Differences in Experiences, Aspirations and Life Chances between East Side and West Side Vancouver Secondary Graduates at Mid-Century: an Oral History

by

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ABSTRACT

A history of growing up in Vancouver in the 1950s was constructed by interviewing eight former students of Vancouver Technical Secondary School in a working class neighborhood on the city’s east side, and eight from Magee Secondary School in a middle class neighborhood on the west side. All 16 graduated from grade 12 in 1955. They responded to a general mailing obtained from reunion address lists. In their interviews, they discussed both their lives as adolescents and their life paths since graduation.

The study reveals social class differences in students' aspirations, their treatment in school and in their school-to-work transitions. Although post-war Vancouver's educational system provided composite schooling--vocational, commercial and academic training--in all neighborhoods, a class structure persisted. The study looks at the factors shaping these circumstances, including the social and political landscape of the fifties, youths' perceptions of social class, part-time employment and leisure activities. The study concludes by examining the role schools played in developing and reinforcing social class and gender roles.
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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

"Everything seemed to evolve within eight square blocks. I never seemed to venture out of that sphere," commented Stanley in an interview for this study about his school years in Vancouver in the 1950s. (1) The neighborhood provided young people with their entertainment, employment and schooling. Most teenagers came from conventional families of the era. Fathers worked and mothers stayed home caring for the children. Teenagers listened to a teen radio station, watched movies about young people, followed trends in clothing and some even purchased their own car or an old "jalopy". They bought records, books and magazines aimed specifically at their age group, acquired with money earned from paper routes, baby-sitting and summer jobs. Composite schooling—academic and technical courses—was available in Vancouver secondary schools, providing all young people, regardless of social class origins, with a range of educational opportunities within the "eight square blocks".

Inequalities in schooling experiences persisted, however, as this study will reveal. Accounts of adults who graduated in 1955 from Vancouver Technical Secondary, located in a working-class neighborhood on Vancouver's east side, and Magee Secondary in a middle-class neighborhood on the west
side, depict differences in aspirations, their treatment in school and their school to work transitions. Evidence of these differences is based on interviews with a total of 16 former graduates, referred to as informants, from both schools.

My interest in social class differences in education led me to interview graduates from different social classes. The informants were aware of the comparative nature of the study, and some volunteered their notions and experiences on the theme of social class, which in fact became the basis of chapter 3. I use a socio-economic framework, employing occupational categories to define working and middle-class identities of graduates. The occupational classification of the informants' social class origins and destinies are set out in Figure 1. Middle-class occupations are broadly defined as professional, business, and supervisory. Working-class occupations are defined as white collar, artisan-skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labor and farming-fishing work.(2) Gender, ethnic and geographical influences are also considered in the overall analysis of this study.

In chapter 2, I examine the local and global environment which shaped teenagers' perspectives. In chapters 3, 4 and 5, I detail the various factors affecting teenagers' life paths drawing from the informants' testimonies. The topics of these chapters are neighborhood and social class, school, and work and play. In chapter 6, I describe the informants' post-graduation experiences. In the final chapter, I summarize the findings from the personal accounts, making connections with sociological theories of social class differences in schooling experiences.

I was interested in studying the fifties because the immediate post-war
Fig. 1. Informants' Social Origins (by Father's Occupation) and Destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Vancouver Technical Secondary Informants</th>
<th>Magee Secondary Informants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Origin</td>
<td>Social Origin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Harold</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business</td>
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<td>Supervisory</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Collar</td>
<td>Mavis</td>
<td>Harold</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Adam</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Ed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artisan-Skilled</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Bob</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Skilled, Unskilled</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming/Fishing</td>
<td>Stanley</td>
<td>Shirley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occupational classifications taken from Paul Alexrod's *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada during the Thirties*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 174-176.
period was a time of fundamental changes in the educational system, setting
the stage for later reforms. Selecting graduates from mid-decade meant I
could trace the informants' teen years from the early fifties to adulthood in
the late fifties. Scholars have only recently begun to examine the voices of
students, in comparison to the voices of education officials. Their oral
histories have influenced this study in both form and content. (3)
Interviewing former students and providing a social class analysis of their
experiences contributes to a multi-perspective historical narrative on
schooling.

The Methodology

I used an open-ended interview schedule (see Appendix I) which the
informants received in advance. The interviews were taped and later
transcribed. I employ first-name pseudonyms to former students (and teachers
they identify) to assure anonymity. The informants chose the locale for the
interviews—their home, workplace or other public setting—and were seen
separately, with the exceptions of two married couples from the same
graduating class at each school who were interviewed together. One interview
with a former graduate who now resides in another province was conducted
through correspondence.

Committee members who organized 40th reunion celebrations for both
schools in 1995 provided me with lists of graduates. Vancouver Technical had
a list of 163 names and addresses from a total of 235 graduates. Of the 72
not found, it was known or assumed a percentage were deceased. Four graduates
had moved to the United States, nine were in other Canadian provinces and 22 lived in British Columbia but outside the Lower Mainland. Magee Secondary graduates' reunion list mirrored that of Vancouver Technical's. Of the 227 graduates, 71 were missing from the list 40 years later. The list also indicated that 54 lived outside the Lower Mainland—25 within the province, 15 in other parts of Canada and 14 in the United States. I corresponded with the first 50 alphabetically-listed graduates living in the Lower Mainland (25 males and 25 females) on each list. (See Appendix II, the recruitment letter.) I received 16 responses—eight from Magee (five males and three females) and eight from Vancouver Technical (four females and four males). I interviewed all the respondents, achieving a relatively balanced sampling of both sexes from each school.

I also used 1955 yearbooks from both schools and a 40th graduate reunion survey assembled by Vancouver Technical reunion committee members. I found helpful public sources such as a Magee anniversary book, newspaper articles, school board reports, a thesis on Kerrisdale youth, and studies about Vancouver neighborhoods. These materials confirmed and extended the oral accounts of the graduates.

Of the 18 secondary schools currently established in Vancouver, only nine were in existence in the early 1950s: King George in the downtown, Lord Byng, Prince of Wales, Magee and Kitsilano on the west side and Gladstone, John Oliver, Vancouver Technical and Britannia on the east side. I chose Vancouver Technical and Magee Secondary because they were long-established schools located in the centre of east and west side Vancouver communities.

Although the sampling is small—16 former students out of more than 400
graduates from two schools—similarities in many of the accounts strengthen their validity. Further, similarities in the accounts of informants and evidence from other materials about graduates of their school, prove the informants were typical representatives. Former students' backgrounds are homogenous in that they are all Caucasian and Canadian-born. They are of British or northern European descent thus excluding students of visible minorities and southern European countries. Few immigrant student experiences were likely to emerge within this cohort of graduates born during the later years of a severe economic depression, a time when immigration into Canada was low. Not many respondents attended church after elementary or junior high school. Most came from Protestant families, with only three Catholics and one Jewish informant. Informants attended different elementary schools, but most attended the same junior high and high school, a short distance from their homes.(4)

The use of volunteers for this study has limited the number of possible social groups, especially the more marginalized, from inclusion. The experiences of male graduates who went into physically demanding work, for instance, are not represented in the accounts. As well, the students from the upper middle-class families of Shaughnessy attending Magee Secondary, did not volunteer for the study. The experiences of excluded groups are sometimes told second-hand, by the informants, but their first-hand accounts would broaden the study.

I approached this research as an "insider-outsider". I have been a teacher on call in Vancouver schools since 1989, teaching at all 18 of the secondary schools in the city, including Vancouver Technical and Magee. It is
my "insider" observations about differences in schools which motivated this inquiry. It is as an "outsider" that I have collected the oral accounts, listening to the perspectives of former students of a generation ago. Their voices allow for a method of historical sociology which can empower the notions of what education has been and what it could be.
Endnotes - Chapter 1


2. Paul Alexrod, Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 174. In reference to Fig. 1, Magee informants June, Shirley and Jean's destinations are in relation to their husband's occupation. Vancouver Technical female informants occupations/husband's occupation fall within the same categories, with the exception of Jane whose second marriage was to a professional. While these categories are not precise, they give a general picture of occupational stratifications helpful to constructing a social class analysis.

3. See Bibliography of this study for listing of academic works using the oral history approach by Neil Sutherland, Veronica Strong-Boag, Jane Gaskell, Paul Willis, Ivor F. Goodson and Christopher J. Anstead. Also see popular studies using oral histories listed in the bibliography by Judith Finlayson, Brett Harvey, Alexander Ross, Jeremy Seabrook and Liz Heron.

4. One informant from Magee transferred to grade 12 from another province. Her account is therefore based on her last year of high school at Magee.
CHAPTER 2—THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

The social landscape of a teenager appears confined, but on closer inspection will be seen extending into a larger sphere managed by adults whose influence, decisions and authority have a determining impact. This chapter provides the historical context for the oral testimonies of graduates of two Vancouver high schools in the 1950s. In the first section, I describe the conforming social structure teenagers lived through but also the instances of tolerance, opportunities and resistance they encountered or observed. The second section describes the neighborhoods and the central institution in their lives, their school.

The Fifties

The age of modernity has been described as a time of "learning to live with bigness". Mass production and mass consumption were new features of the post-war period. Canadians during the war longed for peace and increased economic equality and later pursued these goals with the benefit of a prosperity extending into the 1970s. In British Columbia, under the conservative leadership of the Social Credit Party from 1952 to 1972,
initiatives were undertaken in resource development in the province's interior and the north. Superhighways were constructed. Vancouver and its suburbia grew: In 1941 the city contained three-quarters of the greater Vancouver population and three decades later its proportion was just over half.(2) Unemployment rates in Canada were between 2.5 and five per cent in the early 1950s and rose up to 10 per cent during the brief recessionary period of 1956-59.(3) High school and university graduates in Vancouver had choices in jobs. In some instances employers came to the high schools and universities to recruit employees.(4) Union membership increased steadily after the war and, given more legitimacy by the state, workers made greater gains in wages and benefits. The organized work force in British Columbia reached 55 per cent by 1958.(5) The largest union of forestry workers, the Industrial Woodworkers of America (IWA), set employment standards in the province.

In public life, Canada took its cue from the United States. Canadians feared Soviet aggression, volunteered to fight in the Korean War against the Communist aggressor, built bomb shelters and purged Communists from their institutions. The advent of television and its pervasive cultural and ideological messages coming from the United States profoundly influenced culture. American investment in the Canadian economy rose from 7.5 billion dollars in 1948 to 17.5 billion by 1957.(6) In addition most labor unions were controlled by United States headquarters. Consequently it was inevitable that Canada would support, if only moderately, the cold war ideological premise of containment.

Canadians did not engage in the level of extensive legal interrogations and blacklisting of Communists experienced in the United States, but
authorities expressed similar fears that basic social values were being threatened, partly by post-war transitions. Communism needed to be contained, and this popularly held belief eventually spread to include the containment of other groups in society including teenagers, women and the leaders of trade unions.

Deviant youth especially generated discussion and strategies of containment by educators. Youth gangs made headlines in major North American cities, including Vancouver. "There were fierce anti-west side, anti-east side feelings and there were some brutal fights between gangs," one account from a history of Vancouver schools states. "We used to hire an off-duty policeman to make sure there wasn't trouble at our school dances."(7) But sentiments expressed by a Magee student in the Vancouver Sun upon winning a "Teen of the Month" award in 1957 were more representative: "We kids feel that the misdemeanors of teenagers are given too much publicity because they make 'sensational' news."(8)

Authorities dealt with delinquency and guidance of youth with the tools of the mental hygiene movement and its researchers, counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists. A five year government study of high school students living in a Toronto suburb resulted in the publication of Crestwood Heights in 1956. The community evolved around the school, the authors observed, and the school had replaced the church as the basic institution for the moral guidance of young people.(9) Through testing, counselling and curriculum in schools it was hoped to teach young people "the right sort of habits," said Dr. Cecil Goldring, a Canadian educator, and to build "anti-delinquent communities."(10)

Women were also under pressure to conform. Divorce rates increased to an
unprecedented level directly after the war. Women had enjoyed economic autonomy while employed in war-time work but were later encouraged back into the domestic sphere.(11) The pressure was effective as the fifties witnessed the growth of suburbia and the role of the woman as full-time housewife and mother. Many women willingly pursued the private sphere, "considering their contributions to a domestic world safe from depression and war as pleasurable and of value", according to Veronica Strong-Boag's studies based on accounts from women homemakers in Ontario suburbs.(12) However, Strong-Boag acknowledges not all of the accounts are positive. Discourses on female sexuality at the time linked deviance from this common course as dangerous to the social fabric.(13) As well, women's options were limited by their inability to have legal abortions, informal employment bars on pregnant women, absence of daycares, income tax law and the ghettoization of women into low-paying female-designated jobs.(14) Marriage and children involved social coercion providing the safest and, for some women, more enjoyable destiny.

A rise in trade union leaders with a conciliatory approach to labor relations coincided with purges of more radical voices. The increase in union membership and economic prosperity altered male workers' material lives significantly. Union leaders promoted business unionism and class conciliation rather than class conflict; their primary goal was to become "middle class" in material gains. The internal purges of communists in Canadian based unions such as the IWA and Canadian Seaman's Union crushed the possibilities of alternative union agendas.(15) Relations between government/employer and unions were "contained and dressed in respectable garb of accommodation," labor historian Bryan Palmer observes.(16)
Politics shaped teenagers' lives but was infrequently mentioned in interviews with former graduates. This generation was not politically engaged. A national survey of 500 high school students by *Macleans* magazine in 1959 revealed the majority of teenagers respected authority and had contempt for non-conforming behavior. Ninety per cent of the *Macleans* sample agreed with the statement: "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues young people should learn." About half were in favor of the West launching a preventative war against the Soviet Union. And approximately 60 per cent approved of police wiretapping as a means of gathering evidence.(17)

However, political life in Canada was more tolerant in the 1950s than in the United States. "We weren't robots in the fifties; the fifties spawned the sixties," one of the 1955 graduates interviewed for this study said in defense of his generation.(18) He recalled the social studies teacher at Vancouver Technical teaching about communism and the McCarthy trials in the United States.(19) Democratic socialist political parties had a long tradition in federal and provincial politics. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), renamed the New Democratic Party in 1961, was the opposition party in the British Columbia legislature throughout the 1950s. A graduate from Magee recalled Arnold Webster resigning as school principal when he was elected leader of the CCF opposition in the Legislative Assembly.(20) Another graduate from Magee said his mother was very involved in CCF politics.(21)

High school graduates who attended the University of British Columbia (UBC) in 1956 could join not just the Social Credit, Conservative, Liberal or CCF campus political parties, but the Labour Progressive Party (LLP). The LLP
included communists among its members and, though not a popular party, it participated in the campus mock parliament, criticizing among other things United States investment in the Canadian economy.

Clothes provided a statement, too. Working class male youths wore custom-made pants called "strides", which were baggy at the knee and narrow at the ankle and usually made of corduroy, black denim or glen plaid. Strides protested the conforming wear of the future organization man's grey suit. Rebellious expressions among females were connected with their sexuality. "Good" girls, for example, didn't have pierced ears.

Teenagers on both sides of the city came from families with similar characteristics. Participants in this study were born in the late 1930s and almost all had a father in the work force and a mother at home. The trend for domesticity had moved from the exclusive realm of the upper class to the working class and most of the graduates recall their mother at home throughout their high school years.

City teenagers had their own social life in the 1950s, usually confined to the neighborhood. Graduates remember their peers as generally a wholesome, active, obedient, respectful group. They stayed in their neighborhood, walked to and from school in small groups, held a part-time job, were active in school clubs and frequented "hang-outs" with their friends on the weekend. Sororities and fraternities with initiation rites and exclusive practises spread to some Vancouver high schools from the universities.

Partly in reaction to adult demands, young people attempted to organize their own activities outside school, church and service group programs. Their hang-outs were drive-in restaurants, greasy spoon cafes and, for the boys,
pool halls. Rock and roll became the music of the fifties and hairstyles and clothing were other imprints of the youth culture. Alexander Ross, a teenager in the 1950s, observed in his 1977 account, The Booming Fifties: "We began the decade by worrying about teenagers and ended it emulating them." For the first time young people's fads, styles and pursuit of fun were copied by other age groups, Ross observed.(27)

Graduates of the 1950s started families at a much earlier age in peaceful and prosperous times, unlike their parents who were forced to delay theirs because of the depression and war. This was in fact the decade when more Canadians married at a younger age than ever before or since. Of 81 Vancouver Technical graduates surveyed 40 years later, 35 married one to four years out of high school and almost all had children.(28) Suburbs were designed for child-centred family life. Forty years later, most of the graduates from both schools live in Vancouver suburbs, primarily West Vancouver, Surrey, Richmond and Burnaby.(29) Single family home ownership, cars and television sets signified "mass consumption" and therefore mass economic equality; a sense that "everybody is middle class", or as sociologist John Porter described it, "an image of middle-level classlessness."(30)

Marriages were not necessarily successful. Divorce rates increased during the sixties and surpassed the immediate post-war peak by the early seventies.(31) At Magee Secondary's 30th anniversary reunion in 1985, a participant asked the group, "Who holds the record for most times married?" A graduate responded, "Can anyone top five times?" Most informants from both schools had married but once and were still together, but knew peers who had divorced.(32)
With one exception, informants from Vancouver Technical went directly into the work force; the males into apprenticeships or other types of labor and the females into secretarial or service-related jobs. Magee graduates pursued university or business. The female Magee informants completed only one to two years of post-secondary education and then married and began families. This was not an uncommon course for young middle-class women. Another trend was for women to delay having children while working to finance husbands through university—a cost in former times reserved to parents. (33)

By the 1950s more youth from working-class families stayed in school longer and attended post-secondary institutions than in previous generations. (34) Vancouver schools were moving toward composite high school programs, offering students in every part of the city a choice of vocational, commercial or academic training. (35) The rhetoric of the time encouraged educational opportunities for youth of all social classes. An educator wrote in a British Columbia ministry report in 1950: "The Secondary School of today is no longer a selective institution for the education of the few. It is a school for every man's child, and must attempt to meet the need for that pupil's guidance and development which will result in happy and effective citizenship for all students." (36)

Social pressure to keep youth in school longer coincided with an economy which encouraged working-class families to help educate their children. (37) Federal social welfare policies included family allowance payments, initiated in 1945 and distributed to households for each dependent child under 16. Schooling, and especially the teaching of sciences, came under closer scrutiny toward the end of the fifties, resulting in a Royal Commission on Education in
British Columbia in 1960. The commission led by S.N.F. Chant emphasized the need for all young people to stay in school to grade 12. (38) Achieving a grade 12 diploma became more common and, by the early 1960s, the term "high school drop out" had negative connotations. (39)

Reforms raised the standard of public education. School districts in British Columbia were consolidated in 1946, from 650 districts to 75, following recommendations of a provincial Royal Commission in 1945, headed by Maxwell Cameron. This reform attempted to equalize the urban-rural school resources and keep more rural students in school for longer periods. (40) The increased professionalism and improved working conditions of teachers in this decade raised educational standards. By 1945, secondary level teachers were expected to have a bachelors degree and one year of teacher training leading to a certificate. In 1956, the training of elementary school teachers in British Columbia moved to universities from the Normal Schools. B.C. Teachers' Federation (BCTF) was a strong voice in setting demands for better wages, working conditions and professional training.

Opportunities also opened up for specific racial groups as some discriminatory practices ended. Canadians of Chinese and East Indian heritage were able to vote in provincial elections in 1947 and Japanese and Native people in 1949. These groups could now work in the civil service, be licenced as pharmacists or lawyers, serve on juries and qualify for public office. (41) Changes to the Indian Act in 1951 were motivated by the federal government's attempts to integrate Natives into the mainstream of Canadian life. This included closing down the residential schools and moving young people into provincial schools. The number of Native pupils doubled in the 1950s but only
a small number made it through to grade 12, and those who did were often
directed toward vocational programs. (42)

Few students of visible minorities are among the grade 12 graduates in
the 1955 yearbooks of Vancouver Technical and Magee. Most were Caucasian.
Residential covenants which included race as a criteria were ruled illegal in
1951 by the Supreme Court of Canada. Nevertheless, homogenity in residential
areas in Vancouver as in other parts of Canada often survived through informal
support. (43) And, as the findings of this study illustrate, one's
neighborhood influenced schooling and future work destiny.

The Neighborhood

Most informants from the west side lived in Kerrisdale, but east side
informants came from a wider variety of neighborhoods. Figure 2 provides a
map of Vancouver neighborhoods with informants' residence and school marked.
Ontario Street is the social class divide, although residential diversity
within neighborhoods on both sides of the city exists. (44) This section
describes their neighborhoods with emphasis on Grandview-Woodlands in the east
side and Kerrisdale in the west side.

By the 1950s, Magee Secondary at 49th and West Boulevard in Kerrisdale
drew most of its students from the surrounding locale. Others came from the
bordering neighborhood of Shaughnessy and, farther south east, from Marpole.
Marpole and Shaughnessy were developed along clearly opposite socio-economic
lines; Shaughnessy became home for the very rich and Marpole for working
Fig. 2—Vancouver Neighborhoods

Informant's Neighborhood ▲

Magee Secondary School ■

Vancouver Technical Secondary School ▼

Source: City of Vancouver Planning Department, Publications and Maps, October, 1995.
people. Children from farms and modest homes scattered along the Fraser River flats, south of Kerrisdale, also attended Magee. Originally cleared for farming in the 1880s, Kerrisdale evolved into a middle-class residential community for residents of British origin. In fact, Magee Secondary, established in 1912, was named after one of the pioneer farmers. Students from these areas went to Point Grey Junior Secondary nine blocks north, on Arbutus and 41st Avenue, prior to attending Magee.

In the period following the Second World War, Kerrisdale was a prosperous, self-contained, family-oriented community. Fathers were likely to be professionals or businessmen. Their average earnings in 1951 were one-third higher than those of inner city residents. Mothers worked in the home, raising the children. The majority were of British ancestry. A minority of Caucasian Catholics and Jews, and even fewer families of Chinese and Japanese descent, also resided in the area. Of the 10,000 homes, most were owner-occupied. The first high-rise apartment buildings in Kerrisdale were constructed in the fifties. The hub was a shopping area at 41st Avenue and West Boulevard.

Voters elected conservative politicians at all levels of government, showing a desire for traditional, business-oriented representation. Liberal and socialist influences did exist however. Arnold Webster, principal of Magee Secondary from 1950 to 1953, made newspaper headlines when he resigned to become provincial leader of the CCF.

The bowling alley on West 41st or the Jolly Roger and Avenue Grill with table-side individual juke boxes were popular spots for "hanging out" over a "small coke", according to former student Barbara Moodie's account in the
anniversary edition of Magee Secondary. She also describes going to movies at the Kerrisdale Theatre, house parties and Sunday afternoon teas: "There were wonderful affairs, fancy sandwiches and cakes served to young 'ladies' dressed in their best dresses or suits with hats and gloves and nylons and teetering on high heels!"(50)

Cross-town bus service arrived in 1948. Barbara Moodie's describes how young people got around in the Magee anniversary publication: "We all owned bikes—but preferred walking to school with friends. The 'Tram' which ran along the Arbutus Corridor was a fast and scenic alternate. Streetcars #6 and #7 ran along 41st Avenue to downtown and gas buses travelled from 41st and Granville to Marpole. Ted Deeley arrived at school by motorcycle—Bob Roote by car!"(51) By the mid-fifties, cream colored trolley buses had replaced the streetcars.

The Kerrisdale Courier newspaper celebrated a community anniversary in 1955 by proudly observing the role of churches and schools in the area: "While statistics are not available, it is often said that more persons attend church here, per capita, than any other place in Canada. Furthermore, statistics show that more Kerrisdale students go on to university."(52)

There were places of worship for Catholics and those of the Jewish faith. But Protestant churches dominated the community and many attracted young people by sponsoring organizations such as Girl Guides and Boy Scouts and holding church dances. An account in the Magee anniversary issue notes: "These dances sponsored by St. John's (Shaughnessy) Anglican Church and Ryerson Church were held weekly. Here we danced to records—The Inkspots, Fats Waller, etc. and many romances blossomed, and some faded."(53)
However, regular church attendance in the 1950s was not widespread, according to accounts from Magee graduates. A study in 1954 of 200 Kerrisdale males aged 14 to 18 by Allan Hare shows that many teenagers had a church affiliation but he recommended that they give young people a greater "desire to attend their congregation." (54)

Significantly, 88 per cent of the boys Hare surveyed said they would be attending university. But three school guidance counsellors from Magee told Hare in an interview that some students insisted on going to university even though they were advised not to. "Instead," Hare writes, "they are advised to go into occupations in line with their natural abilities and interests as determined by the results of the psychological tests the students took either in Junior or Senior high school." (55)

"Giving back" to the community was an important value instilled in the young and was manifested in the numerous clubs and service organizations they attended, through the school, church and other affiliated groups. The Girls and Boys Hi-Y (organized by the Young Women's and Men's Christian Association) were popular. Its motto was "Self Betterment Through Service." There were two competing Boys' Hi-Y's at Magee in 1953, Boys Alpha and Boys Beta. The Magee anniversary issue reported "many students showed interest, including girls. Girls had to be excluded." Executives were elected, and a dedication service held at the YMCA chapel was followed by a stag party. Pajama Parties, Sadie Hawkins barn dances and Mother and Daughter teas were interspersed with Kinsman Apple days, work for the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada and time spent washing "miles of rubber tubing" for the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Services. (56)
School sports played a major role for both boys and girls. Bowling was a popular school-organized sport in the early 1950s but was discontinued in 1955. A curling club was organized in 1950 and lasted to 1977. Football for boys began in the 1930s but gave way in the early 1950s to rugby as the popular field sport. Otherwise, a wide range of sports thread through the Magee annuals from its inception to the present day, some of them such as golf, rowing and skiing indicative of the affluence of the community.

Vancouver Technical Secondary School

Vancouver Technical school as pictured alongside a photograph of Magee in Figure 3, borders the Collingwood-Renfrew neighborhood, on East Broadway Avenue and Renfrew. The school also drew students from the east side neighborhoods of Grandview-Woodland, Hastings-Sunrise, Strathcona and Kensington-Cedar Cottage. Most of those at Vancouver Technical in the early 1950s had attended Templeton Junior High, a few blocks south of East Hastings and Woodlands on Templeton Drive, in the Grandview neighborhood. Some of the siblings and friends of students at Vancouver Technical interviewed in this study went to Britannia Secondary on Commercial Drive, indicating students had some choice in neighborhood secondary schools.(57)

East side neighborhoods designed in a tight residential grid pattern, with light industrial zones, waterfront and inland railway system were home primarily to Vancouver's laborers, tradesmen and small shopkeepers.(58) The east side neighborhoods of Grandview and Cedar Cottage exemplified areas of Vancouver where socio-economic strata overlapped.(59) Diverse racial groups
A photo of Vancouver Technical Secondary, above, taken from the west side of the building. The school appears like a sprawling fortress, with a smokestack jutting from its centre. Typical of Canadian technical school architecture of the inter-war period, one informant described her former school as looking like a prison. The school enrolled 1,968 students in 1955—more than twice the number of students enrolled at Magee Secondary.


Magee Secondary, red-bricked with arched entrances, replicates the style of a college building as the above frontal view of the school illustrates. Two-thirds of Magee's 41 teachers were male and one-third female in 1955, compared to Vancouver Technical's staff of 103, which had an equal ratio of male and female teachers.

of people, primarily Caucasian, but also black, East Indian, Asian and Native, had populated the east side at various times. After the Second World War, immigration into the east side from eastern and southern Europe and an increase in the number of Chinese-Canadians moving out of the overcrowded Strathcona area, contributed to the decline in the ratio of residents of British origin in Vancouver from 71 per cent in 1951 to 61 per cent in 1961. (60)

Vancouver Technical borders the Grandview Woodland community, and took in many of its resident children. In 1961 the community had a population of 8,619 with 2,873 homes, including rental apartment buildings. (61) The hub of the community was Commercial Drive, with its food, clothing and service shops reflecting the cultural diversity of the neighborhood.

Labor unions and socialist politics have had a strong influence in the east side communities and left-leaning candidates were most often successful at election time. Residents followed a tradition of organizing and lobbying for community resources. Grandview-Woodland was dubbed the "Cinderella" community of Vancouver in 1952 by the media because of its demands to City Hall for improvements to streets and lighting and a new library. (62)

The Hastings-Sunrise neighborhood was the site of the popular exhibition park, later called the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE). Originally a trade show for dairy farmers, loggers and horticulturalists, by the 1950s the park had become a popular family attraction with the addition of a midway. Young people frequented the rides at "Happyland", an amusement park open year round. Exhibition Park provided many teenagers in the neighborhood summer employment.

Friends met after school at the coffee shop on First and Renfrew or
sipped a coke at a cafe on Commercial Drive. They attended "teen town" dances in the local community halls and even organized their own "Coada Teen Club" at the Commercial and Adanac Young Women's Christian Association.(63) On Friday nights a gang of friends might go to a movie at the Olympia on Hastings Street. Some ventured into Chinatown or walked to the Carnegie Library on Hastings and Main. The Renfrew streetcar rattled down Hastings taking young people to school. Most of the time, however, young people stayed in their neighborhoods and walked to and from their various destinations.

As with racial and ethnic diversity, religious diversity was well represented on the east side. Teenagers shied from regular church attendance, often after elementary or junior high school age. Service groups were popular at Vancouver Technical and some students were Guides and Scouts.

Vancouver Technical was established in 1916 as an all boys' school under the instruction of vocational education teacher and administrator George Lister. The school moved twice, from the Fairview neighborhood to the Labour Temple on the downtown eastside, and then to its present location in 1928. Females were first admitted in 1940. Males and females had separate school entrances, seating arrangements in the cafeteria and auditorium and separate instruction in the classroom until the late 1950s. Vocational training was clearly divided along gender lines, with males moving into apprenticeship programs and females into tailoring, hairdressing or office work. An academic program attracted a minority of students who could continue their post-secondary education directly out of high school. In 1950, Grandview High School of Commerce, on Commercial Drive, closed and students were directed toward Vancouver Technical. A new wing was built in 1955 to accommodate these
students and a broader selection of courses was offered in the commercial program. (64)

Fifties youth moved within a social landscape where neighborhood and school had a direct influence on future destinies and larger political and social trends played an indirect role. In the next chapter, the informants recall the world of their youth. Their memories give shape to a landscape where identities were built amid social class tolerance and divisions.
Endnotes - Chapter 2


4. Ross, *The Booming Fifties,* 115. Ross was an undergraduate at UBC in the mid-fifties and recalls that "the certainty of future employment lent a certain carelessness to campus life." Corporate recruiters came to the campus and "courted" Bachelor of Arts graduates. In specialized faculties, graduates were often able to choose among offers from competing corporations.


6. Palmer, *Working Class Experience,* 276. By the mid-1950s the U.S. investors controlled half the forestry industry in B.C.


10. Mariana Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender and Generation in the City," in *A Diversity of Women,* 31. The mental hygiene movement began in Canada at the turn of the century with the rise of mass schooling. The movement was a coalition of professionals from the medical, psychiatric and educational field who used schools to bring "cleanliness" or hygiene, in all its various interpretations, to the public.

11. S.J. Wilson, *Women, Families and Work* (Canada: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1991), 229. In 1946, 63 divorces per 100,000 people were granted in Canada. The rate decreased to 37 per 100,000 throughout the fifties and began to rise again in the sixties. By the early seventies, the divorce rate surpassed the immediate post-war level.

By 1944, one-third of Canadian women worked for wages, a level of participation which wasn't surpassed until 1967. The government encouraged women into "war work" through tax breaks, publicly funded child care and
better wages. See Judith Finlayson, Against the Current: Canadian Women Talk about Fifty Years of Life on the Job (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1995), 3.


13. Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender and Generation in the City," in A Diversity of Women, 22-23. Valverde links public discourse on female sexuality and family life with the atomic threat and the cold war. For example, atomic rays are described as "femme fatale".


17. "Is our Youth Equipped to Face the Future?" Maclean's, 10 October, 1959, 13-15 and 83-91. Of the 1,300,000 teenagers between ages 15-19 in Canada in 1959, Maclean's solicited an independent research organization to poll 500 high school students from Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, London, Montreal and Halifax. Questionnaires were followed up with selected interviews. The unidentified author(s) of the article expressed concern and alarm because respondents favored authoritarianism rather than liberal democratic ideals.

18. Transcript, Sam, Vancouver Technical, 12.


20. Transcript, Adam, Magee, 2. "He (Arnold Webster) used his job, his principalship, to—he was in the wrong area. High school wasn't the right area for the NDP (sic). He was busy being a nice fellow and smiling at everybody and making sure everybody liked him. After that they sent Colonel Yeo over (to be principal). He liked to be called a Colonel. He was an ex-military man as you might surmise and I think his job was to sort of smarten things up a bit."

21. Transcript, Bill, Magee, 3.

22. Ross, The Booming Fifties, 38. Ross also describes a ducktail haircut, popular with young men, as short on top and long and greasy on the sides.
23. Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities," in A Diversity of Women.
30. Valverde suggests strides were "a badge of a defiant working class masculinity."

24. Transcript, Jean, Magee, p. 15. Jean said, "A girl in Kerrisdale didn't get her ears pierced until she was 16. That shows who you were, if you had your ears pierced early."


26. The Girls Hi-Y Club and Boys Hi-Y Club, jointly sponsored by the school and local Young Men's Christian Association/Young Women's Christian Association, was set up along the lines of campus sororities and fraternities with initiation rites and exclusive practices.


28. Vancouver Technical Secondary School 40th Reunion Survey, 1995. This booklet was printed by a group of Vancouver Technical graduates of 1955. Survey forms were mailed out prior to the reunion. Of the 80 former students who participated in the survey (about one-third of all graduates) 40 of the 41 males indicated they were married and only 26 of the 39 females maintained marital status.


32. Transcript, Bob, Magee graduate, 4.


35. Vancouver School Board, Report, (1954), 2. "The grouping of these schools emphasizes the trend toward composite secondary schools to satisfy the increasing need for a balance between academic and vocational education." From 1939 to 1952 schools were categorized as: (a) Junior High Schools: Point Grey and Templeton (b) Composite Junior-Senior High Schools: Lord Byng, Gladstone, Kitsilano, John Oliver (c) Composite Senior High Schools: Britannia, King Edward, King George, Magee (d) Special Senior High Schools: Fairview High School of Commerce, Grandview High School of Commerce (consolidated with Vancouver Technical in 1950), Vancouver Technical, Prince of Wales.

The move to abolish junior high schools in Vancouver began in 1951 and was completed by 1960. Only two schools did not offer a balance of programs by 1960: Fairview and Prince of Wales. The 1959 AR report notes, "Prince of Wales High School could only offer a straight academic programme which caused parents to complain to the Board about its limited educational opportunities."


37. It had been customary for young people to reach an acceptable grade level then seek employment as family status and economic circumstances generally dictated.


On a national level, half of all possible candidates in British Columbia graduated from grade 12 by 1960, whereas only 2 percent graduated in Newfoundland. Concepts of equalizing education between provinces was also examined. (Bumstead, The Peoples of Canada, 363.)


40. Barman and Sutherland, "Royal Commission Retrospective," in Children, Teachers and Schools, eds., Barman, Sutherland and Wilson, 417-418.


42. Barman, The West Beyond the West, 308.


45. Magee Secondary was originally housed at 67th and Cartier in Marpole in 1912, and had 9 students. The school was named Point Grey High School in 1913 and in the fall of that year moved to its present site at 49th and West Boulevard. In 1914 the school was re-named King George V High School. Elementary level students were also taught in the building until 1925 when Maple Grove Elementary was built. In 1926 the school was renamed once again, to avoid confusion with another school in Vancouver by the same name. Students, parents and area people proposed the school be called Magee Secondary after a pioneer farmer named Hugh Magee who lived near the site. In 1954-55 Magee Secondary enrolled grade nine students as part of the the school board's decision to dismantle the junior high schools. For a detailed history of the Magee Secondary see W.B. McNulty, editor, *Magee 75th Anniversary: 1914-1989* (Richmond: New Leaf Company Publishers and Printers Corporation, 1989.)


47. McNulty, ed., *Magee 75th Anniversary*, 14. Barbara Moodie, former Magee student, states: "Magee students were mostly of British origins, many of Scottish descent. There were few Oriental students, the visible minority being Jewish girls and boys who integrated well while retaining special friendships within their group."

48. Bruce Macdonald, *Vancouver: A Visual History* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1993), 68-69. Liberal and right-leaning candidates succeeded in forming governments at all three levels of power in the 1950s: the Non-Partisan Association won civic elections, the Liberal-Conservative coalition (to 1952) and then the Social Credit party (1952 to 1972) formed the provincial governments, and the federal Liberals held power to 1957, followed by the Conservative Party under Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.

49. *Vancouver Sun*, 19 August 1953, 42.


51. Ibid., 14. Both Ted Deeley and Bob Roote were sons of car dealers.

52. The *Kerrisdale Story* (Vancouver: Kerrisdale Courier, 1955), 35.


55. Ibid., 66.

57. Transcripts, Vancouver Technical graduates. A number of the graduates mention siblings who went to Britannia. Stanley for example had two brothers and two sisters, all of whom went to Britannia.

58. Grandview Woodland, A Community History. (Vancouver: Britannia Community Library, 1985.)


60. Macdonald, Vancouver, 72, 73.


CHAPTER 3—SOCIAL CLASS IDENTITY

Family background is an important source of identity for youth, influencing school and work paths. Teenagers in the fifties were aware of their own social class identity and the social class of others. The ensuing descriptions by the informants of their neighborhood, family, friends and school experiences reveal how they perceived their sense of place within the teenage social world and the adult community.

Working class students who attended Magee from neighborhoods outside Kerrisdale were inclined to separate themselves socially from other students and enrol in the general program, rather than the academic. Some working-class students, one informant recalls, thought more in terms of survival rather than career paths. Aspirations of students were influenced by parents' expectations.

Bob came from the working-class neighborhood of Marpole. He was an only child with parents who encouraged him in his academic studies. His father was a salesman and his mother a housewife. His ambitions put him in the minority among his Marpole peers. He describes Marpole as a very distinct community in the 1950s: "Much of it is gone now, but it was quite distinct. Most of my friends from Marpole would have been in the general program at
Magee. Percentage-wise, probably two out of three would be general program; one of three, university program. We all mixed and fooled around together and some went to jail, some worked in mills and some went to university. The majority wouldn't have gone to university, but we still hung together; we'd go around in cars together." (1)

Bob recalls a faint sense of "class separation" between Marpole students and the others. "There were from Marpole among my peers some rougher, tougher kids. I wasn't, but they were all my friends because I was tactically very smart that way because I kept them all as friends. So there were the usual Marpole versus Kerrisdale monthly little fights in the school, of no great import but there was definitely a...we were a little different from Marpole, but not a major, not a big class issue."(2)

Bill lived with his brother and parents on an acreage along the flats by the Fraser River in such a small community that some informants were unaware students from this area attended Magee. Bill's father worked in a trade and his mother was a housewife, but also wrote for a community newspaper and was active in the CCF. Bill inherited a reading disability, dyslexia, from his father. But unlike his father's experience, by the 1950s the education system was able to give Bill's disorder a name and to help him. He describes the students who went to Magee: "You had the people from the flats by the river, where I came from. These were kids of farmers and fishermen. The kids from the Marpole area had parents who worked in the sawmills and the kids from Shaughnessy had parents who owned the sawmills. There were two different aspirations. I had friends from the Marpole side. I had a girlfriend from Marpole, and there weren't high expectations from her family. It was more
about survival rather than career paths."(3)

Students with middle-class backgrounds represented the "norm" against which the students from wealthy and lower income backgrounds were cast as "other". Harold was a typical middle-class student from Magee, living in Kerrisdale. He is the youngest of three brothers. His father was a teacher and mother a housewife. Harold describes his neighborhood: "I lived on Maple and that was right in the heart of what I would call middle-class clerkdom, teacherdom. Dozens of teachers, all sorts of teachers, and clerks for the city. There were postal workers, too, but houses weren't expensive. My parents paid $7,000 for their house and when they sold it in 1975 they only got $30,000. So it wasn't Shaughnessy prices."(4)

Peer groups adopted informal rules which distinguished students' social backgrounds. Young women who wore cashmere sweaters, as Shirley describes, found a sense of belonging among middle-class students. Shirley came from a middle-class Catholic family living in Kerrisdale. Her parents experienced social mobility as immigrants to Canada and instilled in Shirley and her younger sister an appreciation for the value of money. She was one of a minority of Catholics attending Magee. "You took the bus. I had adequate clothes. There were no designer clothes in those days. The big deal was when you went from Point Grey to Magee that all the grade 12 girls were going to inspect you when you arrived there at the beginning of grade 10, and if you weren't wearing a cashmere sweater then you couldn't stay in the school at all." (5)

The degree of paid labor performed by students while going to high school also indicated their class background, as the informant Ed recalls. He came
from a white collar Kerrisdale family. He describes the mix of students' backgrounds as "the very rich, the average and the less. I would say that the less and the average were hardworking." And the "kids from Marpole," Ed emphasizes, "always worked."(6)

Jewish students maintained their own social groups. This would continue into university, where they had their own sororities and fraternities. The social sphere of school rather than the academic sphere was stressed to the daughters of some middle-class parents. As a result, young women concentrated their efforts on marriage rather than careers. June's family belonged to the Jewish community in Kerrisdale. She estimated about five per cent of students at Magee were Jewish and most of her friends were Jewish. June's father was in business. Her mother was a housewife, as were most of her friends' mothers, although June says there were exceptions, where a wife helped her husband with a family-run business. June's family (parents and three siblings) moved from Winnipeg in 1954 so she only attended grade 12 at Magee. She says, "I think we were unique in that we weren't struggling because, I mean, we all came from high social-economic backgrounds. All my friends had cars or had the use of cars. We'd go shopping, we had it made in terms of material things. I think it was expected by our parents that we go on to university. My mother didn't really stress—she stressed more the social aspects of university rather than the educational or academic end of it."(7)

If a family was different or had problems, it wasn't acceptable to talk about it. The institution of family was closed to public scrutiny. Most students had two parents, with the mother at home. Those who did not felt the difference and not discussing this difference may have enhanced their sense of
stigma. Adam and Jean dated while attending Magee and married soon after graduation. Both came from white collar homes in Kerrisdale with family arrangements slightly different from the norm. Adam's parents divorced and Adam lived with his mother and three sibling in the family home, supported by their father who remarried. Jean's mother worked as a secretary in downtown Vancouver to support the family because her father was unable to work for health reasons. Adam describes the neighborhood as "white collar middle management sort of people. It wasn't as affluent as it is now. But still it was the sort of people, more the educated."(8)

Jean and Adam recognized their family situations were different from most of their peers, but neither teenagers nor adults talked about it. Jean said it became her responsibility to start dinner on weekdays. Her mother would be tired at the end of her work day. "If I went to another girl's home," Jean recalls, "I could see the difference."(9) Adam was also aware of his unique family situation, which likely gave him a keener perception of other family dynamics: "I do remember kids whose parents weren't on the best of terms. I remember a few situations where there were separate bedrooms for mom and dad which probably indicated that things weren't all that they could be. But I don't remember a lot of discussion about it. 'Oh gee, my parents are divorced.' I don't remember that sort of discussion." (10)

Bob said single-parent families were rare and one did not talk about it: "If someone was in a single parent family--I'd have to think--probably if someone died in a mill accident or something. You look back and think there were probably family problems then but it wasn't socially acceptable to talk about it. It got tucked away conversationally." (11)
The "other" students most commonly described by those of the dominant social backgrounds were the working class from Marpole and within Kerrisdale, as well as the non-Caucasians and the very rich. The Marpole students are characterized as tough but also hardworking. The non-Caucasians represent a tiny visible minority. The rich from Shaughnessy had many opportunities unique to their social position.

Marpole students are described by the informants as "hoods", some of them driving motorcycles to school, wearing black leather jackets, or coming up from Marpole on the tram and "always working" after school and on weekends. They were the tough guys, Harold said, "from areas where they may have single parents."(12)

Shirley also remembers Marpole students as "tough", but only by 1950s standards. "We used to laugh and talk about them," Shirley admits. "They wore strides. They were high waisted. They had this high waist band and big balloon pants that were tight at the ankles. I knew girls that came from Marpole, but they weren't particularly visible as being different from anybody else and, of course, the so-called hoods were by today's standards not bad at all. My husband being a guy, knew them on a different basis, and one of the guys he knew stole a car. The kids got into a lot of innocent trouble, though. They did things but weren't branded as juvenile delinquents or sent to jail. I guess it was a different kind of world and the crimes were small in comparison. But one of the guys he knew from Marpole, who got into lots of trouble, became a cop and another one is a fairly well-known artist. The only thing that distinguished them were these pants and duck tails--like the Fonz."(13)
There were lower-income families within Kerrisdale as Shirley describes. "I was aware of two girls whose mothers did sewing, but I don't remember them as poor. One in particular was a Japanese girl who I really liked. I wasn't a close friend but I talked to her and I liked her a lot. She made my graduation dress and I guess she supported the family that way. They lived in a house in Kerrisdale, but I don't remember thinking of her as poor. The other one that I'm thinking of, they came from Germany. I don't think there was a father." (14)

Harold recalls calling at the home of the young woman he selected in the draw for the grade 12 graduation dinner. He describes her home as a "shack" in the middle of Kerrisdale. He remembers his surprise at her circumstances. (15) Jean also remembers a few "poor" families on West Boulevard. (16)

Non-Caucasian students were also recalled by informants, as sometimes being described as outsiders. Adam mentioned one Japanese student and two Chinese students, who were known as "the grocery stores' kids". (17) Bob has a more detailed memory of the non-Caucasian students who were sometimes allied with the Marpole group as outsiders: "In junior high school there was the big fight between M--- and someone; the Chinese guy won so all was well for the Marpole people. There were some Japanese students, but no racial tension because there was no real racial interaction. Certainly none in Kerrisdale. Very WASPish." (18)

The wealthy students are described as the ones with televisions, who drove their parents' expensive cars to school, didn't need to work, and went on expensive holidays with their families, to Hawaii, Sun Valley, or Europe.
Some had swimming pools in the backyard. They were the "filthy" rich, as Harold describes them; the "owners" of the mills, Bill recalls.(19)

West side students had little social contact with the east side. Vancouver Technical was a distant place to the Magee informants. Descriptions of working-class students by Magee graduates reveal both real and stereotypical conceptions. One concept which persists is the inference that some working-class teenagers are "tough", possibly dangerous ("juvenile delinquents") because they come from divorced ("broken") homes. Yet circumstance for most informants from both sides of the city were similar in many respects: two parent families, with a few single parent families, and mothers in the home. However, the east-west class divide was a pervasive construct in the subjects' minds and led to distorted perceptions of how students on the other side lived.

Harold says, "By the time I had graduated from high school I had not met a single solitary divorced person. That was the sort of thing, that was what the neighborhood of Kerrisdale was. Now I'm sure that's not true of Van Tech."(20) Jean and Adam spoke of the east side as a forbidden area for west side teens:

Adam: "You're comparing this with Vancouver Tech. We viewed Van Tech as a place that we...who knows what terrible things were going on there!"
Jean: "We wouldn't even go over there."
Adam: "I don't think we'd go east of Ontario Street unless we were going to the PNE."
Jean: "I wasn't even allowed."
Adam: "There were areas that your parents wouldn't think was suitable; certainly east of Ontario." (21)

Even though Bob was from Marpole, he saw the area east of Main Street as having "a bit of a foreboding to it." "And schools like Van Tech, you wouldn't want to go over there. They were tough areas. We all knew they were tough areas so we just wouldn't go over there." (22)

But Bill did venture east of Ontario Street, perhaps because of his parents' background and having a learning disorder which streamed him into the trades. He offers a different perspective on the east-west divide: "I worked on the east side of the city while I was going to Magee. I had friends who went to Van Tech. Tech was known as a "dumping ground". If you weren't good in school, you went to Tech. You didn't get a chance to "choose" to be a mechanic so you could end up being a mechanic for the wrong reasons, and not liking your job." (23) Bill believes if he had gone to Vancouver Technical instead of Magee he would not have received the additional help needed for his disability and would have dropped out of school. He said he went to dances at Vancouver Technical and enjoyed them more than those at Magee, describing Vancouver Technical students as more "alive". (24)

Wide variations in social class background of students at Vancouver Technical were not evident in the accounts of graduates. The high school had a lunch program allowing students to work for their meals, indicating a portion of the student population was economically disadvantaged. The following accounts of Jane and Mary illustrate that acquiring simple necessities others took for granted such as shoes, a coat, lunch, and money for a field trip made these former students aware of their status.
Jane was raised as an only child by her German step-father in the Strathcona neighborhood. He was unemployed because of illness and supported the two of them on social assistance. Jane had attended Catholic schools and developed friendships with some of these girls as they entered Vancouver Technical together. "We weren't the in crowd, she states. "The in crowd had the better clothes and stuff like that. We came from the Italian working-class district, and far away. We had to bus. We were at Campbell and Hastings, which is way out there, so we were a different crowd and we sort of hung by ourselves I guess you'd say." (25)

Jane says her neighborhood was an Italian area "so everybody would be on the porch and you knew everybody. And you knew who the new arrivals were off the boat—who couldn't speak English yet. And church was a big part of it. Even when we went to high school, we were still part of the choir and we still did the church activities. So it was very traditional, is what I guess I want to say."(26) Jane describes ethnic tensions: "My dad was the only non-Italian in the neighborhood. He was German, so he was fairly well ostracized. He never had any visitors or anything. When I look back it had to be terrible for him. I wasn't ostracized at all because I was blond and young and was accepted, and as a kid I was fine. And I used to sing Italian. I don't speak it, but I use to sing it in church so it was fine. But for my dad, it had to be hard."(27)

Jane worked for her lunch in the cafeteria and took part-time jobs to buy clothes. She remembers a teacher who helped out by paying for her graduation photo. "It was tough because we were poor," Jane says. "We always had the poorest house on the block. I lived with insecurity."(28)
Mary recalls the differences between the students who were the haves and the have-nots. She was interviewed along with her husband, Sam, also a Vancouver Technical graduate of 1955. Both Mary and Sam came from homes where the father worked and the mother stayed home. Sam has one brother and Mary has three siblings. She describes herself as a 'have-not' and her husband as a 'have'. "I worked, she says. I washed dishes in the cafeteria for my lunch. I never got a chance to go on any of the outings because they cost money and we never had that much money. I worked on the cash register, dished up ice cream, dished up lunches. I think I did it all for a free lunch; I didn't get paid or anything. I joined all the clubs that were free."(29)

Mary said the clothes students wore indicated their family's economic status, but Steve felt people didn't notice differences.

Sam: "I didn't notice a difference."
Mary: "When you've got everything you don't think about the people who don't. You just assume it came as easy to them as it came to you."

Sam: "Well that's right, I don't think about how you got that sweater, or those shoes. I don't know..."
Mary: "You never wore shoes with cardboard in the soles that allow you to get holes in the soles and you put layers of cardboard underneath so that the water wouldn't come in. You never had to wear them!"

Sam: "No I didn't. One of my neighbors was a shoemaker so we could just take our shoes across the street. He'd take a look and fix them."(30)

Sam remembers a neighborhood friend whose family was poor. "His bedroom was the basement of a house with a dirt floor. I knew they never had much money. But we never did things that required a lot of money, so, if he wanted
a pair of stride pants, he went to the golf course and caddied for $3 a day, until he had $20 in the bank. Then you'd go down to Chinatown and get them to make you a pair of pants."(31)

Sam had caddied at west side golf courses and was indifferent to their lifestyle. Mary, who had relatives living on the west side, was not. She perceived a social stigma to living on the east side. Sam states: "I caddied for H.R. Macmillan, for presidents, all the big timers in the city of Vancouver. I knew they had money but, as far as I was concerned, they treated me fine." Mary has a different perspective, enforced by class differences within her extended family. She said that although Britannia Secondary was the academic school in the east end, "even Britannia was the poor kids going on to university. If you lived in the east end, you were a certain type of person. You were children of immigrants or poor people, otherwise you wouldn't live in the east end. I guess maybe my parents let us know that. If you were wealthy, we'd live where my Uncle lived on the west side.(32)

Parents would encourage sons but rarely daughters to pursue post-secondary education for social and economic reasons. It was understood, Mary recalls, her brother would attend university but she would seek a secretarial job after high school, even though her marks were better.(33)

Informants describe the ethnic and racial mix within their neighborhood and school as varied and harmonious but not without instances of racial discord. Jane found life for a German immigrant in an Italian community in the 1950s could be difficult. Mary's heritage was British and Sam's Ukrainian, which caused family conflict and meant marriage had to wait until both were 21 when they didn't need parental permission.(34)
Mary describes her neighborhood: "The next door neighbors were Icelandic. They made us a parka. The people up the street were Czechoslovakian and the people around the back were Jewish. I remember the Czechs yelling from back porch to back porch in their own language and they'd be laughing."(35)

Sam said he didn't think in terms of labels. "Chinese kids, Japanese, Indian kids; I don't know, they're just kids. I can never remember calling them anything. And even if they had fights, I can't remember anyone fighting. One of the guys I fought most with was another Ukrainian kid. Two of my best friends were Negro."(36)

Some informants described their high school as "tough". Susan lived on Renfrew Street with her brother, a father who worked downtown and a mother who stayed home. She described junior high school at Templeton as "a real shocker" because it enrolled so many more students from different areas of the east side than had attended elementary school. She says, "So when you came out of grade six and came into Templeton, well, then it was scary because you had a very wide range of people, okay. Different backgrounds. People that were used to fighting. Where I came from, families didn't do those things. So that was very scary. By the time I got to Tech, I had found my own safety zone and I found you could do that, even in Temp—you find your own group, your own people. And I think I brought my kids up to think that way, too; that you can find groups, and there is safety nets within your own school system. Because there were gangs in our day, there were drugs in our day. Heroin was the big drug."(37)

Unlike the other informants, Mark enrolled in the academic program at
Vancouver Technical. He said as an "east end kid" he didn't perceive Vancouver Technical to be different from any other city school: "It was large and certainly embraced both a vocational emphasis and a significantly tough element vis-a-vis its student population. In retrospect, I guess I was an adolescent 'nerd' in those days. Tech's milieu nonetheless sufficed to entice me out of my shell into a variety of extra-curricular activities." (38)

Mavis didn't think Vancouver Technical was a "tough" school. She had a brother, a father who worked in sales and a stay-at-home mother. She lived in the Hastings-Sunrise community, bussing to Vancouver Technical and walking home. She recalls the typical high school social groups. "Everybody was clean cut. Get down to business and get on with it. A teacher was Mr. or Mrs. or Miss and I adored them, and nobody was awful to the teachers at all. We gave them respect." (39)

She talks of the variety of cultural groups and the scar left on the neighborhood when the Japanese-Canadians were interned during the Second World War. "Our neighborhood was a mix. A lot of Yugoslavians, Japanese—that was before they got interned. Gosh, it was so sad. And they were gone. So, basically, it just ended up with Italians, English, Scottish, Irish and a lot of Yugoslavian fishermen families. I think there were only two blacks in our school and they were twins, two boys." (40)

The informants had a sense of being eastsiders and didn't often venture to the west side. They had everything they wanted in their own neighborhood. "It was a great neighborhood," Mavis says. "There was the PNE and Windermere park which had a big pool. Then there was a playground that had tennis courts and a wading pool. Shopping was about seven blocks by foot. My parents
wanted to move once and my brother and I said no way, because we had the best of everything at our fingertips."(41)

Ben was the youngest of three children living with their parents in the Grandview-Renfrew neighborhood. He recalls spending lots of time with his friends at Happyland on Renfrew. "It was only a mile from where we lived. We'd be down there four nights a week. There was a ferris wheel—all the different rides. One of the girl's fathers had something to do with it so we'd get a roll of tickets. Cheap fun...I didn't know where Alma Street (on the west side) was until I got a car. We were east enders and we'd hang out at parties pretty well in the east end." Ben didn't travel outside Vancouver, either. "I don't really remember going on a family holiday with my mom and dad, but we may have. We never had parties. My grandfather lived with us. My parents were quiet people. My mother was a homemaker and that was common. My dad had a trade." (42)

Stanley's two brothers and sisters attended Britannia Secondary but he chose Vancouver Technical because of its vocational program. His father worked and his mother stayed home to raise the children. Stanley's older brother quit school in grade 11 to help support the family. His neighborhood had "a large contingent of Catholics because of the Italians and Yugoslavians. It was just the way things evolved. It was a working-class neighborhood."(43) He reflects: "Everything seemed to evolve within eight square blocks--I never seemed to venture out of that sphere. I never had a car until I was 19, so probably about a year and a half after I graduated."(44)

"In the east end, we were on the same level, working and education so there wasn't that disparity between the intellectual and the worker. So, as I
say, there was a large melting pot. When I was playing rugby in school, my mates were Chinese and Japanese. Everybody had different colored skin but nobody said, 'I don't want to hang out with you because you're black.' It was just the opposite. You encouraged people."(45) Stanley doesn't recall mixing with west side teenagers except during sporting events.(46)

Retention figures for working-class youth increased over the decade, but completing grade 12 was not an established social custom for Vancouver Technical students in the 1950s. A school board annual report noted students left school after completing grade 10 or 11 and reasoned: "The employment picture during the summer of 1956 was very favourable and offered an inducement to students to leave school."(47)

All those interviewed from Vancouver Technical received their grade 12 diploma but some of their family members and friends did not. Stanley's brother left Britannia Secondary in grade 11 to help support a family whose father was an unemployed Second World War veteran. Ben's oldest brother enlisted in the Second World War with only had grade eight education, although his sister obtained her grade 12 diploma. Mavis' brother left Vancouver Technical before graduating, to the strong disapproval of her father. Susan's brother was one course short of graduating from grade 12 at Britannia Secondary.(48)

Many of those attending the 40th graduate reunion of Vancouver Technical had not received grade 12 diplomas.(49) Susan said, "In our time it was not unusual for a lot not to graduate, especially because we were in a technical school. I think possibly once you got into a job situation, which sometimes our course led to, if you were satisfied with the job you were in, and school
was not easy for some of us, then you left school and pursued work." (50) Sam recalled males could get apprenticeship positions in the trades after grade 10, so it wasn't necessary to graduate. (51) A few female students became pregnant and dropped out of school. Some families would send a pregnant daughter to the "Bad Girls Home" as it was euphemistically called, on Cassier and Adanac Street in the Grandview neighborhood. Mary remembered schoolmates who had to withdraw, in one case involving family incest: "I remember a young woman got pregnant by her father. We shunned her. I feel terrible about that. One day she was gone and we never saw her again. We didn't know how to deal with it. I also remember two girls who got pregnant in their last year. They married right out of high school, and later divorced. Their ex-husbands were at the reunion. It seemed so terrible at the time, but 40 years later it was different. Times have changed." (52)

Some males repeated grade 12 because they were assured of a job when they graduated and either wanted to defer entrance into the work force or gain further course credits. Mary contacted one former student about the reunion and he asked which of his graduation years she was referring to. He graduated in 1953, 1954 and 1955. Sam said some male students would purposely fail so they could play high school sports, and knew jobs would be plentiful when they did graduate. (53) Mark graduated twice for academic reasons: "It probably should be noted that I graduated twice from Tech," he wrote, "firstly from the Commerce program in 1955 for which I was class Valedictorian. Then by coming back for one extra year upon graduation, for the princely sum of $125, I was able to complete all grades 11 and 12 academic requirements for a university entrance program diploma in 1956. Had I not done this, though, I would have
probably never have seen university and I think, on reflection, that I subliminally knew this even at that time." (54)

Summary

Many working-class students attending Magee and Vancouver Technical were streamed into vocational and commercial programs. Working-class students at Magee formed their own social groups, separate from their predominately middle-class peers. In contrast to the Magee experience, Vancouver Technical graduates did not describe distinct social class variation among students at their school. However, some students lived at poverty levels which was acknowledged by the actions of individual teachers (paying for a student's graduation photo) and the school administration (lunch program). On the west side, the minority of impoverished students dealt privately with economic difficulties without this type of public recognition.

It was not unusual for students to leave school in grade 10 or 11 in the 1950s. Table 1 shows the retention rates to grade 12 from grade 11 for students at both schools from 1953 to 1955. More Vancouver Technical students left school before grade 12 than Magee students and within this group, more females than males left school. Table 2 shows that in 1961 most young people in British Columbia were in school to age 14. The number decreases considerably, especially for females, between age 15 to 19. In Vancouver, the percentage of the male population between 15 and 19 in school in 1961 is slightly higher than the provincial level, at 75.2 per cent, and only 65.3 per cent for females. (55) Economically disadvantaged students were among this
Table 1.—Retention Figures of 1955 Graduates at Two Vancouver Schools, by Grade and Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Vancouver Technical</th>
<th>Magee Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL DIFFERENCE</td>
<td>-34</td>
<td>-19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Magee Secondary and Vancouver Technical Secondary Yearbooks, 1953-54 and 1954-55. Grade 10 students are not listed in annuals for the 1952-53 school year.

Table 2.—Percentage of Population In School In B.C. and Canada in 1961, by Age and Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male 10-14 years (%)</th>
<th>Female 10-14 years (%)</th>
<th>Male 15-19 years (%)</th>
<th>Female 15-19 years (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Canada, 1961, Vol. 1.3-6, Table 101.
portion of drop outs. Teenagers also left school early with their parents' disapproval. Male students left to pursue trade apprenticeships which involved courses and exams. Early leave-taking was not unusual because employment was available. Some females left early to marry and/or have a child and cases occurred where male students repeated grade 12 for various reasons, secure in the knowledge that they would have a job when they graduated. By grade 12, more students were in the academic than general program in Vancouver, as Table 3 shows. Students in the general program were more likely to leave school before grade 12.

Students at Vancouver Technical came from a wider range of cultural groups than Magee students. Jewish students at Magee formed their own social groups and the accounts suggest some students at Vancouver Technical (such as the Italians from the Strathcona neighborhood) may have also established their own social groups. Generally, Vancouver Technical graduates would have had more experience with ethnic/racial integration and tolerance than Magee graduates.(56)

Parental expectations influenced aspirations of female students. Messages parents gave their daughters at both schools were to take advantage of the social rather than academic aspects of school and to plan for marriage rather than a career. Informants from both schools acknowledge taboo subjects of the fifties such as discussing divorced families and teenage pregnancy.

Family, neighborhood and school played a role in shaping identity. Young people from the west and east sides of the city lived in two distinct worlds with varying levels of awareness of the other. Treatment by teachers,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Males (%)</th>
<th>Females (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>G.P.</td>
<td>U.P.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>39.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

counsellors and the institutionalized streaming of students into certain occupations is described by the informants in the next chapter. Accounts will show that differences between schools perpetuated social class distinctions.
Endnotes—Chapter 3

1. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 2.
2. Ibid., 1.
3. Transcript, Bill, Magee, 3.
4. Transcript, Harold, Magee, 3.
5. Transcript, Shirley, Magee, 6.
7. Transcript, June, Magee, 1.
8. Transcript, Adam and Jean, Magee, 2.
9. Ibid., 15.
10. Ibid., 15.
11. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 5.
12. Transcript, Harold, Magee, 2.
13. Transcript, Shirley, Magee, 9, 10.
15. Informal interview notes, Harold, Magee.
17. Ibid. 9.
18. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 8.
19. Transcripts, Magee, Shirley, 10; Harold, 2; Bill, 3.
20. Transcript, Harold, Magee, 2.
21. Transcript, Adam and Jean, Magee, 14.
22. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 18.
23. Transcript, Bill, Magee, 2.
24. Informal interview notes, Bill, Magee.
26. Ibid., 3.
27. Ibid., 6.
28. Ibid., 7.

29. Transcript, Sam and Mary, Vancouver Technical, 1.
30. Ibid., 7.
31. Ibid., 6.
32. Ibid., 15.
33. Ibid., 7.
34. Ibid., 12.
35. Ibid., 8.
36. Ibid., 8.

37. Transcript, Susan, Vancouver Technical, 3.
38. Correspondence, Mark, Vancouver Technical, 1.
40. Ibid., 6.
41. Ibid., 9.

42. Transcript, Ben, Vancouver Technical, 9.
43. Transcript, Stanley, Vancouver Technical, 6.
44. Ibid., 7.
45. Ibid., 10.
46. Ibid., 7.

48. Transcripts, Vancouver Technical, Stanley, 7, Ben, 12, Mavis, 3 and Susan, 6.

49. Transcript, Susan, Vancouver Technical, 1.
50. Ibid., 1.
51. Transcript, Sam and Mary, Vancouver Technical, 4.
52. Ibid., 4.

53. Transcript, Sam and Mary, Vancouver Technical, 13.

54. Correspondence, Mark, Vancouver Technical, 1, 2.


CHAPTER 4—THE SCHOOL

Former students of Vancouver Technical and Magee recount their schooling experiences in this chapter, describing their impressions and interactions with teachers, how they were taught and their school-to-work transitions. Students were streamed within the curriculum and between the schools. Although students believed they had choices, social factors influenced school-to-work transitions. Differences in teacher-student relations which take into account the social class and gender are exposed in many of the accounts. However as a formalist methodology of drills and memorization of a standard curriculum prevailed, teaching practices did not appear to vary from one school to another.

Teachers

Teachers made a positive difference in the lives of two of the informants; others described teachers as caring, friendly, encouraging, helpful and knowledgeable. But reviews were also critical. Vancouver Technical graduates remember teachers who used both legitimate and illegitimate physical and verbal punishment. (1) Magee students, on the other
hand, recall a more lenient schooling, and in some cases too lenient. A different type of illegitimate teaching practice is described: inappropriate touching of students and accepting gifts in lieu of discipline. In most incidents, parents were not involved, indicating their trust in, and fear of, authority as well as their lack of knowledge as to what was going on in the schools.

Mr. D., an English teacher at Vancouver Technical, received the most recognition for dedicated and inspiring teaching. Mark considers him an "outstanding" teacher; one of the two mentors in his life to influence his decision to enter into the academic program and eventually to university. "I initially met Mr. D. in my Grade 10 year, in the context of a particularly "tough", typically east-end all male class. Within weeks, he had won us all over, and had the entire class writing poetry—even on their own time. His regular "culture session" of classical music held around the two grand pianos in his gracious Grouse Mountain home were eagerly awaited and attended by most of my classmates. It can only sound maudlin to describe the impact this man had on his students—all the more so, I presume, in the context of a rough east end school like Vancouver Technical. Certainly for me, he provided the primary impetus to change from Commerce to a university entrance program, and hence to ultimately attain a degree leading to subsequent post-graduate education."(2)

Susan recalls Mr. D. as a "very genuine" person. "And when he taught Macbeth, he made you feel a part of it; he made you feel it was right there. He should have been in theatre." She remembers a male student who was very cool but had such respect for Mr. D. that he, and other male students, wrote
poetry for the yearbook and weren't laughed at. (3)

Jane describes Mr. D. as supportive. He helped overcome her shyness by encouraging her to speak out in class. (4) Mary recalls he "put such life into English literature." (5)

Mr. H., an English teacher at Magee, made a major difference in Bill's life. Bill had difficulties in the system since elementary school and was constantly disciplined. His frustrations were due to his inability to read. Bill credits the determination of his mother to keep him in school and the intervention of Mr. H. in helping him achieve his grade 12 education. Mr. H. "struck a deal" with Bill when tests and a doctor's examination determined he had dyslexia, a reading disorder. The deal was I could go to high school if I would come into his 8 a.m. class three days a week and all the study periods," Bill said. "And we did a pledge. He said to me, 'if you work hard, I'll work hard'. I'd had trouble elsewhere--my record didn't look very good. He said, 'If I have trouble with you, I'll throw you out and that's it. No trouble now, we're going to work hard.' And he said, 'I'll make sure you're treated fairly. You'll move on, you'll go to grades 10, 11 and 12. You won't be held back, and at the end of the day, you'll graduate from high school.' So that's what I did." (6)

Shirley depicts Mr. H. as outstanding and said he gave her an appreciation of writing. (7) Harold recalls Mr. H. had a reputation as a good teacher, although eccentric and authoritarian. "He had a system to read and thought his system was the only system. You couldn't tell him there was another way. But, nevertheless, he was a good teacher." (8) He also recalls Mr. H. as being versed in the modern teaching methods and a "strong" teacher
because a student could debate with him.(9)

The school-to-work transition for Vancouver Technical graduates was aided by their teachers, some acknowledged. Ben recollects having a lot of good times in the shop at school and his teacher was a "good man and real human." He was a tradesman first, then a teacher," Ben states. He helped Ben get his first job out of high school, arranging "three or four job interviews. And I came back for a number of years to visit him while he was teaching here."(10) Stanley credits this shop teacher as "the one who gave me more added direction into the trade and I felt comfortable doing it." (11)

Susan took commercial courses and praised teachers for treating the students as individuals. She recalls a typing teacher who intervened to help her attain an office job even though her speed was not high. "I couldn't supply a certificate that said I did so many words a minute, but they felt that I could type as good as they required in the job situation."(12) Mavis also speaks highly of the commercial courses and teachers. She remembers government employment agents coming into the school in grade 12 and hiring.(13) Jane fondly remembers a male business teacher. She had the opportunity to help him in teaching dicta typing and other office skills to his students.(14)

Sam remembers a Social Studies teacher who was wonderful. "He discussed Communism. He'd say, 'Let's read about it.' He wasn't promoting it. He'd talk about McCarthyism in the States. He was very interesting."(15) And Susan recalls a business teacher who unofficially doubled as a "guidance" teacher as he lectured students on "what life was all about and what trouble
you could get into". He was an older man, Susan says, who had been at
Vancouver Technical during the war. "I loved him dearly."(16)

Other favorable comments about teachers included an ability to
communicate with students, as friendly and relaxed (telling personal anecdotes
and stories as they taught), treating students as people, and always
available when needed.(17)

Former Magee students also acknowledged good teachers but unlike
Vancouver Technical students, did not characterize them in personable terms.
Overall their relationships seemed more formal.

Bob remembers a female English teacher who was enthusiastic with subject
matter and a "mold-breaker" in style because she wasn't authoritarian. She
let "her personality come through".(18) Shirley recalls this same English
teacher who made language and literature come alive. "She'd stomp up and down
the classroom and play parts."(19)

Harold appreciated a Social Studies teacher who was "modern" in his
techniques, implementing group discussions. He describes him as very
competent, as was the science teacher who had "exceptional" training in her
field.(20) Jean praises the same science teacher: "She really tried so
science was great. And she expected that we would work, so we did."(21)

Each teacher at Vancouver Technical had a paddle and principals had
authority to strap students who misbehaved.(22) A student breaking a minor
rule, such as walking through the wrong building entrance, would get a "six
night detention". This meant staying after school six consecutive days, the
length of a "week" course schedule. If a student skipped classes, the
administration phoned the parents. More informally, teachers would give
students "a smack on the back of the head" or verbally reprimand them. This sometimes included humiliating tactics.

One male teacher "wouldn't hold a job today," some students said. He began teaching at Vancouver Technical when it was an all boys school and hadn't welcomed female students when they began enrolling in 1940. Ben remembers him as "the only teacher I knew who swore at us. I don't think it did us any harm. You knew when you were going to get into trouble because he would bite at the knuckle of his index finger when he got mad. I remember he walked into the room and said, 'Ben, you're an asshole.' We would never mention it to our parents because we'd be in more trouble at home. Everything we got we deserved." Ben also remembers him giving students a kick in the rear end if they were seen talking in the hallway.(23)

Ben said girls were scared of him and Susan recounts a story to illustrate this. A girl broke a rule, going up the "down" staircase and got caught by this teacher. "He went at her. After school! She was going to Nanaimo Street to catch her bus to go home. He followed her to Nanaimo Street! He was a scary man. A very scary man!" Susan recalled him refusing to teach the girls. "If you happened to draw him as your teacher, which I did--I used to go to his door and he'd say, 'you will go downstairs and get that changed (her room assignment) won't you? Good-bye'. And that was just, that was the policy. I didn't get uptight about it because I didn't want to be in his room."(24)

Mary remembers a female student going to his class to give him a note and "he dumped the garbage can, with all its contents, on her head". This student told another teacher what happened, Sam added, but nothing was done about it.
He taught whatever he was interested in and did not follow the curriculum, Sam remembers. Just before the final exam he would take students to his house and pass around the exam questions. (25)

Stanley describes "bad" teachers as "completely off-base and so totally bad that I don't think I was taught in the proper fashion". (26) Jane recalls a vindictive female teacher who took her off the grass hockey team one game for yelling at someone. "I got her the following year (for a business course) and thought 'life is going to be hell', and it was." (27) Ben was called in to see the counsellor because he'd been in trouble. "Rather than a smack at the back of the neck I was given a verbal smack." The counsellor told Ben he would never be a "smart person" and would never "amount to anything". Ben said "the confidence was knocked right out of me and I've never recovered from it." (28)

Sam felt "they weren't the best of teachers". The trade courses he took were not well taught. One of the teachers had other career aspirations "so he'd always keep us waiting while he was doing other things. He'd go get coffee at the coffee shop, this sort of thing. Parents didn't get involved in schools so nothing was ever done about it." He believes his trade training at Vancouver Technical was ineffectual: "I really learned more from my employer when I started working full time." He recalls a teacher who left his mark book on the desk and once, when he left the room, some students changed the marks. The teacher never noticed. "It was a real zoo," Sam concludes. (29)

Sam also remembers a newly hired Physical Education teacher who insisted male students supply their own uniforms. Students resisted, and "one day in
gym class he yelled "balls in" and the kids all hit him with their ball. They say he walked right out of the school after the 'balls in' incident. There were lots of tough kids in that school. Kids who'd been out working on the fish boats, had been working men," Sam said.(30)

Mary felt some teachers were impatient and disrespectful to certain types of students. "Teachers were rude to the Chinese and Japanese kids who were learning the language," she said. "They weren't patient. There was no such thing as extra help. Remarks were made about people who looked poor. They weren't treated as well."(31)

Mary said some teachers were "mean and vindictive". She remembers not having the money for a school trip to the symphony and had to write out math sheets in the library. She also recalls receiving a failing mark in a tailoring class because she couldn't afford good material. "I told my parents and my mother supported me, not the teacher, which was unusual in those days. But she knew I wouldn't speak up unless I really felt something was wrong. Anyway, I got a failing mark."(32)

Magee graduates were also critical of their teachers, even though there are fewer accounts of humiliation or physical punishment. Bad teachers at Magee were "not that great"; "didn't seem to be interested"; they were just "going through the motions"; "not challenging"; "incompetent"; "unable to control the class"; "boring", "didn't care".

Ed says, "I don't think Magee in those days had great teachers. They didn't seem interested, they were just there. I remember the ones I disliked most were the best teachers because they obviously made us work. But a lot of them shouldn't have been teaching. They couldn't even control the class." He
describes a science teacher's class. "It got to be you looked forward to going to his class because you'd know it was going to be a total disruption." Ed said the students took "awful advantage of him" and recalls one student smoking cigarettes at the back of class by an open window.(33)

Bob remembers committing pranks in this science teacher's class, too: "We had the typical laboratory style room and he couldn't hear very well, which the kids took advantage of."(34) Adam also recalls some of the same pranks students played on the science teacher: "It was just an endless situation of constantly torturing the poor guy," Adam says. "But I remember talking to him, because he retired the last year we were there. A couple of us asked, 'how'd you get into teaching?' Well he said when he graduated it was the depression and it was the only job he could get. So basically he spent his working career doing something he didn't really enjoy and I don't think that was untypical."(35) Another male teacher who couldn't control his classes "shouldn't have been teaching", Ed says. "He was terrified of going into class, I'm sure."(36)

Bob said he sensed he could take advantage of women teachers more than male teachers, in terms of arriving late to class or handing in late assignments.(37)

Ed remembers he and his friends played a lot of soccer and even skipped a social studies class. "The teacher said, 'You guys aren't doing very well.' And we bought him four cartons of cigarettes and we all passed." Ed said, "I'll always remember, we bought our marks."(38)

Bob thought teachers were authoritarian, not personable. He doesn't remember any teacher he could "sit down and talk to about something."(39) Ed
criticized the lack of counselling at Magee: "I don't know if it's lack of attention; whether we needed it but they didn't have it (good counselling) at Magee."(40) June felt the counsellors "mismanaged" her. She recalls being very bored in classes because she wasn't challenged. "I remember they brought me to the counsellor to see if I had a normal I.Q., but I had actually probably a very high I.Q. They mismanaged it a lot." June also says, "I really think that the teachers went through the motions of teaching. They didn't seem that genuinely interested."(41)

Harold remembers a physical education teacher who over-emphasized instruction in one sport: "Some of the kids would take off and smoke. He didn't care."(42) He remembers a social studies teacher in grade 12 who seated the students in order of their most recent exam marks. The student with the top mark was positioned at the front of the first row, and the student with the lowest mark at the back of the last row. He did not permit debate and discussion: "You had this teacher who wouldn't answer if you put up your hand."(43)

Harold also recalls a male teacher who touched female students inappropriately. "But it never went beyond patting. I'm sure that was all that happened, feeling girls' bums. They would move and he would follow them." Harold said he's sure none of the girls ever went home and complained although they would talk among themselves and to their boyfriends: "In fact, I'd talk to some of the girls and they didn't like it one little bit." He said the boys treated it like a joke.(44)

Adam and Jean also spoke of the same male teacher. Adam said "he was constantly putting his arms around all the girls and stuff. He was a
lecherous old.... Today the guy would have been out. Nobody thought about those things in those days. It was just, 'don't let him get too close to you.'"(45) Jean remembers getting an "A" from this teacher but getting an "E" from another teacher who taught from the curriculum. Adam suggests she got an "A" because of her appearance: "You were one of the pretty girls." Jean doesn't disagree, and said, "it was ridiculous".(46)

Adam didn't get good marks in high school and felt this stigmatized him at home and school. Only students with good marks got involved in the school play and other such activities, he said and they were treated more leniently if they broke a rule. "You were personae non gratae, which meant if I was found in the room smoking they'd lower the boom. They've got me," Adam recalls. He said this "control mechanism" was used by the parents too. "That was basically where the teachers came from in those days--control."(47)

Teaching Methods

After the war, progressive methods of teaching were promoted by some educators but the traditional ways continued. Canadian academic Hilda Neatby stirred the debate, favoring the traditional, or "formalist", teaching style. The title of her publication in 1954 So Little for the Mind, describes her opinion of progressive teaching methods.(48) Harold's description of two Magee teachers who used "modern" methods, such as breaking into small groups to encourage discussion, was the only example given of teachers' attempting to actively engage students in learning.

Indicative of the "silence" experienced by students as they passed
through their schooling is Bill's perceptions as a learner with low literacy skills but competent verbal skills. Bill said in grade 12 he was able to use his verbal skills to talk about current events in social studies class. Otherwise he has a "mental block" about the knowledge he learned in school because most of it involved reading and writing. (49)

Magee graduates described the formalist style of teaching. Bob remembers learning by rote. "Assignments, reading the book, answering questions in class. Fairly structured. My recollection would be that memory was the most important factor." He recalls "a very linear" and "authoritarian" style of teaching. (50)

June credits high marks she received in high school, and later university, to her "photographic" memory. The teaching didn't seem very creative to her. "They probably taught the same thing every year. Looked in the book and rattled it off. No interesting ways, no creativity." (51)

Ed remembers doing lots of tests, but also as an "average" student he didn't have trouble with them. He doesn't recall field trips or guest speakers. (52) Writing neatly earned as many points as thinking creatively with some teachers. Jean remembers her disappointment when a teacher suggested she would make a good secretary. "I was just so shocked that he totally misread me, but I guess he must have seen this type of people. Probably I turned in neat work." (53)

Shirley thinks high school was good for students who were structured and "didn't mind sitting and listening and behaving and doing what the teacher said". She said there was class discussion, but "you couldn't disagree too severely unless you really argued a point. You basically listened and learned
and it was, I suppose, a more passive way of learning than there is now. I've been involved in other kinds of learning and certainly that was much more passive." (54)

Vancouver Technical graduates shared the same methodology as those at Magee. Mavis remembers classes as being very structured. "There was no goofing around or going away from the norm. Heads down, they taught and you studied and listened. I thought that the easiest way to learn was to listen so I didn't have to crack the books that hard, and I really didn't." Mavis doesn't recall getting too much homework. (55) Stanley believes "everybody seemed to get through with the least amount of effort" and does not recall receiving homework on a regular basis. (56)

Jane remembers a social studies teacher who filled five blackboards with writing. Students would spend the entire class taking down her notes. "You memorized and then you did the exam and you filled in the blanks," Jane recalls. She said she would forget the information after the exam, so she didn't find this method a positive experience. (57)

The provincial government's Royal Commission on Education in 1960, known as the "Chant" Commission, supported traditional teaching methods reflecting the conservative climate of the fifties. The report was backward-looking because educational reforms beginning in the mid-1960s provided alternatives to formalist teaching methods. (58) An increase in the number of required courses in the general program was made in the curriculum in 1958, as Figure 4 shows.

Professional standards and working conditions of teachers steadily improved over the decade of the fifties, eventually providing the necessary
Fig. 4.—Curriculum and Course Choices at Vancouver Secondary Schools in 1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Program</th>
<th>University Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(a) Constants - 55 credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>(a) Constants - 85 credits</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years English</td>
<td>4 years English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Social Studies</td>
<td>3 Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Effective Living**</td>
<td>3 Effective Living**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Mathematics</td>
<td>1 Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 Science</td>
<td>2 Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 Foreign Language</td>
<td>2 Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Library</td>
<td>4 Library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**(b) Electives - 65 credits**
- to include advance courses to obtain one major

Electives: art, commerce, drama, English, foreign languages, home economics, industrial arts, mathematics, music***, physical education, science, social studies, vocational industrial.

*In 1958, the number of compulsory courses on the General Program was increased from 11 to 17.
**Effective Living was replaced by Health and Personal Development in 1956.
***A music major was established in 1956.

environment to implement changes in the classroom. Teachers, through their association, the B.C. Teachers' Federation, consistently pressured for improved working and professional conditions, and made substantial gains over the decades since the war.(59)

STREAMING

Most graduates interviewed believed they had choices in educational and work decisions, however considering family background, neighborhood features, and the influences of schooling experiences, their choices were strongly governed by social factors. Jane Gaskell's educational research on working class youth on the east side in the 1970s indicated similar responses to the question of "choice" in programs. Informants in her study took individual responsibility for their program choices rather than looking at institutional and social factors.(60) Other social influences in the 1950s affecting females on both the west and east sides were work stereotypes and pressures to marry and have children. Parents who did encourage their children to pursue an academic track generally directed their expectations at their sons. In some cases, teachers and counsellors mirrored this expectation. More males than females took the academic program in grades 10, 11 and 12 in the 1953 school year as Table 3 in the previous chapter shows.

Gender segregation in the school, more pronounced at Vancouver Technical, provided a strong influence on youth as they considered their future work and personal choices. Vancouver Technical students were segregated in the academic classes, and socially in the cafeteria, auditorium, building
entrances and hallways. Informal segregation occurred in program selections—males took shop courses and females took commercial, hairdressing and tailoring courses. Many after-school clubs and sports activities were segregated formally and informally on both sides of the city. For example, most sports were all boys or all girls, although bowling and skiing were mixed. Girls tended to be in service clubs, especially at Magee.

Most Vancouver Technical graduates went into working-class occupations after high school. The top occupation of 39 female Vancouver Technical graduates surveyed by their 40th reunion committee was secretarial/clerical work. (See Table 4.) Fourteen listed office work, seven were in service related jobs, eight were self-employed, one was in sales, and one became an elementary school teacher. Seven gave their occupation as homemaker. (61) The four females from Vancouver Technical interviewed for this study took the commercial program and worked in offices after graduation.

Among the 41 males surveyed by the reunion committee, 18 listed a trade. Eight were in managerial and sales positions, eight were self-employed, and two became high school teachers. (62) Three of the male informants apprenticed in a trade after graduating. Only one attended university.

Mary felt she did not have the opportunity to "choose" her future work. She was expected to complete grade 12 and work for a short period before marriage. Her father made it clear he would not support her university training and, in fact, she helped her brother financially when he entered university. (63)

Susan said her parents put their "high" expectations in her younger brother, not in her. She took commercial courses, but says, "If I wanted to
Table 4.—Occupations of Vancouver Technical Secondary Graduates of 1955, by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Male N</th>
<th>Female N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial/Clerical</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service/General Manager</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Support (Teaching assistant, Home Support Aide)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Fisherman, Flight dispatcher, Military)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

do something else, my parents would have backed me. But I didn't aspire to do that."(64)

Mavis remembers starting out in the academic stream, "but then I discovered boys in grade 8 and I thought, no, I'm not going to hack that. I think I'll go into the other one. Typing and, whatever, bookkeeping."(65)

Jane said there were no limits in the choices available, but qualifies her comment: "Money was a limit, as far as going on to university, but that would be it." Jane took commercial and academic courses. She wanted to work right away when she left school. She says she was desperate for cash (having grown up in a single parent family on social assistance) but doesn't feel she was discouraged. "At Tech the counsellor was quite supportive. University just wasn't...it would have been a lot of hard work and I knew that I just wasn't prepared. That was it. I was lazy. By the time I got out of high school I wanted money." Jane said none of her female friends went to university. But she does remember some neighborhood boys who did. She thinks the women who did go were from wealthy families. "I don't think the poorer girls could have made it."(66)

Ben felt he had choices. "My original thought had been to be a mechanic but when I got into high school I decided I wanted to be a printer." He said Vancouver Technical streamlined students into a trade but he had friends who made other choices. "Some of the fellows I chummed with wanted a higher education, so they went to King Edward so they could pick up Latin or German. German was taught at King Ed and one of them wanted to become an engineer." Ben said math was the only academic subject he ever liked and he regrets not having better English skills.(67)
Stanley says he never really had a game plan in his education. "I followed my brother in some steps. He pursued the printing industry as well, and at that time I thought that was an interesting vocation." He recalls being close to his brother and visiting him at work. "I didn't really have anything lined up as to what I was going to do, so I guess it was really through his influence. And we had the printing classes there (at Vancouver Technical) too." Although Stanley's two brothers and two sisters went to the more academic school, Britannia Secondary, they did not go on to university. His brothers apprenticed into trades and his sisters did office work.(68)

Sam regrets not having "bent harder toward university. I wish something would have turned me on." He recalls he "just went with the flow". He remembers going to junior high at Templeton and, "for whatever reasons, they said you're going to Tech so I went to Tech. You know Britannia was the academic school and Tech was the technical school, so...they just sort of channelled me."(69)

Most Magee graduates went to university or pursued business after graduation. Thirty-five female graduates of Magee enrolled at UBC, 30 of them in first year arts and five in the home economics program.(See Table 5) Other Magee graduates could have attended university elsewhere. The three female informants from Magee attended UBC and stayed one or two years before getting married and having children. June remembers "at that time we were influenced a great deal by our parents. There wasn't really much stress put on university. You went for fun and the academic was secondary." She remembers different expectations for males and females. "There were two boys in my
Table 5.—Graduates at Two Vancouver Schools in 1955 who are First Year Students at University of British Columbia in 1955-56 by Program and Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Vancouver Technical</th>
<th>Magee Secondary</th>
<th>Magee Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

family and it was expected that they would finish university and become professionals no matter what, and yet there was never any expectation that I do anything but have fun. We all went at the same time."(70)

Shirley recalls careers were limited for females in the 1950s. It was "secretary, teacher and nurse," she says, "as opposed to thinking you could enter what was then thought of as a male field." Shirley was a straight "A" student and came second in her graduating class, receiving a university scholarship. She said the teachers and counsellors would have been "disappointed" if she hadn't gone to university, but "it was my choice and I wanted to do it anyway."(71)

Jean got good marks. "We all got good marks. We had all gone to Maple Grove Elementary school together and Point Grey Junior High and we all got good marks." Jean remembers the girls outperforming the boys in the earlier grades, but by high school they had "matured and so all those boys that we beat in all the exams, and we thought we could do better than they did, would go to UBC."(72)

Forty-nine of the male graduates from Magee entered UBC, 45 of them in the arts department, three in agriculture and one in science. Harold felt the male students especially, did not have a choice. He remembers "suddenly in grade 10, I thought I've got to get good marks. I've got to go to university. I don't want to go to university. Last thing I want to do is hit the books when I'm 20 years old. So why? Well I go to Magee, everybody's got to go to university."(73)

Harold believes some fellow graduates did not succeed because their natural abilities were contrary to academic training, and were not being
recognized. Consequently they were failing at the university level. He believes one fellow graduate's suicide may have been a result of this social pressure. "I know exactly what went into his life—it was Magee and his father."(74)

Community colleges which had not been established at that time would have offered another possibility for them, Harold said. "The good thing was you could drop out and get a job." He felt there wasn't as much pressure for females: "They expected you to get pregnant, and most did." Harold also thinks there were opportunities for working-class students to work and pay their way through university because jobs were plentiful and housing rents were cheap. He recalls "lots of kids from other schools who were really poor" who went to university.(75)

Bob also went on to university and studied law. He said he knew he wanted to be a lawyer in grade six but coming from the working-class community of Marpole, Bob had a sense of "keeping with the gang" and therefore not being the "brain". "I recall actually intentionally making mistakes on some exams, to keep myself where my buddies were."(76) This was only a brief feeling in junior high. "There was no question that I would go to university. I was on the university program. It wasn't...my parents assumed that, I assumed that. We'd all assumed I'd work, and I'd stay at home as long as I covered my tuition." Bob said he would not have accepted being placed in the general stream. "If there was ever any kind of a scholastic effort to determine that, I would have worked hard to get to university."

Ed went to King Edward to do his senior matriculation, a program equivalent to first year university. He did not know what he wanted to do
after high school. "I think most of my friends who did go on to university went into arts because they had no idea about what they wanted to do. The majority of my personal friends got commerce degrees." Ed says he wasn't "striving" and perhaps wasn't very mature but knew he wanted to make lots of money, have a car and a comfortable home life. He says his mother pushed him to go to university. "I think they (parents) expected a lot more than I gave them. I was not a hard worker. As I say, academically I didn't work very hard, I just scraped by, C average. I didn't study because it was so much fun in school, that I wasn't a great studier." After Ed completed King Edward, his father said "Look are you going to university or are you going to work"? So I got a job, my first job, and that was it."(77)

Adam joined his father's construction business after high school and didn't feel pressure to go to university. "I think it's possible that some of the kids might have had academic pressures but I think those pressures would have come from the parents because a lot of the parents were in the professions." He says, "I don't remember pressure. But I think it's possible, when you look back on it, I can see somebody being driven. It certainly wasn't our experience but I can see where that would happen."(78)

Bill went to Vancouver Vocational School after high school and studied auto mechanics. He remembers Magee as a "highly academic school." But because of dyslexia it wasn't until grade 12 before he read his first book. Bill's son was tested at age five and it was discovered he, too, had the same problem. He had five years of special training and he was able to pass through school successfully and on to university.(79) Bill, and his father, faced limited opportunities because of a physical handicap and an educational
system unable to provide compensations.

**Summary**

Informants' accounts describe social class biases in the public education system in the fifties. Vancouver Technical students were subject to physical punishment, attended gender-segregated academic classes and were more likely to be channelled into vocational and commercial occupations. Magee students, in contrast, faced more lenient forms of punishment, attended mixed-sex classes and were more likely to enrol in the academic program.

Streaming was also gender-biased. Girls from working and middle-class backgrounds trained for secretarial and clerical jobs in high numbers. Working class girls rarely aspired to university. Many Magee female graduates attended university, but were not expected to train for life-time careers and were channelled into post-secondary education in "female" fields, such as liberal arts, home economics, teaching and nursing.

Teachers were more influential in the lives of Vancouver Technical informants than they were with those at Magee. They helped Vancouver Technical students find jobs and encouraged (or discouraged) them in their education and future goals. Some teachers were personable rather than formal and authoritarian in their approach to students. The majority of Magee students had other forms of social support and were therefore less dependent on the public school for help with their future academic and employment plans. Informants described more formal relations with teachers and situations where classroom control was weak. Allan Hare's survey of 200 Kerrisdale teenage
boys in 1954 identified teachers as among the least desired group respondents would approach with a problem. Most chose their mother (40.5 per cent) or father (23 per cent). Only one per cent said they would confide in their teacher. (80)

Parents at both schools rarely interfered with, or knew about, the daily interactions of their children and the school staff. And young people did not expect their parents to do so, even when warranted. A parent was approached only when a situation made it necessary and, as the accounts illustrate, young people were more inclined to share confidences with their friends who understood their schooling experiences.

Learning was a passive experience at both schools in the 1950s, despite the efforts of some educators to actively involve students. As Neil Sutherland concludes from his interviews with more than 200 former students of elementary schools, more than half from Vancouver, formalist teaching methods persisted from the 1920s to the 1950s because most teachers were not properly equipped with an alternative theoretical or practical knowledge, they faced unmanageable class sizes and were subject to institutional pressures to conform. (81) Secondary schools confronted similar difficulties.
Endnotes—Chapter 4

1. Vancouver Technical Secondary yearbook, 1957. Informants for this study are Canadian-born. Immigrant students from Yugoslavia, China, Buenos Aires, Sweden, India and Scotland described the type of school discipline in their homeland in the 1957 yearbook. Ian Fraser of Scotland stated his homeland school did not have a paddle or give out detentions but strapped students with a piece of leather 1/4 inch thick and 18 inches long. He wrote: "You can get strapped for just talking in class!" Sylvia Tomic described discipline in a Yugoslavian village school. Teachers beat students on the hand or took marks off for being late, not doing homework or talking in class. Teachers also pull students by the ear, pull their hair, or push their head against the wall.

2. Correspondence, Mark, Vancouver Technical, 2.


4. Transcript, Jane, Vancouver Technical, 1.

5. Transcript, Mary, Vancouver Technical, 7.

6. Transcript, Bill, Magee, 1.

7. Transcript, Shirley, Magee, 1.

8. Transcript, Harold, Magee, 11.

9. Ibid., 12.

10. Transcript, Ben, Vancouver Technical, 4-5.


15. Transcript, Sam, Vancouver Technical, 13.


17. Transcripts, Vancouver Technical, Stanley, 3, Susan, 2 and Jane, 2.

18. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 7.

19. Transcript, Shirley, Magee, 1.
20. Transcript, Harold, Magee, 7-8.

21. Transcript, Jean, Magee, 12.

22. The classroom paddle was a likely holdover from the days when Vancouver Technical was an all boys' school. Legislation outlawing the use of corporal punishment in schools was passed in B.C. in 1972.

23. Transcript, Ben, Vancouver Technical, 6.


25. Transcript, Mary and Sam, Vancouver Technical, 10.


27. Transcript, Jane, Vancouver Technical, 9.


29. Transcript, Mary and Sam, Vancouver Technical, 10-11.

30. Ibid., 12.

31. Ibid., 13.

32. Ibid., 10.

33. Transcript, Ed, Magee, 1-2, 5.

34. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 6.

35. Transcript, Adam and Jean, Magee, 1.

36. Transcript, Ed, Magee, 5.

37. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 3.

38. Transcript, Ed, Magee, 4.


40. Transcript, Ed, Magee, 3.

41. Transcript, June, Magee, 1.

42. Transcript, Harold, Magee, 4.

43. Ibid., 10.

44. Ibid., 11.
45. Transcript, Adam and Jean, Magee, 2.

46. Ibid., 2.

47. Ibid., 13.


49. Transcript, Bill, Magee, 3.

50. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 5.

51. Transcript, June, Magee, 1, 3.

52. Transcript, Ed, Magee, 5-6.

53. Transcript, Adam and Jean, Magee, 11.

54. Transcript, Shirley, Magee, 1-2.

55. Transcript, Mavis, Vancouver Technical, 7.

56. Transcript, Stanley, Vancouver Technical, 3.

57. Transcript, Jane, Vancouver Technical, 4.


59. Secondary school pupil/teacher ratios gradually decreased after 1937 to a ratio of about 20 students per staff member in 1971 according to school board reports. B.C. Teachers' Federation has long campaigned on smaller class sizes for both student and teacher benefit. See *Public Schools of British Columbia, 100th Annual Report*, (Victoria: 1972), 72.


62. Ibid.

63. Transcript, Mary, Vancouver Technical, 4, 8.

64. Transcript, Susan, Vancouver Technical, 5.

65. Transcript, Mavis, Vancouver Technical, 1.
King Edward Secondary, located at 12th Avenue and Oak Street, was established in 1890. In 1962 it became an Adult Education Centre but maintained Senior Matriculation courses. In 1965 King Edward became a part of Vancouver Community College.
CHAPTER 5—WORK AND PLAY

Obedience and respect for authority were part of a "hidden curriculum" in schools of the 1950s. Employers who hired for part-time and summer jobs had similar expectations and played a role in shaping youth's identities. Help from children was not as essential to most family budgets as it had been in previous decades, especially for working-class families. Still, many students took part-time jobs to gain work experience and another form of "education". This chapter examines the paid work of young people and how it influenced their outlooks and future paths, and their leisure activities. Leisure activities fall into two categories: organized pursuits involving adult supervision and unorganized play which gave teenagers the opportunity for free expression. Finally, the chapter describes the general social and moral environment teenagers experienced.

Female youth, in past decades responsible for numerous unpaid household duties, were liberated to a greater extent as modern conveniences lightened domestic chores. Families were smaller so daughters spent less time assisting with childcare. Male youth were also freed from many manual chores undertaken in pre-war families, such as maintaining the household fuel supply. Informants rarely mentioned domestic duties when discussing how they spent their time after school.
Fifties teens were very much a part of the consumer revolution. They spent disposable income on movies, records, stylish clothing, sporting goods and recreational fees. A few saved for summer camp, a car, university tuition and used some money for public transportation and school supplies. Their varying degrees of self-sufficiency relieved parents from some financial obligations. However, it was common for middle-class students to receive a parental allowance, as was the case with some Magee informants. A few from Vancouver Technical shared earnings with their families.

**WORK**

"Kids on the east side worked in the fish cannery like me," the informant Mary explains, while "students on the west side networked when they worked in the summer."(4) Although west side informants provided no evidence of a relationship between contacts made through summer employment and their future career paths, all accounts indicate differences did exist between west and east side employment patterns during high school. Female students from Vancouver Technical were more likely to perform manual labor than those from Magee. Most male informants from both sides performed manual labor part-time and during the summer with the difference that Vancouver Technical informants obtained employment after graduation in the same occupational field.

Working was a necessity for students from low income families. Jane baby-sat regularly after school and in the summers picked blueberries and worked in a sausage factory. She recalls the exact amount of money her father received on social assistance. Working meant she could buy her own
clothes, pay bus fare and enjoy other activities. (5) Although Mary's home situation was less impoverished, she was expected to pay for her own clothes and to cover other expenses. She was employed in the fish canneries in the summer. (6)

Mavis gave her family a third of her earnings, not because her family relied on the income, but as an exercise in practising responsible behavior. She had office jobs in the summer and continued in this line of work after graduation. (7)

Other students had entry level jobs which would lead to employment in the same area after graduation. Susan worked summers at the PNE and has been there ever since on a casual basis. (8) Ben had a paper route and worked inserting comics into newspapers part time after school for the city newspaper. He apprenticed as a printer after graduation. Ben also recalls working part time in a service station and buying and fixing up cars to resell. (9) Besides caddying at golf courses, Sam worked two summers with British Columbia Telephone Company, his future employer. (10)

Those who didn't apply early for summer jobs ended up working outside the city or were unemployed. Stanley worked on Vancouver Island replacing railway tracks for a logging steam engine in 1953 because he had left looking for summer work too late. "I remember this to this day," he says. "I paid $2.16 a day for room and board and it was probably the hardest job I ever did in my life." He was surprised to be part of a minority of English-speaking workers among immigrants from Germany and Malta. But Stanley's most lucrative employment as a teenager came the two following summers when he worked at the PNE from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. (11)
Some Magee informants received allowances from their parents but also worked in order to buy clothes and pay for outings with their friends. Shirley baby-sat and spent a summer at the Vancouver Tourist Bureau, a job she obtained through her father's connections. June also baby-sat and worked part time downtown in a retail store. Jean worked part time at the Hudson's Bay. All three received an allowance. Adam also had an allowance from his father but had a paper route and summer jobs.

A few Magee graduates pursued jobs in order to finance educational goals. Ed worked after school in the local supermarket and recalls the loneliest summer of his life in a forestry camp in northern British Columbia. He worked for a construction firm another summer. Ed said part of his earnings went toward future university tuition. For Bob, working was necessary to meet future university expenses because his parents could not afford them. He had a paper route, was promoted to local manager of the paper's substation and worked in the mills in the summer. Harold used his earnings for clothing, other necessities and Scout camp fees. A paper route and drug store deliveries were some of his teen jobs.

Bill's part-time work as an auto mechanic combined with his vocational studies at Magee placed him on a similar path as other Vancouver Technical informants. He continued in a trade after graduation.

Male students who had grown through their work experiences were impatient with what they saw as patronizing behavior by teachers, as Sam has observed at Vancouver Technical. While work gave students a sense of independence they wouldn't achieve in a classroom, the structure of the workplace would be the same. Mavis remembers her first job in an office with about 100
employees. "At lunch time they used to ring a bell, like the school bell. And I thought I'd gotten away from that. I thought that was so immature!"(21)

Gender segregation, as at Vancouver Technical, and wage differentiation was especially obvious on work sites with large numbers of employees.

Informants who worked outside their neighborhood gained valuable exposure to another side of life. Ben said one-quarter of the newspaper "stuffers" were from Vancouver Technical, but he was able to meet teens from other parts of the city.(22) Suddenly being part of an ethnic minority working the railway made a strong impression on Stanley. Ed's "loneliness" in a small northern British Columbia town was a maturing experience. And the service sector exposed the female informants to the public at large.

PLAY

Organized and unorganized activities gave teens another outlet to explore their interests and facets of their personality. School sports were significant to male students for different reasons. Clubs reinforced class and gender roles but also provided opportunities. Going out with friends and following their own pursuits gave young people a greater sense of autonomy.

School sports played a major role in student life. West side informants recall the added option of participating in sports sponsored by local businesses and churches. For example, Ed played on the White Spot (restaurant) baseball team and the church basketball team.(23) East side students depended almost solely on the school. Some male Vancouver Technical students delayed graduation to play school sports, as Sam testifies. The
yearbook lists five graduates of 1955 aspiring to professional careers in football, baseball and golf. (24) There were no such aspirations among Magee graduates but most mentioned favorite sports in the yearbook, and recognized this aspect of their schooling as important. Rugby was the most popular sport among boys at Magee, followed by swimming, basketball and skiing. For the girls, most popular sports were skiing, swimming, basketball and badminton. (25) The role of sports throughout the school history dominates the Magee 75th Anniversary publication. The coach of the rugby team, for example, devotes a few pages describing the "glory days" of rugby at Magee. (26)

School clubs allowed students to find their areas of interest and interact with each other with more freedom than was possible in the classroom. But they also reinforced social roles and reflected class differences. Magee students, for instance, were more oriented toward clubs whose mandate included "helping the less fortunate", although Vancouver Technical students organized food hampers at Christmas and other similar activities. Clubs were popular and most informants held memberships to some of them. Many clubs popular in the fifties would not exist by 1965; mainly service-oriented clubs such as Catering, Hi-Y, Christian Fellowship, Lost and Found, and the Red Cross. (27) Yearbook descriptions show Magee girls favored the Hi-Y Teens, Drama and the MacMillian Club, a performing arts club. Boys also participated in Hi-Y Teens in the greatest numbers and Drama. Outside of school, but included in the yearbook as a favorite activity, girls listed Daughters of Job, and for boys, Demolay, both connected to the Masons and their women's organization, Order of the Eastern Star. The girls showed the greatest range of participation in clubs, many of them all-girls' "service-oriented" clubs. (28)
A public perception that Magee was an "elite" academic school where students were groomed for university, both inside and outside the classroom, is supported in media reports. Magee was among the many high schools to organize a United Nations club after the Second World War. A *Vancouver Sun* report in 1950 singles out Magee students for a mock debate on the Korean War and their "adoption" of a French girl, orphaned during the war. The article states, "In most of these schemes, teacher participation is almost negligible. 'The kids figure out all the details and then come and tell us about it,' Vice-principal R.K. Cameron said." The article goes on: "With one of the best academic standings in the city, Magee youngsters are undisputed champions in their student activities, which have gained a maturity close to university level." (29)

Mark shows the pride he gained with his involvement in Vancouver Technical clubs, which included the MacMillan Club, the yearbook, and school newspaper. "I was in fact editor of the Van Tech yearbook during my two senior years, and also served as reporter, resident cartoonist and editor for Van Tech's inaugural student newspaper for the same time period. This emerged as a source of personal pride, since in its first publication year (1956), the Tech Times placed second of all high school newspapers in an annual provincial contest sponsored by the University of British Columbia Publications Board." (30)

Churches did not play a significant role in the lives of most informants with Protestant family backgrounds, but the facilities they provided for teens in the community were available and well used. As an only child in a single parent family, Jane's connection to the east side Catholic
church and its community gave her added support. She sang in the church choir throughout her teens and returned periodically to visit as an adult. (31)

Adults were involved in some leisure activities, providing varying degrees of guidance and supervision. Scouts and Girl Guides were popular organized community groups for teenagers involving parents in leadership roles. Mary was the only east side informant to belong to the Canadian Girls In Training (CGIT). (32) Harold, from Magee, was a Scout. Shirley graduated from Magee with a medal for "service" and later would be a top volunteer parent in the Girl Guides. (33) Community centres also had loosely structured "drop in" activities for teenagers. Susan frequented the Pender Y in the east end, recalling the mix of whites, blacks and Chinese young people. (34) Bob played basketball at the Marpole Community Centre. (35) Sam fondly recalls "fathers versus sons" baseball games, spontaneously organized on Sunday nights at Clinton Park on the east side. (36)

Some teenagers dated, while others recall joining "gangs" of friends and pairing off in grade 12 or later. Jane remembers "looking" more than dating: "When you talk about sweet 16, I was not sweet 16. I would just walk, and sit on the verandah and look at all the guys." (37) Mavis describes a traditional dating ritual with father as judge and protector: "The boys came to the door. My father insisted on that and he would judge them and know more about them, and I knew if he didn't like them that would be it. We even listened to our parents in those days! What a concept!" (38)

The community provided a wealth of activities for teens, whether in couples or groups. Vancouver Technical students attended dances with a live orchestra at Clinton Hall on Hastings and Penticton, "hot" Italian movies
Sunday nights at the local church and popular movies at the cinemas on Granville Street and Hastings Street. A coke or coffee after school, just walking home with friends, or going to a friend's house to study, were popular social rituals. Major outings in the summer were trips to English Bay or Kits Beach.

Magee graduates favored the White Spot drive-in, skiing at Hollyburn Mountain, having a beer at the Fraser Arms, the pool hall, cinema, dances and noon hour concerts at school with local or visiting entertainers, compliments of a parent's influence. Just "driving around" in a parent's car was also a popular pastime.

The Moral and Social Environment

Young people felt safe and secure in the fifties. It was an innocent time when teenage sex and substance abuse were not widespread. Only a few informants had a knowledge of street gangs.

"It was pretty straightforward," Mavis says of life on the east side. "No drugs, no sex, no AIDS. We didn't talk about sex. You pretended you didn't know anything about it. Very innocent, I guess." As for sex education at school, Mavis comments: "We had hygiene and it was not graphic or anything. It was just something about your period, and pictures of the ovaries and the sperm and that was just it. The boys learned about menstruation and the ovaries and all that jazz, and I thought that was pretty good in those days."

Precautions were taken, but personal safety was not a concern. Mavis states, "I went out by myself all the time. There were certain unsafe areas
where you wouldn't venture, but I felt very safe in our area and, of course, my parents wouldn't allow me out at dark."(39)

Ben said "even the girls" weren't scared in his east side neighborhood. "Even when we'd be out in the evening, we used to walk in the back alleys. We watched out, but there'd be about a dozen of us. We never had a thought about people coming after us for no reason." He does add: "there were murders about but when you're a kid nothing can scare you...its always going to happen to the other person."(40)

Susan was aware of social undercurrents on the east side: "There were gangs in our day, there were drugs in our day. Heroin was the big drug." She said they weren't as prevalent as they later would be "but you were advised of it, and you were told the things that you should know."(41)

But Mary also recalls life in the east end as safe: "You could go anywhere and knew what you were allowed to do. It was a free life." Mary said she "never worried about being unsafe".(42)

Stanley remembers that he never felt threatened. "There was no vandalism--very, very little. There seemed to be common respect for people and property. There wasn't any wanton smashing of people or cars or anything like that. So I would say generally there was a common respect for everybody, teachers, what have you, parents." Gangs were not visible, Stanley recalls. "There were isolated incidents of things happening with gangs, but I found it very low key."(43)

Jane says, "We didn't have any violence. I don't remember being bullied." She recalls, "It was a kinder age. We were safe. Going to school, coming from school, going out walking along the streets. We could walk every
night, which my girlfriend and I did in that area. But again it was an Italian area so everybody would be on the porch and you knew everybody." She doesn't remember anyone having sex before 18 or 19. "My girlfriend's sister got pregnant and that would be the worst thing that would happen in the neighborhood. The priest commented at mass that she got married but this wasn't acceptable because she was pregnant when she got married and he didn't like that."(44)

On the west side, a sense of safety and innocence also prevailed. Shirley says, "The Korean War had happened but it was pretty remote. Looking back I probably should have known more. But we felt very safe." Shirley recalls not feeling threatened in any way. "Rape wasn't anything you'd ever dream of." She says "In our growing up years, most people who wanted jobs could get them. Yes, there was a skid row, we knew it was out there somewhere. I guess people would be in institutions like some of the street people should be today. So you didn't ever see them—you didn't know anyone who wasn't normal."(45)

June said there may have been "nuts" around, but "we certainly didn't have a clue about them because it wasn't advertised on TV so it was a pretty carefree wonderful time." She remembers, "You could leave your doors open then. No qualms about walking to your friends at night by yourself."(46)

Bob calls the fifties period, "la la land." "There were fights, there were some tough fights. The gang stuff had started. It was emulation of New York gangs.(47) There was the Knight Street gang and you knew who they were and they were tough. People got kicked. There were no guns. Dunbar to
Broadway was regarded as a tough area. We'd be challenged to fight but we'd usually did not go. We were smart. There were no random acts of violence. Very la la land. There might be a beef between two people but it was la la land. It was the fifties!"(48)

Ed remembers the odd "tough" kid. One offered to fight Kitsilano high school kids in the park, "but it was mostly bravado". He says there were no weapons and no drugs.(49)

Adam recalls: "Drugs were unheard of...well, marijuana or heroin, but that was something some terrible criminal element did, the gangs in New York. I honestly can't recall anyone knowing anything." He says, "Society had behavioral norms that you had to adhere to. There's been a continual breakdown in society. The further back you go, the more security you had."(50)

Youth culture prospered in a post-war economy because teenagers had some autonomous consumer power. In some aspects of their lifestyles, this advent of "mass" consumption had the same levelling effect on working and middle class-youth as it had on adults. All youth felt safe and recall their sense of innocence. Distinctions among youth persisted, however, in appearance (i.e. clothing), leisure opportunities and choices of occupational paths. Employment during high school played a more significant role for Vancouver Technical students than it did Magee students, directing many of them into their future occupational field.
Endnotes—Chapter 5

1. Neil Sutherland, "'We always had things to do': The Paid and Unpaid Work of Anglophone Children Between the 1920s and the 1960s" Labour/Le Travail, 25 (Spring, 1990): 105-141. Over 150 interviews with adults who grew up in the Cedar Cottage neighborhood and Kerrisdale neighborhood of Vancouver's east and west side respectively, between 1920 and 1960, provides a detailed history of youth's contributions to the family economy, and their changes over time.

2. Ibid., 140.

3. Mavis, an informant who attended Vancouver Technical, believed teenagers had more domestic responsibilities and matured faster than contemporary youth. "But then again we didn't have all the conveniences that we have today. So we'd have a sawdust hopper to be filled in the kitchen; heat the house with sawdust and the furnace in the basement had to be filled; that was our jobs and mom had a wringer washing machine; she didn't have to use the scrub board. Mind you my sweet mother did my laundry." Transcript, 11.

4. Transcript, Mary and Sam, Vancouver Technical, 9

5. Transcript, Jane, Vancouver Technical, 6, 12.

6. Transcript, Mary and Sam, Vancouver Technical, 9.

7. Transcript, Mavis, Vancouver Technical, 5

8. Transcript, Susan, Vancouver Technical, 6.

9. Transcript, Ben, Vancouver Technical, 6, 10.

10. Transcript, Mary and Sam, Vancouver Technical, 4.


12. Transcript, Shirley, Magee, 5.

13. Transcript, June, Magee, 4.

14. Transcript, Adam and Jean, Magee, 15.

15. Transcript, Adam and Jean, Magee, 14.

16. Transcript, Ed, Magee, 4-5.

17. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 4.

18. Transcript, Harold, Magee, 2.


22. Transcript, Ben, Vancouver Technical, 1.
27. Ibid.
30. Correspondence, Mark, Vancouver Technical, 1.
31. Transcript, Jane, Vancouver Technical, 6, 12.
32. Transcript, Sam and Mary, Vancouver Technical, 13.
33. Transcript, Shirley, Magee, 9.
34. Transcript, Susan, Magee, 6.
35. Transcript, Bob, Magee, 5.
36. Transcript, Mary and Sam, Vancouver Technical, 8.
37. Transcript, Jane, Vancouver Technical, 8.
38. Transcript, Mavis, Vancouver Technical, 7.
40. Transcript, Ben, Vancouver Technical, 3.
41. Transcript, Susan, Vancouver Technical, 3.
42. Transcript, Sam and Mary, Vancouver Technical, 11 and 14.
43. Transcript, Stanley, Vancouver Technical, 7.
44. Transcript, Jane, Vancouver Technical, 2, 3, 6.
45. Transcript, Shirley, Vancouver Technical, 4, 12, 13.
46. Transcript, June, Magee, 4.
American writer J.P. Donleavy describes the changes in his hometown of New York City in 1952, after his return from the war and studying in Dublin university: "Random violence, of gang warfare and zip guns, which was once confined to known dangerous parts of the city, was spreading." in *The History of the Ginger Man* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 12.


49. Transcript, Ed, Magee, 7.

50. Transcript, Magee, Adam and Jean, 3, 15.
CHAPTER 6—FORTY YEARS LATER

Graduates of Vancouver schools in the fifties experienced opportunities and limitations both at school and at work. A prosperous economy meant employment but a limiting and segregated institutional ideology restricted their potential. This chapter examines Vancouver Technical and Magee graduates' aspirations and life paths over a 40 year period with attention to the impact the schools' streaming process had on their destinies.

About half of all graduates in both schools listed aspirations in their 1955 yearbook. Males at Vancouver Technical aspired to manual trades such as printer, electrician, mechanic, carpenter and technician. A minority sought professional careers and only one male student stated he was going to university. In contrast, most male Magee graduates aspired to a variety of professional or business careers. Only four chose manual jobs. The majority of females at both schools aspired to jobs informally designated as "female". The most popular jobs listed by female graduates at Vancouver Technical were secretary, hairdressing, nursing and tailoring. At Magee, the choices were secretary, nurse and teacher, or university. (See Table 6.) The only significant similarity in aspirations by both sets of former students was among females. A large number aspired to secretarial work, the occupation
Table 6.—Occupational Aspirations of Graduates at Two Vancouver Schools in 1955, by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspirations</th>
<th>School/Sex</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vancouver Technical</td>
<td>Magee Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University-bound</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (Managing/Owning)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial/Clerical</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service (Hairdressing, Dental Assistant)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Military, Pilot Fisherman)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

with the greatest number of females in Canada. (See Table 7.)

Young people's aspirations were influenced by their parents, peers, neighborhood and school. Males from Vancouver Technical were the group most definite about their occupational future, likely because it wasn't "postponed" by further education. A large number of Magee females also expressed their aspirations in the yearbook, but were possibly the least likely of all graduates from both schools to pursue them.

Streaming in schools, as outlined in Chapter 4, meant most Vancouver Technical graduates went directly into the work force. The 40th reunion survey shows the greatest number of male respondents went into trades and greatest number of females respondents were in office work. Aspirations were a strong indicator of work destinies. Self-employment was often a second career for both men and women. Some men became consultants and contractors and a few women had their own sewing, hairdressing or interior design business. "Homemaker" was also a popular second career listed by female graduates. Only three females identified themselves solely as homemakers.

University was the next step for many Magee graduates. As Table 5 in Chapter 4 shows, 84 Magee students entered first year programs at UBC. Five of the male graduates on the Magee reunion list have "Dr." before their names. Few male graduates experienced occupational transitions or interruptions, unlike female graduates.

This generation experienced the benefits of a low unemployment rate and early retirement options. Female graduates frequently married in their early
Table 7.—Ten Leading Occupations of Women in Canada, 1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
<th>Percentage of all workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stenographer, Typists, Clerk-Typists</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other clerical occupations</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Clerks</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maids and Related Service Workers</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookkeepers and Cashiers</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses, Graduate and In-Training</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Labourers</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waitresses</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewers and Sewing Machine Operators</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These statistics did not include women workers in the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

twenties and began families right away, some re-entering the work force when the children were older. Many informants are retired or semi-retired and own their homes. Most still live in the Lower Mainland, Magee graduates primarily in Vancouver, West Vancouver, Surrey and Richmond and Vancouver Technical graduates in Burnaby, Surrey, Vancouver and Richmond.

Vancouver Technical Secondary Graduates

When a few members from the class of 1955 gathered to initiate their first reunion in 1995, their major task was to locate as many of the 235 graduates as possible. In the end, they composed a list of 163 names and addresses. It was known or presumed that some of the graduates were deceased. Four had moved to the United States, nine were in other Canadian provinces and 22 lived in British Columbia but outside the Lower Mainland. Forty years later 13 of 103 female graduates had reverted to or maintained their maiden names, two men had changed their names, possibly for ethnic assimilation reasons in one case and for personal reasons in the other. Two couples were in the same graduating class and are still married.

While the reunion committee's list held clues to the graduates' destinies, its survey provided more information. A brief questionnaire asked graduates about their personal and work life and sought comments on their experiences at school. Unmarried females were more likely to participate than unmarried males. Eleven out of 39 divorced or widowed women filled in questionnaires compared to only three of 41 men. All the men had fathered two to eight children and only two of the 39 women had not had children, but had
married. More than half of those surveyed became parents within five years of graduation—14 males and 21 females. Only seven of the graduates began families after 1970. The majority had two or three child families (55 of the 80 graduates), although four-child families were not uncommon (16 of the 80 graduates) and there were a few five, six and eight-child families. Only one graduate had an only child.

A quarter of those surveyed retired before age 58. All profiles indicate they had been employed and raised families since high school. A typical male graduate's profile states:

"Pretty boring...left home, got a job, stuck with it, got married, established a home, two kids, retired early and enjoy my friends and family. I wouldn't change a thing."

A female graduate states:

Married in 1956. Moved to Yukon in early 1962. Worked with "Pots and Pans" for 17 years. Worked as a Secretary for 17 years—at home again. Home being a lake cottage, beautiful setting, great friends, wonderful family—life's good.(5)

Reunion survey accounts range in details, but the essential work and family paths are similar to the above descriptions.

Mavis presents a similar account: "The Unemployment Insurance personnel
came to our school and we all had jobs when we graduated, which was really neat. I started at a customs house. Then I went to a brokerage firm and I got my own department—and I was this little kid. I can’t believe I did that. Then I got married at 19, pregnant at 21, quit and stayed home with the kids until I was 39. From there, I worked at a flower shop for 11 years. Then I was the catering co-ordinator for 300 people in a downtown firm. About four years ago, I said to my husband, that’s it, I’ve hit the wall. So I’ve been home and it’s been fun. My husband’s been semi-retired now so we play together.”(6)

Mavis’ husband also went to Vancouver Technical but didn’t graduate. He has worked as a floor layer, eventually becoming self-employed, and is now semi-retired at 60. Although Mavis has not kept in touch with her high school friends, with the exception of her sister-in-law, also a member of the 1955 graduation class, she recalls “I don’t know anybody that went to university. As far as I know they got jobs out of school.”(7)

This pattern is similar to Mary’s but with a difference. Mary took the opportunity to retrain. She went into office work after grade 12, married Sam at 21 and quit her job to raise a family of four children. She later re-entered the work force as a secretary, found it unrewarding and so completed a four year program at British Columbia Institute of Technology in interior design. She has had her own business for 10 years.

Mary says it was usual for young people to continue living at home after
high school: "It would have been a slight on our parents if we'd move out of our home until we got married. We both lived at home until we got married. Sam lived out of town because he worked for the telephone company right out of school. So he would go during the week, but he'd go home to his parents on weekends, and his mom would have been horrified if he hadn't." Mary calls it the "guilt generation". "I was the dutiful daughter. Parents had a lot of say. I made $175 a month working in an office. I lived at home and under my parent's rules."(8)

Susan also rejected her first vocation when she re-entered the work force. She worked in an office after high school, married and then quit work when she was expecting her first child. When her three children were older, Susan said: "I did not want to go back and work in an office. That was not really something that was very interesting for me. I took night school courses in early childhood education. Once my youngest one went into school, I started teaching full time."(9)

Of the 80 respondents to the reunion survey, Jane is one of the two females who has not raised a family. Consequently she has had an uninterrupted working life. "When I graduated Tech placed me in a job which I quit after three weeks. I'd had four years of shorthand and typing and the last thing I wanted to do was check doctor's signatures." She went to British Columbia Electric and then to the airlines. "In 1958 I joined the navy and then I worked with the provincial government for 22 years. We had the freedom to quit and there were so many jobs that if you were good at office work you didn't have to stay at one place."(10)

Jane plans to retire at 60 with 35 years service. She was married for 14
years, divorced and remarried again for 14 years, and then widowed. Jane's four women friends from high school all work after taking time out to raise their children.(11)

Male graduates pursued the vocation begun in their teens through to retirement. Sam majored in electronics and apprenticed for seven years with a telephone company after graduating. He retired with full pension at 52 as the organization was downsizing. He says of his early work years: "We weren't robots in the 50s. The 50s spawned the 60s. We'd work 44 hours a week, lived at home. We couldn't afford an apartment, making $6 or something a day. There were no alternatives."(12)

Ben apprenticed into the print trade. He says, "By the time I was in grade 11, I knew where I wanted to go. I was working at newspapers because I had always worked there. I thought the men in the press room had a good job and I thought that's where I want to work—an excellent trade. I probably have one of the best trades, as far as I'm concerned, that's around. It's been good to me."(13) He didn't have to compete for a job: "I had a foreman come along and say 'you still want to come and work for me'? I said yes. That was the way I was hired and I never had an interview. Basically, I've only had the one job all my life."(14)

Ben had been in contact with only two high school friends before the reunion: "I worked night shift most of my life so I lost contact with just about all my friends. My social life having the night shift...it really was no social life."(15) Ben married and has one daughter.

Stanley also apprenticed in printing, travelling to different print shops in Vancouver. He was a foreman for nine years at one company and then owned
his own shop until 1990 when he joined Pacific Press. He plans to retire before he is 60. He married two years after graduating and has four children. He was also a volunteer fireman for a short time in the 1970s. He says, "My life has really not been too different from anyone else's. The important things in my life were when I got married, and raising children and making sure they were properly looked after, buying a house—these were important things to me. Everything else was secondary. I really didn't have aspirations to be anything more than I am today."(16)

Mark was the only graduate with the title "Dr." preceding his name on the reunion list. He went to university and married after receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree. He then pursued a doctoral degree, accumulating academic awards and scholarships along the way. He is an advocate for mental health patients in Alberta after a varied career in that field.

Mark regrets not keeping in touch with friends. He recalls one who went on to be a journalist and another who "died violently before his 20th birthday in a vicious knife wielding incident in an east end bar."(17)

Magee Secondary Graduates

This was not the first reunion for Magee graduates. Their reunion list was updated each decade after graduation. Statistically their class mirrors Vancouver Technical's. For example, both classes had more than 200 students. More than 60 graduates are missing from both reunion lists. Two-thirds of the graduates live in the Lower Mainland. Among Magee graduates, 25 are still in the province, 15 live in other parts of Canada and 14 have moved to the
United States. Three former graduates are living in the United Kingdom. Six women have reverted to or maintained their maiden names (compared to 13 from Vancouver Technical) and five married couples from the same graduating class are still together.(18)

Many of the male and female graduates went to university, but the males obtained credentials and pursued a career without interruption. Those who did not went into the business sector, either self-employed or in management positions.

In contrast to their counterparts at Vancouver Technical, female Magee graduates did not pursue paid work once their children were in school. Informants explain that household economics did not require them to re-enter the work force and they felt satisfied and busy in their roles as full-time homemakers. However, they recall friends from Magee who did re-enter the work force when their children were older.

Shirley went to university after high school and got her teacher's certificate. She married a member of the 1954 graduating class. "In those days we married younger," she said. Shirley said most of her peers married in their early twenties.(19) She had four children and did not return to work. "I've done a lot of really interesting volunteer work and in a lot of ways don't feel I stopped using my brain," she said. Shirley did volunteer work at the Vancouver Aquarium for 18 years hosting tour groups in French. She has also been a volunteer with the Girl Guides for 26 years.(20)

June took two years of university and some teacher training, married and moved to Sudbury, Ontario. "I was unable to continue that education so I decided to raise a family. I've had a very busy life. I married, had two
children. I was divorced. I had a second marriage (and divorced again) and now I'm more into my family and my grandchildren and travelling."(21) She recalls: "A couple of my friends did graduate in education and they were teaching, but that was just in the first years of their marriage. Their husbands were set in their careers so they could start raising their families. I've kept a couple of friends from those years."(22)

Jean also went to university but after one year married her high school boyfriend, Adam, and has stayed home since, raising four children. She has made many voluntary contributions to the community.

Adam went into his father's business out of high school, but eventually attended university. "My father was in the construction business. Our father's assumption was that we would work with him. It was a matter of choice that I subsequently went back to university at night. I started out to get my CGA (Certified General Accountant). I didn't know learning could be like that, that you could get people who knew their stuff and could stand up and be so spellbinding. I got a degree in Urban Land Economics."(23)

Bob went directly to university and obtained degrees in law and commerce. He has specialized in communications law, practicing for other employers before setting up his own firm. Bob was married briefly in his thirties and does not have children, unlike most of his peers. He has been seeing a single mother for six years now, after a series of relationships.(24)

Bill made a work transition after being streamed into the trades largely due to his disability. He says, "After high school I went to Vancouver Vocational School and got my trade papers. I quit after four years and realized I was doing this because it was a "win", not something I really
wanted to do. So then I went into business. Currently I am a business consultant. Prior to that I was in a family business, the aluminum business, with my father. We had three factories and an overseas branch. The business was sold in 1988 after my father died. I have continued improving my academic ability with extension courses and night school."(25) Bill is married with one son.

Ed attempted to complete a degree while pursuing a management career for a telephone company. "I went to King Edward to do senior matriculation, started to work, then went back to university to get my CGA. Three years into that I was transferred to the United States and so I stopped that. I tried to do correspondence but it was no good. So I had a little post high school but I didn't continue. I've been working for 37 years. I started in 1957 and I left and worked for various companies within the organization. I went to New York and then Seattle, Alaska, back to New York, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and then I came back to Vancouver in 1979."(26) Ed is married and has two daughters.

Harold became a teacher, then a librarian. "In my case I don't know why I became a teacher. Yes, I do know why--because my wife was a teacher, so I became a teacher, too, and we travelled in the summer time. That's not a very good reason to become a teacher, right? But my father was a teacher too."(27)

Harold said most of the males from Magee went to university. "One of them failed. He tried three times. He's pulling luggage at the airport. He's perfectly happy. That's what he wanted to do. That's his level. He failed three times in a row. This was the wonderful fifties and sixties. No matter what you did there were jobs. I know three people who went to university,
failed, not because they were too dull, but because there was too much drinking and carousing, and those three people all went into companies and became chartered accountants. If you go to UBC now, and you fail, what can you do? But these guys failed every single course but they ended up rich people. That's because of the era."(28)

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Harold and his wife began their family after nine years of marriage. "I know several girls who should have gone to university because they were intelligent, but they got pregnant when they were 19 or 20 so they got married; some of the marriages worked out, some didn't. Some of those people went to university 10 years later, some have not."(29)

Impact of Streaming on Graduates' Life Paths

Graduates benefited from a prosperous economy. Poverty, unemployment, continuous job searching and rejection were not a part of their life experience. However, teens of the fifties were limited in their work/life choices by a socialization which segregated and conditioned them. Parents' social origins played a role in influencing the informants' occupational destination. Graduates from Vancouver Technical maintained the white collar and artisan skilled occupational categories of their fathers while Magee graduates stayed within the professional and business categories. There was some class mobility as Bob, Bill and Mark exemplify. Most affected by school streaming were women of both working and middle-class backgrounds and working-class males.

Work choices in the 1950s were limited for both working and middle-class women. Women faced wage discrimination through occupational segregation
in low paying work sectors. As Mavis states, "Women didn't make much money then so it was harder for them to become independent."(30) Women's accumulation of years of paid work was often interrupted with family responsibilities, further limiting opportunities for salary increases and promotions. Middle class women attending university enrolled in female-designated faculties. (See Table 8.)

Some women graduates from this period express the limited choices their school and family gave them. Vancouver Technical female graduates describe their regrets in the reunion survey under the categories "Greatest mistakes" and "What would/should you have done differently" as follows:

(a) becoming a teacher, instead of a clerk;
(b) taken university entrance;
(c) majored in more math and science;
(d) completed my grade 12 (this woman's oldest son is 40, indicating she could have been pregnant in grade 12; she married, had three more children and is now single);
(e) quit school too soon,
(f) not going on to university.

One Vancouver Technical graduate became an elementary school teacher in 1957, and taught most of the 38 years since. She would have eventually completed her Bachelor of Education degree, extra-sessionally as the teaching requirements changed. Evidence from the interviews, survey, and the UBC yearbook indicate some female graduates went on to community colleges, usually long after leaving high school, but few went to university at any time.
Table 8.—First Year Students at University of British Columbia
in 1955-56, by Program and Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program*</th>
<th>Male N</th>
<th>Female N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy (second year)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Training (one year after degree)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All faculties show first year program enrollments unless otherwise indicated.

Source: University of British Columbia Annual, Totem, 1956.
in the last 40 years.(31)

Jane expresses her regrets about choices she made as a teenager: "I could have gone on to university and I didn't. It's a regret because it would be nice to have a degree. But we were on welfare, Mr. S— was our case worker and he said to my father that they would actually fund me if I wanted to go. I said I'd been poor long enough. I was on this basic allowance so that was it."(32)

Jane also said the counsellor at Vancouver Technical would have supported her if she chose the academic stream. She has taken first year arts courses at a community college and plans to pursue academic courses when she retires from her office job. She said, "I'm looking forward to returning to school when I retire, so obviously Tech didn't turn me off from wanting to learn!"(33)

Mary was discouraged from university by her family. "I would have loved to have been an architect. I had an aptitude in this area, like my dad," she says. She acknowledges in the reunion survey that her "greatest mistake" was not going to university. She did have a rewarding second career in interior design.(34)

Shirley went to university in 1956 but did not pursue a career. "I did a year of arts, and then I went into first year education and got hired in Vancouver and found that I couldn't handle it. I simply panicked and resigned. I guess, in a way, considering I was an "A" student in high school and an honours student at university, it was partly the fault of the system, it was partly my fault. I basically had a mini-nervous breakdown and said "that's it". So, after I got through that I got myself a job downtown, I got
my diploma, and in May I was married anyway because my husband was through university. I haven't worked since. Most husbands didn't want their wives to work, and it sort of wasn't an option. I got pregnant right away. Then several more children, and we kept moving, and there wasn't the opportunity to really work."(35) Shirley doesn't regret being a full-time mother: "There was a chance for lots of communication and I don't regret that one bit."(36)

June is disappointed she didn't pursue a career given her high academic ability. She feels she "wasted" her talents. "At the time I probably didn't realize it. But in retrospect, it's too bad someone didn't encourage me more, having had the marks that I had achieved in university with little effort. I probably wasted my brain. I thought in later years I'd go back to university but there's been too many things happening in my life. I was never in one place long enough to do that. And then I didn't need to do it because I became financially independent. Also I knew that I didn't have the memory, the concentration power, and that everything came to me very easy at that stage of my life. I knew then that it wouldn't happen that way. That I'd have to really get into the books and study. So I guess I wasn't willing to make that sacrifice later on in life."(37)

Jean believes private school instead of Magee would have better prepared her for university. She mentioned a friend who went to a private school: "They had to study more; they had more homework."(38) She has not had a paid job since her marriage and said: "But what I realize now and if I could go back and do it, I would get my degree in counselling and probably be a chaplain. If I could do anything, I'd like to be a chaplain. I do volunteer chaplaincy without any training because I am naturally gifted in
Bob recalls a female law student in his university classes who won a top academic award when she graduated but faced discrimination and was unable to find employment with a law firm. He said she finally gave up trying, married and raised a family.

Male graduates who were in the vocational program at school also expressed regrets. Sam states his "greatest mistake" in the reunion survey as "not going on to university." Of 41 male graduates who responded to the Vancouver Technical reunion survey, two went to university and eight regretted not doing so. Their comments include: should have stayed in the university entrance class and gone to university; should have studied to be a lawyer instead of a tradesman; should have taken up commerce; should have stayed in the university entrance after grade 10 instead of having to return to get my matriculation five years later; should have taken more academic courses--apply myself more to studies.

A school, neighborhood and a culture which directed youth in to specific areas, such as manual versus academic, either permanently deterred Vancouver Technical graduates from paths they may have otherwise inclined toward, or delayed them.

Sam said he went to Simon Fraser University in his late 40s and took a first year economics course. He wanted to gain a better understanding of the economy. "I really enjoyed university and I may go back," he said.

Ben believed the counsellor who told him he wasn't "smart enough" instilled a lack of confidence that influenced his future work performance. "When I was fire chief in a volunteer department, I would be asked by groups to come and give talks and I wouldn't go. Mainly I didn't go because I live
in an affluent area and I thought more educated people might ask questions that I couldn't answer. So I would never go. Strictly through lack of confidence. I probably would have done all right."(44)

Stanley believes he missed his calling because his ability to communicate with people was not used in his work: "I probably could have pursued a vocation where you get into more of the social factor with people, but that's the way things have happened. I wish I could have communicated with people more, but being in that type of work (printing) I never really had the opportunity, except talking to work mates."(45)

Bill said becoming a tradesman was an easy route because he was good at it. Even though he was at Magee, he went into the vocational program because he lacked literacy skills. "It wasn't until six to seven years out of high school that I started to move in a positive way," he states. He left his trade and developed a business. He has since worked closely with young people in Richmond who were at risk, through drugs or other problems, and has encouraged them to look for opportunities.(46)

The men who have achieved goals contrary to their social influences have done so both in spite of and because of experiences other students might not have encountered. Mark, for instance, states he had two important mentors in his early life, who encouraged him to take the academic route. He also describes himself as a "nerd"—an outsider. The Vancouver Technical yearbook indicates personality types who are "brainy"; whereas the Magee yearbook does not.(47) The two Vancouver Technical males who became high school teachers indicate in the reunion survey under "greatest achievements": "graduating in
the academic program at Tech" and "using participation in the football program
as a stepping stone to future football and educational opportunity."(48)
Having an academic inclination at Vancouver Technical meant being different
from most of your peers.

The students from "working-class" Marpole who attended Magee indicate
similar obstacles. Bob was an only child and his parents placed all their
aspirations in him. While he had to pay his way through university, and dealt
with issues of "difference" with his Marpole peers, he was able to achieve his
goals. Bill was also streamed into the trades because of his learning
disability and believed his true aspirations were consequently delayed.

"Streaming" may also affect those who appear most fortunate, in this case
the Magee male graduates who had the widest set of options. These options may
have excluded manual, sport or fine art type vocations, stories which did not
emerge directly from the Magee graduates' interviews but did so in other
histories of the fifties.(49) Harold describes the pressure in the
mid-fifties for Kerrisdale youth to go to university. It appears the business
world was their only other option.
1. Other clues from the reunion list indicate that one female graduate is a nun and several male graduates are lawyers in Vancouver law firms. One female graduate has appeared in social columns of the Vancouver newspaper.

2. Of the 163 Vancouver Technical graduates on the 40th reunion mailing list, 38 have suite numbers—16 males and 22 females. Of the 155 Magee graduates on the 40th reunion list, 26 have suite addresses—10 males and 16 females.

3. Vancouver Technical Graduate Reunion Address List, 1995 and the Magee Secondary Graduate Reunion Address List, 1995. Addresses indicate that Vancouver Technical graduates living in the Lower Mainland are mainly in Burnaby (28), Surrey (17), Vancouver (16), and Richmond (13) and Magee graduates are mainly in Vancouver (40), West Vancouver (13), Surrey (12), and Richmond (9).


7. Ibid., 10.

8. Transcript, Sam and Mary, Vancouver Technical, 9, 12.


10. Transcript, Jane, Vancouver Technical, 2.

11. Ibid., 11.

12. Transcript, Sam and Mary, Vancouver Technical, 12.


15. Ibid., 10.


17. Correspondence, Mark, Vancouver Technical, 2.


20. Ibid., 9.

21. Transcript, June, Magee, 2.
22. Ibid., 2.
23. Transcript, Adam and Jean, Magee, 6.
25. Transcript, Bill, Magee, 2.
27. Transcript, Harold, Magee, 7-8.
28. Ibid., 7.
29. Ibid.
30. Transcript, Mavis, Vancouver Technical, 10.
32. Transcript, Jane, Vancouver Technical, 3.
33. Jane, correspondence following the interview.
35. Transcript, Shirley, Magee, 8.
36. Ibid., 8.
37. Transcript, June, Magee, 3.
38. Transcript, Jean, Magee, 9.
39. Ibid., 11.
40. Bob, Magee, informal notes, after taped interview.
42. Ibid.
43. Transcript, Sam and Mary, Vancouver Technical, 10.
44. Transcript, Ben, Vancouver Technical, 11.
45. Transcript, Stanley, Vancouver Technical, 8.
46. Transcript, Bill, Magee, 2.
Graduates of Vancouver high schools in 1955 describe an authoritarian educational system. Schools played a prominent role in the reproduction of their social class and gender roles. Reforms in the fifties which attempted to equalize schooling experiences, the beginnings of a separate "mass" youth culture, and similarities in working and middle-class family social characteristics gave youth on both sides of the city common experiences in growing up. These features, however, did not eradicate the contrasting situations of east side and west side high school students. I will summarize the study's findings in this chapter, acknowledging similarities but emphasizing differences which existed at Vancouver Technical and Magee. I will then consider how and why the differences worked themselves out in both the school and later life for the students.

In many social and cultural aspects of this study, students from Magee and Vancouver Technical mirrored each other: most came from a two parent family, with fathers the wage earner and mothers at home. Family size ranged from three to five children, parental expectations for daughters were domestic, for sons employment; teenagers worked part-time and in the summer and had a disposable income for their own consumer needs. Despite these
similarities, perceptions of differences on both sides of the class divide in Vancouver led to feelings of apprehension and distorted views of others, keeping the barriers up between different groups of teenagers.

Parents from both communities were unlikely to be consulted or involved in young people's interactions with school staff. Conformity and respect for authority were the dominant values of the adult and teenage world of the fifties, stemming from post-war social upheavals and the desire for stability. Parents trusted the schools with their children and did not interfere, nor did their children approach them with their problems.

The fifties social problems were considered a private matter. Young people discerned the social taboos by considering what wasn't being said. One didn't talk about family circumstances, for example, such as having divorced parents. Teenage girls removed themselves from school if they became pregnant. Students requiring financial assistance were more likely to receive some public acknowledgement, however, through school programs on the east side of the city.

Silence was an attitude promoted in most classrooms. Taking notes, listening to the teacher, memorizing the information and summoning it forth at test time was the standard form of learning at both schools. Though the ideas on "progressive" teaching methods were heralded by educators, the "formalistic" style remained.

The dominant social class of the community surrounding the school plays a key role in the type of schooling students receive. In many aspects, those at Vancouver Technical received a different type of schooling than those at Magee because the majority had working-class origins and aspired to working
class occupations. The majority of Magee students, on the other hand, aspired to professional and business careers and experienced a more benign middle-class schooling.

Vancouver Technical's practice of separate academic and technical classes for girls and boys within a co-educational public school system instilled in students the acceptability of institutionalized segregation. This practice was rooted in the history of the school and the history of vocational education. Only toward the last half of the fifties would Vancouver Technical introduce co-educational academic classes. Sex-segregated classes prior to these changes gave students a different education from their counterparts in other Vancouver public schools, where co-educational classrooms were the norm.

Vancouver Technical students were subject to more physical punishment than Magee students and more likely to be verbally abused. The strap, the paddle, a "smack at the back of the neck" and demoralizing reprimands were standard disciplinary procedures at Vancouver Technical. There were no advocates for students who felt unjustly treated. Parents, other teachers and the administration were the unquestioned authority figures. In contrast, former students of Magee describe a more liberal form of disciplinary control. Favors were given to well-behaved students, those who misbehaved were tested or "reasoned" to and often no disciplinary action was given, making some students feel ignored or uncared for.

Teachers at Vancouver Technical also played a supportive role in their relations with students whom they assisted in employment interviews, provided encouragement, helped establish future work goals, and generally established
more of a personal rapport. Magee students depended less on their teachers and had a more formal relationship with them.

Young people were aware of their differences geographically, culturally and socially. They observed class distinctions within their school and within the city even though they lived within the narrow world of a neighborhood. Distinctions were observed in various ways: by neighborhood (Marpole and Shaughnessy, for example), clothing (strides, pierced ears, cashmere sweaters), and car ownership. Gangs existed and were described as "east side" or "west side" by the media. Organized activities for teens were confined to neighborhoods and few intra-city activities for young people existed. Employment could have provided opportunities for greater contact with teenagers from other parts of the city but they either worked in their neighborhood (e.g., paper route) or with large groups from the same school (e.g., PNE). Bill was the only informant who as a teenager moved from one end of the city to the other, attending Magee and working as a mechanic on the east side after school and attending dances at east side schools.

Most graduates of 1955 from both schools were Caucasian. Only 21 graduates from Vancouver Technical and five from Magee were from other racial groups. From the available data, it does not appear that non-Caucasian students left school before grade 12 in significant numbers. In fact, a few of the graduates from both schools who went to university were non-Caucasian. Accounts from Magee students, however, suggest that visible minorities may have felt like "outsiders". As well, Jewish students at Magee formed their own social "cliques" rather than mixing with the dominant Protestant students. Magee imitated university sororities and fraternities, with a "Hi-Y" club
(a separate club for girls and boys). This club had initiation rites which could exclude members based on majority rule, imitating in turn the adult world of discriminatory leisure clubs. Because Vancouver Technical students came from a wider range of cultural backgrounds, visible minority students integrated more easily.

This study did not capture the wider range of occupational destinations of graduates. The male informants at Vancouver Technical entered trades which demanded apprenticeship training reflecting a higher position within the working-class hierarchy, in both material and social rewards. The experiences of male graduates who went into physically demanding work, for instance, is not represented in the accounts. Their stories may challenge the notion of fifties affluence and illuminate more fully how the wealth was unevenly distributed.

During the fifties the British Columbia school system moved toward a composite high school curriculum. In Vancouver, the district offered students in every area choices in their educational training. Nonetheless, streaming of students within the schools and between schools prevailed. In 1955, a minority of grade 12 students were on the academic track at Vancouver Technical while a majority were on the academic track at Magee. Most male grade 12 students at Vancouver Technical aspired to manual-oriented occupations while those at Magee favored university or business-oriented pursuits. The majority of female students at both schools chose "female" designated jobs, although Magee students also considered occupations which required some post-secondary education (nursing or teaching, for example) and more of them stated they were university bound than did those at Vancouver
Technical. Most graduates surveyed 40 years later were employed in the occupations they trained for and aspired to in high school.

How useful was the vocational curriculum? The male informants at Vancouver Technical "majored" in a trade, which they later apprenticed into. Sam considered his training in high school a "waste of time", and said he did his real learning on the job. Female students spoke more positively of the office skills learned in high school being useful on the job. However, does the curriculum fill up excessive time in "vocational" training when a stronger grounding in academic subjects leads to more future options? Studies on the history of vocational education indicate that a gap has always existed between skills taught and those required by industry and that the schools' real purpose has not been to emphasize skills, but rather to instil proper work attitudes so students become productive workers.(4)

School-to-work transitions of east side youth were re-enforced by employer practices. Students who had not completed their high school program and by law were allowed to leave at age 16 were hired willingly by employers in an economy where jobs were plentiful. This meant, however, that east side students were more likely to leave school in grades 10 or 11 than west side students. Employers also conducted interviews and conferred with teachers of graduating students at Vancouver Technical. Shop teachers helped students obtain employment, arranging job interviews with employers on the students' behalf. Part-time and summer jobs also played a greater role in Vancouver Technical students' lives, providing their initial exposure to future work destinies.

The work place was the immediate and long-term destiny for most Vancouver Technical male graduates, and other options, such as post-secondary education,
were not considered. The small number of male graduates in 1955 who deliberately failed in their senior year to defer the adult responsibilities associated with work and marriage indicates the limited options they perceived to be available to them.

Flexibility and mobility in schools and the work place existed, but were infrequently accessed. An academic program was in place for Mark to take at Vancouver Technical and he was able to continue on to university. The general program at Magee allowed Bill to achieve a grade 12 diploma. His learning disability may have disqualified him from doing so in a strictly academic program.

The minority of students who chose to go against the stream had extra support of parents or other mentors. Others made occupational transitions at different points in their adult life. For example, two of the female informants from Vancouver Technical re-entered the work force when their children were older, and rejected office work in favor of retraining at a community college for what was, for them, a more satisfying occupation. Economic mobility meant some employees could eventually become employers. About a fifth of the 80 graduates surveyed at the Vancouver Technical reunion indicated they had owned a business at various times.

The post-war expansionary era promised equality of educational opportunities and conditions but the experiences of Vancouver high school graduates of 1955 demonstrate that schools reinforced rather than opened up opportunities for the majority of youth. Parents, teachers and counsellors provided models, expectations, direct and indirect messages, encouragement and discouragement to youth. The structures, practices and curriculum of the school influenced students' decisions. And friends and peers moving in the
same direction gave a legitimacy to a student's decision. Students chose from the options they perceived were available and based on a sense of their own capabilities. As Gaskell notes in her study of working-class youth in Vancouver in 1977, teenagers knew what the world was like and they were able to make choices. "Changing their minds would have meant changing the world they experienced, not simply convincing them of a new set of ideas around equality of opportunity and the desirability of a different world."(5)

Women's roles in the economy changed over the 40 years since graduation. However, schooling which had trained females primarily for short-term careers, and a lifetime of domestic work, brought its share of casualties: women who either expressed regrets and remained out of the work force, or experienced hardships establishing economic independence in their middle age. None of the female graduates of Vancouver Technical enrolled in university following high school, unlike their counterparts at Magee. Female graduates from the east side, however, were more likely to achieve economic self-sufficiency in the work place at various points in their adult life, while west side females relied on their families for their economic needs. Students who entered the female-designated occupations after graduating in 1955 were welcomed by employers as a transient, inexpensive, hardworking group of workers. In fact, the number of women entering the work force in Canada increased from 24 per cent in 1951 to 30 per cent in 1960. (And would continue to increase to its current level of 60 per cent.)(6) Yet all Vancouver schools had home economics courses for girls, preparing them, in part, for domestic labor.

Although Magee graduates attended university in large numbers,
they did not necessarily complete their degree program or follow through with a long-term career. And, at the university level, they encountered informal gender segregation in program choices. Girls in west side schools were also active in clubs that were involved in school or community volunteer work. Two of the female Magee informants have been unpaid volunteers in their community as adults, indicating this would be a major social role for some female graduates. (7)

Few males from Vancouver Technical attended university and some of them expressed regrets 40 years later. One informant felt his schooling did not give him the social confidence necessary to meet later work challenges. Some former students felt their natural talents had not been explored through their occupations.

Aspirations matched outcomes for students, the available data indicates. Young people had a sense of where they were headed by grade 12, especially working-class males. They had less time to consider work options than some middle-class males, who could enrol in post-secondary general arts programs before selecting a professional program or occupation. Although Magee graduates had more options, they were discouraged from entering certain occupations. Having families at a young age also put pressure on males to make employment commitments early in their lives. The fact that the fifties provided abundant employment opportunities meant that many graduates were successful in meeting their aspirations.

The sphere in which a young person moved was much smaller than that of the same person looking back 40 years later. Now he or she can see beyond the range of possibilities the neighborhood school offered. Yet our early
socialization plays a crucial role in our future paths. The wider range of options offered youth in schools will broaden the path. The dichotomies faced by fifties youth have not completely broken down in Vancouver schools. Students today continue to experience segregation along class, gender and racial lines and between manual and mental work. Much has been learned and written, however, about education and equality, especially since the fifties, and social theories have been instrumental in leading to significant educational reforms. (8) Still the basic economic structure which stratifies occupations prevents true equalization of schooling and promises the generational repetition of patterns of differences in the education of youth along social class lines. (9)

This study has connections with observations made by other scholars. Jane Gaskell's study in 1977 of school-to-work transitions of 83 graduates from three schools situated in different working-class neighborhoods of Vancouver shows that student choices were similar to those of the 1955 graduates of Vancouver Technical: males went directly into the work force and females primarily into office jobs with the notion that these would be short-term situations until they married. A few different variables existed in the 1970s for the male students in contrast to the 1955 graduates--most believed they would not stay in their low-paying position for long and some believed they would go to community college at some point in the future. (10) It was more common for the 1955 graduates to stay in one occupation or with one company, often to retirement. Further, community colleges were only being built in the mid-fifties so did not present a choice for 1955 graduates. A more recent study of working-class and middle-class students in Vancouver
in the late 1980s, by Lesley Andres, also makes the case that schools reinforce students' social class. (11) Reforms have occurred in schools since the fifties which have had a positive impact on students although fundamental changes in the structures have not.
Endnotes—Chapter 7

1. French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu proposes the general cultural knowledge students from middle/upper social classes acquire leads to greater rewards in their schooling than experienced by working class students. See P. Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture. (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977.)

2. Describing class and course assignment at London Technical and Commercial High School in Ontario between 1920 and 1940, using oral accounts of 24 former students and two former teachers, Goodson and Anstead state: "The subjects which students took during the school day had for the most part already been chosen by the administration; students rarely had any options. This meant that the same group of students remained together as a class for the whole day. To assign students to a class at the beginning of the year, teachers in each course divided their students by gender and then lined them up alphabetically. They would then count off the required number for each class. In some cases, the leftovers from each gender would be combined into one class, which then sat with the boys and girls separated in the classroom. Each class moved as a group from room to room in single file, while the teachers stayed in their own rooms." In Ivor F. Goodson and Christopher J. Anstead, Through the Schoolhouse Door, (Working Papers) (Ontario: Garamond Press, 1993), 175.

3. American sociologist Jean Anyon attended elementary schools in four socially distinct neighborhoods. In the working class schools she notes, "Teacher control of students is a high priority in these schools, as in other schools. What the teachers attempted in these two working class schools, however was physical control. There was little attempt to win the hearts and minds of these students." in "Social Class and School Knowledge," Curriculum Inquiry 11(1) (1981): 32


Also see Timothy Dunn, "Teaching the Meaning of Work: Vocational Education in British Columbia, 1900-1929" in Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West, ed. D.C. Jones, N.M. Sheehan and R.M. Stamp (Calgary: Detselig, 1979).


7. As stated in Chapter 6 of this study, three of the 80 former Vancouver Technical students surveyed 40 years later for their reunion, indicated "homemaker" or "housewife" as their primary and only occupation (in contrast to the 35 other female respondents in the survey who indicated other paid work). Two of these three women listed volunteer work as a major activity in their lives.
8. Theories such as the study of cultural deficiencies in students leading to inferior school performance have lead to educational reforms such as the head-start program, where preschool children designated as requiring these skills, are given a "head-start" in voluntary programs set up in the community.

9. American sociologists Bowles and Gintis use a Marxist analysis in their examination of schools. They state, "Inequalities in education are part of the web of capitalist society, and are likely to persist as long as capitalism survives." S. Bowles and H. Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 32.


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Mavis. (Vancouver Technical graduate.) August 16, 1995.
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APPENDIX I—INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The interviews are based on the interview guide approach. Although I have certain questions that I will ask all participants, the interviews will be open-ended and loosely structured.

Questions (to be answered by all participants):

1. Please tell me about your high school experiences.

2. In what way were they unique to you? To your neighbourhood/school?

3. How did you view your educational and occupational opportunities?

4. Did other students have different opportunities and schooling experiences?

5. What did you want to do when you graduated? Do you think your aspirations as a graduate in 1955 were realistic?

6. What did your parents expect of you? Your teachers?

7. Did you feel "streamed" in one direction (academic, technical, etc.) by your parents, teachers or counsellors?

8. How did you view your teachers, their methods of instruction and the material you were taught?

9. What did you do when you graduated from high school? What have you done since then?

10. Any other comments about being a teenager in Vancouver at ________ school from 1952 to 1955?
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational Studies
Mailing Address:
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Date

Participant's Name
Participant's Address

Dear {Participant's Name},

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education and am conducting a history of public education in Vancouver as part of my thesis research. I am gathering oral histories from students of {Secondary School} who began high school in 1952 and graduated in 1955. I am a public school teacher in Vancouver and am interested in the history of the district and the different educational experiences of students. The name of the study is: "Differences in Experiences, Aspirations and Life Chances between East and West Side Vancouver Secondary Students at Mid-Century: An Exploratory Study."

I would very much appreciate your time to discuss your high school experiences. I believe that your experiences will provide valuable insights and historical data on education in Vancouver. The interview would take about one hour and could be conducted in your home or a local public area at your convenience. Enclosed is an interview information sheet which may answer some of your questions.

If you would like to be included in the study, please complete the attached "Respondent Information" form. If you agree to be interviewed, you will be asked to sign a separate "Consent Form" before the interview takes place. The final report will protect your privacy; all individuals will be referred to by the use of pseudonyms. I hope you will consider this invitation to reflect and contribute on your past. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at {Your Contact Information}. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Janet Mary Nicol