The influence of students' social class status upon secondary school counselors' judgments about students' potential for college attendance

Judith Ann Schindler
University of Northern Iowa

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The influence of students’ social class status upon secondary school counselors’ judgments about students’ potential for college attendance

Schindler, Judith Ann, Ed.D.
University of Northern Iowa, 1988

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UMI
THE INFLUENCE OF STUDENTS' SOCIAL CLASS STATUS
UPON SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS' JUDGMENTS
ABOUT STUDENTS' POTENTIAL FOR COLLEGE ATTENDANCE

A Dissertation
Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Approved:

Dr. Ann Vernon

Dr. John K. Smith

Dr. Harley E. Erickson

Dr. James G. Chadney

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Judith Ann Schindler

University of Northern Iowa

December 1987

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Bias Among Secondary School Counselors</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect of Socioeconomic Bias</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Issue of Class Bias</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Educators</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Psychiatrists</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Psychologists</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Nonschool Counselors</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Bias Among Secondary School Counselors</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cicourel and Kitsuse Study</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. PROCEDURES</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Qualitative Paradigm</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR CONTEXT</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Research Sample</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class Status</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Features of Participants' Context</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility of Postsecondary Institutions</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Preparedness of Midstate Students</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Participants' School Districts</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Factors</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directiveness versus nondirectiveness</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity versus constraint</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of the Forced Choice Exercise</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College and Community College as Distinct Recommendations</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interview</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Themes</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Distribution of Recommendations</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Multiple Interpretation Phenomenon</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The Achievement Types Counselor Assigned to Students Are Shown with Students' SCAT Scores and Ninth Grade Point Averages ............................ 25

Table 2: Distribution of Achievement Types by Counselor's Social class Ratings .................................. 27

Table 3: Advisees' Class and Achievement .......................... 74

Table 4: The Effect of Achievement Upon Recommendations .... 79

Table 5: The Effect of Social Class Upon Recommendations .... 80

Table 6: Indicators of Potential College Candidate ............. 99
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Distribution of Class-Influenced Recommendations . . . 77
Figure 2: Recommendations for High Achievers . . . . . . . . . 91
Figure 3: Recommendations for Average Achievers . . . . . . . 92
Figure 4: Recommendations for Low Achievers . . . . . . . . . 93
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Approved:

Faculty Advisor

Dean of the Graduate College

Judith Ann Schindler
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the extent to which students' social class origins influence guidance counselors' judgments about students' potential for college work. Forty experienced practicing high school guidance counselors from a Midwestern state participated. Each participant read nine vignettes each describing a fictitious eleventh grade boy and containing information regarding his social class, achievement, career interest, and stated desire to attain college or postsecondary education. (Half the participants received vignettes indicating that advisees desired college education; the others received vignettes indicating advisees' more general desire to attain postsecondary education.) Three of the nine advisees were presented as upper class (one a high achiever, one an average achiever, and one a low achiever). Three were presented as middle class and three as lower class with the same distribution according to achievement. After reading each vignette, participants checked off the post-high school activity (vocational school, apprenticeship, community college, military, four-year college, on-the-job training, or other) they considered reflective of the boy's best interests. Participants were interviewed individually regarding their judgments. Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and analyzed along with participants' check-off recommendations. Results revealed that 26 (65%) participants gave differential recommendations in cases where academic achievement was comparable but social class differed. Thirty-two (80%) participants expressed
class-influenced assumptions about students and/or their parents. The researcher concluded that social class could not be considered a quiescent factor; however, its influence on participants' judgments was generally subtle, unconscious, and unintentional. The researcher discovered that participants employed multiple (and sometimes conflicting) criteria rather than any single standard set of criteria to assess students' college potential. Lack of standard professional criteria was particularly evident in participants' reliance upon stereotyping and reenactment in judging college potential and their (usually unwitting) inclusion of social class as a criterion in this judgment. Several typically American beliefs influenced participants as they formulated recommendations. The most important of these included belief in individual opportunity; a meritocratic system; and desirability of upward socioeconomic movement (or at least stability). Recommendations were only slightly influenced by students' stated desires to attain college versus postsecondary education.
CHAPTER I
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which students' social class origins tempered guidance counselors' judgments about students' potential for college entrance. Each year hundreds of thousands of high school students decide whether they will pursue college education. Guidance counselors often influence the decisions these students reach (Ginzberg, 1979; Herr & Cramer, 1979; Shoben, 1962; Wrenn, 1962). In both subtle and direct ways, counselors encourage or discourage students in their decisions about college attendance. The influence counselors possess by virtue of their positions can have serious, lasting effects on students whose future occupational status, advancement opportunities, and earnings are obviously affected by the level of postsecondary education they attain (Bell, 1973; Collins, 1979). Students' decisions about college attendance, then, may seriously affect their life chances. Any influence counselors bring to bear upon these important decisions is clearly of concern.

Underlying this matter of counselors' influence is a more basic question concerning counselors' judgments about students' potential for college work. On what basis do counselors judge who is and who is not college qualified?

The professional ethic to which counselors subscribe en joins them to judge students' potential in an egalitarian manner. The
Code of Ethics of the American School Counselor Association declares that counselors' responsibilities derive from the fundamental premise that "each person has the right to dignity as a human being . . . without regard to race, sex, religion, color, socioeconomic status" (Tolbert, 1978, p. 399). Counselors have "a principal obligation and loyalty to respect each person as an unique individual and to encourage that which permits individual growth and development" (Tolbert, 1978, p. 400).

Counselors are enjoined to evaluate students' college potential according to achievement and ability measures such as test scores and grade point averages and to consider students' aspirations and motivation. Such standards ostensibly indicate a student's capacity for college work. Factors such as individuals' race, religion, sex, or social status, on the other hand, are not to enter into counselors' judgments about a student's fitness for college. If it were shown that such factors influenced a counselor's judgments, the label biased could be applied to him or her even if such bias were unintentional and unconscious.

Evidence of covert as well as overt bias in judgments and practices of counselors and other helping professionals has been discovered through research conducted over the past several decades. Like other members of the population, helping professionals can be expected to develop a degree of bias (gender, race, or social class bias, for instance) simply by living in a society pervaded by these prejudices. In the case of school
counselors, much research has been devoted to the study of overt and covert manifestations of sex bias (Friedersdorf, 1970; Harway, Astin, Suhr, & Whitely, 1976; Pietrofesa & Schlossberg, 1970; Thomas & Stewart, 1971) particularly in career and educational guidance where a great deal of literature and retraining effort have been aimed at ensuring egalitarian service for all regardless of gender. With the exception of the work of Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963), very little research of consequence has been directed at the issue of social class bias.

Such lack of research, however, has not been evident in other areas. Clients' class backgrounds have been found to influence dramatically the professional judgments of practitioners whose work is similar to that of school counselors. Research conducted among school teachers and administrators (Cusick, 1973; Hollingshead, 1949; Hurn, 1985), psychiatrists (Budner, Escover, & Malitz, 1964; Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958; Lee, 1968; Moore, Benedek, & Wallace, 1963; Myers & Schaffer, 1967; Redlich, Hollingshead, Roberts, Robinson, Freedman, & Meyers, 1953; Shader, 1970), psychologists (Koscherak & Masling, 1972; Levy & Kahn, 1970; Luepnitz, Randolph, & Gutsch, 1982; Routh & King, 1972), and counselors (Carkhuff & Pierce, 1967; Wright & Hutton, 1977) has confirmed that differential treatment was often afforded clients according to their social status.
Need for the Study

Briefly, this study extended the research on social class bias and helping professionals to include the school counselor. The importance of doing so is apparent in that school counselors are in a position to influence significant decisions students reach about their futures. Other helping professionals who, like school counselors, are committed to assisting individuals and who sincerely believe they are making judgments based on objective, egalitarian, scientific principles have been found to have discriminated unknowingly between clients of high and low status. Likewise, school counselors may unwittingly form important judgments about students' potential for college on the basis of social class.

If counselors are influenced by students' social class status, students whose achievement and ability qualify them for college may be discouraged from this path with potentially serious effects on their life chances. Likewise, students whose academic achievement and ability do not qualify them for college may, because of their class status, be encouraged to pursue an academic career for which they are ill prepared.

Statement of the Problem

This inquiry into the criteria counselors use to determine who is and who is not college qualified investigated the relative significance of two sets of student characteristics: achievement and ability status and social class status. At issue was whether students' social class origins figured more prominently into judgments
guidance counselors made about students' college potential than did measures of these students' academic achievement and ability.

**Limitations**

A number of limitations affected this study. Participants in the study may have presented themselves differently in an interview with a researcher than they would have presented themselves in actual practice. Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Goetz and LeCompte (1984), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) mention this limitation as characteristic of interview methods of data collection.

Another limitation concerned the narrow boundaries within which participants were required to make their determinations about the nine fictitious students. Participants in this study worked within the limited confines of a written vignette containing information restricted to socioeconomic and achievement variables. Results of the study must be considered in light of this limitation. Providing more information (descriptions of students' appearance and manner, extracurricular involvement, behavioral records, and so forth) would have made the exercise more realistic but impossibly complex. The task of discerning which of these multiple factors had influenced participants' judgments would not have been feasible. The decision was made, therefore, to constrict participants' field of knowledge about the student.

Although the vignettes contain information considered most important for identification of social class status (Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958), participants may have responded more strongly to
other class indicators such as the student's grooming, manners, dress, speech patterns, and so forth in their actual day to day practice of guidance counseling.

Factors or combinations of factors other than social class and/or achievement could also moderate counselors' judgments as they estimate students' potential for college work. For example, had parental expectation and support for postsecondary education been explicitly described in the vignettes and varied independently of social class, participants' responses may have been considerably different; their judgments may have been influenced more strongly by parental expectations and support levels than by the family's socioeconomic status.

Definition of Terms

Bias: According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, this term is defined as "such prepossession with some object or point of view that the mind does not respond impartially to anything related to this object or point of view" (Gove, 1981, p. 211).

Educational/Vocational Advisement: the total process of helping the advisee decide upon his or her educational and vocational plans.

Social Class: Reading (1977) defines social class as a "major social group, members of which are of approximately the same economic position, prestige, occupational rank, power, value orientations" (p. 37).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Throughout the brief history of vocational guidance counseling, unintentional bias in guidance counselors' judgments about clients has been problematic. Frank Parsons, who is credited with establishing vocational guidance in 1907, has himself been accused of such bias. Parsons' intentions were to provide vocational guidance based on supposedly scientific aptitude tests and interviews for individuals who might otherwise select occupations haphazardly. In fact, Violas (1978) charged, Parsons' systematic, scientific helping sometimes amounted to sorting individuals into occupations according to race and social class. Using The Case of the Would-Be Doctor from Parsons' (1909) Choosing a Vocation, Violas described how Parsons dissuaded a young man from a medical career by convincing him his racial and social background made this choice inappropriate for him. Although Parsons believed he was providing expert help by scientifically guiding individuals into occupations they would find fitting and satisfying, he was at times operating on the basis of race and class criteria (Violas, 1978).

Since Parsons' day, unintentional bias in school counselors' judgments has been the subject of some discussion and research. Race, sex, cultural, and class bias have received varying degrees of attention. While certain forms of bias (sex bias, for example) have generated significant levels of research and action, other forms
(class bias, for instance) have remained largely unexamined. Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) alone systematically investigated the presence of class bias in secondary school counselors' judgments. Because so little research is available on class bias in school counselors' judgments, a brief review of research on sex bias will help to set the context for this inquiry.

**Sex Bias Among Secondary School Counselors**

Typically, sex and class bias are practiced unintentionally and appear under the guise of expert helping (Harway et al., 1976). Like class bias, sex bias is officially proscribed in school counselors' ethical codes (Tolbert, 1978). Pietrofesa and Schlossberg (1970) noted that counselors in training "generally verbalize that they should not impose their biases regarding age, sex, color, class on counselees. The counselor's behavior in actual counseling sessions should reflect this oft-repeated opinion" (p. 3). The two researchers discovered the opposite. In practice the 20 counselor trainees in their sample demonstrated bias against a female's entering a traditionally male occupation. While counseling a coached female client deciding between engineering and education, male and female subjects consistently supported education, the more stereotypically feminine vocational choice. Content analysis of counselors' biased statements indicated that counselors had placed major stress on the traditionally assumed masculinity of the engineering choice.
Counselors in Friedersdorf's (1970) sample also demonstrated relatively distinctive attitudes about which levels and types of occupations were realistic and appropriate for females. Friedersdorf administered to 50 male and 56 female counselors the Strong Campbell Vocational Interest Blank for Women. As they completed the instrument, half the males and half the females role played collegebound girls, and the other half role played noncollegebound girls. Results revealed that counselors of both sexes judged certain categories and levels of careers most fitting for females whether college educated or not.

Thomas and Stewart's (1971) research results complemented these findings. Sixty-four practicing high school counselors responded to five audiotaped stimulus interviews with high school girls who expressed either deviate or conforming career goals. Counselors, regardless of gender, judged conforming goals more suitable than deviate goals.

These studies revealed that gender considerations could influence the judgment formation processes school counselors employed. Such studies and many others like them (Harway et al., 1976) have focused national, state, and local attention on sensitizing counselors and other school personnel to sex bias. At the national level, the Education Division of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare sponsored a comprehensive national study to investigate sex bias in secondary school counselors'
attitudes and practices, counselor training programs, and materials including tests, interest inventories, vocational materials, and institutional catalogs. Entitled *Sex Discrimination in Guidance and Counseling* (Harway et al., 1976), this nationally disseminated report concluded with wide-ranging recommendations for researchers and legislators. The National Institute of Education developed and disseminated to school counselors guidelines for the assessment of sex bias and sex fairness in career interest inventories widely used with high school students (National Institute of Education, 1975). Professional counselor associations with nationwide memberships have published training materials on sex bias and the counseling of female clients (Whitfield & Gustav, 1972). Leading professional counseling journals (*The School Counselor* and *The Counseling Psychologist*, for example) have devoted entire issues to sex bias and the counseling of women.

On the state level, extensive activity has been focused on efforts to retrain and sensitize guidance and other school personnel. In North Carolina, for example, the Department of Public Instruction mandated that school districts ensure that their personnel are made aware of sex bias and its implications for guidance services, student placement, and curriculum. Schools have been charged with the responsibility for developing and publicizing policies and activities aimed at eliminating gender discrimination (Department of Public Instruction, State of North Carolina, 1974).
All these efforts underscore the importance assigned by government and professional counseling organizations to the recognition and elimination of sex bias. In numerous official professional and government statements, class bias was grouped with sex bias as undesirable (Harway et al., 1976; Tolbert, 1978). Efforts to sensitize counselors to class bias and to eradicate it, however, can in no way compare with like efforts in the area of sex discrimination.

Neglect of Socioeconomic Bias

In counseling texts, socioeconomic status is generally presented as one of many influences counselors need to consider as they help students formulate post-high school plans. Counselors are urged to weigh carefully this nonacademic non-test factor as information useful in the guidance process. Socioeconomic status is presented as an influence on student aspiration levels (Shertzer & Stone, 1971); on values students hold regarding work (Herr & Cramer, 1972; Shertzer & Stone, 1971); on schooling (Herr & Cramer, 1972; Hutson, 1968); on college and occupational choice (Herr & Cramer, 1972; Isaakson, 1985). Mention is made of upper social class parents pressuring their children to attend college regardless of the children's demonstrated capacity for college work and attempting to induce guidance counselors to collude with these goals (Herr & Cramer, 1972; Shertzer & Stone, 1980). Shertzer & Stone (1971) tell counselors "the occupation of a high school student's father is a
relatively good predictor of whether or not the student will enter college" (p. 352). Herr and Cramer (1984) include grade point average along with father's occupation as the two most reliable predictors of students' postsecondary educational achievement.

While it is true that statistics show fathers' occupations correlating with children's college entrance, such statistics should not be used to guide counselors' judgments about individual clients' potential for college. Encouraging counselors to use such statistics as predictive is ultimately to preserve the status quo rather than to seek actively the best interests of each client. An example will clarify this point. A great deal of statistical evidence over the years has shown that girls enter traditionally female professions such as teaching and nursing. Clearly, if counselors encouraged girls to enter such professions over traditionally male professions (engineering and dentistry, for example) based on such statistics, they would be considered biased regardless of the objective accuracy of the statistical evidence they presented (Friedersdorf, 1970; Pietrofesa & Schlossberg, 1970). In such cases, statistical evidence represents a status quo which needs critical examination and change, not reproduction.

In summary, texts widely used in preparation of high school counselors contain little meaningful information on social class and its implications for guidance. A number of texts actually encourage the use of father's occupation (the key indicator of
social class according to Hollingshead) as predictive of students' educational careers. This, in effect, encourages counselors to rely upon statistics which reflect the status quo rather than the ideal.

Typically, counseling text writers have paid only the briefest attention to social class as a factor within the counseling interaction itself. A brief review of selected texts illustrates this point. Miller (1961) wrote several paragraphs describing socioeconomic status, declared that "implications for guidance are clear" (p. 80), and moved to another topic. Herr and Cramer (1972) urged counselors to understand implications of social class status for guidance but failed to draw out these implications. Tolbert (1978) declared that social class bias in the counselor could prevent effective helping but pursued this point no further. Shertzer and Stone (1980) exhorted counselors to recognize the possible impact of social class status but provided no examples, no recommendations, and no related empirical study. Ivey (1983) noted that counseling goals he endorsed were "culturally dependent and typical of white, middle-class, North American values" (p. 218). Possible effects such bias could produce in practice were not addressed. Isaakson (1985) discussed social class as part of the sociological perspective which he described in exclusively deterministic, mechanistic terms. If counselors were to work out of such a perspective, he asserted, they would essentially be "helping clients to accept whatever fate is about to hand them" (p. 80). With that, Isaakson dismissed the sociological perspective
altogether. Hutchins and Cole (1986) mentioned family background but only in terms of its influence on clients' nonverbal communication patterns. Gibson and Mitchell (1986) presented an extensive review of findings regarding counselor bias toward racial minorities but made no reference to literature regarding helping professionals and social class bias. Egan (1986) admitted that "a working knowledge of the power of culture is a relatively new tool for helpers" (p. 12) but examined the idea no further.

Isaakson (1985), Herr and Cramer (1984), Shertzer and Stone (1980), and Hutson (1968) all made superficial references to one or more of the classic studies of social status (Hollingshead, 1949; Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958; Lynd & Lynd, 1929; Warner, Meeker, & Eells, 1949) but failed to draw out any implications for guidance and counseling practitioners. Their focus on these works, brief as it was, rested on the existence of social class discrimination but not on the possible impact class differences could exert in the counseling interaction. Although it related directly to guidance counselors, the Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) study was seldom mentioned in standard texts. Related studies of social class bias among helping professionals and educators were likewise absent. Such studies have raised important questions school counselors might consider.

The Issue of Class Bias

Several education and helping professions have been studied for evidence of social class bias. School teachers and
administrators and mental health professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and nonschool counselors have been subjects of research into social class bias. Like school counselors, these professionals are enjoined by their ethical codes to avoid class bias. They profess to serve clients in an egalitarian caring manner and to treat them as unique persons whose individual well-being is foremost. In spite of this, investigations have yielded readily discernible patterns of class bias in education and mental health care. While an exhaustive review is unnecessary, several studies from each of the above areas of practice must be mentioned to set the context for this inquiry.

Among Educators

Despite powerful professional and popular injunctions against biased treatment of school children, school administrators and teachers have been found to apply discipline differentially along social class lines (Cusick, 1973; Hollingshead, 1949). Upper class students were found to be routinely exempted from punishment for offenses for which their lower class counterparts were severely reprimanded. While misbehavior of upper class students was typically handled quietly and privately, that of the lower class student was generally handled more harshly and publicly (Hollingshead, 1949). Differential disciplinary treatment of students in school was found to parallel police procedures in the community at large. Lower class persons were found far likelier to incur the full weight of the law, to be jailed, fined, or otherwise
publicly censured for acts that were excused, covered over, or handled privately when committed by members of the upper classes (Hollingshead, 1949).

In strictly academic areas, too, class bias has been observed in school settings. Rist (cited in Hurn, 1985) examined teachers' assignments of students to high, middle, and low ability groupings within classrooms. He discovered that group assignment was made largely along class lines. Children who looked and acted least like middle class children, whose families were on welfare, who came from single-parent families, whose parents were unemployed—these children were much more apt to be placed in the lowest group and positioned farthest from the front of the room. Rist remarked that teachers treated groups differentially. Members of the low group were more often scolded for their work and behavior and more liable to receive controlling teacher interventions. They had fewer chances to answer meaningful questions and less instructional time. Rist noted a widening academic gap between higher and lower groupings as the year progressed and practically no group to group mobility even after three years. Hurn (1985) reported that, like Rist, Mackler found that obedience and manners figured heavily into teachers' judgments about children's ability group placement, and that little group to group movement occurred during the academic year.

Hollingshead's (1949) research revealed striking relationships between students' social class status and the grades teachers
awarded them. Using five social class categories, Hollingshead found that teachers allotted over half the grades in the 85 to 100 range to students in the two upper class groups; yet in a typical community, upper class pupils represented under 10% of the school population and earned only 20% of the highest IQ scores. Clearly, upper class students were receiving a disproportionate share of higher grades given their IQ scores. Among the lowest social class students, only 8% were assigned grades of 85 to 100. Sixty-six percent had grades of 70 to 84, and 25% received grades of 50 to 69.

Hollingshead exposed a grade distribution that followed class lines and did not accord with students' indicated ability. While it was true that upper class students showed a somewhat greater proportion of high IQ scores than did lower class students, four times as many pupils in the middle and lower-middle classes had IQ's of 120 to 139 than had their counterparts in the two upper classes. Hollingshead inferred that social class bias on the part of teachers accounted at least in part for these serious discrepancies between indicated ability and assigned grades. Presented as neither intentional nor personal, bias was nonetheless present and operative.

**Among Psychiatrists**

Among groups of helping professionals, too, patterns of differential treatment have been observed. A number of studies conducted among psychiatrists have uncovered compelling evidence of social class bias. In their landmark work, *Social Class and Mental Illness*, Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) found that quiescent
social class factors and not the claimed medical criteria were operative in determining which mentally ill clients were treated, where, how, and how long. Lower class patients were likelier to have been diagnosed psychotic rather than neurotic; to have been treated in state hospitals; to have received organic rather than insight therapies; and to have remained under treatment for longer periods of time. Other research confirmed that low social class status was negatively related to acceptance for individual psychotherapy (Myers & Schaffer, 1967; Redlich et al., 1953); that more serious psychological problems were ascribed to lower status clients (Lee, 1968; Moore, Benedek, & Wallace, 1963); and that psychiatrists were likelier to prescribe drugs than individual therapy for their lower status clients (Moore, Benedek, & Wallace, 1963; Shader, 1970).

Typically, low socioeconomic status contraindicated one-to-one therapy. The dominating influence of social class status in treatment decisions appeared in reports that assignment to therapy was more a function of social class than of diagnosis (Budner, Escover, & Malitz, 1964; Myers & Schaffer, 1967). These patterns in clinical practice did not result from deliberate policy. Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) concluded that they represented "unanticipated consequences of complex and tacit . . . processes of expectancies and role assignments" (p. 302).
Among Psychologists

Like the practices of school personnel and psychiatrists, those of psychologists have evidenced social class bias. Lee's (1968) subjects (psychiatric residents) tended to ascribe more serious psychological problems to interviewees with lower class case histories. Opposite biasing effects have been reported. Clinical psychologists in Routh and King's (1972) study rated middle class clients as more in need of professional help for an emotional problem. Although opposite in direction from other research results (Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958; Lee, 1968; Moore, Benedek, & Wallace, 1963), ratings again indicated differential treatment along class lines.

Socioeconomic status can confound psychologists' clinical judgment of the presence of alcoholism in clients (Luepnitz, Randolph, & Gutsch, 1982). Graduate psychology subjects who had completed training in assessment and diagnosis of alcoholism tended to correctly diagnose lower class clients with alcoholism. Subjects were inclined to misdiagnose upper class clients manifesting the same level of alcoholic symptoms.

Levy and Kahn (1970) found that addition of social class data significantly influenced psychologists' clinical judgments in Rorschach interpretations. Novice and expert raters assigned more negative evaluations of personality and prognoses for protocols accompanied by lower class case histories than for identical protocols with middle class histories attached. Lower class
patients were viewed as more maladjusted. Less insight therapy was prescribed for them. They were likelier to be diagnosed psychotic or character disordered while their middle class counterparts were more often labeled neurotic or as suffering from situational stress reaction. Although novice Rorschachers were more inclined to class-based interpretations, expert raters also manifested the biasing effect.

Influence of social class data on interpretation of Rorschach responses has produced opposite effects as well. Koscherak and Masling (1972) reported lower class Rorschach protocols rated less severely by clinicians than middle class protocols. Although they expressed surprise at the direction of their results, Koscherak and Masling asserted their study and previous research "clearly testify to the influence of social class on the clinician's judgment" (p. 418).

Among Nonschool Counselors

Studies have revealed that counselors, too, have been influenced by the socioeconomic status of their clients. Wright and Hutton (1977) discovered counselors' perceptions of similarity to and degree of liking for lower class clients influenced counselor decisions about whether further sessions would be beneficial for the client. These factors (similarity and liking) did not emerge as significant in interviews with higher status clients. Wright and Hutton believed their results suggested "counselors may
unconsciously employ a different decision-making process for high-and low-status clients" (p. 527).

Carkhuff and Pierce (1967) found client and counselor social class to be significant sources of effect. Clients most similar in social class to counselors achieved deeper self-exploration than did dissimilar clients.

Summary

Research findings such as those produced from investigations into the practice of school personnel, psychiatrists, psychologists, and nonschool counselors have brought to light dramatic patterns of class-based differential treatment of students, patients, and clients. Below the surface of ostensibly egalitarian, neutral, professional practice, social class clearly moderated the formation of professional judgment. So subtle and hidden was the working of these norms and so taken for granted and ingrained were the publicly accepted, formal rules of the game, that social class bias remained an unrecognized bias among professedly egalitarian, caring professionals like school teachers and administrators and mental health care professionals. They remained largely unaware of the presence of class bias and, indeed, were generally offended at the suggestion that class bias could be intruding itself into their professional practice. They understood their decisions as commonsensical, rational, and humane and as fitting responses to the world as they understood it. The fact that, under scrutiny,
judgments considered professional, neutral, and helpful to clients fell into discernible patterns of social class bias underlined the reality and power of this hidden process.

Class Bias Among Secondary School Counselors

With the exception of Cicourel and Kitsuse's (1963) research, intensive studies of social class bias such as those among educators and mental health professionals have not been conducted among school guidance counselors. Several researchers have studied the impact of student socioeconomic status on use of high school guidance services. Tseng and Thompson (1968) discovered that the more ambitious, affluent student who reflected middle class ideals and values used guidance services more often than did his or her lower class peers. Shapiro and Asher's (1972) research confirmed these findings; lower social status students in their study tended not to discuss post-high school plans with the guidance counselor.

These studies focused on student populations and class-based tendencies to use or avoid guidance services. Unlike previously cited research conducted with school and mental health practitioners, these studies did not focus on the helping person and his or her judgments. Cicourel and Kitsuse's (1963) study stands alone in this regard.

The Cicourel and Kitsuse Study

Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) focused their attention on how routine decisions of high school guidance counselors were related to students' decisions about college attendance and, by implication, to
those students' vocational choices. Cicourel and Kitsuse questioned assumptions commonly made regarding why students decided for or against college entrance. First, Cicourel and Kitsuse took issue with the idea that students attended college purely because they had higher IQ's and grade point averages and more financial resources. Many students with high IQ's and achievement records did not enter college. Likewise, Cicourel and Kitsuse questioned the view that a student's socialization fully explained his or her movement toward or away from academic achievement, certain vocational aspirations, and college attendance:

Class-ascribed college-going expectations might be considered an adequate explanation of the gross college/non-college distribution, but it cannot explain how students are distributed among hierarchically ranked (prestige) colleges. An explanation of such a distribution requires an investigation of the ways in which admission to various colleges is subject to specifically organizational contingencies. (p. 284)

Cicourel and Kitsuse enumerated organizational contingencies which were preconditions for college entrance. The parent or student must relate to school personnel the student's desire to attend college. The student must take and successfully complete courses required for college entry. The student must in some cases obtain the recommendation of school personnel for admission to college. The formal organization of the school clearly plays a significant role in how students' expectations and aspirations are processed and realized. For Cicourel and Kitsuse, this role is neither routine nor nonproblematic.
Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) identified the role of counseling personnel as significant in the evaluating and processing of student expectations and aspirations. To investigate how counselors assess students, the two researchers interviewed the counselor assigned to students in their research sample. Cicourel and Kitsuse systematically questioned the counselor to determine the standards she used to categorize student achievement. "And how do you determine ability?", the researchers asked her. "By tests and performance, generally," replied the counselor (p. 284). She then identified five achievement types (excellent student, average achiever, underachiever, overachiever, and opportunity student) and slotted each student from the research sample into the category she judged most fitting. Cicourel and Kitsuse then compared the counselor's categories for each student with objective measures such as standardized ability test scores (School and College Ability Tests scores) and grade averages for each student. The researchers would have expected to find a systematic relationship between the counselor's achievement type classification and the distribution of SCAT/grade average discrepancies. They discovered instead that the achievement categories into which the counselor placed students did not coincide with achievement levels indicated by the objective criteria on which she claimed to have based her judgments.

In Table 1, the range of discrepancies classified in the five achievement types by the counselor clearly indicated that her stated criteria (tests, performance) were not consistently applied and could not account for the distribution of achievement types.
Table 1
The Achievement Types Counselor Assigned to Students Are Shown with Students' SCAT Scores and Ninth Grade Point Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ninth-grade point average</th>
<th>1.00-1.50</th>
<th>1.75-2.00</th>
<th>2.25-3.00</th>
<th>3.25-4.00</th>
<th>4.25-5.00</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achievement types</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overachiever</td>
<td>(42)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underachiever</td>
<td>(68)</td>
<td>(73)(80)(84)</td>
<td>(17)(39)</td>
<td>(10)(39)</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average achiever</td>
<td>(47)(64)</td>
<td>(27)(32)(35)</td>
<td>(15)(20)(20)</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent student</td>
<td>(73)(73)(80)</td>
<td>(75)(78)</td>
<td>(84)(85)(94)</td>
<td>(84)(84)</td>
<td>(94)</td>
<td>(90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N(number of cases)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No information for 8 cases.


Note. Counselor's Achievement Types range from low (Opportunity student) to high (Excellent student). SCAT scores are in parentheses. Gradepoints range from high (1.00) to low (5.00).
Several of the counselor's classifications raised questions. Why was one student with SCAT 47/1.75-2.00 an average achiever while another with SCAT 58/3.25-4.00 was an underachiever? Why were nine students with 90-97 SCAT scores and with grade averages from 1.00-4.00 excellent while another with equivalent SCAT and grade point average was labeled average, and three others were classified underachievers?

The researchers concluded that objective, rational standards (test scores and grade averages) did not represent the basis upon which the counselor classified students' achievement. If the counselor did not classify achievement on the basis of ability and performance, on what basis did she assign students to achievement types? Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) hypothesized that students' social class characteristics may have influenced the counselor's judgment. To test their hypothesis, the researchers had the counselor position each student in the sample in one of five standard social class groups they presented to her. When the investigators compared social class positions the counselor assigned students and achievement types she ascribed to them (see Table 2), they found that 17 of 18 students rated excellent were among those classified upper class.

Because only 40% (17 out of 42) of the upper class students were categorized as excellent students, these findings do not define precisely the basis for the counselor's overall distribution of achievement types. Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) interpreted their
results, however, as supportive of the view that students' passage through the school system was "contingent upon the interpretations, judgments, and action of school personnel vis-a-vis the students' biography, social and personal adjustment, appearance and demeanor, social class . . . as well as his demonstrated ability and performance" (p. 290).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselor's social-class ratings</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overachiever</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underachiever</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average achiever</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>81*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No information on 9 cases.


Note. Counselor's Achievement Types range from low (Opportunity) to high (Excellent).
Over 20 years have elapsed since Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) completed their research. Since that time, no related research efforts have followed. Like the judgments of other helping professionals, those of the secondary school guidance counselor deserve further attention. The senior high school counselor's position can be quite influential both in the overall structure of the high school and in the individual student's movement through the high school system and into postsecondary activity (Cicourel & Kitsuse, 1963; Shertzer & Stone, 1980).

Counselors routinely guide student decisions concerning coursework and academic track placement. Such decisions materially affect students' subsequent ability to meet college admission requirements. In certain cases, written recommendations from counselors are necessary for students considering college. Berger's (1965) study revealed that counselor recommendations exerted a strong influence in certain college admissions decisions (particularly in the case of higher prestige colleges). "It is a crucial factor in marginal cases and in many cases the applicant may be denied admission even if otherwise qualified" (p. 337).

Counselors are designated as official providers of information about colleges, admission requirements, and procedures. The counselor's provision of accurate information in timely and effective manner in itself constitutes considerable influential power:
School counselors have . . . been viewed as gatekeepers of the good life in the United States because of the potential they hold to sort and direct students by their attitudes and information into categories of who is worthy or likely to succeed in certain . . . opportunities . . . . School counselors are seen by some persons as conveying subjective and inaccurate attitudes to students by subtly reinforcing them not to take certain curricula, attend certain schools, make certain plans, or pursue certain goals because these students do not fill the school counselor's subjective criteria of who should be accepted into or follow the more prestigious or challenging pathways in society. (Herr & Cramer, 1979, p. 15)

The possibility that counselors' judgments about students' educational (and consequently vocational) futures may be based more on social than achievement and ability criteria deserves attention.
CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

This study was conducted within the qualitative research paradigm. A brief overview of the qualitative model will provide background for presentation of the procedures.

The Qualitative Paradigm

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) list five distinctive characteristics of qualitative inquiry. Each of these characteristics has received extensive attention from other leading exponents of qualitative research.

First, in qualitative inquiry, the natural setting or context is the direct source of data, and the inquirer is the key instrument (Patton, 1985; Smith, 1983). Qualitative researchers concern themselves with the setting because they believe social behavior is context dependent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather than strip findings of their context, wherever possible researchers will enter natural settings to gather information (Denzin, 1978). This holistic approach resists the breaking down of reality into cause-effect, into dependent and independent variables (Patton, 1985). Qualitative inquirers supplement what they collect within the setting with understanding developed from being on site and from extensive and in-depth interviewing. Recorded information and subjective interpretations and reactions are reviewed by the researcher "with the researcher's insight being the key instrument for analysis" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 27).
Reliance on the researcher as instrument breaks sharply with positivist tradition. The quantitative researcher holds that certitude is possible and can be attained through the researcher's adherence to proper methodological procedure. The qualitative researcher believes that no instrument or method is privileged, that no procedure can guarantee access to actual conditions in the world (Hughes, 1980; Smith & Heshusius, 1986). Clearly, in qualitative research no claim can be made for the instrument's absolute freedom from subjectivity (Denzin, 1978). In this type of inquiry, researchers assiduously attend to and record (along with the other information) their subjective responses, musings, and interpretations over the course of the inquiry. Researchers attempt to be aware of and to limit bias and to render an on-going account of the process of observation and insight formation (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Second, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) point out that qualitative research is descriptive; in it, findings do not tend to be reduced to numerical symbols. In their quest for understanding, qualitative researchers analyze page after page of material attempting to report that material as closely as possible to the form in which it was originally conveyed. Frequently, anecdotes and quotations are included (Patton, 1985).

Third, within the qualitative paradigm, researchers focus on process rather than on product or outcome. How people negotiate meanings, how certain ideas enter the realm of the commonsensical,
how given expectations become part of the fabric of everyday life are the kinds of issues with which qualitative researchers typically concern themselves. To comprehend human social reality, the researcher must discover actors' definitions of the situation, their ways of perceiving and interpreting reality and the relationship this has to their behaviors (Patton, 1985; Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979).

Fourth, qualitative inquirers rely chiefly on inductive analysis and generally do not start with hypotheses they wish to uphold or disprove (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1985). Clearly, in many cases qualitative researchers do begin with at least a hunch and at most a well-developed hypothesis. Such hunches or hypotheses are, however, always considered open to change as the study progresses and information accumulates. The qualitative inquirer is not bound to initial hunches or hypotheses but uses them as jumping-off points.

Qualitative researchers use part of their study to discover important questions and tentative theories which emerge from field experience. Glaser and Strauss (1967) identify this as "grounded theory." As Bogdan and Biklen (1982) explain, qualitative researchers are putting together a puzzle whose picture they do not already know. They construct a picture which takes shape as they collect and examine the parts. This is not say that qualitative researchers begin their inquiry without initial dispositions, ideas, or questions, only that these do not constitute an unchanging framework within which the research project is constrained. Initial
hunches, ideas, and questions evolve and change as the researcher gathers and analyzes data.

Fifth, for the qualitative researcher, meaning is essential. Individuals' varying views of their world and differing attempts to make sense of their experience are of primary interest. Researchers seek to understand and render an account of varied participant perspectives. Understanding, Verstehen in the Weberian sense, represents the goal of qualitative research (Weber, 1947). Understanding is, in effect, an end in itself (Denzin, 1973; Patton, 1985; Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979). Qualitative researchers do not set out to discover or affirm law-like generalities as do quantitative researchers (Hughes, 1980). Gadamer (1975) expressed this qualitative perspective in his discussion of the nature of historical research:

Historical research does not endeavor to grasp the concrete phenomenon as an instance of a general rule. The individual case does not serve only to corroborate a regularity from which predictions can in turn be made. Its ideal is rather to understand the phenomenon itself in its unique and historical concreteness. However much general experience is involved, the aim is not to confirm and expand these general experiences in order to attain knowledge of a law, e.g. how men, peoples and states evolve, but to understand how this man, this people or this state is what it has become—more generally, how has it happened that it is so. (p. 6)

In summary, the qualitative paradigm is inductive, phenomenological, contextual, subjective, holistic, process-oriented, close to the subject, descriptive, ungeneralizable (in the quantitative sense of this term), and oriented toward understanding human actors within natural settings.
(Cook & Reichardt, 1979). Underlying these characteristics identified by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) and others are epistemological assumptions of an idealist nature.

Unlike quantitative researchers who espouse a correspondence view of reality, qualitative inquirers adopt the stance that all reality (and none so much as human social reality) is mediated by the human mind and unavoidably colored by subjectivity and values. For the qualitative inquirer, human social reality is shaped and constructed by the human mind in different ways at different times and places. Researchers who adopt a positivistic approach, on the other hand, understand human social reality as objective, stable, and accessible. They believe they can know and describe reality objectively by properly applying scientific methods which guarantee access to value-free, objective, factual data which can be relied upon to correspond directly to reality (Hughes, 1980; Smith, 1983).

These sharply divergent epistemological perspectives are reflected in radically different approaches to conducting and reporting research. For the quantitative researcher who searches for law-like generalities (a concept grounded in positivist epistemology), acceptable research results must be reliable, valid, and generalizable. For the qualitative researcher who adopts an idealist epistemological perspective, understanding is the goal (Hughes, 1980).

Qualitative and quantitative approaches have developed along separate lines and have evolved different logics of justification:
What we refer to as the quantitative approach is based on an external perspective—facts separate from values, truth as a matter of correspondence to an independently existing reality, and the idea that we may adopt a "God's Eye" point of view. The qualitative perspective is based on an internalist position—truth as socially and historically conditioned agreement, social reality as mind-constructed, and the idea that the only point of view we can take is that of various people based on their various interests purposes, and so on. (Smith, 1984, p. 381)

The logic justifying the quantitative approach requires reliance upon scientific method. Indeed, it is only by strict adherence to proper method that one can hope to avoid error and arrive at truth as it is understood within this paradigm. The logic of justification for the quantitative approach is based on the assumption that the researcher can stand apart from the reality he or she is investigating and represent that reality as it truly (i.e., objectively) is by applying the proper techniques, and that others are then logically compelled to accept the research results thus attained.

The logic justifying the qualitative approach rests on the assumption that no method, technique, or procedure ensures the researcher access to truth in the objective sense in which truth is understood within the quantitative paradigm. Truth in the qualitative sense is quite a different thing from truth in the quantitative sense. It is understood differently. It is pursued differently.

The logic which justifies qualitative inquiry supports the search for truth as it is understood within the idealist

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framework, that is, as a matter of internal coherence of one's statements and of socially and historically conditioned agreement. In the search for truth thus understood, no epistemological privilege attaches to any particular research method. No particular technique or procedure is viewed as capable of guaranteeing truth or compelling others to accept research results obtained through proper application of method. The researcher cannot be compelled to use a particular method because no method can ensure objectivity or guarantee that the truth has been discovered once and for all. The epistemology underlying the qualitative approach compels qualitative researchers and their readers to relinquish the quest for such objectivity and for such truth. Recognizing and acting upon the epistemological principles which sustain the qualitative paradigm requires leaving behind the quest for a certitude grounded in the use of epistemologically privileged methodology.

To carry out qualitative inquiry while insisting upon the adoption of certain methods and techniques to safeguard the researcher from subjectivity and error would represent a contradiction at the epistemological level. Supporting the value of qualitative research while insisting that it be, in fact, epistemologically quantitative to be credible represents an unsuccessful attempt to bridge the gulf between quantitative and qualitative paradigms by, in effect, reducing qualitative inquiry to a type of quantitative inquiry. So far (despite Weber's valiant effort), the epistemological chasm between the qualitative
and quantitative paradigms remains unbridged. As Patton's (1985) and LeCompte and Goetz's (1982) attempts (among others) have demonstrated, efforts to ignore the epistemological rift between these two paradigms has led to the capture and engulfment of the qualitative paradigm within the quantitative paradigm.

Qualitative researchers study individuals and groups in great depth within their own natural contexts, to gather thick, rich data enabling researchers to learn holistically how actors interpret their own worlds, and to deepen and extend understanding of other subjective states (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979). From the extensive information they collect, qualitative researchers proceed inductively to search for emergent patterns, to describe and interpret what they uncover while systematically tracking their own subjective responses and insights (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1985). For the qualitative inquirer, then, research into human social reality is a continuous search for understanding, a "never ending process (hermeneutical) of interpreting the interpretations of others" (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). In accord with these ideas, this study is an attempt to understand how counselors give meaning to an important aspect of their job, to discover what constitutes for them the accepted and the commonsensical as they provide educational and vocational guidance to their high school clients.
Materials

Materials used with each participant in this study included a series of nine vignettes, an information sheet, a data display chart, a tape recording and full transcription of each interview as well as field notes recorded for each interview. A file containing a complete set of these materials was created for each participant.

Two series of nine vignettes (Set A and Set B) were created to describe nine fictitious high school students (Appendix A). Each vignette was comprised of a student’s social class background (parents’ educational levels and occupations and family residence), achievement indicators (grade point average and standardized test percentile), and statement of general career interest area. Most of the social class and achievement background provided in the vignettes is available to guidance counselors on standard student record forms used in public schools. Both sets of vignettes are identical except that on one set of vignettes (Set A), each of the nine fictitious students stated a desire to attend college. On the other set (Set B), each student expressed a desire to pursue postsecondary education.

At the bottom of each vignette, participants were directed to consider the particular student's best interests and to indicate which option they were most inclined to encourage (i.e., vocational school, apprenticeship, community college, the military, four-year
college, on-the-job training, or other). Participants were then asked to write a brief explanation for their choice in each case.

Vignettes were constructed systematically. Each was limited to 82-87 words and 9-10 typed lines, presented in the same sequence and, as nearly as possible, in the same words. Both sets of vignettes (Set A and Set B) were presented to participants in the same random order. To avoid possible interference from gender issues, only males were depicted. To avoid intrusion of possible ethnic or racial issues, only Anglo-Saxon names were assigned. Each student was represented as a member of an intact nuclear family.

The nine vignettes included three upper class students, three middle class students, and three lower class students. Social class position of each student was determined using Hollingshead's three-factor Index of Social Position (Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958) (Appendix B). Because this index is nearly 30 years old, Treiman's (1977) occupational prestige ratings (Appendix C) were used to confirm relative rankings of each occupation used. Although the Hollingshead scale takes into account only fathers' occupations, mothers in each vignette were also assigned occupations. To encourage readers to average out a social class in each case, both mothers' and fathers' occupations were selected from the same occupational prestige range. No unlikely combinations (e.g., father as a custodian and mother as a federal judge) were introduced, a
decision based upon Himmelfarb and Senn's (1969) findings which support an averaging formulation of impression formation in the judgment of individuals' social class standings. Grade point averages based on a four-point scale and achievement test percentiles were assigned in high (3.78-3.91/90-93), middle (3.0-3.13/62-65), and low (1.77-1.90/41-44) ranges. Scores in each category were allowed to vary slightly to allow for realism in the vignettes. Achievement percentile ranges were identified by referring to most recent Department of Public Instruction figures on state achievement test norms for the state in which the research was conducted. (T. Stefonek, personal communication, June 16, 1986).

In each vignette a general career interest was stated by the student. Career interests were worded broadly (e.g., business, health care, hospitality industry) and did not in themselves constrain the counselor to recommend any particular postsecondary educational track. In each case, the stated career interest could be pursued through vocational as well as college coursework.

The vignettes were constructed systematically and presented to participants in random order. The vignettes served primarily as a device to engage participants in discussion about how they arrived at their judgments regarding advisees' potential for college work. Results of the forced choice exercises provided information about several important trends in the recommendations. The researcher considered her dialogues with the 40 participants at the heart of the research effort, however. While results of
the forced choice exercises provided a snapshot of overall participant response, it was the participants' explanations which revealed how they arrived at and made sense of their judgments.

A direction sheet (Appendix D) was prepared for participants who were requested to read it before beginning the vignettes exercise. An information sheet (Appendix E) was used to gather demographic data about each participating counselor. Appendix F contains the data display chart used with each participant. After participants had completed the written vignette exercise, the researcher noted and studied any patterns in options recommended for students of varying ability and social class and used this information in the ensuing interview. The data display chart was also used to track and report overall patterns that emerged for participants with Set A vignettes and those with Set B.

A tape recording was made of each interview (with respondents' permission) and was transcribed onto a word processor. Full print-outs were produced and filed along with field notes written during and after each interview.

The researcher recorded field notes for every interview. In writing field notes, the researcher recorded ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches and noted patterns and themes that emerged. The field notes provided a personal log which assisted the researcher in tracking the project's development, in determining how the research plan was influenced by the information gathered, and in
remaining aware of ways information affected the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

In this study, all tape recorded interviews were supplemented with field notes so context and meaning of the interview could be described (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The researcher recorded field notes on site while the participant completed the written vignette exercise. After each interview, the researcher wrote or tape recorded additional field notes which were subsequently typed and filed along with the interview transcript. Transcripts for each tape recording were completed as soon as possible after the interview to ensure fuller and more accurate recall.

For each respondent, then, a set of materials was systematically gathered and filed: information sheet, completed written vignette exercise, data display chart, tape recording of the interview, full transcription of the recorded interview, and researcher's field notes.

**Participants**

Forty practicing high school guidance counselors participated in this study. Because it was assumed that guidance counselors use practical experience and observation to develop a professional style and disposition, each participating counselor had three or more years of experience in senior high school educational and vocational counseling. The 40 counselors in the study were randomly divided into two equal groups. One group received Set A of the vignettes, and the other received Set B.
Procedures

Prospective participants were contacted by telephone. Counselors in one-person guidance departments were contacted directly. In the case of guidance departments with two or more counselors, the chairperson was contacted by phone, the study's purpose was explained in general terms, and the cooperation of the department was requested. The chairperson was asked to invite the participation of department members. If the counselor(s) agreed to participate, arrangements were made for a meeting at some time between August and the end of October, 1986. A confirmatory follow-up letter was sent (Appendix G).

When researcher and participant met, the participant was assured of confidentiality, provided a brief review of the purpose of the study, and told how the written exercise and interview would be conducted. Because bias is a sensitive issue and does not lend itself to direct observation, participants were informed only that the research concerned how guidance counselors assist high school students with postsecondary educational and vocational planning. After completing the vignette exercise and interview, all respondents were fully apprised of the nature of the study and were assured that their written and taped communication would be entirely eliminated from the study if they requested this.

A nonschedule standardized interview format (Denzin, 1978) was employed with each of the 40 participants after he or she had completed the written vignette exercise. Use of the nonschedule
standardized interview requires a list of information needed from each participant but varies phrasing and order of questions to fit each respondent's characteristics and the characteristics of each interview situation (Denzin, 1978).

Denzin (1978) examined several assumptions underlying this style of interviewing. First, if a question's meaning is to be standardized, it must be articulated in words familiar to interviewees. Participants have unique ways of defining their worlds. The interviewer must enter into the unique world and language of individual respondents. Second, no rigid sequence of questions is adequate for all participants. Denzin (1978) cites Richardson, Dohrenwend, and Klein who contend that "'the most effective sequence for any respondent is determined by his readiness and willingness to take up a topic as it comes up'" (p. 115). The final assumption undergirding this approach supports the notion that although form and sequence of questions may vary, their meaning can be kept equivalent across respondents (Denzin, 1978).

Nearly all questions used in the interview were open and were generally of two kinds, focused and maximally open. Focused questions directed respondents' attention to a specific area (e.g., How does Adam's academic background influence your inclination to recommend community college?). Maximally open questions led respondents to elaborate at will (e.g., Could you tell me more about that?). Complex, controversial, confrontational questions were generally reserved for the middle or end of the interview when
respondents' interest had been stimulated, and rapport was well developed. Most researchers follow this pattern in question presentation (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

During interview and analysis phases of the study, the researcher continually conducted member checks. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define the member check as a technique "whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected" (p. 314).

The researcher employed part-by-part and total verbal summaries during interviews to check participants' intentionality, correct errors in interpretation, and provide opportunity for additional input. Frequently, the researcher checked member reactions to emerging categories and trends in the data. Due to the nature of the subject under investigation, the researcher did not always alter categories or interpretations solely on the basis of participant reactions. If findings appeared to support particular interpretations, these were maintained. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out, the researcher must not identify entirely with members' reactions because all members may "share some common myth and may intentionally or unintentionally desire to keep that myth in place" (p. 315).

Data Analysis

During and after the collection of information, inductive data analysis was employed. Described as "a process of making sense of
the field data" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202), inductive analysis proceeds from specific raw units of data to subsuming categories of information. Like content analysis, inductive analysis seeks to uncover and make explicit embedded information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transcriptions and accompanying field notes and data display charts were carefully reviewed. Regularities and patterns as well as specific topics were noted. A list of words and phrases (coding categories) were generated to represent topics and recurrent themes and patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). As units of information began to accumulate within initial categories, the researcher endeavored to compose propositional statements to provide a basis for inclusion/exclusion judgments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As Lincoln and Guba pointed out, this method essentially involves "sorting units into provisional categories on the basis of 'look-alike' characteristics, which, in the spirit of the naturalistic paradigm, may initially be only tacitly understood" (p. 203).

The actual physical handling of the material requires brief description. First, the researcher produced two copies of each set of transcription/field notes. One copy was filed intact. The other became a working copy. Each page of each working copy was numbered sequentially and carried the participant's code number at the top. All working copies were read through in succession and without interruption at least twice (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). As a
coding category was developed, its label was written in along the margins to mark off units of material that belonged within that category.

Once coded, each piece of information (whether a sentence, a paragraph, or several paragraphs) was labelled with its contributor's code number and the number of the transcript page on which it occurred. It was clipped from the page and filed in a folder representing the category into which it had been provisionally placed. As is usual in qualitative inquiry, categories were re-labeled, dropped, and added, and units of information were shuffled from one category to the next until exclusion/inclusion criteria became firm (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

After analysis, findings were reported in narrative form. Quotations and anecdotal information were used to illustrate and support identified themes and patterns. The researcher's interpretations and subjective involvement were reported.

Each copy of the report was coded to enable others to trace the researcher's statements and interpretations back to original supporting material. Statements in this report were labeled with participant and file code numbers permitting the reader to return both to original transcripts/field notes or to files containing material for given categories. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to such procedures as maintenance of an audit trail, a step which can enhance the qualitative study's credibility.
Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted during July of 1986 with 11 practicing high school guidance counselors from a Midwestern state. Each had over three years of experience. During the pilot study, important information was gained regarding participant reaction to research materials and procedures and general direction of the study. The pilot study also provided the opportunity to test and practice information gathering and analysis processes.

All participants demonstrated willingness to complete the written exercises which required from 20 to 40 minutes. They described the task as clearly defined and easy to do. Participants verified the realistic nature of the vignettes, indicating that the nine fictitious students depicted in the vignettes were typical of students in their practice. Participants demonstrated willingness to engage in the interview, and permission to tape record the interview was readily granted in each case. As a rule, counselors continued talking long past the agreed upon time limit of 45 minutes. This talkativeness may have been partly a function of the counselors' relaxed summer schedule and did not represent typical response during the busy school year. This response could also indicate that participants preferred more time to express themselves. As a result of this experience, the researcher decided to request that prospective participants reserve at least an hour for the interview and the vignettes exercise.
When informed of the underlying purpose for the study, no participant requested that his or her taped or written remarks be eliminated from the research results. In every case, participants expressed interest in learning results of the study.

As a result of the pilot study, two changes were introduced into the materials. The career interest area listed for Adam was changed from animal science to business when it was discovered that counselors perceived animal science as leading in only two directions: veterinary school or vocational training. Animal science was dropped because it did not appear to evoke in counselors the full range of educational and vocational opportunities intended. In the Jason vignette, the term janitor was changed to custodian in keeping with more contemporary parlance.

Procedural change included the decision to produce two sets of vignettes and to use one set (Set A) with half the participants and the other set (Set B) with the other half. The researcher reached this decision after participants stated that their decisions would have been more varied had the nine students aspired simply to postsecondary education rather than explicitly to college education. The researcher decided to administer Set A and Set B of the vignettes to learn more about counselors' reactions to explicit college aspiration in students versus a more diffuse aspiration. The researcher wondered if, as Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) contended, student ability to negotiate the system hinges very substantially on their verbalizing college aspirations in direct
ways to school personnel. Do counselors respond one way to a set of students who directly state college aspiration and another way to a set of students who make diffuse statements of aspiration (i.e., who aspire simply to some kind of postsecondary education)? Is the counselor more likely to make educational recommendations along class lines if students express their aspirations in diffuse rather than direct ways?

A second procedural change involved the decision to include an interview with each participant. Originally, the researcher had planned to have all participants complete the written vignettes exercise and then to interview only half of the participating counselors. As the pilot study progressed, it became clear that the interviews provided an indispensable source of information about counselors' thought processes. Relying solely on a reading of participants' comments on the vignettes exercise proved inadequate as a method for collecting information. During the course of an interview, the researcher frequently found that she had misinterpreted counselors' written remarks. Further, the researcher noted patterns among counselors which were likely to emerge only during an interview process and not in response to a written instrument. A recurring pattern throughout most interviews, for example, was the counselor's spontaneous mention of the significant influence his or her family background exerted upon current guidance practice. Because this seemed such a potentially rich area for
exploration, it was included specifically among information topics used to direct the nonschedule standardized interviews.

Over the course of pilot study interviews, the researcher accumulated a provisional list of information topics with which to conduct nonschedule standardized interviews. Through a process of adding, subtracting, and altering, the researcher composed the list which was used to begin conducting the 40 research interviews. As is usual in qualitative research, this list of topics was continually altered during the course of information gathering. Several information topics had been developed before pilot study interviews began, some developed during the pilot study, and a number of topics evolved as actual information collection progressed.

During the course of the pilot study, the researcher found the process of making transcriptions of tape recorded interviews a very helpful part of the analysis process. Although lengthy and tedious (five to six hours for each hour and a half of interview time), the very slowness and repetitiveness of the process enabled thorough review of the interviews including vocal tone, hesitations, and verbal underlining. The transcription process provided an opportunity to make connections between ideas and to note regularities in the information and time to generate insights.

A problem which surfaced during the pilot study was the researcher's tendency to relate to interviewees as fellow guidance counselors and not as participants in a research study. This tendency lessened the researcher's effectiveness as an observer.
The researcher attempted to overcome this obstacle by spending a brief period of time specifically entering into a research attitude immediately before meeting the participant.

A related issue was the researcher's tendency to assume understanding of key words and phrases, of important professional experiences, and of interviewees' emotional reactions to these experiences. The researcher traced this tendency to her own recent experience as a high school counselor. To avoid interpreting for the participant, the researcher attempted to keep a mental note of the number of interpretations used per session and to replace interpretive comments with open questions. During the transcription process, the researcher was able to check types of interactions made with interviewees, monitor numbers of interviewer interpretations, and reduce their occurrence.

The pilot study provided the researcher with practice necessary to refine research materials, information gathering and analysis processes. The researcher was also able to identify several tentative hypotheses and to add and adjust information topics to be pursued during the actual information gathering phase.
CHAPTER IV

THE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR CONTEXT

The researcher drew a sample of 40 participants from 16 public secondary schools in Midstate. (To protect the anonymity of participants, the researcher substituted Midstate for the name of the upper Midwestern state in which this study was conducted.) All participants had practiced high school guidance for at least three years and were typical of secondary school counselors employed in public school districts in Midstate in 1986.

To set the context for this study, several pertinent characteristics of the environment in which participants worked must be described. These include the availability and accessibility of postsecondary institutions in Midstate, overall level of academic preparation of Midstate high school students, and characteristics of school districts from which participants were drawn. Each of these represented an important aspect of the context in which participants provided educational and vocational counseling.

Certain less tangible but no less significant features of the context in which participants worked also require discussion. These features were cultural; that is, they derived from the particular ways of living and thinking which characterized the participants' environment. Two cultural contextual elements emerged as particularly significant for the practice of educational/vocational advisement.
First, participating counselors were advising young members of a democratic society. Participants had to determine in how directive a fashion they would advise their young clients by reconciling support for clients' right to self-determination and their need for direction and guidance.

Second, participants were advising young people in a society where the cultural ideals clearly emphasize individual equality and opportunity. Participants had to reconcile these cultural ideals with practical limitations which constrained individual advisees. The first of these aspects of the cultural context emerged as an overtly problematic issue for participants while the second appeared to be resolved without conscious deliberation.

Description of the Research Sample

The Midstate Department of Public Instruction listed over 1500 public school counselors employed within the state's public school districts in 1986. Of these counselors, over 800 were high school guidance counselors. A typical sample of 40 was drawn from among these public secondary school guidance counselors.

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) define it, a typical sample is a purposeful sample taken "when the purpose is to avoid rejection of information on the grounds that it is known to arise from special or deviant cases" (p. 102). It was determined that a typical sample would best serve the purposes of this inquiry because it was designed to examine judgments typical guidance counselors make in the course of educational/occupational advisement and the influence

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students' social class might exert on these judgments. The focus of the study was not on the deviant or unusual case but on the ordinary or typical counseling professional performing the advisement role. In terms of such key characteristics as race, sex, age, and years of experience, the 40 participants were representative of Midstate counselors. In terms of social class background, they were also typical.

Race

All participants in this research sample were Caucasian as were over 95% of public school counselors in Midstate in 1986. Most minority school counselors were employed in urban and Native American reservation school districts. In this study no participants were drawn from Native American reservation school districts, and none were drawn from those urban areas with the largest minority populations. Racially, counselors in the sample were typical of guidance personnel employed in Midstate secondary schools.

Sex

The male-female ratio in the sample approximated that found in the general population of high school counselors in Midstate. Twenty-six (65%) of the participants were male, and 14 (35%) were female. The state's secondary school counselors were approximately two-thirds male and one-third female.
Age

The age range of participants reasonably typified that found among Midstate high school counselors as a group. Nearly two-thirds of the Midstate secondary counselors fell in the 31-50 age range as did about two-thirds of the participants. Roughly a third of Midstate counselors were over 50 as were about a third of the counselors in the sample.

Years of Experience

Participants' years of experience in high school guidance and counseling roughly approximated the experience levels of Midstate high school counselors in general. In Midstate as a whole and in the sample, about a third of the high school counselors had between 4 and 12 years of experience while over 50% possessed 13 or more years in the field.

Social Class Status

It has long been known that public school personnel are drawn predominantly from the middle and lower classes (Lortie, 1975). Thirty-one (77.5%) of the participants in this study reported middle middle and lower middle class origins; 2 (5%) reported lower class backgrounds. The remaining 7 (17.5%) described their families of origin as upper middle class. When asked to identify their current social class status, nearly all participants described themselves as middle class. Over 50% identified themselves as upper middle, while 42% said they belonged to the middle middle class. Of the 2 (5%) participants who described their current status as upper class, one
claimed to belong to the top 6% of the U.S. population in socioeconomic terms. Half of all the participants reported an increase in current socioeconomic status over that of their families of origin (for example, an increase from lower to middle class or from middle middle to upper middle class); no one reported currently belonging to a social class lower than that of his or her parents.

Conclusion

The race, sex, age, experience, and social class characteristics of the 40 participants in this study were typical of the characteristics of guidance counselors in Midstate secondary schools in 1986. The participants were Caucasian, predominantly male, and mainly in the 31-50 year age range. Participants tended to be highly experienced practitioners. They reported mainly middle middle and lower middle class origins with current social class status above that of their families of origin.

Relevant Features of Participants' Context

High school counselors advise adolescents in the important process of selecting for themselves a postsecondary school activity. To set the context in which participants in this study perform their advisement role, it is important to review the educational options open to Midstate high school students upon graduation and the general academic preparedness of students counselors advise. It can be reasonably assumed that the accessibility of various higher educational institutions affects the advisement counselors...
provide as does the level of academic achievement their students have attained.

**Accessibility of Postsecondary Institutions**

Opportunities for postsecondary education and training in Midstate are more plentiful and more accessible than they are in many other states. Levels of students' academic attainment, too, are considerably above national norms. For its population, Midstate has exceptionally extensive public postsecondary educational systems including numerous two-year and four-year college campuses and vocational schools. Alongside its extensive public higher educational system, the state has a well-developed private higher educational system.

Midstate has followed a policy of making available to its citizens higher education at vocational and university levels. This accessibility is geographical in that institutions are scattered throughout the state. Financially, institutions of higher learning are also reasonably accessible. Costs at every Midstate public institution of higher education fall within the moderate range. Costs at some private institutions are moderate as well while costs at others exceed $10,000 annually (Lehman, 1986). Reciprocity agreements with bordering states make a number of outstate institutions as financially accessible to Midstate students as are their own state schools.

Along with the geographical and financial accessibility of numerous institutions in the state are the relatively open
admissions policies on many of the campuses. Admission requirements for Midstate postsecondary institutions do vary. A high school diploma (and in some cases a passing score on a qualifying exam) entitles students to admission to vocational technical training. Some public four-year universities accept students who are in the top three-quarters of their graduating classes while others are more restrictive. Usually, very low ranking students can qualify for admission to colleges by attaining ACT scores above certain levels or, in some cases, by successfully completing a probationary period at the institution, or by first achieving an acceptable grade point average at a two-year university center. Admission requirements at the two-year campuses tend to be more open than requirements for four-year campuses. Generally, then, even low-ranking students are not eliminated from entering postsecondary institutions and proving themselves there. This is not to imply that all Midstate postsecondary institutions, private and public, maintain open admission policies for there are numerous selective institutions. The point here is that Midstate guidance counselors work in a context where few rather than many students are eliminated from considering college entrance solely on the basis of academic performance in high school.

Academic Preparedness of Midstate Students

Overall, Midstate high school students are well prepared academically to enter postsecondary institutions. Midstate's high school graduation rate exceeds 80% and is among the 10 highest in
the country (Berg & Doyle, 1987). In nationally normed achievement tests, the 60th to 70th percentile band represents the average band for Midstate students (T. Stefonik, personal communication, June 16, 1986). ACT test results produced by the state’s juniors and seniors put it among the top five states in the nation on this measure of scholastic aptitude (Berg & Doyle, 1987).

The participants in this study provide educational and occupational advisement within a context where kindergarten through grade twelve education produces high school graduates who score considerably above national norms on achievement and scholastic aptitude tests and who have within their reach an array of postsecondary institutions.

Clearly, participants in this study do not work exclusively with students who fit the higher achieving profile that represents the average for Midstate. Like most guidance counselors, participants in this study advise students who represent a range of achievement and potential, who express more or less desire to pursue some form of postsecondary education or training, and who perceive this option as more or less accessible to them. Regardless of these individual variations among their clients, guidance counselors in Midstate work within a context where postsecondary education is supported and accessible. Opportunities to enter postsecondary institutions are relatively available regardless of individuals’ geographic locations or finances. Even for those who rank below
average academically, college entrance is possible, and vocational training is, of course, clearly an option.

**Characteristics of Participants' School Districts**

Participants were drawn from 16 public high schools in Midstate. The high schools were classified as mid-sized or large. Each of these schools belonged to either a Class A or a Class B athletic conference. The state's Interscholastic Athletic Association designates high schools Class A, B, or C on the basis of size. Five participants were employed in three Class B schools where enrollments ranged from about 400 to about 600. The remaining 35 participants were drawn from 13 Class A schools for which enrollments numbered from about 600 to over 2,000.

No participants came from the small Class C schools where enrollments were under 300 students. Class C schools are typically located in lightly populated rural areas. Counselors from these small high schools were not included in the sample because it was felt that such small rural communities were likely to be characterized by flat rather than well-defined social class structures. Counselors working in such small high schools may be no less aware of social class and no less influenced in their judgments by this factor; however, counselors in Class C schools were assumed to have less day to day contact with clients representing a range of social class status. Such a clientele would be more typical for counselors working in larger population centers. It was decided to interview counselors more likely to routinely encounter students
representing a wider variety of social class backgrounds. Consequently, participants were limited to counselors employed in Class A or B schools.

Nearly all participants worked in the context of a guidance department with two or more members. In only one school was the guidance staff limited to a single counselor. In five schools, teams of two counselors comprised the guidance department. In a sixth school, half-time counselors assisted two full-time guidance counselors. In the remaining nine schools, staffs of four or more (often including a part-time counselor) comprised the guidance department. The participants in this study, then, practiced guidance counseling in mid-size or large high schools and nearly always functioned in departments of two or more counselors.

Cultural Factors

The context within which participants advise students is saturated with certain philosophical and ideological assumptions. Some of these touch closely upon the guidance counselor's work and pose problems which counselors must resolve if they are to conduct the business of advisement efficiently, or indeed, if they are to conduct it at all.

Two problems of this type emerged clearly during the study. First was the question of individuals' right to self-determination versus their need for direction. The counselor provides guidance for young people within a democratic system; he or she must respect advisees' freedom and autonomy while addressing their need for
advisement in the complex and serious process of choosing a direction after high school. This issue of autonomy versus direction required that participants choose a more directive position (which emphasized advisees' need for guidance) or a more nondirective position (which emphasized advisees' right to self-determination). Second was the balance participants had to maintain between individual equality and opportunity as these are represented in accepted cultural assumptions and practical limitations constraining individual advisees.

To conduct guidance on a case by case basis within their cultural context, participants had to organize approaches which enabled them to balance the individual's right to self-determination with his or her need for direction and to balance culturally embedded assumptions regarding equality and opportunity with practical limitations constraining individuals.

**Directiveness versus nondirectiveness.** The high school guidance counselor assists adolescents in the important process of selecting for themselves a postsecondary school activity. In the United States, the advisement role of high school counselors requires that they provide guidance while respecting the individual's right to self-determination. To practice guidance within this context, the counselor must strike a balance between the direction of young inexperienced persons and the protection of their right to make their own decisions. Participants did this by
adopting a more directive approach (with the emphasis on guidance) or a more nondirective approach (with emphasis on advisee autonomy).

The issue of directiveness versus nondirectiveness arose early in the study. The nature of the exercise participants were required to perform provoked much of the discussion on this topic. Participants were asked to read nine vignettes each containing information about a fictitious eleventh grade boy. Based on the information they were given, participants were to select from seven possible postsecondary school activities (college, community college, vocational school, apprenticeship, the military, on-the-job training, and other) the one they judged to be in each boy's best interests. Although 39 of the 40 participants agreed to make these judgments, over half (62%) indicated that in practice they adopted a nondirective stance and would not operate by representing to an advisee any one best choice. Over a quarter (27%) of participants were inclined to take a more directive position.

The researcher recognized this matter as overtly problematic when participant after participant responded to it as an issue requiring that they take a position and defend it. Statements of their positions were more often defensive and even moralistic in tone than neutral or detached. The researcher concluded that this question was one which had received serious personal consideration and which bore closely on participants' sense of professional identity.
Directive and nondirective approaches were not difficult to distinguish as the terms were applied fairly consistently by participants. Often they labeled themselves directive or nondirective. At other times, participants' accounts of their conduct in practice identified them as directive or nondirective.

The directive approach was consistently described as the counselor's overt guiding of the advisee in a specific direction through the use of specific recommendations. The nondirective approach was described as the counselor's presentation of an array of options without any overt direction of the individual. The nondirective counselor was presented as adopting a neutral stance, as avoiding specific recommendations, and encouraging advisees to make their own decisions.

Over half of the participants (62%) indicated that in practice they adopted a nondirective stance. They reported favoring student self-determination over more active direction of the student and asserted that they would be unlikely to steer students specifically in one direction or another. They tended to describe their function as helping students discern their own personal goals (as distinct from parental or peer expectations and goals), informing students about all available options, and supporting students in making their own decisions. These participants generally presented themselves as confirming whatever choices students made regardless of the counselors' own internal assessments of the wisdom of these choices. These participants
admitted forming judgments about students' chances for success in their chosen paths but reported keeping such judgments out of the advisement process.

To support their nondirective position, 11 of these participants referred to the negative reputation they believed highly directive counselors have given the profession. They related stories about judgmental counselors who had discouraged advisees from pursuing their chosen goals only to be proven wrong when, years later, disgruntled advisees returned to chastise these counselors for attempting to alter or limit their goals. In the following excerpt, a participant relates one such story:

"I'm not sure that as a counselor I should say to a kid, "I don't think you should go to college. I think you should go to a vocational school." Our goddamn group of people have been accused of this, and we have kids coming back all the time. I worked with a lady [guidance counselor] who is now retired and who I dearly love, but she was great at saying, "You'll never do this. You'll never be an optometrist!" And they come back here, and they tell me, "Hey, I am an optometrist!" Ya. We're not gods, and we just can't do that. And what I tell kids is, if you want something, go for it! (37/7)*

The clear implication in this and similar accounts was that nondirective approaches emphasizing students' rights were to be favored over more directive approaches that invited criticism from

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*Following each excerpt, a citation appears. The first number is the participant's identification number. Identification numbers do not represent the order in which participants were interviewed. In other words, (37/7) does not represent the 37th person interviewed. The second number refers to the interview transcript page on which the quotation can be found. This notation procedure is used throughout the dissertation.
advisees who rightly challenged the accuracy and fairness of counselors' assessments of their potential. One participant summed up the nondirective point of view:

> I don't prejudge anybody when they come in and talk about what they want to do. To me, it's more important what they're interested in doing and what their motivation is to do it. There's some individuals—it's very difficult to say you should go to college. You know they are going to college, but you know they are going to have a very hard time because of their emotional immaturity, but I don't have any regrets about facilitating that if that's what they really want because I think individuals are going to be happier with themselves if you help them achieve what they want for themselves even though it might have turned out to be wrong. Because they will always know you helped them do what they thought was good for themselves, and I think that's a very important element. (27/12)

Some participants (27%) adopted a more directive approach in the execution of their advisement role. These counselors described themselves as providing direction and steering students toward or away from given options as opposed to supporting and encouraging advisees regardless of the options they were inclined to choose. These participants tended to judge students' chances for success in the various postsecondary activities and to incorporate these judgments into the advisement process. One participant stated this position most clearly:

> I have to be a realist. Say I have a student come in and tell me he wants to go to a school of business, and he has a 1.8 grade point average. I'm not pointing out to him what I should as a counselor unless, in a decent way, I get through to him the idea that it's going to be difficult for him if he gets in. I can be a plastic person down here and nod affirmatively to every kid, and I know I do not have responsibility then. I should not be
paid by the school board to be a school counselor. I have to interpose on them, if you will, what I have learned over the years. I can't see nodding affirmatively to every student who comes in. It's not fair. (29/6)

While participants' self-reports and researcher observations of their treatment of the fictitious advisees would indicate a preference among participants for the nondirective approach, it must be remembered that in this study participants were never observed conducting actual counseling sessions. Whether the majority of participants' practice was as nondirective as their claims would indicate was not known. Several statements by participants who declared themselves nondirective raised some doubts on this matter. A few participants said they would facilitate advisees' goals but would present low-achieving advisees with information such as admission requirements or statistical studies predicting college grades to help advisees become more realistic about their options. Such approaches were clearly intended to discourage certain advisees and seemed to the researcher a subtle form of directiveness on the part of an avowedly nondirective counselor.

Most participants preferred to be identified as nondirective and defended this position, often with feeling. They emphasized their support for the value of advisee self-determination and freedom over the value of specific, directive guidance.

**Opportunity versus constraint.** A second contextual question regarding cultural assumptions and the practice of advisement also emerged during the research. In interview after interview,
the researcher was struck by the sense of optimism and
and enthusiasm which pervaded participants' discussions of
individual advisees' potential and of the possibilities open to
them. Part of this might be attributed to a halo effect, that is,
to participants attempting to present themselves to the researcher
in the most favorable light. The pervasiveness of participants' hopeful, confident assessment of both advisees and their life chances, however, struck the researcher as more than an unbroken series of attempts to impress. After multiple reviews of interview transcripts, a remarkably consistent theme emerged. Whenever participants identified a constraint under which a given advisee might be operating, they confirmed his capacity to surmount or circumvent that constraint, championing the typically American faith in the individual's ability to capitalize on opportunity through hard work, persistence, motivation, and talent. After observing such repeated instances of this approach, the researcher concluded that it served an important function for participants, permitting them to reconcile their acceptance of certain American ideals with practical limitations which constrain individual advisees.

Over three-quarters (78%) of participants specifically expressed their adherence to one or more of these cultural ideals or assumptions: that education is the means whereby individuals (regardless of race, sex, creed, or class) can compete for and attain social and economic advantage; that individuals have the right to determine their own destinies and that they should aim
high and follow their dreams; that opportunities for social and
economic gain are open to all on the basis of talent and effort;
that motivation is the key factor in success; that second chances
are always available; that late bloomers can still succeed.

Only one participant expressed a point of view at variance
with this dominant one. She described herself as a socialist and
recounted her disillusionment with accepted notions about education
and social mobility. She acknowledged actively recruiting students
into vocational schooling and membership in the working class and
away from ambitious goals which will be realized by only a few. Her
thinking, represented in the following excerpt, is in sharp contrast
to that of the other 39 participants:

I went through college, and when I got out of college,
there were no jobs for people who graduated from college.
So I'm really disillusioned with college. I managed to
get a job that required college, and I managed to go two
years to graduate school, and I work in a professional
capacity, but I'm not making as much as some of those people
out there with skills and the status isn't as great . . . I
think there's too many of us that think we're going to be
executives and too many of us that think we're going to be
GM executives and make $80,000 a year. And that's what most
of these kids think they're going to do. There's just too many
of us to do that. There need to be some people down here in
the trenches that actually know how to do something! I
really think that's important. (5/12)

Unlike this participant, the great majority showed tacit and
explicit acceptance of cultural ideals which support an optimistic
approach to individuals' potential to achieve ambitious social and
economic goals and which support education as the vehicle for
attaining those goals.
Against these positive beliefs, participants balanced practical limitations constraining individual advisees' opportunities. Financial need, insufficient family support, admissions requirements, and other potentially limiting elements were recognized by participants. In assessing students' potential and opportunities against such limitations, participants nearly always maintained an enthusiastic and positive disposition. Never did they interpret constraints as insurmountable barriers. Instead, participants were inclined to see individuals' motivation and desire as capable of neutralizing obstacles. These counselors tended to point out the array of opportunities available to individuals and the variety of means whereby individuals could pursue their goals. They exhibited optimism about the potential and life chances of advisees and were inclined to be encouraging in the face of constraint rather than cautious, negative, or neutral. The following excerpts illustrate participants' tendency to confirm opportunity and to treat barriers as surmountable:

Everybody should be able to attain post-high education if they've got enough courage to work, if they've got enough fortitude. When you take that complainer who has complained all the way through and says the world is against him because of lack of money, he's going to be complaining all his life, and there's nothing I can do. (32/6)

I do believe that if there is really determination, there is a way that you're going to reach that goal, although I know there are circumstances that are very difficult. But if there is a strong desire, I really think that, with some help, individuals are gonna be able to reach their goals. (3/10)
The researcher concluded that participants generally espoused a particular conception of the American Dream: people are expected to flow up the class system or at least maintain their positions if they exhibit the necessary talent and equally (or even more importantly) the necessary desire and effort. People are not supposed to flow downward. This belief in continuous upward mobility (or at least stability) is manifest in participants' tendency to advise college as most desirable and their tendency to minimize impediments.

This belief in the importance of upward socioeconomic movement (or at least socioeconomic stability) also helps to explain participants' willingness to recommend vocational school for the lower class average and low achievers; in these cases, such schooling was acceptable, that is, it represented no loss of socioeconomic status but permitted these lower class students to maintain or even boost their status. On the other hand, most participants showed great reluctance to recommend noncollege options for high class advisees as this represented loss of status and, consequently, the prohibited downward flow.

Participants in this study adopted an orientation which permitted them to preserve their allegiance to certain cultural ideals while contending with constraining factors. This is not to say that participants rationally and consciously selected this orientation from an array of competing orientations. After interviewing participants and reviewing these conversations, the
researcher concluded that the reconciliation participants achieved between cultural ideals and practical constraints was not the product of a critical rational process. It appeared to be more a case of participants' acceptance of dominant ideological beliefs about the individual and about education as a means of bettering or (at least) maintaining one's socioeconomic status. These beliefs led to participants' encouraging advisees to use education to exceed or maintain their status and led to participants' redefining constraints as not truly constraining.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

A brief review of the research procedure will set the stage for presentation and analysis of participants' responses. This research project required that each of 40 experienced high school counselors provide professional recommendations for nine fictitious eleventh grade boys. Three of these advisees were presented as from the upper socioeconomic (SES) strata with one a high achiever, one an average achiever, and one a low achiever. Three boys were presented as middle class and three as lower class with the same distribution according to achievement. Table 3 displays the distribution of social class and achievement characteristics of the nine advisees.

Table 3

Advisees' Class and Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High SES</th>
<th>Middle SES</th>
<th>Low SES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Ability</td>
<td>Thomas (HAHC)</td>
<td>Daniel (HAMC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Ability</td>
<td>Ryan (AAHC)</td>
<td>Eric (AAMC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Ability</td>
<td>Michael (LAHC)</td>
<td>Andrew (LAMC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Initials identify advisee by class and achievement. (HAHC) means High Achievement, High Class; (LALC) means Low Achievement, Low Class and so forth.
Background about each boy was provided in the form of a brief vignette which indicated the boy's social class status (parents' education and occupations and family residence) and his academic record (an achievement test score and grade point average). In each case, the boy's general career interest area was reported as was his stated desire to pursue college or postsecondary education.

Counselors who participated in the study were directed to check off the postsecondary option (college, community college, vocational school, apprenticeship, the military, on-the-job training, or other) which in their judgment served each boy's best interests, given the information available. Most participants were requested to write a brief comment at the bottom of each vignette providing a rationale for their choice. In some instances, time constraints made it necessary to eliminate written remarks.

Results of the Forced Choice Exercise

An analysis of the forced choice portion of the research results indicated that in 26 out of 40 cases (65%), one or more of a participant's recommendations tended toward social class rather than achievement characteristics. This is to say that 26 participants made recommendations influenced by social class in at least one achievement category (the set of three high achievers, the set of three average achievers, the set of three low achievers). Class-influenced recommendations were those wherein differential recommendations were given in cases where academic achievement was comparable but social class backgrounds differed. Most typically
this meant a recommendation of college for all high-achieving boys and community college for all average-achieving boys regardless of their social class origins but recommendations of community college for the high status low achiever and vocational school for his low status low achieving counterpart.

Only 2 participants' (5%) recommendations were influenced by social class in every single set of boys (high, average, and low achievers). In other words, instances of differential treatment on the basis on social class appeared among these participants' recommendations for the high achievers, the average achievers, and the low achievers.

Twelve participants (30%) produced at least one class-influenced recommendation in two of the sets of boys. Ten of these participants made such recommendations within the middle and lower class groups of boys but did not differentiate on the basis of class among the three high-achieving boys. The three high achievers were nearly always seen as college material regardless of class background.

Twelve participants (30%) made one class-influenced recommendation in one set of boys only. None of these participants appeared to have been influenced by social class in the case of the high achievers. These boys were viewed as collegebound regardless of social class background. Six participants made class-influenced recommendations for middle class boys, and the remaining 6 made such recommendations within the group of low social class boys.
Figure 1 displays the distribution of class-influenced recommendations produced by 26 participants. As is evident from the chart, few recommendations in the high achiever category appeared to be moderated by social class considerations. Most of the 40 participating counselors recommended that all three high achievers pursue college.

**Figure 1. Distribution of class-influenced recommendations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>High Achievers</th>
<th>Average Achievers</th>
<th>Low Achievers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>017</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>018</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>031</td>
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<tr>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>003</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>035</td>
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<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Each x represents one class-influenced recommendation. The first two participants made one class-influenced recommendation in each of the three achievement categories, for example.
While 26 (65%) participants produced at least one class-influenced recommendation, 13 (32.5%) made their recommendations strictly on the basis of academic record. Their recommendations were based on students' academic performance and remained consistent across class lines. These 13 participants did not, for example, perceive higher class boys as college or community college material while perceiving their lower class comparably achieving peers as vocational school material. Instead, their judgments appeared to rest on each boy's achievement score and grade point average.

One participant declined to complete the forced choice exercise. For each advisee, he checked off all the options while maintaining that he never made internal judgments about students' best interests. He said he always simply informed advisees about all their options.

Results of the forced choice exercise revealed participants' tendency to advise college for high achievers, college or community college for average achievers, and community college or vocational school for low achievers (Table 4). As Table 4 reveals, recommendations became increasingly variable as achievement levels fell.

Table 5 displays participants' recommendations as they were distributed across social class categories. College recommendations declined as class status fell while vocational school recommendations rose as class status fell.
The researcher interpreted these distributions as supportive of the notion that participants generally perceived college as the best option in line with the interpretation of the American Dream as manifested by upward mobility or (at least) stability. Participants appeared to strongly support upward mobility or maintenance of current class status. They recommended vocational school, for example, three times oftener for low class advisees and two times oftener for middle class advisees than for high class advisees.

Table 4

The Effect of Achievement Upon Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job Training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job Training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher concluded that participants viewed the vocational school recommendation as allowing middle class advisees to maintain their status and as allowing low class advisees to maintain or boost their status. The vocational school recommendation represented the prohibited downward movement for upper class members, however. For them, college or community college represented the only acceptable alternatives.
College and Community College as Distinct Recommendations

In the forced choice exercise, college and community college were among the postsecondary school options counselors could check off. Initially, the researcher had planned to treat recommendations for community college and for college as essentially the same. An analysis of participants' comments led to a reversal of this decision; it became clear that participants viewed the function of community colleges as different from that of four-year colleges.

On 16 occasions, participants recommended college for a boy in one set of achievers and community college for another boy in the same set. These instances were treated as cases where social class had come into play and were not viewed as instances where essentially the same recommendation had been made. In all, 26 (65%) participants were found to have made recommendations moderated by advisee social status. Among these were 7 participants whose only class-influenced recommendations were those involving the difference between college and community college recommendations.

The decision to categorize these 7 participants with those who had produced class-influenced recommendations might be questioned by arguing that surely there could have been no real difference between a recommendation for a four-year college campus and one for a two-year college campus because, in both cases, the student was being advised to pursue the baccalaureate degree. The only ostensible difference would seem to be that a community college student would eventually need to transfer to a four-year campus while the student
who initially entered a four-year institution would not be automatically required to transfer after the sophomore year. How, then, could a recommendation to a community college be construed as substantially different from a recommendation to a four-year college? The answer lies in the interpretations participants consistently assigned to the community college recommendation. The judgment to advise community college differed materially from the judgment to advise entry into a four-year college.

During their interviews, 28 (70%) participants offered views on the function of the community college. None of these participants was directly asked about the community college. They spontaneously remarked on the subject as they presented their rationales for each of their recommendations. These participants held remarkably consonant views. They perceived entry into the community college as a socially acceptable way to extend the period of exploration and testing. One participant summed up this dominant perspective, saying:

Actually a lot of the community colleges I'm aware of are just Grade 13 and Grade 14 of high school. It's not quite the same as entering a university set-up. (13/7)

The community college was viewed as a sorting agency, as a place where students might test both their abilities and their aspirations and arrive at more definitive decisions about their educational careers. As one participant stated:

Community college is kind of a safe place to start because you can go either way. I think a lot of the determination has to be based on the student's success once they get there, particularly for these lower GPA kids. It's real hard to know what their ability level is. (30/7)
Community college was not viewed as the exact equivalent of the first two years at a four-year institution. It was perceived as more academically and emotionally supportive than a four-year college, less competitive, more remedial, more personal, and less intellectually rigorous. Several typical remarks reveal this perspective. Explained one participant:

You usually look at a community college as for maybe a student who hasn't had quite as much success in high school because they don't have to face the competition right away. Sometimes there's a better adjustment. (15/3)

Stated another, "The community college gives the possibility of the smaller supportive environment" (22/5). "I see community college as a little less competitive. I see it as a good place to start out and get your feet wet" (12/6), said another. "I just think the kids get better attention, a lot more support" (8/9), noted a participant as she justified a recommendation for a two-year over a four-year campus.

Only 6 participants noted any financial advantage to attending community college. The great majority concentrated on those aspects of the community college which offered students academic support and an extended period to explore themselves and their educational and occupational options. As one participant put it:

The community college gives the opportunity to build skills and explore. It allows them, if they once get into it, to shift into different areas without losing a lot. (31/8)

Interestingly, 15 (37.5%) participants perceived the community college as an ideal compromise choice in the case of Michael (LAHC).
They reasoned that community college would please Michael's (LAHC) parents (who were assumed to require that he enter college) while providing an academic environment more consonant with Michael's (LAHC) abilities and needs. This participant's reasoning was typical:

The community college is something in-between. It would provide [Michael's] parents with a feeling, if they feel he ought to go on to college, then this is a step he could take, and it is moving in a direction they would anticipate. If, on the other hand, these are his capabilities (that is, if he is a 1.9 student, achievement score of 41), this would also give him a chance to find out for himself, see where he is academically and, again, for his parents to find out just where he's at whether they're pushing or supporting. Either way. (7/6)

Other participants reasoned in basically the same way about Michael's (LAHC) case. Stated one of them:

We put him into the least demanding intellectually of the acceptable things here, and that would most likely be community college where, hopefully, he can gear up his act a little bit better so at a later date, providing he does have academic ability, he will be able to transfer to a four-year college and make peace [with parental expectations]. (19/3)

The researcher concluded that the decision to advise community college differed materially from the decision to advise four-year college. Community college recommendations generally involved less confidence in the strength of an advisee's abilities or aspirations and a desire to provide more opportunity for exploration. Sometimes it was perceived as satisfying upper class parents' college expectations. Participants perceived community college not so much as a genuine college experience but as a sort of high school/college hybrid which functioned as a testing ground for students exploring commitment to a college career.
The Interview

After completing the forced choice exercise, each participant was interviewed. A nonschedule standardized interview format was used. This type of interview employs a list of information needed from each participant but varies phrasing and order of questions to fit each respondent's characteristics and the characteristics of each interview situation (Denzin, 1978).

Participants' remarks during these exchanges yielded interesting and provocative material. As is typical in qualitative inquiry, original interview questions were modified as themes not foreseen by the researcher emerged and took shape. Between the first interview and the fortieth, the researcher's list of needed information underwent a transformation. Some items were deleted as their irrelevance became evident; others were added. In general, the list of information needed became shorter, more focused, and more relevant to emergent themes. The original series of items used in the interviews included:

1. Further information (beyond that given in vignettes) which participant desired about each advisee and why
2. Participant's rationale for recommendation in each case
3. Participant's assessment of importance of his or her role in advisee's decision-making
4. Participant's assessment of effect of his or her professional preparation as a counselor upon his or her advisement practice
5. Extent to which participant relied upon advisee's academic records in making recommendations

6. Participant's own background (social class of family of origin, high school grade point average and standardized achievement test scores, parental expectations, current social class status)

This original list can be compared with the final series of items which evolved:

1. Further information participant deemed necessary to properly conduct advisement interview (information not provided in vignette)

2. Factors participant identified as most important indicators that an advisee is likely to succeed in college

3. Participant's rationale for each recommendation in each case

4. Participant's own background (social class of family of origin, high school grade point and standardized achievement test scores, family expectations, current social class status)

The final series of items were those which were found to evoke the richest, most focused material from participants. These items represented key areas discussed but were not all inclusive for every case. Other questions were sometimes introduced as required by the situation. Frequently, for example, participants were asked to clarify and expand upon points.

Interviews were structured in the sense that the interviewer gleaned the same key information from each participant. Interviews
were unstructured in that participants were encouraged to speak freely, to pursue points which evolved in the discussion, to elaborate, and to question rather than to limit themselves to responses to standard questions presented in unchanging form and order. This style of interviewing permitted a relatively relaxed, conversational exchange dispelling somewhat the formal, self-preoccupied atmosphere of the research interview. It allowed the emergence of unforeseen emphases and themes and maintenance of a focus around a list of needed information.

**Major Themes**

Several major themes emerged during the information-gathering phase of the study. Others came to light only after the researcher had repeatedly read and analyzed the forced choice exercises, written remarks, and interview transcripts. A brief overview of all of these major themes is necessary before each individual theme is examined in more depth.

First, in one area at least, participants were found to have been in almost perfect agreement. A study of the distribution of participants' recommendations revealed that nearly every participant recommended college for all three high achievers regardless of these boys' social class backgrounds. Participants were not so remarkably consistent, however, when it came to the average and low achievers. Neither were they so oblivious to social class, particularly when it came to the lower achievers.
Second, participants frequently gave diverse and conflicting recommendations to the same advisee. Only in the case of the high achievers did participants present a united front. The researcher observed that participants were strongly inclined to give quite different interpretations to identical information about the nine fictitious students. Participants were also inclined to use multiple and sometimes conflicting criteria to judge students' potential for college. These professional guidance counselors did not appear to have or to apply any single standard set of criteria to arrive at this important judgment.

Third, the researcher discovered two major ways by which participants generated the criteria they employed to judge students' fitness for college. One method involved reliance on results from statistical research. The other involved reliance upon nonscientific methods of matching advisees with postsecondary activities. Participants relied upon certain stereotypes to guide them in the formation of recommendations. They also employed the process of reenactment (the generation of recommendations for advisees by replaying one's own personal history and superimposing this onto advisees' situations).

Fourth, the researcher discovered that in many cases an advisee's social class had influenced participants' judgments about his fitness for college. Occasionally, the social class factor was knowingly applied by participants; more often, social class
influenced participants' judgments but unintentionally and unconsciously. Participants who incorporated social class into their criteria (whether consciously or unconsciously) most frequently used it to estimate family expectations and level of support for higher education. The social class factor emerged most prominently in the case of Michael (LAHC). The blend of high social class and poor academic record struck many participants as problematic. No other combination of class and achievement evoked the speculation that this combination generated. In the cases of Thomas (HAHC) and Jason (HALC), a milder sort of social class effect occurred. Both boys were advised to go to college but, of the two, Thomas (HAHC) was generally considered the more ideal college candidate. His grades, achievement test score, aspiration, and parental backing were all considered very strong. In Jason's (HALC) case, parental backing was frequently considered questionable.

The Distribution of Recommendations

To display the consistency and variability of participants' recommendations, a set of histograms was used (see Figures 2, 3, 4). Only 39 participants' recommendations were included in the histograms because one participant firmly declined to recommend any one option for any of the nine fictitious advisees. In each case, he checked off all seven available options explaining that he would restrict himself to providing each boy with objective information on all available options, and that he would resist absolutely any overt influencing of his advisees. He maintained that he made no
internal judgments regarding students' best interests in the course of his practice and, therefore, would not do so for the sake of this research project.

Categories in the histograms include college (Col), community college (Com), vocational school (Voc), military service (Mil), on-the-job training (OJT), other (Oth), and undecided (Und). The undecided category includes those recommendations given by a few participants who had checked two or three options in some cases saying they were unable to limit themselves to any one best option. The apprenticeship option was never selected by a participant and so does not appear on the histograms.

A review of the histograms reveals that across only one set of cases were participants' recommendations largely in agreement. Highest scoring students (those with test scores in the 90th percentiles and grade point averages over 3.7) tended to receive the same recommendation from participants. Such high scores were consistently interpreted as indicating college. All three high scoring boys (whether of upper, middle, or low class status) were advised to pursue college by 90% of the participants.

Such agreement weakened when participants advised the average and especially the low achieving boys. Average achieving middle class Eric's recommendations were more dispersed than those of his upper class counterpart and less dispersed than those of his lower class counterpart. The same held true for every average achiever.
Figure 2. Recommendations for high achievers

Thomas (HAHC)

Col | 39
Com
Voc
Mil
OJT
Oth
Und

10 20 30 40

Daniel (HAMC)

Col | 37
Com *
Voc *
Mil
OJT
Oth
Und

10 20 30 40

Jason (HALC)

Col | 36
Com **
Voc
Mil *
OJT
Oth
Und

10 20 30 40

Note. Abbreviations used above represent: Col=College; CC=Community College; Voc=Vocational School; Mil=Military; OJT=On-the-job Training; Oth=Other; Und=Undecided

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### Figure 3. Recommendations for average achievers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ryan (AAHC)</th>
<th></th>
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**Note.** Abbreviations used above represent: Col=College; CC=Community College; Voc=Vocational School; Mil=Military; OJT=On-the-job Training; Oth=Other; Und=Undecided
Figure 4. Recommendations for low achievers

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Note. Abbreviations used above represent: Col=College; CC=Community College; Voc=Vocational School; Mil=Military; OJT=On-the-job Training; Oth=Other; Und=Undecided
In other words, the lower the boy's academic record, the more varied the recommendations he received. The lowest achieving boys received the most varied and conflicting sets of recommendations. A lower class low achieving student like Adam, for instance, received an array of recommendations from the 40 participants. Over half recommended that he attend vocational school. The other recommendations ranged from four-year college and community college to on-the-job training. For upper class low achieving Michael, on the other hand, half of the participants advised community college; the other recommendations ranged from four-year college and vocational school to on-the-job training.

The influence of the social class variable appeared stronger in participants' considerations of average and low achievers than in their consideration of the high achievers. Recommendations for high achievers were very similar. Among average and low achievers, class-influenced differential treatment increased. The achievement variable appeared to exert considerable influence upon the dispersion in the recommendations. The lower the achievement level fell, the greater the diversity which characterized the recommendations.

The Multiple Interpretation Phenomenon

Figures 2, 3, and 4 reveal that many advisees received multiple and conflicting recommendations. As the boys' achievement levels dropped, recommendations they received grew increasingly varied and conflicting. Depending upon which of the 40 counselors he chanced
to see, for example, the low achiever could be professionally
advised to consider anything from four-year college to entry level
employment upon high school graduation. These counselors'
professional estimations of the boys’ capacities and of their best
interests varied wildly.

How is it that trained experienced professionals whose central
role involved educational and vocational advisement differed so
sharply about the best interests of advisees about whom they had
identical information? Before this question can be addressed,
several examples of multiple interpretation must be reviewed.
Participants’ inclination to select different and even conflicting
indicators of college potential must also be examined.

Multiple Interpretation of Objective Measures

Curiously, even objective measures such as test scores and
grade point averages were the subjects of multiple interpretation.
In the case of the highest scoring set of students (those with
achievement test scores in the 90th percentiles and grade point
averages over 3.7), participants’ interpretations were quite stable.
Such scores appeared to signal college potential. Objective
measures in the average and particularly in the low ranges, however,
received multiple interpretations.

In the case of Andrew (LAMC), for instance, a grade point
average of 1.77 and achievement test score of 42nd percentile were
variously interpreted by counselors as low, low average, and
average. Several participants perceived Andrew’s (LAMC) scores as
eliminating him from four-year college. Others did not perceive his scores as disqualifying him from this option; they argued that with motivation, Andrew (LAMC) might well become a successful college student. Half of all participants felt Andrew (LAMC) could handle a vocational school program. One participant interpreted Andrew's (LAMC) scores as so low that he stood little chance of succeeding at the vocational school level; he advised Andrew (LAMC) to enter the military.

A sampling of participants' comments about Andrew (LAMC) illustrates the diversity of judgments made about him:

Grade point is a little below what we usually think to be of a collegebound student even though we've had some with lower who have gone [to college] and done all right. (9/6)

A low grade point average in high school doesn't preclude one from going to college. He still ranks in the upper, well, he's above 40% of his classmates which statistically puts him in the middle of the pack as far as college potential, so I wouldn't rule that out. (27/6)

Said one counselor, "He's not ready for college with that GPA, and he's not going to get in" (35/11). Another participant declared, "The boy is not too strong, so I definitely recommend a community college or vocational school" (34/4). Yet another participant introduced the military service option, saying, "The military would be the ideal place. He said he'd like to go on to postsecondary education, but I don't think that's realistic with that GPA and achievement score" (39/6).

Not only were identical sets of objective measures interpreted differently. The whole concept of objective measures as worthwhile
criteria for assessing college potential was the subject of disagreement. Objective measures did not figure into participants' criteria in any single standard way. Some participants reported that grades and test scores played a prominent role, serving as the major mechanism whereby the participant sorted collegebound from noncollegebound students. For others, these objective academic criteria were discounted on the grounds that they were unreliable or that such young students may not yet have demonstrated their full academic potential.

Several excerpts from interview transcripts display these conflicting attitudes toward adoption of objective measures as criteria on which recommendations could be based. The first three comments reflect the perspective of participants who saw objective measures as critically important to the process of arriving at recommendations. One participant made this typical remark: "The number one indicator of success in college would be grades" (24/5). Stated another individual:

If they come in and they indicate that they want to continue their education, what we'll look at is their grade point average, their class rank. And then we'll look at some of their achievement scores. (26/5)

Confirming the importance of high school grades, another participant noted:

We know that if you're successful in school with the grades that success builds on success. Well, these [low achieving] kids haven't been successful, and they know that. For them to say they have an interest in college, I guess my concern for them would be, "Why? You struggled for four years. Now you say you want four more years of college. You got to explain that to me." (28/5)
The following excerpts reflect a contrasting point of view.

These participants tended to discount grades:

I don't look at the grade point that closely. I'll look at the student in relation to the courses, how hard he's worked, his extracurriculars, maybe a job that he's had, and probably base a successful conclusion more on that than on his grade point average, so I know I've ignored the grade point. (32/2)

Although there's some element of predictability in your grade point and your standardized tests, I think there's a lot of maturing that happens with a person after they leave high school. And if there's the motivation and desire to really achieve a goal, I don't like the high school record to lock them to where they're going to go in the future. I have a real deep feeling about that. (21/5)

A lot of a person's abilities are latent and don't show up necessarily in grades in high school. (29/4)

Multiple Indicators of College Potential

Not only did participants interpret identical information quite differently, but when questioned about indicators they considered important in judging students' chances for success in college, participants produced an array of factors rather than one or two key factors. Along with grades and test scores, factors listed as indicative of a college candidate included motivation, involvement in extracurricular activities, sincere interest in attending college (which participants described as the student's personal interest in college versus his desire to fulfill his parents' wishes that he attend college), parental support, and others. Again, no single standard set of indicators prevailed. Although some indicators were mentioned more frequently than others, each counselor appeared to have constructed his or her own set.
In Table 6, the most frequently mentioned indicators are listed along with the number of times they received mention. Most participants reported using a combination of these indicators to determine advisees' fitness for college. Few participants claimed they relied upon only one or two key indicators to make this determination.

Table 6

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Clearly, participants interpreted identical information in a variety of ways and singled out different and sometimes conflicting factors as indicative of college potential. It is not surprising, therefore, that in many cases they produced diverse rather than uniform recommendations for the same advisee.
How is it that trained experienced professionals whose central role involved educational and vocational advisement differed so sharply about the best interests of advisees about whom they had identical information? The researcher concluded that participants disagreed because they had produced a variety of recommendations using distinctly different sets of criteria to judge advisees' fitness for college or for other postsecondary activities. Participants did not rely upon some standard set of criteria to determine students' potential. Instead, each participant had crafted his or her own working criteria to facilitate the complex task of providing advisement affecting individuals' educational and occupational futures.

The Production of Criteria

How did participants select the particular criteria they used in the advisement process? Two sources of criteria could be identified from analysis of interview transcripts: appeal to statistical research studies which supply predictive information about students' potential for college work and the use of a number of nonscientific methods including reliance upon stereotypes and reenactment.

Through Appeal to Research Results

Nearly two-thirds of the participants (65%) included grades and/or standardized achievement or scholastic aptitude test scores among criteria used to assess college potential. Eight participants explicitly stated that their reliance on these measures derived
from results of studies which showed correlations between these measures and students' expected success rates in college. Three typical remarks illustrate the confidence these participants placed in such research:

I think the best predictor would be the grade point average, and that's pretty much an established fact. (33/6)

Most counselors and most educational authorities, I think, as well as college officials are inclined to say the number one indicator of success in college would be grades in high school. Second best indicator would be test scores. (24/6)

Grades. I believe that what the colleges say when they've been saying that for fifty years [laughs]! What has the the kid done in high school? Not just grades, but grades in which courses? (22/6)

Many other participants were less explicit; they did not explain specifically that their reliance on grade and test measures derived from statistical studies. They discussed these measures as accepted criteria, however, and treated their use as routine, accepted practice.

Some participants, then, did appeal to research results as criteria for determining college potential. This is not to say that every participant who relied upon test and grade measures did so to the exclusion of all other criteria. A few did so. Others, however, expressed a point of view similar to these:

I look, of course, to what they've done in high school, but I think there's more to be considered than that . . . I look at whether they've had jobs, whether they've been involved in a lot of school activities, what their high school record looks like, what their parents would want, what they really want. I don't look at one thing; I don't think you can do that. (16/5)
In terms of going on to college, the grade point average and class rank and test scores are nice in terms of determining probabilities of success, but they certainly aren't the total information you need in ascertaining whether that individual can or should do college level work. (27/2)

Although not all participants who included grades and test scores in their criteria judged exclusively according to these measures, many did, in fact, incorporate them. It can be concluded that some participants generated at least some of the criteria whereby they judged students' potential for college by appealing to results of research showing correlation between grade and test levels and potential for college level work.

Through Use of Stereotype and Reenactment

The researcher found that participants sometimes used stereotypes in the process of judging students' fitness for college work. Two advisees who often evoked stereotypes were Jason (HALC) and Michael (LAHC). Michael (LAHC), the high class low achiever, often evoked the messed up rich kid or the poor little rich kid stereotype. Several participants ascribed Michael's (LAHC) low academic performance to personal problems and assumed his family life to be of poor quality. Several participants speculated that Michael's (LAHC) affluent professional parents (especially his father) were often absent or consumed with social and career responsibilities and unavailable to meet the boy's need for parental love and direction.

Jason (HALC), on the other hand, evoked the poor boy does good stereotype. Participants often remarked that he should go as far
as he could go, follow his dream, be the best that he can be. They often noted that Jason (HALC) appeared to possess the drive and talent necessary to succeed even though his family appeared to lack the finances necessary to pay his way.

Often, the researcher noted, items prominent on a counselor's list of criteria for fitness for college figured strongly in that counselor's own personal background and experience. (As part of the interview, participants described their own family and academic backgrounds.) For example, the same participant who listed motivation as a key criterion in judging advisees' potential for college attributed his or her own success in college to motivation. Nearly 60% of the participants were observed generating one or more criteria through the reenactment process.

In the following excerpt, a participant uses reenactment in the formulation of a recommendation for Daniel (HAMC). This counselor used grades and test scores as criteria in the determination of the boy's fitness for college. His fitness for college was also determined by the counselor's reference to his own personal history and the application of that history to Daniel's (HAMC) situation:

I think Daniel should go to college. He's got a real nice high grade point average and achievement scores. He wants to get into construction and architecture. I look at myself a little bit there because of my own background. I really got wrapped up in construction work after high school, and I dug a lot of ditches and paved a lot of roads. My hands got real sore, and my back got real weak, but it was macho, and it was important to do those things at a young age. So here's my chance to say that Daniel maybe has a feeling he'd like to work outside in construction,
but that's going to wear off in a little while, and so maybe the security of a four-year college degree in those areas such as civil engineering or whatever. He may not get his hands dirty, but he'll still have the option to work with those people or indoors. He's got the abilities. He should be encouraged to use those. I had a boss in construction who came in to me in the middle of the night and told me that he quit college one semester short of his bachelor's degree, and he has been stuck digging ditches for 14 years since then. And he knew I was going to college kind of on the side, and he said, "Don't ever lose track of that. Don't ever leave it behind like I did. It's the biggest mistake I ever made." And it stayed with me. So when I see Dan, I see a little bit of myself, and I say, "Oh, oh! I'm going to see if I can help this boy out a little! [laughs]" (18/7-8)

In some cases, counselors used criteria drawn from reenactment to interpret objective measures. One participant, for example, dismissed the poor academic performance of the three low achievers saying, "As you realize, they'll find themselves more in college" (32/2). Later, he related his own experience with low grades:

I had a low grade point and low test scores because I didn't feel like studying when I was in high school, and there was one old guidance counselor who told me, she said, "You can do what you want to do." And I took her advice, and I went to one year of college and went into the service for two years to get the GI Bill, and I came out, and I made up my mind I wanted to do well. So grade point average, test scores? When I took tests in high school, I filled in the odd circle. I think some of our kids do that here. I'll encourage and write a recommendation for anyone in the last ranking in the class to go on to school. (32/6-7)

In a similar case, a participant defended his practice of encouraging any student, regardless of grades, to pursue college if he wished. This participant said he relied exclusively upon advisees' stated aspirations and did not use their grades or test
scores as criteria for assessing their potential for college. He explained that he had had poor grades in high school but had completed college once he had become motivated to do so:

I feel that students can overcome things that other people don't think they can. I think, for example, that after I talk to a student and they indicate an interest in college, I've had any number of teachers come to me and say, "How can you give that student information on college? They're getting D's and F's in our classes!" And I say, "Hey, look! They're interested in it! And it may be that they decide to go that way, and it may be that what they're doing right now may not be indicative of what they're really capable of." Yes, this does have a lot to do with my philosophy. (23/6)

Another participant discussed the military as a possible option for one of the low achievers, saying, "He may want to consider some other approaches such as the military or something of that sort to give him more time to think things over" (40/4). Later in his interview, this same participant described the role the military service had played in his own personal development:

I was not ready to go on to school when I graduated from high school. I went to the military. I spent four years in the military. I knew I didn't want to do that for the rest of my life, and that had a way of motivating me to look at some different options. (40/5)

In 9 (22.5%) cases, participants' social class backgrounds entered into the production of criteria through reenactment. The following example was provided by a participant who reported a poverty-level family background. She said she had been a very bright student, extremely eager to learn but socioeconomically disadvantaged. Her discussion of Jason (HALC) revealed her
application of criteria generated by reenactment of her own experience as a low class, high achieving student:

His grade point is so high. I think the only thing that might hold him back, you know it in your heart! It's a gut reaction, that's all it is. This kid not only has a desire to go into business or the health care industry, but there's this desire to learn. Vocational school is so technically oriented. Philosophy, English, those other kinds of things he wouldn't get there. You can't tell me he has no desire to learn that [stated emotionally] because he has a 3.9 [vigorously taps the vignette before her with her pencil]. I would work with those parents [said in an emotional tone] because, see, I would identify with them. Oh, this one I'd go for all the way! (35/9)

In describing how she would work with the parents here, this participant assumed that they would not be supportive of higher education for the boy. She based this on her own experience. Her father had opposed higher education for her, she said, because he had feared that a college degree would alienate her from him, a farmer with only a grade school education.

Another participant identified in a somewhat different way with an advisee's low social class background. He said:

Here's a family background with dad being a custodian and mom working as a domestic. Probably really a lot of support for whatever he goes into, particularly from the background that mom and dad have. (39/6)

This reasoning intrigued the researcher because it was contrary to nearly every other participant's interpretation of low class families' support for higher education. "What leads you to say that probably would be the case here?" asked the researcher. Responded the participant:

I think because you've indicated on the sheet there that Jason's dad has only gone through tenth grade, and
mom has a high school diploma. Thinking about my own parents, my dad completed tenth grade, and my mom had a high school diploma, and they pushed and said, "You have to have that four-year degree!" (39/7)

In another case, an individual who had identified students' involvement in extracurricular activity as the single most important predictor of success in college had this to say about his own background:

I got brothers that were, I was the youngest, and I was a sophomore, and my other brothers were a junior and a senior. They were very, very intelligent but not extracurricular oriented, and I was extracurricular oriented and more of a C or B student where they were A's, and they participated in maybe one sport. So I had that pull on me and felt that pull when I was in school from teachers who would say, "Why aren't you like John and Dick?" (28/8)

As he had stated earlier in his interview, this participant believed that "you know what their aspirations are through extracurriculars" and that a student's drive could be assessed through extracurricular activity. For this participant, extracurricular involvement had provided an avenue for expression of drive and aspiration. As a guidance counselor, he superimposed this same meaning on the extracurricular involvement of his high school clients and used it as a criterion to gauge level of aspiration, drive, and, ultimately, likelihood of success in college.

In summary, participants produced a variety of criteria whereby they judged advisees' college potential. Some of these criteria derived from widely accepted predictive research on grade point averages or standardized test results. Other criteria
such as that derived from the use of stereotypes and reenactment were nonscientific. The researcher found that participants did not rely on any standard set of criteria. No significant evidence could be found to support the notion that participants consistently applied explicit, rational, scientific standards in the development of their judgments about advisees' potential for college work. In fact, the researcher believed that the majority of the participants generally operated much as lay persons would have if they had been asked to make these same judgments.

**Social Class as a Criterion**

Social class considerations appeared to moderate one or more of the recommendations made by 26 participants. Either orally or in their written remarks, 32 (80%) participants made assumptions about advisees (and/or their parents) which were colored by social class considerations. Usually, these assumptions consisted of differential estimates of parental support the various boys could expect to receive or differential estimates of parental expectations the boys were likely to experience. Clearly, social class exerted an influence on the thinking of many participants. Not all of them ultimately produced recommendations influenced by this factor, of course. Fourteen (35%) participants made their recommendations strictly along achievement lines. In many cases, however, it appeared that social class had been incorporated into the criteria participants used to think about advisees and to judge their fitness for college.
The participants who employed social class as a criterion did so with varying degrees of awareness. The following excerpt exemplifies explicit adoption of social class as a criterion for determining college potential. Here a participant discussed Ryan (AAHC):

Ryan Knowles. Four-year college. Seemed to be a very professional family background. It looks like a lot of money in the family. I always hate to say this, that because the family has money, the kid is going to do well in school, but it does happen that way quite a bit. The parents are also very educated people, and his grade point is just over a 3.0. I'm assuming again, because of the education background of the parents, he probably has a fairly high level curriculum here at the high school, and I'd think he's probably in the college track, so to speak. I'd recommend a four-year college for him. Even though the previous person, Jeremy, [low class, average achiever] had a higher grade point average, I just think that family background has some affect on my recommendation. (17/5)

This participant recommended vocational school for Jeremy (AALC) and college for Ryan (AAHC). He applied social class as a criterion in an explicit fashion.

Another example of the conscious adoption of social class as a criterion can be seen here:

Well, I think there are three things. I like the test scores. I like the grade point. But I place a lot of value on the family background. And the reason I do that is because I think very often that if you've got a family that's pushing for, well, like you have two professional people here that are married. They're probably pushing for college. That kid will go to school. That kid will succeed. I'm a great environmentalist on this sort of thing. (36/6)
Unintentional Use of Social Class Criterion

Interestingly, other participants who based their judgments on social class factors were not always so aware that they were, in fact, applying this standard as they judged students' potential for various postsecondary options.

Over the course of the 40 interviews, 18 (45%) participants explicitly claimed that they were not influenced in their judgments by students' social class status. These claims were offered spontaneously as participants discussed their rationales for recommending one option over another. Despite their insistence to the contrary, 10 of these participants were found to have made class-influenced recommendations and assumptions, and 2 were found to have made class-influenced assumptions but no class-influenced recommendations. Only 6 of the 18 who claimed to be uninfluenced by social class actually appeared to be uninfluenced by this factor.

In 2 such instances early in the information-gathering phase of this study, the researcher brought participants' attention to the discrepancy between their claims and their actual performance. In each case, the participant showed some discomfort and even dismay. The use of the social class factor appeared to have been unconscious, unintentional, and disturbing to the participant. In subsequent interviews, the researcher noted such discrepancies where they occurred but chose not to bring them to participants' attention.
A particularly clear example of the phenomenon of unintentional application of social class as a criterion can be observed in this counselor's remarks. He stated:

I hope you realize that I would never, I hope I would never discriminate against a student because of his socioeconomic background. That would be the last thing I would do [spoken in a very serious, definite tone]. (11/10)

In fact, the participant recommended community college for Michael (LAHC) and vocational school for Adam (LALC). His commentary on Michael's (LAHC) low achievement revealed this participant's sense that something in the situation was amiss. The boy's class status and his achievement record clearly did not coincide with the counselor's assumptions about students with backgrounds like Michael's (LAHC). The participant made several attempts to explain Michael's (LAHC) low achievement (including possible chemical abuse and lack of maturity) and affirmed his belief that Michael's (LAHC) class-ordained destiny was college:

Michael Troy Wilson. Father is a full partner in a law firm; mother is a psychiatrist. Student has a real low grade point, and the standardized scores are low. A community college would probably be a better place for this student to start. He might need a little maturing because he certainly has, um, the parents had the background, and the student should [emphasis the researcher's] be looking at the four-year college if the environment is there. But he obviously, there are some other things impinging to get a 1.9 grade average. So you'd have to look at a student like this and wonder if he's on drugs, if there's some problem that maturity would put in the background. I'm sure this student would end up probably in college some day. Might not be right out of high school, you know, but, um, but probably a two-year program somewhere. (11/6)
These comments can be compared with the same participant's remarks regarding Adam (LALC), Michael's (LAHC) lower class low achieving counterpart. Here no attempt was made to explain away low scores. There is no implication that "the student should be looking at the four-year college if the environment is there."

Clearly, the environment is not there. Adam's (LALC) true academic potential was not questioned; instead, his scores were accepted at face value. College did not figure into the destiny projected for him by the counselor. Adam (LALC) was, in fact, presumed to be uninterested in nonvocational subjects such as "social studies and these courses":

This is an eleventh grader. Father's a night watchman; mother's a waitress. Adam David Harris. He's interested in working in business with a 1.84 grade point average and test score of 43. I would look at this person as, probably if he's interested in going to school, vocational school with an emphasis in the business area. Start him in maybe one of the marketing degrees. And with some maturity, these kids get out of high school and get into a program that just teaches 'em the emphasis on the [technical] area they're in. They sometimes fly in these courses where they might not be interested in social studies and these courses. They don't see any reason for taking them. The vocational school. (11/7)

This kind of unintentional, unconscious differentiation among advisees was far more prevalent than the deliberate variety. In fact, only 4 participants overtly stated that they incorporated family background into their judgments about advisees' potential for college. Whether consciously or unconsciously, however, social class did enter into the judgments of the majority of participants.
In the forced choice exercise, 65% of them produced one or more class-influenced recommendation for advisees. In their interviews and/or written comments, 75% of the 40 participants made assumptions moderated by social class in one or both of these areas: about how likely upper, middle, and lower class parents were to expect and support college education for their children and about how to deal with the poor academic performance of Michael (LAHC), the upper class low achiever. For the most part, these instances of class-influenced differentiation appeared unconscious, subtle, and unintentional.

Estimates of Parental Expectations and Support

Twenty-eight (70%) participants stated the belief that more highly educated parents were almost certain to encourage and support higher education for their children. These participants consistently expressed confidence in the support high class advisees would receive from home. Middle class advisees, too, were viewed as supported; however, high class parents were likelier to be seen as encouraging college to the exclusion of any other option. Middle class parents were generally believed to be more open to a variety of postsecondary options for their children. Only 2 participants expressed any doubt about high or middle class parents' support for higher education for their children. Twenty-four (60%) participants expressed doubt about parental support low class advisees were likely to receive. These comments on Jeremy (AALC) convey the uncertainty typical of the majority of these participants:
Some of the things that caught my mind is that it doesn't look like they're a real high income family, that the parents, one completed 11th grade, and one completed high school. Uh, I guess that kind of stuck in my mind also. You'll find one of two things with families like that. Either they're gonna say, "I want something better for you. I want you to go on to school," so there's a lot of support there, or you'll find school isn't very important at all. (31/12)

I think it's always helpful to know what the family does because that gives you an indication as to what sort of family pressures there are to succeed in college. (19/4)

Another participant's remarks on Jason (HALC) and on Thomas (HAHC) illustrate contrasting estimates of parental support. About Jason (HALC) the participant said, "I don't know how the family feels about college." About Thomas (HAHC), she remarked, "It appears that the family would be college oriented" (30/3). In another typical instance, a participant made the following series of written remarks. About Thomas (HAHC) he wrote, "He has potential and family history which would support college." About Daniel (HAMC) he wrote, "He has potential and probably the family backing." About Jason (HALC) he wrote, "Jason has potential" (13).

This tentativeness characterized the majority of participants' estimations of family support for low class advisees' college aspirations. Whereas high class parents were automatically assumed to be desirous of college for their children, low class parents' ambitions for their children were considered low or simply could not be gauged.

For the most part, participants attributed the upper class parents' college expectations to the parents' own educational
achievements. This type of thinking is illustrated in the following excerpts:

There's always a lot more pressure in making this decision when the parents are educated themselves and high motivated or high ability or combined. I have found in working with kids that they're feeling under a lot more pressure to be successful and to get busy at reaching their goal than kids whose parents are a little more laid back or who haven't had the experience of a college or even a vocational school education. For these kids, if they do something in the next 10 years, it'll be really nice, and the family will be proud, whereas with students with parents who are highly educated, it has to be now, and you go right on and complete college in four years. And they don't like this four and a half or five year business. The expectations are a lot higher, and the kids feel that. Even if the parents say, "You do what you want to do. It's your life." Somehow there's an underlying expectation that flows through, and kids feel if they're going to be accepted by mom and dad, they have to go on to school. (8/8)

It's not because I'm a snob that I think college people's kids are going to college. It's because I know from experience that that's how it works. And a person who has never been to college has no idea of what there is there and how it works so they probably never really encourage their kids to do that sort of thing. (8/14)

Another participant explained how he felt professional families supported their students and why uneducated parents were less able to provide the same quality of support. While making this sharp distinction between professional and nonprofessional parents, he insisted that he tended to "screen out family background." Clearly, the family background weighed heavily here:

I look primarily at the ability data. I tend to screen out family background. The family background, however, is important in encouragement for college because if parents are both professional people who have gone to college and done post-graduate work, they're going to be more sympathetic and supportive of a student who goes on to graduate work. If neither father nor mother has gone on to college, often
the father and mother or family friend or relative will say, "Are you still in college? You've been in college six or seven years! What are you going to be?" It's hard for them to understand those long-range goals, whereas people from a professional background are not only understanding but very supportive, and so there's a big difference there, I think. In one case, the student has to justify or feels he has to justify why he's still in school, and in the other case, when he comes home, he knows that he's expected still to be in school and probably has financial support from a professional family. Otherwise, I don't (other than psychological and financial support which are two very, very important things) the cultural and family background really would not influence me. (24/8)

As they calculated which option would best serve a particular advisee, some participants factored in a class-based estimate of parental support. This approach (which was almost formula-like at times) is illustrated in these two comments about Ryan (AAHC):

Ryan. Professional family. Heavy pressure to achieve. I'd send him to the four-year college. (19/4)

Looking at what his parents are doing, their expectations are probably going to be that he should go on to a four-year college and, with this in mind, I would probably suggest that he consider a four-year school. (7/8)

It can be argued that participants' estimations of parental support played a critical role in their judgments about students' fitness for college. Social class, translated in terms of assumed parental support and expectation, moderated participants' judgments about advisees' potential for successful college work. Seventeen (42.5%) participants stated the belief that family support contributes significantly to students' chances for success in college. Several excerpts illustrate this thinking:

The number one factor in predicting success in college would be grades in high school. Second most important factor would be test scores. Third most important factor would be support from home. (24/6)
We find our greatest success with students when their parents are behind them, and they say, "I didn't go to college," or "I did go to college," and "I want my son or daughter to get an education, whether it be vo-tech or college." I think the parents behind them is very important. (26/3)

The value a family places on education has so much to do with it. If they don't value it, then I think my chances of getting the support I need to keep on going when the going gets rough are lower. It seems important for kids what mom and dad think or what mom and dad think they can do. I think that's very strong. (25/6,9)

I think the biggest influence [in college entrance] is expectations that the family puts on the kid . . . If you expect something, it's amazing, but your expectations seem to come true. It happens in all kinds of things. (1/11)

By assessing such a crucial factor (family support) on the basis of class, many participants allowed social class a significant mediating role in formation of their judgments.

The following excerpt is a particularly straightforward example. In her discussion of the case of Jeremy (AALC), a participant commented, "I think because of family support maybe not being quite as strong, that's why I went with the community college." Later she acknowledged that she did not actually know the level of support present in Jeremy's (AALC) family situation, "but just in looking to what they have done and the jobs they have, there might not be the support there to finish a four-year degree" (20/4–5), she reasoned.

A further example can be found in another counselor's justification for advising community college for upper class low achieving Michael (LAHC) and vocational school for his low class low
achieving counterpart, Adam (LALC). "This is probably where I discriminated. This one's [Michael's, LAHC] parents had an influence on him, and so I gave him more chance to go to college whereas this guy [Adam, LALC], I didn't think he had the parental push" (2/4).

Certain participants' inclinations to assume strong support for college among higher class parents and questionable levels of support among low class parents appeared paradoxical. When describing their own backgrounds, 23 (57.5%) participants claimed that neither of their parents had been college educated. Three-quarters of this group said that regardless of their own meager educational backgrounds, their parents had been strongly in favor of the children's pursuing college degrees. Further examination of interview transcripts revealed that 9 participants, having themselves been encouraged to attend college by noneducated parents, held the belief that noncollege educated parents were less likely to encourage their children to pursue college than were educated parents.

Participants' inclination to believe that high class highly educated parents could be automatically expected to strongly support education for their children while noncollege educated parents cannot is interesting in view of Boyer's (1986) recent findings. According to his study:

Parents who did not themselves graduate from college appear to exert the strongest influence on their children's decision to attend college. Of students reporting "much influence" from their parents in making the decision to attend college, 54% were from families in which neither
the mother nor the father was a college graduate, 26% were from families in which only one parent had earned a college degree. (pp. 285-6)

Boyer pointed out that only 20% of those who reported strong parental influence came from homes where both parents were college degreed. He acknowledged that this may have been due to more subtle application of pressure by more highly educated parents, pressure in the form of unspoken parental expectation extending over many years. Regardless of this possible unreported parental pressure, Boyer's results revealed that more students of noncollege educated parents experienced strong parental influence toward college than did students of college educated parents.

Class-influenced differential assessment of family expectations and support can be recognized as fitting the definition of bias given by Gove (1981): "such prepossession with some . . . point of view that the mind does not respond impartially" (p. 211).

Clearly, participants who automatically assumed that lower class parents could not be counted upon to expect or support college for their children were not arriving impartially at judgments about these parents but were indexing parental expectation and support levels to parental social status in a consistent (and usually unreflective) way.

It must be noted that excellent reasons can be given in favor of the counselor's taking note of parental social class and of the counselor's asking lower class students pertinent questions about their need for support. Indeed, many government and
college/university programs have particularly targeted lower socioeconomic youngsters for additional financial, emotional, and intellectual support to increase the percentage of this group entering college. A few participants mentioned their sensitivity to the needs of the lower class student and said they went out of their way to provide extra emotional support and to locate all possible financial aid for such students. The researcher differentiated between this deliberate checking into the situation approach which was characterized by tentativeness from an approach based on the automatic assumption that expectation and support levels of lower class parents were questionable or nonexistent. The latter approach appeared to constitute the type of prepossession with a point of view to which Gove refers in his definition of bias.

Class-influenced assessment of family expectation and support can be recognized as an indirect form of social class differentiation. Two other examples of indirect differentiation include the use of extracurricular involvement and the use of frequency of visits to the guidance office as criteria for judging college potential.

In this study, one participant out of four counted advisees' involvement in extracurricular activities among indicators of fitness for college. The 10 participants who identified extracurricular involvement as a criterion whereby college potential might be judged explained that extracurricular activity evidenced advisees' drive, ability to compete, and ability to manage time,
all qualities participants deemed important for success in college.

The following remarks were typical of these participants' interpretation of student involvement in extracurriculars:

You know what their aspirations are through extracurriculars. I think you can see drive there. You know, if the kid comes in to me and, say, he's a little below what it would take to be a doctor or any of those things that are real competitive. If he's holding down some decent grades and doing all this extra stuff, I think that's a big factor when you get into the competitive thing because you learn to compete. You can't live in your little world all by yourself. So that would be a thing I would discuss. "Look, basically, you haven't done a lot of extras. Medical school, certain engineering schools, law school—you do the extras! You're competing so hard that you have to learn to give the extra. I don't know if you've learned that yet." (28/3)

Number one, you'd watch what they did in high school. That's a very good indicator [of potential for college]. What kind of courses they take and what kind of grades. But, I guess, an equal indicator is what level of activity they participated in in school. What kind of leadership have they shown? How good are the communication skills with peers and adults? What kind of service are they willing to give to the community and to the school? Clubs, athletics, student senate, whatever. (9/11-12)

Just knowing was the kid involved in extracurriculars at school? That's kind of an indicator [of potential for college] in some instances. I think that students, I don't want to say they're more successful, but students who get more involved with school activities, no matter what it might be, some are involved with athletics or music or art; if they have varied interests, they're more likely to be more involved with school as a whole. I think (and this is just a personal opinion) but I do see many students who aren't involved with anything other than just attending their classes, and it's a different picture I get [laughs]. Kind of hard to explain! (3/2-3)

I think there's been a study that rather than GPA or SAT scores, I think the biggest indication of future success was extracurricular activities in school; and I think
that I kind of agree with that because school leaders and people who are involved in those types of things usually do fairly well after school. (1/7)

If as Hollingshead (1949) found, extracurricular involvement correlates with social class status (the higher the class, the greater the involvement), use of this criterion may represent a particularly subtle application of the social class standard in assessing college potential.

A similar instance of the hidden influence of social class may be found in the judgments of 4 participants who identified frequency of visits to the guidance office as indicative of the collegebound student. As researchers (Shapiro & Asher, 1972; Tseng & Thompson, 1968) have found, middle class students were much more likely to approach the counselor for help than were their low class peers.

Assessments of Upper and Lower Class Low Achievers

Another instance of the subtle, largely unconscious influence of social class can be seen in several themes which appeared in participants' responses to the boys' family backgrounds. As already mentioned, participants were strongly inclined to assume that upper class educated parents desired and expected their children to pursue college. The middle class boys' parents were generally viewed as supportive of higher education. Twenty-five percent of participants stated the belief that middle or lower class parents would be more open to options other than college. Lower class parents were more apt to be viewed either as not likely to support higher education
for their children or as unknown quantities. Over half (60%) of the participants expressed uncertainty about these parents' ambitions for their children.

The researcher wished to investigate such trends as well as participants' tendency to make particular speculations about one boy but not another in the same achievement band. The researcher noted, for instance, that participants often attributed Michael's (LAHC) poor academic record to personal problems but accepted Adam's (LALC) equally poor record at face value. To study these trends, the researcher analyzed each transcript. Every reference made to a specific boy was clipped, labeled, and filed. This process produced nine folders, each filled with all participant comments about each particular boy. Each boy's file was then analyzed to identify and describe any characteristic themes which might emerge. Subsequently, findings for the boys were compared and contrasted.

This methodical examination of participants' interview and written comments revealed two important findings. The first of these has already been discussed: participants were inclined to assess on the basis of social class the degree to which parents were likely to expect and support higher education for their children. Such assessments of parental support then figured into participants' judgments about advisees' fitness for college. Second, participants were sometimes inclined to rely on social class considerations in their evaluation of the boys' abilities and aspirations. This could
be readily observed when all comments all participants had made about one boy were compared with all comments made about another boy within the same achievement band. This cross-comparison revealed instances of distinctly different treatment of boys whose achievement records were nearly identical but whose class status differed. For example, 4 participants called Ryan (AAHC) an overachiever. To explain why he recommended four-year college for Ryan (AAHC) and community college for the middle and low class average achievers, one participant remarked:

Ryan Edward Knowles. I liked his grade point average, and that tells me he's a worker. His percentile here is a little lower. I go back to a family influence there and maybe what's expected of him. Dad is a neurosurgeon. Mother is a professor. He might be an overachiever. He might be thinking in terms of a college all the way from grade school, something like that. His testing corresponds to some of the other ones [the middle and low class average achievers] that I didn't recommend to a four-year college program. I think the family influence has brought that grade up to a 3.04. That same individual in another family might see a grade point in the one's or two's. (36/5)

No one speculated that Eric (AAMC) or Jeremy (AALC) were overachievers. In another instance, a participant wrote that she "would not recommend anything until [Michael, LAHC, and Andrew, LALC] took ACT tests and finished junior year." For the low class Adam (LALC) in the same achievement band as Michael (LAHC) and Andrew (LAMC), she assumed no more potential ability would emerge. "Due to GPA," she wrote, "I would recommend vocational school related to school motivation level for Adam (LALC)" (20).

For the most part, instances of such class-influenced differentiation were scattered throughout participants' comments

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on the nine advisees. The notable exception was the case of Michael (LAHC) and Adam (LALC). Nowhere did social class mediate so powerfully as in the judgments participants made about these two boys. During their interviews 26 (65%) participants approached Michael's (LAHC) situation in a distinctly different way than they approached that of Adam (LALC) although the boys' academic records and career and educational aspirations were interchangeable. In 26 cases, participants' rationales for their recommendations were moderated by class-influenced assumptions about these two boys.

Michael's (LAHC) case was treated as something of an anomaly. Many participants found it difficult to reconcile his low academic performance with his privileged background. In attempts to resolve the discrepancy between such low academic achievement and such high social status, participants speculated that Michael (LAHC) was an underachiever, that he had chemical abuse problems, that he had received insufficient attention from his highly professional father, that his poor achievement was a symptom of his rebellion against his parents' high expectations. Remarked a participant who assumed Michael's (LAHC) potential was greater than his performance indicated:

I assumed he is an underachiever and needs time to mature. I guess I'm projecting here families I've worked with where the kid chooses to be an underachiever. (22/5)

Other participants speculated about drug involvement. As one individual reasoned:

My hunch is something is happening here with this grade point. I would look for a number of things. I'd look
for what classes he has taken, what he's doing. Is he involved in drugs? This [pointing to social class information on the vignette before her] tells me he's a tad better than this [pointing to the grade point average and test score]. (35/10)

Some participants attributed frustration and emotional stress to Michael (LAHC). The following excerpt is typical:

Michael. He obviously comes from affluence and education. But he's caught in a little bit of a dilemma. Either he does not work very hard or heredity was not at work [laughs]. And so poor Michael has been frustrated much of his life because he has not lived up to the expectations of his father. So he's probably pretty stressed out about this whole situation already. (19/3)

This participant perceived Michael's (LAHC) grades to be the result of a series of problems:

Michael's 1.90 grade point and achievement score of 41 is perhaps the result of Michael feeling all this [parental] pressure very early and feeling resentful and for those reasons and maybe a lot of other reasons, an alienation from the educational process. And he became involved in some of the more unsavory elements that students become involved in. Let's say he had an alcohol and drug abuse problem. He might have that kind of potential that isn't indicated here. (4/5)

Another participant felt Michael (LAHC) lacked autonomy. He ultimately recommended that Michael (LAHC) enter the workforce directly upon graduation. While participants were often inclined to advise community college for Michael (LAHC) on the basis of social class, this participant arrived at the opposite conclusion (to advise job entry upon graduation) for equally class-influenced reasons. He viewed the job as a way to stabilize Michael (LAHC) so that he could then pursue college:

This creates a very interesting dichotomy [laughs]! The fact that the parents are very, very well educated.
He has achieved only a 1.9 grade point average. You can bet your bottom dollar that there's a lot of frustration in that family. Parents I'm sure are probably very frustrated over their child's lack of academic success which may have compounded that particular problem. This individual may be in need of developing a sense of independence first, of autonomy. Which he might screw up [laughs], but he might also capitalize on in terms of getting himself together. But my guess is he's got to do that first before he attempts college. Otherwise, he might waste a few thousand dollars before he gets serious. I don't know if I would tell him that, but I certainly would raise that concern in some fashion. I've seen students in this predicament before. It really depends on that person's ability to deal with the conflict that has probably arisen in his family. (27/6)

In summary, participants were strongly inclined to view Michael's (LAHC) situation as discrepant. His parents were perceived as highly successful and as expecting and supporting a college career for Michael (LAHC). Michael's (LAHC) poor performance was interpreted variously and was not generally assumed to reflect his true ability.

Participants were not inclined to interpret Adam's (LALC) combination of social status and academic achievement as discrepant. Only 2 participants remarked that Adam (LALC) may have had more ability than his record indicated. Eleven (27.5%) participants wondered whether Michael (LAHC) may have had more ability than he was demonstrating. In the vast majority of cases, Adam's (LALC) academic record was taken at face value. No attempts were made to explain away his poor performance. No references were made to possible drug or emotional problems, and Adam (LALC) was never viewed as failing to live up to his parents' expectations or as rebelling. Most participants questioned the degree to which Adam's
(LALC) parents desired and supported higher education for their son or assumed that such expectation and support levels were weak or lacking altogether. Remarked one participant:

Probably is capable of doing more. I don’t know how much the parents push the boy for good study habits and talk about education, but probably the vocational school would be the best place for him. (33/4)

Another participant offered this typical remark:

Adam would struggle at college, and his parents do not have post high school education. There would probably not be a strong emphasis on getting post high school education at home. I think if Adam went to vocational school, that would be very acceptable. (8/7)

In general, Michael's (LAHC) poor academic performance was more likely to be attributed to personal problems of some kind. Adam's (LALC) poor achievement was more likely to go unquestioned or to be attributed to the low or questionable value his parents assigned to education.

Contrasts between speculations made in the cases of Adam (LALC) and Michael (LAHC) appeared in sharpest relief when individual participants' comments about the two boys were considered side by side. It must be remembered that these two boys' academic records were nearly identical and that their career and educational aspirations were the same. Despite these facts, they received markedly different recommendations, and their situations were interpreted differently.

In one instance, a participant reasoned that vocational school represented a boost for Adam (LALC) and speculated that Adam's
(LALC) poor academic scores derived from inheritance or from his social class background. This same participant reasoned that Michael's (LAHC) academic record reflected his rebellion against his parents' high expectations. The participant made the following remarks about Adam's (LALC) situation:

Adam. Looks like the parents don't have too much money based on some of their background or lack of training or specific training. But, gosh, if somebody is going to be a night watchman and somebody's going to be a waitress at a truckstop, it sounds as if they're out there trying anyways. They're not sitting back and doing nothing and feeling sorry for themselves. Being around parents like that, I'm kind of thinking he's going to go on to school. He likes business. All right, he's not a real powerful type student. That might be an inherited type thing, a socioeconomic type thing, or whatever might all affect that. But I thought vocational school would be a real boost for him. I also in my explanation put down the fact that maybe the military would be the place to go to get some training, too, if he could afford that easier. With both his parents working, they might be able to pull off helping him get through vocational school, though. (18/5)

In discussing Michael's (LAHC) situation, the same participant's line of reasoning changed. In this case, poor performance was attributed to rebellion against high expectations rather than to genetics or social class origins:

Dad's a lawyer, and mom's a psychiatrist. Probably have all the answers. And Michael might be, with such low grade point average and achievement testing, he might be kind of rebelling against all this perfection in the family or something. Even a Victorian home! I thought, isn't that fancy [laughs]! For him to grow up in such a home as that, and everything is in its place, and everything like that. So proper. And maybe that's my own personal feelings. That's a pretty powerful combination for parents. And sometimes you have to find ways to overcome that, and you might do that by rebelling a little bit and kind of getting their goats with some low grades and some things like that. So I put down well, maybe they could put him in a two-year
college where you can get in with a little bit lower grade point average. And let's say if he got in and once he accepted this as being his own education, then perhaps he could transfer into a four-year college down the line or whichever way he wanted to go with it. But it looks like he needs to get away and find himself more or less, his own place in the world. (18/6)

In a second example, a participant assumed that Adam (LALC) would not receive the support necessary to pursue college and that his grades indicated deficient skills:

My concern for him, he's interested in going on to school, but he doesn't have the grade point nor, you know, I think he might have trouble in college. It looks like if his high school work is consistent with college, he'd probably fail out if he didn't build that up. Again, there are other factors here. He's not coming from the background where college is going to be something the family has gone through, and they might have trouble supporting even financially. So I thought they might better be able to handle the tech school and him, too, for his educational uses. There's a lot of angles he could go into in the tech school. (16/3)

The same participant assumed that Michael's (LAHC) potential was not accurately reflected in his grades and that community college would provide him the opportunity to attempt collegiate work. If this attempt proved unsuccessful, Michael (LAHC) could then make the transition to vocational school:

I think he needs to do it in two steps. His parents, just judging from that, both of them have postgraduate degrees. With his father being an attorney and mother being a psychiatrist. He hasn't proven himself in school for whatever reason. His high school isn't reflective of what he can do, or he just isn't able to do that. He again is talking about college and business, so I think probably starting in a community college and then with the idea of transferring. See what happens from there. The community college, there may be an easy transition into a vocational school, too. (16/4)
Another pair of excerpts illustrates one of the most overt and intentional class-based treatments produced by any of the 40 participants. As he assessed Michael's (LAHC) situation, this participant compared it with Adam's (LALC):

Yes. Michael Wilson. 1.90 grade point average. At this point, I started comparing some things. Adam had a 1.84, and Michael has a 1.9. They're real close in grade point average. In this situation, it would be kind of critical for me to see what kind of courses he took. Now, if he took some of the advanced math courses (which he probably wouldn't have with a grade point average like that), but if he's trying to take some of the more advanced courses and gets a 1.9 (almost a 2.0 grade point average), I could lean towards a two- or four-year college setting. He would not get into a four-year college with a 1.90 average. A two-year college, he might be able to get into. And I'm assuming in this case, with the background of the parents that he has a fairly solid situation at home, some good incentives and everything, and I just think maybe he has the potential to achieve in a four-year college setting eventually after a two-year college. But I think two-year college in preparation for a four-year setting is appropriate at this point. (17/4)

This participant held onto the belief that, despite his low grades, Michael (LAHC) possessed the potential to succeed at a four-year college. For Adam (LALC), he did not seriously entertain the community college or four-year college options. He saw in Adam's (LALC) situation neither the ability nor the incentive to succeed in college:

Next one is Adam Harris. I recommended a vocational school for Adam. Grade point average is low; it's a 1.84. And that would tell me that he probably would not be successful, at least not at this stage in his life, in a college setting whether a two- or a four-year college. This one I wasn't real sure what to do, whether vocational school or an apprenticeship program, maybe, or on-the-job training type thing. But I think a vocational school would be a possibility. Again, I look at the family background. There's not higher educational degrees as far as I can tell, and
the family rents. It goes back to, maybe it's a bias or prejudice I have, but I just think typically when you see some kind of ownership, usually you see a different quality of kid coming out of that family and more incentives and that type of thing. (17/3)

In Adam's (LALC) case, parental expectation level and degree of support were often considered questionable or assumed to be lacking. Participants were not nearly so inclined to assume hidden potential in Adam (LALC) as they were to assume it in Michael (LAHC). Several other assumptions were made only about Adam (LALC), including the assumption that he preferred hands-on work, that he had a poor attendance record, that he desired quick entry into the workforce, and that vocational school was the right place for him. An example of the latter assumption can be found in this comment by a participant who, however subtly, planned to redirect Adam's (LALC) college aspiration:

His scores are fairly low, grade point and achievement scores. Again, I hesitated. There's a couple different choices I had in mind. He wants to go to college. He wants to work in business. I put down that he's got the interests and the goals. His ability is certainly questionable. Financial need is definitely a problem. If he went to a community college, there would be ways to cut expenses, but I would guess his parents wouldn't be able to help him out very much at all. So I might sit down with Adam and talk with him about other ways of getting into business, such as apprenticeship or other possibilities, um, just to point out that there are some other things available. (3/7)

This rationale for a noncollege recommendation for Adam (LALC) can be contrasted with the same participant's rationale for advising college for Michael (LAHC). In this case, the point at issue was not so much low grades or financial need. Instead, it was this
boy's right to attempt college that accounted for the participant's college recommendation. No mention was made of redirecting this boy's aspiration:

Michael. OK, well, his parents obviously have good jobs, lawyer, psychiatrist. No financial need. His scores are quite low. He wants to go to college. That's one of the strongest things I look at. Unless he is indeed one of those late bloomers, he's going to have problems in college, and he will find that out soon. Getting through. I still think he should get out there and have the right to attempt it. (3/6)

Interestingly, the participant included as part of her rationale for Michael (LAHC) the boy's stated desire to attend college claiming, "That's one of the strongest things I look at." Clearly, this criterion was not "the strongest thing looked at" in Adam's (LALC) case. His stated career and educational aspirations were identical to Michael's (LAHC). Adam's (LALC) aspirations, however, were perceived as misdirected.

Although analysis of interview transcripts revealed that nearly two-thirds of the 40 participants differentiated between Adam (LALC) and Michael (LAHC) on the basis of social class, it must be remembered that a third of the participants did not. This group focused exclusively on achievement indicators and/or the boys' stated aspirations. Such participants were inclined either to dismiss social class information with remarks like, "I don't pay any attention to that" or to make no comment at all on class factors. The participant who most directly addressed the social class differences between Michael (LAHC) and Adam (LALC) as beside the point stated:
Well, you know, if Michael can go to community college, why can't Adam? They're kinda similar, aren't they?

See, I don't think I have the right to say, "My dear, you cannot go to college. I think you should go to a vocational school." No, I don't think that's right. This is America, and I think everybody has an opportunity. I think he could go to college and fail, but I think that's also his opportunity to do. And, you know, we could say, well, Adam's dad works as a night watchman, and his mother is a waitress. There won't be enough money. That's BS. There's probably going to be plenty of money for a kid like this to go because we have financial aid now, and if you don't have a lot, you're going to get some help, right? So we can't use that any more. There is money for students to go. (37/4-5)

Assessments of Upper and Lower Class High Achievers

The many instances of social class effect in participants' handling of the cases of low achieving Michael (LAHC) and Adam (LALC) raised the question of whether the pair of high achieving boys (Thomas, LAHC, the upper class high achiever and Jason, HAHC, the low class high achiever) had been treated similarly. Would low class, high achieving Jason (HALC) be considered just as much an anomaly as upper class, low achieving Michael (LAHC) had been?

A review of their cases revealed that participants did not consider Jason's (HALC) low class/high achievement profile so deviant as they had considered Michael's (LAHC) upper class/low achievement profile. Further, the participants were not inclined to make such sharp class-influenced distinctions between the two high achievers (low class Jason, HALC, and high class Thomas, HAHC) as they had between the two low achievers (high class Michael and low class Adam).

Participants viewed both Jason (HALC) and Thomas (HAHC) as strong college candidates. Thomas (HAHC), however, emerged as the
ideal college candidate because in his case, all the pieces fit together. In Jason's (HALC) case, nearly all the pieces fit together. Jason (HALC) had the grades, test score, and aspiration to qualify as a strong college candidate. Only his family background prevented him from attaining the status of ideal college candidate which Thomas (HAHC) so clearly enjoyed.

In only 3 cases did participants explicitly state that Jason's (HALC) situation struck them as somewhat of an anomaly. As these remarks indicate, his social class background and achievement levels did not match for these few participants:

He appears to have the academic ability and achievement test score. I'd recommend a four-year college. However, it's curious that his father is a custodian in a local manufacturing plant, and his mother works as a domestic. I mean, certainly that is inconsistent. (12/4)

Family background [Jason's] would sort of put up a yellow flag right away so that you might want to question his motivations. One would be inclined to believe that given that family background, he might be more interested in a vocational type program. (27/5)

Ten (25%) participants raised concerns about Jason's (HALC) financial need, but nearly everyone believed scholarships or financial aids would supply needed funds. Two were more guardedly optimistic and ready to explore lower cost options (such as community college or the military) to enable Jason (HALC) eventually to complete a baccalaureate program. Although finances figured into participants' judgments about Jason (HALC) in many cases, all were agreed that four-year college was ultimately the best avenue for Jason (HALC).
Without exception, participants regarded Jason (HALC) as college material. His scores were considered in the very high range. Although over a third (37.5%) of the participants questioned Jason's (HALC) lower class parents' support for higher education, no one questioned the boy's ability or suggested that college was not the right place for him. Most participants made comments like "I think he's definitely college material" (20/5) and "It looks like he could easily do college level work" (1/3). Stated another, "With these grades and those ability levels, he should go into a four-year program" (2/3). "Jason should go to college. He wants to go, and he has an exceedingly high grade point average" (29/4), said another counselor.

Over a third of all participants did voice assumptions about the family support Jason (HALC) was likely to receive. Their remarks were along these lines:

I think Jason, again, um, I think the family background here is interesting. I don't know how the family feels about college. (30/4)

I wondered as I was reading it what his dad thought of education. That thought crossed my mind. He is academically strong. I worry a little bit about his dad's regard for education. I wasn't sure. (25/9)

Family support? I just don't know. It's hard to tell. I'd have to talk to the people. (13/12)

Some participants expressed a need for further information about Jason's (HALC) parents; some desired a personal meeting to better discern their expectations and support for the boy's aspirations. The confident assumptions participants made about
Jason's (HALC) upper class counterpart (Thomas, HAHC) were in sharp contrast to their hesitation here. The higher class parents were assumed to be solidly in favor of college whereas the lower class parents (even those with a high achieving son) were considered unknown quantities.

In light of Jason's (HALC) extraordinary academic accomplishment, it is curious that parental backing should be questioned in his case. Apparently, the counselors based their estimates of Jason's (HALC) parents' support more on their social class status than on their son's remarkable achievement record.

Seventeen (42.5%) participants made no reference to Jason's (HALC) family background but focused exclusively upon his outstanding grade point average and test score. This participant's evaluation was typical. "It looks to me like Jason could handle a real power type post-high program and therefore shouldn't limit himself" (4/4).

Thomas (HAHC) appeared to fit most participants' ideal image of the student bound for college and likely to succeed there. Over half of the participants used expressions like "sure," "without a doubt," and "with no reservations" to describe their confidence in their judgments about Thomas' (HAHC) fitness for college. Thomas (HAHC) "looks to me like a typical collegebound type student" (17/4) remarked one participant. "I wouldn't go any other way but four-year degree. There's no doubt," (8/6) affirmed another. "I
have a feeling he would lean toward college just because of his background and his potential" (13/3).

Often, participants mentioned that Thomas (HAHC) would have no trouble. "It's going to go real smooth, and he's going to college, and he's not going to have any trouble, and it'll be smooth sailing," (5/11) remarked one counselor. "I think of all the kids I went through in these vignettes," commented another, "he would be most likely to be able to succeed in a four-year college" (31/5). Two participants assumed that Thomas (HAHC) would pursue graduate work, and nearly a quarter spoke of Thomas' (HAHC) future advancement possibilities. Two participants stated that Jason (HALC) would probably pursue graduate work, but only 4 spoke of future advancement for him.

The researcher concluded that most participants saw Thomas (HAHC) as the ideal college candidate. He possessed all the desirable qualifications: high grade point average, high achievement test score, stated interest in higher education, and parental background. Parents' higher class status weighed heavily in this equation. Thomas' (HAHC) social status translated into high family expectations and availability of strong support in both financial and emotional terms. A series of excerpts illustrates this tendency to infer high expectations and support:

Thomas Paul Knight. Professional background. Four-year college. [This is said with a tone of finality.] Not only his parents, his scores are good, his grades are good. Let's go to college. (36/2)
Thomas obviously comes from an affluent family and would get pressure to achieve and to attend college. (19/2)

Father is a dentist. Mother works as a scientist for a commercial lab. I'm sure the expectations for this son, Tom, will be high. If I was a betting man, I'd probably guess he'd be going on to college. (33/3)

The parents are the kind of people who would encourage him to go on to a four-year college because they're pretty professional people. (18/5)

I'd assume from his parents' background that he must be following somewhat in their footsteps. Parents would support him in terms of his interest, going on to some kind of professional occupation. (7/4)

If a four-year college is his choice, he'll get support from his parents. (26/3)

Because Thomas' (HAHC) high achievement fit with assumed parental expectations and his own stated interest in pursuing college, his case was viewed as straightforward. His achievement, aspiration, and social status constellated an ideal collegebound profile.

Alongside this perspective was another represented by a small minority (15%) of participants who recommended college for Thomas (HAHC) but focused exclusively upon his ability with no reference to social status. The following assessment is typical of this group:

High grade point. High achievement. Definitely those two things indicate that I don't think he'd have any difficulty in an academic curriculum in a four-year school if that's what he wants to do. (9/5)

These participants expressed the same definiteness about the college option for Thomas (HAHC) as had the other participants.
Their confidence appeared to rest solely on Thomas' (HAHC) ability, however. Family expectations and support were never expressly noted.

Conclusion

The high class low achiever (Michael, LAHC) had been viewed as something of an anomaly. The researcher asked herself whether the low class high achiever (Jason, HALC) would also be perceived as anomalous. She found that participants were inclined to view both Thomas (HAHC) and Jason (HALC) as collegebound but perceived Thomas (HAHC) as the more ideal college candidate. As was true in the case of the parents of every low class boy represented in the vignettes, Jason's (HALC) parents' expectations and level of support for higher education were questioned rather than assumed to be strong. This was so despite the boy's outstanding academic record. Overall, social class distinctions did not appear as pronounced in the cases of Thomas (HAHC) and Jason (HALC) as they had in the cases of Michael (LAHC) and Adam (LALC). In Michael's (LAHC) case, many participants felt compelled to provide explanations for the poor performance of one in such a privileged position. The researcher interpreted this to mean that many of the counselors found the high class low achiever profile (Michael, LAHC) a troubling anomaly, but that they accepted the low class high achiever's case (Jason, HALC) as neither terribly discrepant nor troubling.

Jason's (HALC) performance did not appear to require justification. He clearly fit the desirable upwardly mobile
profile. The researcher speculated that Jason's (HALC) profile (poor boy high performer) fit certain pervasive American cultural images many participants had referred to during the interviews. As already discussed in Chapter IV, the majority of participants displayed typically American optimism about the life chances of the individual, optimism based on the belief that with talent, hard work, persistence, and motivation, one can better oneself. During their interviews, over three-quarters (78%) of the participants stated their allegiance to these principles directly. Overall, their approach was suffused with optimism and enthusiasm regarding individuals and their opportunities to develop and use their talents to advance socially and economically despite obstacles.

Several participants told stories about having worked with extraordinarily talented youngsters who, like Jason (HALC), came from very modest backgrounds and ended up with brilliant careers. Ten participants related stories about how they themselves had pursued college and enjoyed successful careers despite poor or modest family circumstances. All of this led the researcher to conclude that the low class, high achieving boy was viewed not as anomalous but rather as a familiar figure for these counselors many of whom had come from lower middle and middle class homes themselves and who had used the educational system to advance socially and economically. For these participants, college would be viewed as the natural choice for this lower class high achieving boy. The researcher speculated that the profile of talented low class Jason
may have disposed some participants to personally identify with him and actively sponsor his advancement via college education. In other words, the researcher speculated that in some cases, the advisee's social class background may have acted as a trigger for the reenactment process. The researcher questioned whether the class background and ideological beliefs of guidance counselors might play a key role in the way they assess various achievement/social class configurations and subsequently in the way they advise students. Their allegiance to American ideology regarding talent and opportunity and (in many cases) their personal experience of the operation of this ideology in their own lives might have disposed them to recognise and further the opportunities of highly talented lower class Jason.

Effects of the Two Sets of Vignettes

Before concluding this section, the effect of the use of two slightly different sets of vignettes with participating counselors must be reviewed. Two sets of vignettes were employed with participants in this study. In one half of the sets, the nine boys were presented as having an interest in attending college while in the other half, the boys stated their interest in attaining postsecondary education. This slight difference was introduced to determine whether, as Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) have speculated, a stated interest in college would influence participants to select college more frequently regardless of advisees' social class background. Would the fact that an advisee specifically aspired to
attend college influence the participant to recommend college more often than the rather diffuse aspiration to attain postsecondary education?

Results revealed that participants were equally inclined to recommend college regardless of the set of vignettes they received. Those with the college vignettes were somewhat more inclined to recommend community college. These participants recommended college 102 times and community college 38 times while those with vignettes reading postsecondary education recommended college 99 times and community college 25 times.

During interviews, participants sometimes remarked on the statement referring to the boys' stated interest in college or postsecondary education. On roughly half of these occasions, participants interpreted boys' stated aspirations as indicative of their seriousness about pursuing education. In these participants' view, the mere statement of aspiration indicated some commitment to the idea of going on to school. Just as often, however, participants dismissed the boys' stated aspirations to attend college or attain postsecondary education claiming that high school youngsters commonly state such aspirations even if they are not personally committed to them. These participants further claimed that high school students generally understand little about postsecondary institutions. They pointed out that students often misuse the term college, applying it in a generic way to all post high school programs including vocational school programs. These
participants assigned little importance to the aspiration statements and assumed they would need to routinely provide for most advisees a thorough explanation of post-high school options.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSIONS

Before discussing conclusions for this study, a brief summary of findings is in order. This study began as an investigation of the influence advisee social class might exert upon high school counselors' judgments of advisees' fitness for college. Results revealed that the judgments of the majority of the 40 participants in this study were influenced by advisees' social status. Twenty-six (65%) participants produced one or more class-influenced recommendation, and 32 (80%) expressed class-influenced assumptions about students and/or their parents. The researcher concluded that social class could not be considered a quiescent factor.

The participants who produced class-influenced recommendations generally discriminated by judging the higher or middle class boy in one achievement band as collegebound while judging the low class boy in the same band as vocational school or community college material. Similarly, a high class boy would be assessed as a community college candidate while his middle and/or lower class counterpart would be perceived as a vocational school candidate.

Over the course of their interviews or in their written remarks, most participants expressed assumptions about the advisees based on their social class status. Three of these assumptions received most frequent mention.

First, high class educated parents were generally presumed to expect and strongly support college for their children. These
parents were sometimes considered reluctant to accept any postsecondary option other than college or community college.

Second, middle class parents were viewed as likely to support the college option. They were sometimes considered more open to noncollege postsecondary options than were the higher class parents.

Third, lower class parents' support for their children's college education was generally considered lacking or could not be gauged. Many participants considered these parents more open to noncollege options and unlikely to insist upon college for their children.

These differential estimations of family support proved significant and did color some participants' judgments about advisees' fitness for college. Participants were inclined to cite family support as contributing significantly to students' chances for success in college. The supported student was perceived as the better risk.

The researcher discovered that in one pair of cases, social class considerations influenced participants' judgments more strongly than in others. One particular combination of social class and academic achievement provoked more class-influenced assessment than any other. The configuration of ability and class represented by high class, low achieving Michael (LAHC) was perceived as anomalous. Many participants felt compelled to speculate about this privileged boy's unexpectedly poor academic performance while accepting without question the same low level of performance from
Adam (LALC), Michael’s (LAHC) low class low achieving counterpart. While Michael’s (LAHC) poor achievement was more likely to be ascribed to emotional, drug, or maturity problems, Adam's (LALC) was likely to go unremarked or to be ascribed to his parents' indifference to education.

In a second pair of cases, the researcher noted a somewhat less striking instance of differential treatment. High class high achieving Thomas (HAHC) and low class high achieving Jason (HALC) were both viewed as strong college candidates. Thomas (HAHC), however, was generally seen as the ideal college candidate. Besides his high grades, test score, and aspiration (all of which he shared with lower class Jason), Thomas (HAHC) had upper class parents who were assumed to be solidly in support of college. Jason's (HALC) parents' support was questioned rather than presumed strong.

Unlike Michael's (LAHC) case, Jason's (HALC) was not generally perceived as anomalous. The researcher noted that many participants' own experience was as low middle class individuals who had used education to better their social and economic condition. This and the typically American ideology the majority of participants expressed concerning opportunity for all may have disposed them to perceive the low class high achiever as a familiar rather than anomalous figure. Additionally, Jason's (HALC) upward social trajectory represents the fulfilment of the typically American mandate to better oneself through talent and effort.
Only rarely did any participant explicitly present social class as a criterion whereby he or she judged students' college potential. Often, however, the researcher was struck by the automatic, unreflective way participants produced assumptions and recommendations moderated by social class considerations. These were presented as commonsensical, as in accord with how the world is. Many of those who presumed lack of support for college education among lower class parents, for example, treated this as obvious, as part of common knowledge and, consequently, as a suitable basis for judgment.

Typically, participants claimed that social class did not influence the vocational/educational guidance they dispensed, or they claimed to resist actively any inclination to assess students' potential according to class. For the most part, the influence social class exerted on participants appeared to be subtle and unconscious. Participants generally perceived their class-influenced assumptions as commonsensical, as reflective of reality and as reliable, practical, helpful, and humane.

Not all participants appeared to be influenced by social class, of course, and not everyone appeared to be equally influenced by this factor. In fact, many participants produced only one recommendation (out of nine possible recommendations) which reflected the influence of social class.

In qualitative research, the initial question the researcher poses is not necessarily the most important question that is
eventually raised. As the research progresses, issues arise which the researcher has not anticipated. These issues sometimes bring the researcher closer to the heart of the matter than any speculations and questions he or she entertained before actually entering the field.

In this study, the initial question about the influence of social class upon counselors' judgments remained central but led to other important questions. One such issue concerned the very nature of the vocational/educational advisement activity. Participants in this study espoused quite different approaches to some of the most fundamental aspects of this activity which consumed the better part of their working days.

Participants were sharply divided over their definition of the counselor's role within the vocational/educational guidance process. For advocates of the directive approach, the guidance function involved information-giving and overt influencing of the advisee. The advisement act was not presented as neutral but as involving active encouragement and discouragement of various postsecondary options according to the set of criteria each counselor had adopted to enable him or her to assess students' potential for college, vocational school, or other options.

Advocates of the nondirective interpretation of the guidance role represented guidance counselors as caring but neutral providers of information who avoided influencing advisees' decisions and who restricted themselves to the role of decision-making facilitator.
Despite this presentation of self, nondirective participants as well as their more directive peers clearly had developed criteria which they used to order and make sense of data about students and on the basis of which they arrived at assessments of students' fitness for various postsecondary opportunities. Whether nondirective counselors can successfully hide these internal judgments from advisees and retain their professedly neutral stance is unknown.

The researcher was inclined to believe that participants often unwittingly communicated to the advisee their disposition regarding his best interests. During the study, the researcher noted a number of instances where avowedly nondirective (i.e., neutral) participants described strategies they would use to subtly redirect advisees' unsuitable aspirations.

How (and indeed if) counselors' internal judgments can be or should be hidden from advisees is clearly of practical and ethical significance to guidance counselors and their clients. The philosophical questions surrounding counselor bias, neutrality, and influence deserve serious attention, touching as they do upon the very definition of the counseling role and the counseling relationship.

Another issue which emerged as the study progressed and which also involved lack of consensus among participants was the multiple interpretation phenomenon. During the information-gathering phase of this study, it became clear that the high achievers were treated very consistently in recommendations participants produced. In the
cases of average and low achievers, however, participants often interpreted the same facts about the same student in startlingly different ways. What one participant perceived as salient in a certain constellation of grade point average, test score, social class, and aspiration, another discounted. What one participant considered an indispensable qualification for college candidacy, another dismissed. This multiple interpretation of identical information extended to so-called objective academic measures (grades and test scores) as well as characteristics such as social class. As a result, the same advisee often received a bewildering array of recommendations all from experienced, Masters-degreed guidance professionals whose central role was vocational and educational guidance.

The researcher concluded that the lack of consistency in participants' recommendations derived from the lack of any single standard set of criteria for assessing college potential. To fill this vacuum, participants appeared to have formulated their own sets of criteria to guide their practice of vocational and educational advisement. Some of these sets incorporated social class as a criterion used to assess fitness for college while others did not. For the most part, inclusion of social class as a criterion for determining college potential was unconscious and unintentional.

It appeared that even though vocational/educational advisement represented their central role, these guidance counselors lacked consensus about what constitutes fitness for college. Use of
multiple sets of criteria for judging college candidacy and the resultant inconsistency in recommendations produced by participants struck the researcher as problematic as did cases of unconscious inclusion of unworthy criteria such as social class and the tendency of some participants to derive key criteria chiefly from their own personal experience and from reliance on stereotypes. The tendency to use reenactment and stereotypes to create criteria is not difficult to understand. In the absence of a standard set of criteria, the guidance counselor must formulate a working set of her or his own if she or he is to practice the profession. What struck the researcher as problematic about reenactment were instances where it appeared that participants unconsciously treated advisees not as distinct individuals but as extensions of the counselor. Likewise, the use of stereotypes tended to reduce individual advisees to mere resemblances.

The researcher believes that the very nature of vocational/educational advisement requires re-examination. Vocational/educational advisement constitutes a very important function (if not the principal function) of the secondary guidance counselor. The fact that many participants formulated their judgments about advisees' potential for college work much as lay persons would probably formulate such judgments raises serious questions about the professional nature of this activity.

Evaluation of the worthiness, origins, and prioritization of criteria counselors use to judge advisees' college potential is
critical in view of the counselor's position and the potential influence that attends it. If students are to receive a more consistent quality of advisement, counselors must closely examine the criteria they now employ. Clearly, this is no simple task because of the subtle, unconscious nature of certain criteria which can enter into counselors' judgments and because it may be impossible and undesirable to formulate any one standard list of criteria all guidance counselors would presumably apply. Given the unpredictability of human beings and the status of current attempts to measure their potential, any officially designated inflexible set of criteria may prove counterproductive. Further, given widespread convictions in this country regarding the individual, equality, opportunity, second chances for late bloomers, and so forth, adoption of a single set of criteria for assessment of college potential is likely to be rejected as rigid and restrictive.

Attempting to concretize an official list of criteria to which all counselors would presumably adhere seems less worthwhile than the pursuit of other goals. Recognizing and eliminating college fitness criteria based upon social class is clearly one of these. Counselors are enjoined in their codes of ethics to treat clients on an individual basis and not according to class, gender, race, or creed. Yet, as evidenced in this study, well-meaning counselors often unintentionally differentiated among their clients on the basis of social class. Because they live in a society permeated by social class bias, counselors must be sensitized to its
subtle influence upon their judgments about advisees' qualification for occupational and educational opportunities.

The importance of sensitizing counselors to the influence of social class is compelling when Cicourel and Kitsuse's (1963) perspective is adopted. The counselor plays an important role in the processing of the decisions and aspirations of high school students as they negotiate the various avenues open to them in high school and beyond. As an important part of the institution that prepares individuals for positions they will occupy in society, the guidance counselor must be keenly aware of the subtle operation of social class differentiation if he or she is to avoid unwitting complicity in the reproduction of the social order. Rather than unconsciously abetting the sorting of students by social class, the counselor is enjoined to oppose this tendency as he or she is enjoined to oppose the equally powerful and subtle tendencies to sort students on the basis of gender or race.
REFERENCES


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MICHAEL TROY WILSON

Michael is an eleventh grader. His father is a full partner in a large law firm. His mother is a psychiatrist. The family has refurbished a Victorian home in an older but fashionable part of town. In summer they stay at their lake home. Michael's father and his mother have post-graduate degrees. Michael states his interest in attaining postsecondary education and says he would like to work in business. His grade point average is 1.90. His composite percentile rank on his most recent standardized achievement test is 41.

Consider this student's best interests. Which one of these options are you most inclined to encourage in his particular case? (Check one.)

____ Vocational School
____ Apprenticeship
____ Community College
____ Military
____ 4-year College
____ On-the-job Training
____ Other: _______________________________________________________

Please write a brief explanation for your choice in this case.
RYAN EDWARD KNOWLES

Ryan is an eleventh grader. His father is a neurosurgeon. His mother is a university professor. The family owns a large new home in an exclusive suburb and has a vacation home in another state. Ryan's father and his mother have post-graduate degrees. Ryan states his interest in attaining postsecondary education and says he would like to work in the communications and media industry. His grade point average is 3.04. His composite percentile rank on his most recent standardized achievement test is 64.

Consider this student's best interests. Which one of these options are you most inclined to encourage in his particular case? (Check one.)

____ Vocational School
____ Apprenticeship
____ Community College
____ Military
____ 4-year College
____ On-the-job Training
____ Other: _____________________________

Please write a brief explanation for your choice in this case.
THOMAS PAUL KNIGHT

Thomas is an eleventh grader. His father is a dentist. His mother is a scientist for a commercial lab. The family owns a condominium in a newly redeveloped part of the city. They spend holidays at their country home. Thomas' father and his mother have post-graduate degrees. Thomas states his interest in attaining postsecondary education and says he would like to work in the hospitality industry. His grade point average is 3.87. His composite percentile rank on his most recent standardized achievement test is 92.

Consider this student's best interests. Which one of these options are you most inclined to encourage in his particular case? (Check one.)

[ ] Vocational School
[ ] Apprenticeship
[ ] Community College
[ ] Military
[ ] 4-year College
[ ] On-the-job Training
[ ] Other: ________________________________

Please write a brief explanation for your choice in this case.
ERIC TIMOTHY MARTIN

Eric is an eleventh grader. His father is a tool and die maker for a mid-sized manufacturer. His mother teaches second grade. The family owns a modern ranch-style home in an older suburban area. Eric's father completed a year of trade school after high school, and his mother holds a bachelor's degree. Eric states his interest in attaining postsecondary education and says he would like to work in business. His grade point average is 3.00. His composite percentile rank on his most recent standardized achievement test is 65.

Consider this student's best interests. Which one of these options are you most inclined to encourage in his particular case? (Check one.)

___ Vocational School
___ Apprenticeship
___ Community College
___ Military
___ 4-year College
___ On-the-job Training
___ Other: ____________________________

Please write a brief explanation for your choice in this case.
ANDREW MARK STEWARD

Andrew is an eleventh grader. His father manages a hardware store. His mother is a librarian at a public library. The family owns a remodeled two-story home in an older suburb. Andrew's father has a high school diploma, and his mother has a bachelor's degree. Andrew states his interest in attaining postsecondary education and says he would like to work in the computer and information industry. His grade point average is 1.77. His composite percentile rank on his most recent standardized achievement test is 42.

Consider this student's best interests. Which one of these options are you most inclined to encourage in his particular case? (Check one.)

___ Vocational School
___ Apprenticeship
___ Community College
___ Military
___ 4-year College
___ On-the-job Training
___ Other:______________________________________

Please write a brief explanation for your choice in this case.
DANIEL ALLEN HANES

Daniel is an eleventh grader. His father is an insurance agent. His mother is a social worker. The family owns a roomy house in a newer suburb. Daniel's father has a high school diploma and one year of vocational training, and his mother has a bachelor's degree. Daniel states his interest in attaining postsecondary education and says he would like to work in the construction and architecture industry. His grade point average is 3.78. His composite percentile rank on his most recent standardized achievement test is 93.

Consider this student's best interests. Which one of these options are you most inclined to encourage in his particular case? (Check one.)

___ Vocational School
___ Apprenticeship
___ Community College
___ Military
___ 4-year College
___ On-the-job Training
___ Other: ________________________________

Please write a brief explanation for your choice in this case.
JASON RODNEY BENSON

Jason is an eleventh grader. His father is a custodian at a local manufacturing plant. His mother works as a domestic for private homes. The family rents a small single-story home near an industrial park. Jason's father completed tenth grade, and his mother has a high school diploma. Jason states his interest in attaining postsecondary education and says he would like to work in the health care industry. His grade point average is 3.91. His composite percentile rank on his most recent standardized achievement test is 90.

Consider this student's best interests. Which one of these options are you most inclined to encourage in his particular case? (Check one.)

___ Vocational School
___ Apprenticeship
___ Community College
___ Military
___ 4-year College
___ On-the-job Training
___ Other: ________________________________

Please write a brief explanation for your choice in this case.
ADAM DAVID HARRIS

Adam is an eleventh grader. His father is a night watchman at a large shopping mall. His mother is a waitress at a truckstop. The family rents a two-bedroom apartment in a low-income housing project near the downtown area. Adam's father and mother have high school diplomas. Adam states his interest in attaining postsecondary education and says he would like to work in business. His grade point average is 1.84. His composite percentile rank on his most recent standardized achievement test is 43.

Consider this student's best interests. Which one of these options are you most inclined to encourage in his particular case? (Check one.)

____ Vocational School
____ Apprenticeship
____ Community College
____ Military
____ 4-year College
____ On-the-job Training
____ Other: _______________________________________

Please write a brief explanation for your choice in this case.
JEREMY PAUL ATKINS

Jeremy is an eleventh grader. His father is a bartender. His mother is a worker in a dry cleaning/laundry business. The family owns a mobile home in a trailer court at the edge of the city limits. Jeremy's father has completed eleventh grade, and his mother has a high school diploma. Jeremy states his interest in attaining postsecondary education and says he would like to work in business. His grade point average is 3.13. His composite percentile rank on his most recent standardized achievement test is 62.

Consider this student's best interests. Which one of these options are you most inclined to encourage in his particular case? (Check one.)

___ Vocational School
___ Apprenticeship
___ Community College
___ Military
___ 4-year College
___ On-the-job Training
___ Other:__________________________________________

Please write a brief explanation for your choice in this case.
Appendix A contains the nine vignettes which comprise Set B. Vignettes in Set A are identical except that the phrase "states his interest in attaining postsecondary education" is replaced by the phrase "states his interest in attaining college education."

Vignettes have been arranged in random order. They were presented to participants in the sequence in which they appear in Appendix A.
Appendix B

Determination of Social Class

with Hollingshead's Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>1 x 9</td>
<td>1 x 5</td>
<td>1 x 6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>1 x 9</td>
<td>1 x 5</td>
<td>1 x 6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>1 x 9</td>
<td>1 x 5</td>
<td>1 x 6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>3 x 9</td>
<td>3 x 5</td>
<td>3 x 6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>3 x 9</td>
<td>4 x 5</td>
<td>3 x 6</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>3 x 9</td>
<td>3 x 5</td>
<td>3 x 6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>7 x 9</td>
<td>5 x 5</td>
<td>4 x 6</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>6 x 9</td>
<td>4 x 5</td>
<td>5 x 6</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>6 x 9</td>
<td>5 x 5</td>
<td>5 x 6</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each element in the above calculation is weighted. Father's occupation is weighted at nine; father's educational level is weighted at five; family residence is weighted at six.

Each social class is assigned a score range:

- Social Class I 20-31
- Social Class II 32-55
- Social Class III 56-86
- Social Class IV 87-115
- Social Class V 116-134

(Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958)
Appendix C

Determination of Occupational Prestige

with Treiman's Ranking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MICHAEL</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>75.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychiatrist</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RYAN</td>
<td>Neurosurgeon</td>
<td>81.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University Professor</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOMAS</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scientist</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERIC</td>
<td>Tool &amp; Die Maker</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elementary Teacher</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDREW</td>
<td>Manager of Hardware Store</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANIEL</td>
<td>Insurance Agent</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JASON</td>
<td>Custodian</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAM</td>
<td>Night Watchman</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEREMY</td>
<td>Bartender</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dry Clean/Laundry</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occupational rankings range from 88.9 (Member of President's Cabinet) to 9.3 (Shoeshiner).

(Treiman, 1977)
Appendix D

Directions Provided to Participants

DIRECTIONS

The purpose of this research is to study student decision-making about post-high school activities and the advisement guidance counselors are inclined to offer students in this process. The information you have to work with will appear in the form of nine vignettes each concerning a different student. In this study, each student represents a composite of data and not an actual individual.

The researcher realizes that you may find the student data limited and that you may prefer more extensive information upon which to base your advisement. Please make the best decisions possible given the background you have in each case.

After reading a vignette, check the one option you consider best in that case and write a brief explanation for your selection. Then move to the next vignette and repeat this process until you have completed all nine vignettes.
Appendix E

Information Sheet

CODE NUMBER ______________________
DATE_____________________________
TIME_____________________________
LOCATION_________________________

NAME________________________________
SCHOOL________________________________
ADDRESS________________________________
PHONE________________________________
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE_____________________
   (High School Guidance & Counseling)

COUNSELOR'S CURRENT SOCIAL CLASS____________
COUNSELOR'S FAMILY OF ORIGIN SOCIAL CLASS__________
Appendix F

Data Display Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High SES</th>
<th>Middle SES</th>
<th>Low SES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Ability</strong></td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Jason</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noncollege</td>
<td>Noncollege</td>
<td>Noncollege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Ability</strong></td>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>Jeremy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noncollege</td>
<td>Noncollege</td>
<td>Noncollege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Ability</strong></td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noncollege</td>
<td>Noncollege</td>
<td>Noncollege</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Follow-Up Letter

Guidance Department
Anytown High School
Anytown, Midstate 54000
October 17, 1986

Dear Mr. Jones,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the dissertation research we discussed in our telephone conversation of October 15. As part of doctoral study at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, I am investigating how guidance counselors assist high school students with postsecondary educational/vocational planning. Forty high school counselors from Midstate will participate.

Participating counselors are asked to complete a written exercise and an interview. If it can be provided, a private, relatively quiet setting is best for our meeting. Usually an hour is sufficient to complete the entire process.

Thank you for your cooperation. I look forward to meeting you on Monday, October 27 at 9:00 am in the guidance office at Anytown High School.

If you need to contact me prior to October 27, please write at 1800 1/2 10th Street, City, Midstate or call (111) 223-0001.

Sincerely,

Judy Schindler