with others to make the day and routine work, and a lack of 'punctuality' about their job and their future in it. Finally, the 'boys' were more likely because they had something to pay for themselves, and would 'stand up for themselves', but only in a restricted mode which fell short of one of the 'men' wanting to join the 'team'. Thus, we now have the personal grounds on which the conformist often unreflectively and unvoluntarily rides. For one of the 'boys', not only was the shop floor more exciting than he might have expected, but he was also welcomed and accepted by his new superiors in such a way that seemed to allow for the expression of his own personality where the school had been precisely trying to block it. Thus we have a different conformist subculture which further serves us the transition from school to work.

What are the implications of all this for the so-called 'transition' from school to work of working-class unqualified school leavers? Well, in the first instance, the initial hypotheses of the research programme were largely substantiated. A) The informal culture of the 'boys' and its located sources of knowledge and information had a more decisive effect on their job choices than did official sources of information.

B) That much of what was the basis of influence could be understood better from a subjective reading perspective than from more conventional institutional perspectives. We are now in a position, however, to put forward much more detailed conclusions and suggestions. Firstly, the most profound transition these boys make is not the physical passage from school into work, but their occupational entry into the distinctive non-conformist group and its culture within the school, and this transition may occur anywhere between the second and sixth form. Secondly, in relation to the cultural-growth shift, and their development of a whole and comprehensive view of what is expected from life, this particular job choice does not matter too much. Indeed, we may see that with respect to the criteria which this located culture throws up, most manual and semi-skilled jobs are the same and it would be a waste of time to use the procedure, which clearly goes against the principle of the cultural differences. As far as the actual work content is concerned, all these jobs may be expected to be monotonous and arduous, so that matters every time in money and the possibilities of a cultural involvement and diversion. Although the present's programme focuses the 'boys' with something of the sense of the range of jobs and the importance of choosing between them, it's clear that beneath
the surface of the cultural process we are pointing to, takes hold. Even if it's not explicitly verbalized, from the way many of the kids actually get jobs, and from their own expectation that their jobs will change a lot, they do not basically make much differentiation between jobs - it's all labour.

Spike

In a discussion on jobs

I got a job on Thursday. That day it was today.

Spike

In a discussion on jobs

I got a job on Thursday. That day, it was today. Monday, a bloke come to have our house valued, knew someone down to have our house valued. I thought I'd dropped in about a job and he says, 'Yeah, come up, last night, I had to go up last night.'

PW

What is it?

Spike

Insurance broker-like, doing odd jobs as well.

PW

What do you mean to go on to, you know, selling the (...) thing I go on to, you know, selling the houses. I started already; I've loaded some houses. I started already; I've loaded some houses.

Spike

... posters for the window.

PW

That's good.

Spike

Yeah, I got a trade beyond me now.

Percy

I was with my mate, John's brother, I went with him to buy,... he wanted a job. Well John's sister's boyfriend, got a job at this place, and the guy to the boyfriend, got a job at the place, and the guy to the boyfriend got a job at this place, and he sent me a letter, he said, 'I know there, and you might get a job there', and he went down, and they sent me one.

PW

You're too old for training, 'cos he's twenty. You're too old for training, 'cos he's twenty. 'I'll send you letters, I'll send you to Allan, he says, 'Who's that out there', and he sent him some letters, he says, 'Who's that out there', and he sent him some letters, he says, 'I dunno'. He can't send him. To come out. I went back from the job, looked him. I don't know if I was lookin' at him. He went back from the job. I don't know if I was lookin' at him. I don't know if you know if you want it.'

What you doing?

Percy

Carpentry, joinery. And a month ago I went back and... well, a month ago, a few weeks ago, and I seen him.

PW

Well, that was a complete accident really. I mean we had you thinking of joinery?

Percy

Well, you've only got to go and see me woodwork, I've had it, I ain't done woodwork for years.

In a discussion of their future

I don't think any of us'll have one job and then stick to it. None of us. We'll swap around.

Eddie

In a discussion of their future

It just shows in your part-time jobs don't it, don't stick to a part-time job.

Thirdly, the option of affiliation with a school-counter cultural group, and a processing of opportunities through the criteria thrown up by this culture, is a more sensible, richer and more form of action to an unpleasant, unrewarding and finally oppressive working situation, than a more considered task-oriented form of action which would have exposed in the bleakest possible manner the real bankruptcy of the actual jobs available. For the working class as a whole still does face harsh conditions, and the performance of work which by no stretch of the imagination could be thought of as rewarding. To face such work unrelieved by a cultural involvement or diversion, and armed only with middle-class criteria which rarely confirm the awfulness of the situation, would certainly not have been a strategy for survival.

Fourthly, it is clear that those lads voluntarily choose to enter the factory sites, at this age anyway, especially as they are aided by their disliking, and torture out of school. Just as the 'boy' school culture was not a reflex of defeat, so the entry into the lower grades of factory work is by no means perceived as defeat, failure or second best. This fact, as we discuss in a moment, is of the fullest significance for us if we wish to study and understand forms of social stability.

Perhaps surprisingly, then, this suggests that there is no particular 'problem' as it is conventionally defined-in the transition of the majority of working-class kids without paper qualifications into work. That is...
Finding jobs, may stand its culture in particularly good stead at this time. It is the 'baby' with their 'chance', contacts, and self-confidence and will have secured the streets or small businesses for all available jobs. If there was to be a failure, it would prove they were not 'chance' and independent - to be out of work. They did not like to admit that they could not 'look after ourselves'. It may well be the more isolated individuals, or the conformist individuals, with low or no paper qualifications, who are most severely at risk during recession. These may be the people who are let down by the formal system, and for whom there is no informal safety net. Whether or not the social 'problem' of unemployment, oppositional, non-conformist groups surfaces in any noticeable form depends really on the source and pattern of unemployment in the future (10).

For the Career's Service really, both in and out of school, the results of this research may seem excessively negative, and to yield little or no way of concrete recommendations for the practice of their work. Certainly this research suggests that it is basic cultural processes, rather than official guidance, which most importantly determine job choice amongst large sections of the unqualified. On the other hand, it can only help in the long run, if those concerned with careers work have a greater appreciation of the real processes involved in the working class lady's preparation for work. At least, it might be possible to avoid confusing their presence by the imposition of an inappropriate middle class grid of under/over-the-functional rationality.
It might also be possible to intervene and aid these real processes at certain points. Certainly from the personal counselling point of view, it is surely useful to understand something of the real cultural processes you are seeing the result of. If direct help and advice is frequently impossible, at least it is an advance to understand and sympathise. Furthermore, the cultural perspective might allow the counsellor to identify potential problem cases before they are actually suffering at work. The two obvious cases here are social isolates, and the more conformist lads, who might be heading, through lack of qualifications or lack of choice, to the factory floor. These lads are most truly in the worst of all worlds.

Nor should we forget that, although the agencies see relatively unsuccessful in influencing decisions about type of work, they certainly play a useful role in providing information about jobs, and in putting the individual in contact with the firm, once his basic decision has been made. Furthermore, there are limited strategies open to careers teachers which might increase the relevant knowledge kids have of their future working situation - and so match up their own feelings and type of cultural involvement with different working situations. We're thinking here of work's visits, and work's experience courses - by far the most successful elements of career's guidance we saw so far as the 'boys' were concerned.

On the other hand, those involved with careers may feel some uncertainty about aiding the real processes of job selection in the located culture of the school, since this might seem to accept and further stabilize the status quo. We must not forget that an important determinant of the 'boys' behaviour and culture is a negative - and often more accurate than the teacher's - assessment of what the school and working situation holds for them. It is precisely because of the lack of intrinsic interest here, that extrinsic compensations are sought. A systematic institutional support of cultural practices based on such perceptions runs the risk of further endorsing the unequal and class-structured arrangements of our society which filters the kind of opportunities and jobs open to working class, un - or low - qualified young adults.

Perhaps the best course is to keep a sympathetic, understanding, helping eye on the real cultural processes at play, whilst also attempting to change the larger structures - in society at the largest scale down to the school at the smallest - to which those processes are, at bottom, a response. Of course, this is to push our analysis further than its stated theoretical and methodological range. The precise position adopted by the teacher or careers officer must depend on his own analysis. We have been mostly concerned to depict and present certain cultural processes and subjective orientations in the school, and to show their effect upon, and inter-relation with, occupational choice. It was not part of our brief to consider the most basic structural determinants of those processes: why, below the immediate experiential level, the anti-school culture develops in the first place, and why some kids feel the need to differentiate themselves from the Institution. It is in answering this question that the concerned individual will begin to work out a long term strategy for helping those kids. For our part, we believe that this study can be seen in the larger perspective of the generation of a class culture.
This is obviously more interpretative and speculative, and is beyond our original terms of reference, but we believe that the processes we have analysed can be most productively seen in the context of the regeneration of a class culture. Our work would suggest that one would most certainly expect to find oppositional groups in all kinds of schools, and our study stresses precisely the point that one must not overlook the level of the school and its specific practices and cultural forms in looking at either education or society, in the more general context. However, it also seems clear that where that school is working class, and where the oppositional group has widespread contrasts with the general and locating working class culture of the neighbourhood and work place then the formation of the counter-school group has special significance. It reflects, at bottom, on a form of identification by the kids - in a specifically cultural mode - of the real conditions which face them. At some basic level the 'Boys' access the possibilities associated with these conditions and eventually close down that range associated with conventional formal advance with the playing of the Institutional game and its prescribed aims. Instead they further open up and explore upon conditions set by the previous closure. That range of possibilities associated with a degree of independence, social collectivity, and the celebration of informal, direct, immediate experience. Nor is the conventional range of possibilities closed off simply because they are unattainable through lack of ability. Many really able boys choose to ignore this.

This suggests they are rejecting, at some level, the limited final advantages of a successful negotiation of these possibilities. They make an assessment, in some way, of the validity, number and length of the paths which are apparently offered up as by the dominant closure - and this is highly interpretative and based on a form of ideal-typical analysis not introduced in the main text - can be understood as a kind of self election to a future larger class membership: that of the middle and lower, or 'rough' working class. Now the conformist kids, the 'earoles', accept that the formal possibilities laid down for them at school, and via the Careers Service, at work, are likely to yield the fullest advantages in the long run. In very simplistic terms, they accept what they perceive as the organisational forms and routes laid down by the dominant society and submit themselves - without that large reserved area of independence: the culture of the 'boys' - to its processes. This can be seen as a self-election to the 'respectable', upwardly mobile faction of the working class.

The argument would be, then, that for the 'boys' the school counter culture acts as a vital preparation ground for entry into the working class culture, proper, of the shop floor. In this sense both cultures share some of the same determinants: the common impulse is to develop strategies for dealing with boredom, alienation and lack of control. The school, however, is special in that it is part of the apparatus of the state, and in the widest sense, of its function of social control. Just as it is possible to link the school counter-culture with the larger informal culture of the working class, so it is possible in a parallel way to link the school with larger, formal, aspects of the State. The modern, welfare, social democratic state has massively intervened in educational processes to give what it presents as greater chances to the underprivileged (11). Though we must be pessimistic about the extent to which these interventions have been successful in their own aims or about whether these aims were anyway entirely unambiguous, it would be idle to assume that they have had no effect. One of the
really distinctive differences between the school and the shop floor situation to precisely the state-protected nature of the former. Still the often elusive kind of administrative mutar create more protected spaces in the school than is possible in the factory at one real level the school in there to help kids such as those we have been studying. However, the nature of this "help" is far from obvious and seems to have produced some - for the administrator - unintended effects. Instead of bringing these kids into the safe play of centripetal and progress in the dominant mode, the altruistic and motivated agents of the school have been re-interpreted, and aligned by the located class culture. It is hard to believe that working class kids are not very much more developed now, and that HLA, after the initial violent fluctuations, will produce responses she has more initiative and confidence upon leaving. The direction and progress of this greater maturity, if, however, far from settled. Instead of feeding into the conventionally approved pool of utilities and feelings, it is quite possible that the direction of these changes is towards strengthening: more informal, partly experienced, class culture. The more developed abilities, and sharper minds, of the new school leavers may well be in the line of particular working class attributes and cultural skills. In this sense we may see the school youth's culture, not only as a preparation for the shop floor, but also - be it minor - creative fuel for the culture of the shop floor. The school is supplying cultural needs, who - thanks to the state - have had a prolonged and protected period to develop aspects of their identity and culture, which are in the next mode or those of the shop floor, but, in certain aspects, refer to a point of greater accomplishment.

With respect to what we have called the self-selection to a class culture, that is surprising is the voluntary and celebratory nature of this choice. The recognition of class, and of identity with that class, is not a question of defect, coercion or resignation, neither is it simply the result of a passive, archetypal, ideological process of legitimation. It is a question, in part at any rate and at this age, of an affiliation which is seen as deeply, creative and attractive. This fact is of enormous importance to us in understanding the true complexity of social change: there is an element of self-position in the consciousness of subordinate roles. It also allows us to begin to understand the underlying durability of the existing social relations of our society.

This is not to say that the working class culture, as a whole is one of celebration. This would be absurd. The culture remains, in essence, a creative attempt to make the best of hard and brutalizing conditions. On the other hand, it is clear that the culture is not all of the pieces, that there are additional points of celebration and strength, as well as other points of despair, sadness, ecstacy and limited redemption. We would argue that the class culture, in it is bound up with the working-class kids' tugs out of the shop floor and at a moment when... into the emailing responsibility of life, family and home, is precisely such a source of strength and reparation. If this is the scope of the culture, however, the end might be expected not long after.

Our qualitative pilot work throws up a number of topics for future research.
(A) The identification, over longer periods, of conformist and non-conformist groups in school, is the attempt to see if it is possible to plot their job choices and future development with parameters derived from this study.

(B) The planning and implementation of careers and counselling work more appropriate to non-conformist groups in the school, and segment of the social problems of conformist, or social isolated, without paper qualification.

(C) Case studies of boys reaching their early twenties, marriage and responsibility from non-conformist backgrounds. It would predict this as a period of crisis, of possible return to state education, of probable involvement in Union affairs.

(D) Analytic work on the role of the State in Education and its relation to the individual school and its social landscape.

(E) Further work on the nature of working class culture, especially as it is manifested in the school, and how it is related to school cultures.

(F) Investigation of ways in which the oppositional dimension of school and work culture did it be understood, or harnessed, at a more political and positive level.

The results of this study are being disseminated as widely as possible. A residential session has been organized by Wply Metropolitan Borough (in which area the research was conducted) for Careers teachers from forty four schools and for the careers officers of Verley to hear the results of this work. They have all been circulated with copies of the paper, "You working class kids get working class jobs."

Dr. Willie has spoken, or is to speak, to several Education Departments, including those of Birmingham, Bristol and East Anglia Universities, and to the City of Birmingham Education College. A number of articles have been completed and will be sent to appropriate journals and the books are in preparation. Efforts are being made to ensure that those concerned with careers problems at the Schools Council, Careers Research and Advisory Centre, the Department of Education and Science, and other governmental bodies, receive copies of this report.
Notes


(3) When we began our field work in April 1972 this school was designated as a single sex, non-selective, Secondary Modern School. In September 1974, just after the completion of our school-based field work, it was re-designated as a single sex Comprehensive School as part of the general re-organisation of Secondary education in Mersey. The school itself change quite considerably between these two dates.
New buildings were added, 3brooms were replaced by mixed-ability groupings, a resources centre was introduced and experiments were made with team teaching and curriculum development programmes. This period also saw the introduction of the Bailing of the School Leaving Age, and the implementation of the whole range of new 'option courses' to cope with the all-round 5th year. Our period of field work, therefore, changes from a traditional style Secondary Modern School to something like a modern Comprehensive School with its wide range of courses and core open, skills and topic centred, teaching methods. Furthermore our 'five' wise study group was drawn from the M.L.A. year which experienced the compulsory fifth year for the first time. In some ways it was unfortunate that our study was conducted within this period of instability and change, and it makes it harder to generalise from our study. On the other hand, it is precisely this sort of change which is typical of our educational system at the moment, and as we suggest later, there is good reason to believe that some of the basic processes we identified will be relatively unaltered by the particular type of school form which is current at any one time. In this sense, there were certain advantages in studying basic cultural processes during a period of institutional change, and certainly there was an unexpected benefit in being able to study the first compulsory fifth year at first hand.


(2) E. Hargreaves, op. cit.

(6) For a fuller explanation of these concepts, P. Berthelot, *Bookchology*, Paladin, 73; F. Barron, *Elements of Sociology*, Cape, 67. Basically the difference between imposed and accepted refers to the difference between the direct and intended nature of a particular communication, and the instinct, often unintended messages which are communicated at the same time through such processes as association, generalised suggestion and use of available cultural stereotypes.


(8) See P.W. Higgs, *Material Production and Human Experience*, C.C.S., cyclostyled, which is held at this field work.

(9) We are not pointing at an absolute break between these two elements: cultural involvement, power. They both have their political and cultural outcomes and connections, and in the middle to long term perspective they are inevitably linked. Nor are we evaluating the two concepts in any simple functionalist way. In the long term it may, anyway, be the case that the core of cultural activity yields the most profound and thoroughgoing method for approaching basic questions of power, and changes in power relationships. At this point in the argument we make the distinction for the purpose of an immediate analysis of the culture at one moment in time.

(10) There is growing evidence that it is certain groups of black kids, located in inner urban areas, who have no qualification and amongst when the unemployment rate is going well over 10% and who have developed their own distinctive 'boys' culture, where these 'social problems' are beginning to emerge. See, for instance, Stallman M., 'Getting There in Lime', *Time Out*, August, 72; Gillman P.

(71) See the whole series of official education reports, and the key series of education Acts from 1890 onwards culminating in the recent framing of the School Leaving Act.