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THE OFFICE SECRETARY

A STUDY OF AN OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF WOMEN OFFICE WORKERS

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

THE CITY UNIVERSITY,
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES,
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ABSTRACT

An analysis was made of one clerical occupation in which women predominated, that of the office secretary. The research aimed to examine the occupation in the general context of women's employment and in particular to examine the relationship between the secretary's job and occupational and social mobility.

Information was obtained from two separate sources: a) a sample of employers in central London and all the secretaries they employed, using as a sample frame Thomson's London Yellow Pages Classified telephone directory, and, b) the nationwide membership of two organisations of secretaries, the Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries and the National Association of Personal Secretaries. Two hundred and fifty-two establishments took part in the enquiry and eight hundred and sixty-one completed questionnaires were received from secretaries and former-secretaries.

Employers, who were interviewed, were asked about their needs and use of secretaries. The questionnaire to secretaries covered a number of different topics including education and training, career and job selection, a secretary's function, conditions of work, use of machinery, job satisfaction, promotion and occupational mobility, and the effect of marriage. Issues such as a secretary's role and the status of the occupation were examined.

The research presents a picture of secretaries and the work they do and puts forward recommendations to improve their employment situation.

INTRODUCTION

Women outnumber men in clerical occupations, yet this has not been reflected in previous research. The predominance of women in clerical occupations is particularly apparent in the case of the office secretary. While the exact number of secretaries is not known because official statistics do not quote separate figures for them, it is known from the 1961 Census that men typists, shorthand-writers and secretaries constituted only 2.1 per cent of the total employed in those categories, whereas they made up 86.8 per cent of clerks, cashiers and office machine operators. It was hoped to discover the causes and consequences of the secretary's job having become a predominantly female occupation. The hypothesis was made that although there were undoubtedly several factors which led to the dominance of the occupation by women, a major contributory factor was the compatibility between the secretary's role at work and women's role in society.

The office secretary holds a position which is often considered to be the most prestigious among clerical occupations, partly as a consequence of the close contact at work with people of high status. For this reason the occupation has been one to which more junior office staff have aspired. At the same time, secretarial work has been considered as a useful means for women to gain entry to other occupations. A second hypothesis was therefore made that the secretary's role was closely associated with upward occupational and social mobility for women.

It became apparent after lengthy discussions with secretaries at the beginning of the research, that it was not possible to examine these questions without considering a number of other issues which were not only related but were of considerable importance to the secretaries themselves. Many were very concerned, for instance, at what they felt to be the devaluation of the term 'secretary' and the falling status of the occupation. Employers, on the other hand, felt strongly about the shortage of secretarial staff and lower standards of efficiency. It was obvious that in order to understand the occupation fully and thus put the hypotheses into proper perspective, it would be necessary to adopt an approach which was broad in scope.

It was decided to use an historical approach in an attempt to determine why women were first attracted to office work, the factors which encouraged them to adopt it in ever increasing numbers and their particular concentration in secretarial work. In order to examine the compatability between the roles of secretary and of woman it was thought relevant to enquire into issues such as the position of the secretary in the organisational structure, her function at work in terms of the tasks she carried out and the sex-related aspects of her role. Factors thought to have some likely bearing upon the relationship between the secretary's job and occupational and social mobility for women included the education and training of secretaries, career choice, job content, attitudes towards and interest in promotion, and the status of the secretary's job.

One further aim considerably influenced the direction of the research. It was very clear from discussions with both secretaries and employers that the employment situation, particularly in central London, was in a state of flux and the cause of considerable concern and dissatisfaction. Changes were taking place in the structure of the occupation and in its status, largely brought about by a chronic shortage of secretarial staff. It was hoped that the research would be of some positive practical value by locating the causes of any dissatisfaction and subsequently making recommendations which would hopefully be of some help in improving the situation. Consequently the inclusion of additional topics such as job selection, conditions of work, job satisfaction and the influence of employment agencies were considered to be important.

This broad approach necessarily meant that it would not be possible to deal with any one issue in great depth. Nevertheless it was felt to be justified on the grounds that very little information was available concerning secretaries specifically or women office workers generally. It was considered that by providing a basic framework which was largely descriptive in nature, further research could be undertaken, where appropriate, using the comparative method.

It had been decided, partly for practical reasons, to concentrate the research upon central London, since the research worker was based there. At the same time, however, there were benefits to be gained by limiting an investigation to that area.

Office employment in central London was highly concentrated and the problems resulting from a shortage of secretarial staff were acute. Consequently it was thought that the area would benefit more than any other from an analysis of the employment situation. It was appreciated that the situation in central London might not be representative of the whole country but since a shortage of secretarial staff was common everywhere, the London situation was not expected to be essentially different from that found elsewhere.

In order to ensure that responses to enquiries are representative, the most reliable method available is to obtain a sample using principles of random selection. It was decided to use such a method to obtain a sample of secretaries, one which it was hoped would reflect the range of employment situations, different types of secretary and various shades of opinion. It was considered that the best way of locating a representative sample of secretaries in central London, there being no list of secretaries available which could be used as a sample frame, would be to select them according to their place of work. This method would have the additional advantage of locating a sample of employers whose views on secretaries would be of considerable value.

It became possible as well to include in the investigation the membership of two organisations of secretaries, The Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries and the National Association of Personal Secretaries, whose members were, in the former case, very well qualified, and in the latter, senior secretaries. A brief description of both organisations follows:

The Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries Ltd., (IQPS) arose out of the efforts of The London Chamber of Commerce to raise the standards and status of secretaries, through the institution of a system of qualifications. The Private Secretary's Diploma was the highest qualification given by the Chamber and examinations were started in 1956. A group of the first secretaries to pass the examination decided to set up a professional association for secretaries which was limited to those who had gained the Private Secretary's Diploma, and in 1957 they formed what was originally called The Private Secretaries' Association. It was granted a certificate of incorporation in 1961, and in 1966 assumed its present title. The Institute's stated aims are:

'1. To establish the status of the qualified Private Secretary within the professions, commerce, industry and all other fields in which the Private Secretary may be employed.

2. To obtain national recognition of the London Chamber of Commerce Private Secretary's Diploma.

3. To stimulate interest of employers and teaching staffs in encouraging their personnel and students to train for the Diploma.

4. To offer advice and guidance to those wishing to make a career in private secretarial work.

5. To furnish to members information on appropriate professional matters.

6. To promote a free exchange of ideas, opinions and experiences amongst members.'

The lowest age for taking the examination of the London Chamber of Commerce is twenty-one years, and Diploma holders are entitled to use the letters P.S.Dip. after their names.

The National Association of Personal Secretaries (NAPS) is another professional association for secretaries. Membership is restricted to 'any person who has completed five years' experience as a personal secretary or personal assistant to a senior executive or professional person and who at the date of application is so engaged and who has passed an examination in secretarial subjects.' The aims and objects of this Association are similar to those of the Institute, although it achieves them through mutual interest and as a pressure group, instead of through formal qualification. The stated aims are:

'1. To provide a professional association for personal secretaries.

2. To encourage a greater degree of efficiency in those engaged in personal secretarial work, to improve the knowledge and status of persons engaged in personal secretarial work and to achieve uniformly high standards of work.

3. To promote and foster in professional and commercial circles a higher recognition of the importance of secretarial work.

4. To hold conferences and meetings for the discussion of professional affairs, the reading of papers and the delivery of lectures.'

The aims of the two associations were therefore very similar. Both organisations had various forms of membership in addition to full membership, such as associate, affiliate, or student and trainee membership for those who were not yet qualified or sufficiently senior, but only those with full membership were to be included in the survey. Each organisation had its own journal

which was distributed regularly to members, held meetings at which there were guest speakers, arranged social gatherings and visits to places of interest and had as its President a woman Member of Parliament.

It was hoped that by using two different source groups, that is,both a random sample of secretaries working in central London and the membership of two organisations of secretaries, the information gathered would be complementary and also permit comparisons to be made. While a random sample of secretaries in central London would be representative only of that particular area, the membership of the two associations was nationwide; while a random sample would cover a range of jobs of differing responsibilities, the members of the two associations were likely to be holding responsible and senior positions. By contrasting the views from these two sources it was hoped it might be possible to gain a greater understanding of each.

A somewhat different approach to the two sources was to be adopted. As members of the Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries and the National Association of Personal Secretaries were distributed throughout the country, a postal questionnaire was considered to be the best method of obtaining information. With the London sample, however, it was hoped to establish some personal contact, although the same questionnaire would be given to members of the two organisations and to the London sample, so as to make comparisons between the two groups possible.

The aims of the research can be summarised as:

1. To examine the hypothesis that the occupation is important in terms of upward occupational and social mobility for women.

2. To describe an occupational group of women office workers.

3. To provide recommendations to improve the employment situation for both secretaries and employers.

These aims were to be carried out in the context of women's employment and their role in society.

CHAPTER I

OFFICE WORK FOR WOMEN: AN HISTORICAL REVIEW

> 'I wish you would let me sort your papers for you uncle', said Dorothea. 'I would letter them all and then make a list of subjects under each letter.'
> Mr. Casaubon gravely smiled approval, and said to Mr. Brooke, 'You have an excellent secretary at hand you perceive.'
> 'No - no', said Mr. Brooke, shaking his head; 'I cannot let young ladies meddle with my documents. Young ladies are too flighty.'
>
> 'Middlemarch' by George Eliot, 1872.

In 1966 there were 2,097,940 women clerical workers in[1] England and Wales, representing approximately two-thirds of the total clerical work force and one quarter of all jobs done by women.

Although women play an accepted part in office work today, it has not always been so; in the mid-nineteenth century the office was an exclusively male preserve. At that time women who worked were limited to a few areas of activity, predominantly domestic service, factory work and sewing, and they worked because they were poor. For middle and upper class women, the very idea of work outside the home was unthinkable. They were supported, in as grand a style as possible, by the male members of their families, and occupied themselves with domestic and social concerns.

For many of these women, however, the need for employment was becoming a vital necessity. Firstly there were those women who through misfortune no longer had the financial support of

a parent or husband, and secondly, an increasing number of single women was to be found in the population. The _Census_ of 1851 stated that there was a considerable excess of women over men (between the ages of twenty and forty, women exceeded men by 133,654) - 'Of every 100 women in Great Britain of the age 20 - 40 _forty two_ are spinsters'.[2] By 1861 there were 2,482,028 'Spinsters of all ages of the age of 15 years and upwards', of whom 404,773 resided in London, 'as there is a demand for their services'.[3]

There were several possible causes of this relative excess of women. In the first place life expectancy for females exceeded that of males. In 1841 it was 40.2 years for the males of England and Wales but 42.2 years for females.[4] As well, a large number of single men emigrated to the colonies in order to expand their opportunities and enrich Britain's trade. Possibly they left partly to escape the financial burden which marriage at home would place upon them. This was a further reason for the excess of single women; middle class men were postponing the age at which they entered marriage. Postponement was considered judicious until such time as a man might be able to earn enough to support what was likely to be a very large family, now that more children survived birth, and the limiting of family size by birth control was not yet an established practice.[5]

Single women of the middle class who were not financially supported by their family were in a most difficult situation. On the one hand they were criticized for wishing to find work, since to work resulted in great loss of social status, and on the other hand there was little work available for them to do. They often became destitute and many ended up in the workhouse or as prostitutes. 'Go thou into our parish workhouses in dreary London, and investigate the past histories of some of those pale figures lying on the narrow couches of the female wards, and thou wilt find there drifted waifs and strays from the "upper and middle classes" who pass long months and years in pauper clothing upon a pauper's fare.'[6]

There was one occupation alone to which an 'educated' woman might turn when the necessity arose. She could become a governess. This was acceptable since it involved close contact with members of a family who were of a similar social class to the governess, and because she possessed the necessary 'accomplishments' to enable her to teach the daughters of the household. Unfortunately the numbers of women available to do the work of governesses considerably exceeded the demand for their services. This in turn led to them being offered increasingly lower wages, until they received in many cases no more than domestic servants. Since a governess was expected to dress and deport herself as a 'lady', the increased competition for employment led to great hardship. Although the number of

women employed as governesses grew from 21,373 in 1851 to 55,246 in 1871,[7] the numbers of women seeking such employment still far outnumbered the positions available. In the opinion of one commentator, a first class governess who was 'capable of teaching Horace to little Lord Edward, and of reading Dante and Schiller with young Lady Isabella'[8] could still command a good salary. It was among those whose accomplishments were only of an average standard, that the hardship lay. So critical did the situation of employment become that the Governesses' Benevolent Institution was founded in 1843 with the aim of 'affording assistance privately and delicately to ladies in temporary distress.'[9]

There had always been some women who by accident or intention had received a boy's education, or who through intelligence and self-help had educated themselves to a high standard. It was such women with time and money at their disposal, who agitated for the improvement in the position of women during the nineteenth century. Although their activities were largely directed towards the attainment of the vote, they achieved considerable successes in the field of legislative reform, and were instrumental in improving the employment situation for women. They had become skilled in disseminating information and propaganda and in creating pressure groups to meet the various demands for reform. Among them were Bessie Rayner Parkes, Barbara

Bodichon, Jessie Boucherett and Emily Faithfull who ran The Englishwoman's Journal, which acted as a forum for all the issues which were of concern to women at that time. When The Englishwoman's Journal ceased publication in 1864, its place was taken in 1866 by The Englishwoman's Review. These women set up their own printing works, The Victoria Press, headed by Emily Faithfull, which they ran without the help of men (with the exception of the heavy lifting work). They found that their columns acted as a magnet for women who were in need of advice and large numbers of out-of-work governesses and other 'helplessly "genteel" women' came to the offices for aid.[10] As a result it was decided to form, in 1859, The Society for Promoting the Employment of Women.

In these journals and elsewhere, women questioned the social attitudes of the time which forbade ladies to work, and men to give them employment. 'I cannot see why working ladies need be more unsexed than working housemaids, nor why that activity, which is deemed to make a woman eligible as a wife to a working man, should, when exercised on higher subjects, unfit and discredit her to be the wife of a working barrister or medical man.'[11] They recognised that many of the barriers were to be found in the attitudes of women themselves, and said that middle class women were apeing the life of the aristocracy which was based on idleness, rather than accepting their situation as members of the middle class, which was based on work.

The only way in which the amount of work available to women could be increased was to open up to them new fields of employment, fields which were traditionally held by men, and to attempt to change the attitudes of both men and women so as to make such a change possible. In 1869, Josephine Butler, who was to play a major part in the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act (1886) wrote, 'The public approves of the proposition that woman should work rather than beg, and the public therefore acknowledges that work of some sort must be allowed to women ... Women have always had to work, but they worked, say the objectors, "quietly, and in their proper places; and it is only in this generation that they have grown querulous and discontented, and demand new spheres, and want to enter into competition with men in every trade and profession" ... The fact is that men have taken away from women the employments which formerly were appropriated to them, and that therefore it is men who force women to claim the right to new openings for their labour.'[12]

Many suggestions were put forward as to the type of work that women might undertake. One writer proposed that ladies should work as shop assistants, especially in 'those departments in the great shops, which are devoted to the sale of light articles of female attire. Why should bearded men be employed to sell ribbon, lace, gloves, neck handkerchiefs, and the dozen other trifles to be found in a silk-mercer's or haberdasher's shop?'[13]

The reasons were expounded in an item in the Edinburgh Review: 'One is, that women are too ill instructed in arithmetic for the purpose; the other is, that ladies prefer the services of men.' The first reason, however, explained the second - 'Ladies would rather be waited on by a man who understands his business, than by a woman who keeps them waiting for ten minutes, while she is trying to make out their bill.'[14]

This illustrates one glaring defect which severely limited the employment of women in certain occupations - their education was grossly inadequate. As far as schools for girls were concerned, the only choice of establishment offered to middle class parents for their daughters in the 1850s was between 'Miss Jones's establishment, where the course of education consists in playing on the pianoforte, working in worsteds and doing crochet, and the seminary for young ladies kept by Miss Robinson, where dancing, deportment and flower painting are the order of the day.'[15] Some of the reasons for this situation were given by the Rev. J. P. Norris, the Government School Inspector, in his Report to the Committee of the Council of Education in 1857.[16] He said that there was a general feeling of apathy towards the education of girls which was reflected in the fact that they were hardly considered when general questions of education were discussed, and that the reasons were twofold. Firstly, those who were in a position to

influence education thought of it only in terms of increasing the national wealth, that is, how education would help to increase national production, and, as women did not work, education was consequently of little moment. Secondly, some people were prejudiced against education of all kinds and although they might hesitate to express their views as far as boys were concerned, they felt no such hesitation in expressing them towards education for girls. He suggested that 'The more enlightened women of England must come forward and take the matter into their own hands, and do for our girls what Mrs. Fry did for our prisons, what Miss Carpenter has done for our reformatories, what Miss Nightingale and Miss Stanley are doing for our hospitals.'

Another field of employment which was suggested as suitable for women was clerical work, but here again there were few women who had been sufficiently well educated to cope with such a job. A gentleman who spoke on this subject at a meeting of the National Association for Promoting Social Science at Bradford in 1860[17] pointed out that, being anxious to make his daughters good arithmeticians, he requested that their governesses teach them this subject. However, several in turn said that if they wanted arithmetic taught, he would have to employ a tutor; and indeed at girls' schools if arithmetic was attempted, it was invariably taught by a man. He feared that if inadequately educated women were employed as clerks, it would reinforce the

doubts felt by employers that women were not capable of such work and that lack of education would rebound on women's chances of employment in that sphere.

One deficiency the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women sought to remedy was the lack of training available to women who contemplated attempting business occupations. The Society managed to raise enough funds to set up a school for girls and young women where they were trained to wait in shops, by being 'thoroughly well instructed in accounts, book-keeping, etc.' They were also taught to 'fold and tie up parcels, and perform many other little acts' including ... 'the necessity of politeness towards customers, and a constant self-command.' It was hoped that girls educated in this school would also be capable of becoming clerks, cashiers and ticket sellers at railway stations. The Society reported, 'We are aware that instruction cannot be given to all who require it; twenty schools would not suffice for that, but when it is proved that women are capable of these employments, a demand for them will spring up, which will compel a change in our present one-sided system of education.'[18]

Education for women gradually improved throughout the century, partly as a result of improved education for all, but also as a result of the foundation of institutions specifically for girls. Among the working class, education for both boys and girls was uniformly bad, or non-existent. For the middle class

such schools as did exist for girls had as many unpleasant features as did their counterparts for boys. Jane Eyre's harrowing experiences at 'Lowood' are founded on Charlotte Bronte's attendance at such an institution. However, for middle class girls at least, the situation began to improve dramatically from the middle of the century.

The Governesses' Benevolent Institution had aroused the interest of F.D. Maurice, Professor of English Literature and Modern History at King's College, London, who had a sister working as a governess, and he, together with his friend Charles Kingsley, founded in 1843 an educational institution next door to the Governesses' Benevolent Institution in Harley Street to educate women aged fourteen and over for their teaching role. Its instruction was in the form of popular lectures, and its name, 'Queens's College' reflected its association with the founding members at King's. Two women who attended these lectures, Frances Mary Buss and Dorothea Beale, were within a very short time to found excellent schools for girls, the North London Collegiate School in 1850 and Cheltenham Ladies College in 1853.

In the 1860s the movement quickened, owing to continued agitation for reform. Its success was possibly due to the fact that improvement in the educational standard for women was a reform more easily provided than the political changes which

they were demanding. Queen Victoria granted a Royal Charter to Queen's College in 1853, although maintaining her strong disapproval of political action by women.

The Schools Inquiry Commission sitting between 1864 and 1866 was persuaded by Emily Davies, who was to found Girton College, Cambridge in 1873, to include education for girls in their terms of reference. The Commission recommended that every town large enough to have a boys' grammar school should also have a girls' day school under public management and with moderate fees. In 1869 the Endowed Schools Act was extended to girls, and in 1870 it became possible for endowed schools for girls to be built out of excess funds which had been given to boys' schools. In the same year State aided schooling for both sexes was introduced by the Education Act. The Girls' Public Day School Trust was established in 1872; it was a commercial venture, demonstrating with the success of its first school in Chelsea in 1873 that education could be profitable as well as desirable, and within the next twenty years thirty-six Girls' Public Day Schools were founded by the Trust.

Higher education for women, which had begun with Queen's College, also became established at this time. Bedford College, which started as a school for girls run by Miss Reid in 1847, modelled itself on University College, London, and received a charter of incorporation in 1869, and in 1873 and 1875 Girton and Newnham Colleges were ~~founded~~ opened at Cambridge. At Oxford, the first

University college for women was Lady Margaret Hall, which opened in 1879.

It was fortunate that the need for work on the part of women, and the improvement in their educational opportunities, coincided with an expansion in trade and commerce which dated from the 1850s. And in the mood of prosperity and change which was to suffuse England for about twenty years, employers were more flexible in their attitudes. They were prepared to contemplate the possibility that women might be employed in certain select occupations, such as clerical work. The Census of 1851 lists the number of male commercial clerks as 11,755 and only 15 women, yet by 1861 there were 274 women employed in this capacity. Women seemed to have got their foot into the office door.

The responsibility carried by the first women office workers was very great for it was believed that upon their reliability depended the fate of future women employees. 'The girl who fails through want of care and painstaking is inexcusable, and she injures not only herself but all other working women; by her folly she creates an unfavourable impression against them, and acts as a warning to employers not to engage persons of her own sex. Every woman on the contrary, who performs her duties well and carefully, encourages the employment of other women. By her good and honest work she lays the foundation of her own fortune, and that of others also at the same time.'[19]

However, the increasing demand for clerical labour, as borne out by Census figures, suggests that there would have been a demand for women's labour irrespective of the superior quality of their performance compared with male clerical workers.

By 1871 there were 1,412 female commercial clerks employed in England and Wales, and one of the major employers of female labour was the Civil Service. In particular the office of the Postmaster General was held by a succession of men who were sympathetic to the cause of employment for women and were prepared to give a lead. Women were first employed in the Civil Service as telegraphists; it was probably easier to introduce this new labour into a new occupation than one which was already well-established. The Post Office was pleased with the performance of the telegraphists; they were quick and had a 'delicacy of touch, are more patient than men during long confinement to one place, and take more kindly to sedentary employment.' Other advantages were that 'the wages which will draw men from but an inferior class will draw women from a superior class, and hence they will generally write better than the former and spell more correctly; and that they are less disposed than men to combine for the purpose of extorting higher wages.'[20] Nevertheless, the justification for their employment was found in their cheapness. Women were less expensive to employ by the Post Office not only because they accepted lower wages, but because when they left to get married (and no married women were officially employed in the Civil Service until 1946) their replacements began at the bottom of the salary scale, unlike men who, as their years of employment

accumulated received regular increments.

Great fears were expressed at the dangers to which women might be exposed by working in the company of men, and in fact, parents were loath to allow their daughters to work in offices for this very reason. The first women who were employed by the Civil Service were locked into a room for their protection.[21] But in the Post Office, which was a new Department, a mixed staff was employed from the first. Mr. Scudamore in the Post Office Telegraph Report for 1872 said 'the admixture of the sexes involves no risk but is highly beneficial. It raises the tone of the male staff by confining them during many hours of the day, to a decency of conversation and demeanour which is not always to be found where men alone are employed. Further it is a matter of experience that the male clerks are more willing to help the female clerks with their work than to help each other; and that on many occasions pressure of business is met and difficulty overcome through this willingness and cordial cooperation.'[22]

However, the introduction of women did not pass without protest, not least from Post Office clerks whose jobs were threatened by the new cheap labour. The Englishwoman's Review reported that in the Savings Bank Office, where the employment of forty women clerks was contemplated, an indignation meeting

was held to protest against the proposed action of the authorities, to complain of the 'grievous dangers, moral and official, which are likely to follow the adoption of such a course.' The Review noted an observation made by a cynical reporter from the Sussex Daily News that presumably the clerks were horrified at the notion that the presence of women would oblige them to behave like gentlemen. The reporter himself was ashamed of his sex when he found men clamouring for protection against the weaker sex. 'If men are better than women', he commented, 'they need no protection; if they are not better, then they do not deserve it'.[23]

In 1871, the Telegraph Clearing House Check Branch was established with a staff composed wholly of female clerks and later they were employed in the Returned Letter Office, the Controller of the Department stating that their employment completely surpassed his expectations. 'They are very accurate, and do a fair quantity of work, more so, in fact, than many of the males who have been employed on the same duty. Since postal orders were introduced last year, the whole of the clerical work is performed by a staff of women clerks, and is done in a very satisfactory manner.'[24]

During the 1870s the numbers of women working as clerks grew. Employers outside of the Civil Service, such as the Prudential Life Assurance Society, took on women clerks, and others considered doing so. A solicitor writing to The Times on January 3rd,

1882, for example, expressed a general willingness to try out the new entrants: 'I have long thought and been convinced that women might be as usefully employed as men as writers, bookkeepers, and general clerks, and I personally carry out my conviction to the extent of occasionally employing them out of my office. Why not in my office? I should not object; but would my clients? I am a solicitor in good practice, with a large staff of clerks - all men, young or middle-aged - what would be the effect of introducing young women into the office? At first, no doubt, flutter and flirtation: but when the novelty had worked off the innovation would, I feel sure, work satisfactorily. The separate room system would not answer; indeed, I do not see why it should be tried. I shall try the experiment by and by of engaging two young women as writers, and I will see what stuff they are made of, not as mechanical writers, but as intelligent brain-workers in the law.'[25]

In the Post Office, the proportion of women continued to grow, but their presence was not as accepted as their numbers might suggest.[26] In a paper read to the Social Science Congress in 1879, Whately Cooke Taylor, on the subject of Civil Service Appointments for Women, recalled that he had been the first person, ten years previously, to suggest that the Civil Service be opened to them. Since then there had been persistent efforts to keep women out, to the point where he feared the

critics might be succeeding. The grounds on which people protested were simply that the duties of a clerk were unfeminine, although he could see nothing essentially masculine in the occupation of writing and summing figures. 'It is said, for instance, that the strain and excitement of competitive industry is not suitable to the more nervous organisations of women: and yet it is in the labour of factories and workshops, all of which is strictly competitive industry, that the great majority of women are employed. It is said that the higher and more dignified offices in the body politic are not within their sphere; and yet the Sovereign of these realms is a woman.' He felt the crux of the matter was probably still the feeling that though some careers might not be exclusively masculine, all were essentially unfeminine, that is to say that all means of earning an independent livelihood were unbefitting to women. He thought it was more than a coincidence that the women who had been employed in the Post Office were put into the jobs that were the least suitable for them, where the work was harder, more irregular, and there was more contact with the public than in most Departments. The jobs were the worst paid, involved concentrated attention, and often night work. Now there had been complaints that women were not so efficient. 'It is conceivable that badly paid young women will suffer more from sitting up at night than better paid young men.' They had been made to work longer hours, and been required to be more punctual in attendance, been granted less leave of absence than men and treated more harshly in every way. These were the

same tactics, he claimed, that had been used against women in other spheres, such as medicine.

Mr. Taylor's fears that women might be kept out of Government offices were never realised, since women were increasingly used within the Civil Service. In 1880 they were selected for employment on the same basis as men, that is, by open competition; the only problem for the Civil Service was to keep the number of applications for positions down to a manageable size. An article in Cassell's Magazine in 1893 suggested a way in which this highly competitive situation might best be tackled from the applicant's point of view. 'When a girl is between fifteen and eighteen she competes for a female sortership in the General Post Office. Should she be so fortunate as to obtain one of these situations, she devotes her evenings to study. Then, as soon as she is 18, she presents herself at every examination for clerkships (in this way she is earning while training) ... Assuming that examinations are held bi-annually she has fourteen chances instead of four.'[27] Concern withthe status of the occupation and its 'respectability' is illustrated in the same article when the author replied to questions put to her by the mother of a friend. 'And are the lady clerks nice in themselves, my dear - well connected, and so on?' 'Yes; on the whole, I think we are quite sufficiently respectable .... When I entered, twelve years ago, in the old nomination days, we were very select indeed, only the daughters of professional men being elibible as nominees. Now, however, the daughters of the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker can enter by the broad path of open competition ... but ... what

they lack in gentle breeding is made up to them in intellectual pre-eminence.'

By 1881 the numbers of male clerks had risen to 175,468 and the number of women clerks to 5,989. In the Post Office some women had gained promotion; Mr. Fawcett, the Postmaster General, announced in the House of Commons that between 1876 and 1883, 153 male clerks had been appointed with 13 'superior appointments' and 156 female clerks with 15 'superior appointments'. However, the salary allotted to a superior appointment on the female staff was about one-third of that allotted to an appointment of the same rank on the male staff. Mr. Fawcett was asked if complaints had reached him from female clerks that they were required to do the work of male clerks at low salary and Mr. Fawcett replied that he had no doubt that female clerks would be glad to have advances in their salaries, but he found no difficulty in obtaining eligible candidates for the appointments.[28]

It was at about this time that an event occurred which was to turn the flow of women workers into the office from a steadily increasing trickle to a torrent - a practical typewriter was invented.

This machine, which was marketed in the United States of America in 1873, and appeared in England the next year, was the culmination of years of experiment and improvement. The first patent for a writing machine had been taken out in 1714 by Henry Mill, an Englishman who was the engineer to the New River Water Company; the invention was described as 'An artificial machine or method for the impressing or transcribing of letters

singly or progressively one after another, as in writing, whereby all writings whatsoever may be engrossed in paper or parchment so neat and exact as not to be distinguished from print; that the said machine or method may be of great use in settlements and publick records, and impression being deeper and more lasting than any other writing, and not to be erased or counterfeited without manifest discovery.'[29] Unfortunately no details of this apparatus exist.

During the eighteenth century several simple machines had been developed in Europe, some of which had as their object a means of helping blind people to write. The first American patent was taken out in 1829 by W. A. Burt and was called a 'typographer'. It was a box-like contraption, made mainly of wood. The type was mounted on a rotating circular frame, and it operated by moving the wheel around until the desired letter had reached the printing position. Then it was pressed down against the paper with a lever.[30] It printed in capital letters only, and was considerably slower to use than a pen. It did, however, work fairly reliably.

A different principle was patented in France in 1833 by Xavier Progin for a 'typographic machine or pen'.[31] This machine was the first to use type bars and was operated by pulling up hooks attached to long wires. The paper remained still while the mechanism rotated. This was claimed by the inventor to be 'almost as fast as a pen.'[32]

In 1836 a typewriter was invented which was reminiscent of that machine which used to be found on piers and in amusement arcades and is now used for labelling. It consisted of a round face with letters around the circumference and a pointer which was moved by hand to the appropriate letter, and then pressed to print on to paper or cardboard.

Between 1831 and 1860 very many attempts at solving the mechanical problems of a typing machine were made, including such contributions as those by Ravizza (Italy 1855-56) who invented the ribbon inking system, and by Thurber (U.S.A. 1843) whose 'Chirographer' contained a roller for rotating paper and enabling letters to be spaced out. Wheatstone (U.S.A.) invented several different typewriter models between 1851 and 1860, one of which had a keyboard like a piano and printed on to narrow strips of paper. The piano keyboard idea was so appealing that it probably delayed the progress of development and several attempts were made to improve upon it.[33]

It was not until 1868, however, that the first really practical typewriter was patented, and that was invented by C. L. Sholes with the aid of Glidden and Soulé. Glidden found the money, Sholes invented the spacing mechanism, and the idea of converging typebars was suggested by Soulé.[34] James Densmore became interested in the machine as a commercial proposition and repeatedly encouraged Sholes to improve upon the first model in order to make it into a viable commercial

proposition. It was not until E. Remington and Sons, the small-arms manufacturers, became involved in 1873 and agreed to produce the machine, improving upon it technically, that the typewriter became a commercial practicality. While the individual features of the Sholes-Glidden machine, known as the No.1 Remington, could be found in different models of typewriters which had been invented during the previous fifty years, in this model for the first time they were all successfully combined. Subsequent models made further advances such as the use of both upper and lower case letters, and in 1883 Horton's machine was the first to make it possible for operators to actually see without difficulty what they had typed.

Remington gave their London agency in 1886 to the firm of Wyckoff, Seamans and Benedict, and this greatly enlarged their sales in Britain. (By 1909, a book on the History of the Typewriter[35] listed two hundred and seventy different machines which had been invented by that date.)

Within a comparatively short time, typewriters were being used in offices throughout the country. At first they were hired out with an operator, until enough people had been trained to enable machines to be bought independently. It was seen that mechanical writing could be both cheaper and faster than hand writing and by 1878 it was in use in the Civil Service. In the Probate Office, which had to furnish copies of all titles to the Legacy Duty Office, the work of copying done by clerks formerly cost £3,000 per annum. With three typewriters

and three young women to operate them, it was possible to reduce the cost to £300. Considering that the first practical typewriter had onlybeen produced in 1873, this was a very rapid acceptance of a mechanical aid, although Rhee suggests that the typewriter was employed very slowly compared with the adoption of computers today.[36] By 1889, approximately £30,000 per annum was being spent on typewriter operators in the Civil Service.[37] Women were at a distinct advantage since it was felt that they could manipulate the typewriter keys with greater ease than could men. They were still receiving considerably less pay than their male counterparts and so economy could be made both in time and money. It was calculated in 1889 that about £10,000 per annum could be saved in and around Whitehall by the employment of women and typewriters.[38] In addition, it is likely that women were acceptable as typewriter operators, as they had been as telegraphists, because it was a new occupation which did not, on the face of it, threaten established workers, who in any case had no power to resist such an innovation since they had not formed unions.

There was some confusion at about this time, as to the correct nomenclature to adopt for typewriter operators. A commentator remarked that 'it would be well if some fertile brain could create a suitable title for these "copyists". They are frequently called "typewriters", which is clearly a misnomer, as the machine is the "typewriter". Then again, the name "typist" is often used, but this is a most objectionable title.

"Type-writer copyist" is certainly the correct appellation.'[39]
It appears in fact that they were most commonly referred to as 'typewriters' until about the turn of the century when the now-familiar word 'typist' was adopted.

The Society for the Promotion of Employment for Women was quick to recognize the job opportunities that lay in the typewriter. They recommended its adoption and announced that they were intending to take some positive action. In 1884 they wrote ... 'The introduction of the new type-writer, with small as well as capital letters, seems to promise a new field of employment to educated women, and though the Committee are scarcely as sanguine as to the amount to be earned by means of it as the writers of some recent articles in the Newspapers appear to be, still it seems to them that an intelligent woman, who is energetic and punctual ought to be able to make a fair income by it. They have, therefore, decided to establish an office in the City, where four or five ladies may work under an experienced superintendent ... The cost of a typewriter is £21, and each worker must have a machine for her own use. The Committee, therefore, desire to raise a sum of £63 to purchase three machines, as the office cannot be self-supporting unless four, at least, are working in it. Donations for this purpose will be thankfully received.'[40]
Their appeal was obviously successful since later in the same year they wrote: - 'We are glad to be able to record the commencement of a new and probably fairly well paid employment for women in

the ladies' Type Writing Office, Lonsdale Chambers, 27 Chancery Lane [coincidentally, this is today the address of the Location of Offices Bureau whose function is to encourage offices to move from London to other areas] ... To all who take an interest in the welfare of women this office must commend itself; for it not only affords a means of earning a livelihood but also tends to educate, as every manuscript must be thoroughly studied before being copied.'[41]

In 1890 a typewriting contest was held with the object of publicising the new skill. Ninety per cent of the applicants were women and they took all the prizes.

The number of women working as 'typewriters' created certain problems, one of which was that the standard of worker had fallen. 'More'meant'worse'in the offices of late nineteenth century employers. In 1891 R. V. Gill in The Englishwoman's Review pointed out that 'type-writing is distinctly a profession and not a trade, requiring education, energy and the other characteristics which make it essentially work for educated women, and much harm is done to the status of the profession, and especially to the standard of the work, by the mistaken system adopted in some offices of teaching a large number of illiterate young women who can never make reliable workers. The secret of the whole thing which dwarfs the progress of the profession is that there are legion of incompetent workers afloat'. The writer went on to state that the essential talents of a good copyist were:

'1. That she is a lady by birth and education, well-read, and conversant with the general topics of the day, and

2. That she has a fair amount of common sense, and the power to know when she does not know, and to be thus guarded against making the stupid mistakes of misreading a difficult MS. to a degree which is sometimes astonishing.'[42] The proposed solutions to these problems were that only educated gentlewomen should be trained as type-writers, and that they should receive certificates of competence from the body from whom they received their training. The same author wrote some time later: 'alas! the market is overstocked with so-called ladies who have learned so-called typewriting' but 'Out of every hundred women ... there are not twenty capable workers, and probably not twenty who are gentlewomen ... It has come to my personal knowledge that one girl at least who makes sad havoc of her h's, and cannot spell and punctuate, has been engaged in a Government office. Would a man of this type be employed?'[43] This protest appeared to be directed not only towards standards of proficiency but towards the social class origins of the lady typewriters.

The typewriter had been accepted and developed partly in response to a commercial and industrial need, but it was not the only machine to change the face of office employment. Inventions such as the telephone, telegraph and electric light,

and office equipment such as copying machines and carbon paper, all made their appearance and contribution in the latter part of the century.

At about the same time, the technique of shorthand writing became the object of considerable interest and experiment.

Shorthand is a very ancient skill, some people maintaining that references to it can be found in the Bible, although this is a matter of questionable interpretation. Butler reports in The History of British Shorthand[44] (from which the following information on shorthand was obtained) that it was certainly practised in Roman times, although the efficiency of the system is not known. Julius Caesar used shorthand when writing to friends; he was possibly taught by Marcus Tullius Tiro, who was the originator of the first known system of shorthand writing. Shorthand may have been used even earlier in Greece, but from either Greece or Rome came the system used in Egypt in A.D.155, where evidence exists of a contract between Appollonius, the shorthand-teacher, and Chaerammon, the pupil, to have lessons in shorthand costing one hundred and twenty drachmae, 'forty to be paid in advance, forty on satisfactory evidence of progress, and forty when the boy had become proficient.'[45] In A.D. 411, eight stenographers took down the proceedings of a conference of over five hundred bishops in Carthage.

The earliest English stenographic system was invented by a monk named John of Tilbury, in 1180, and consisted of eighteen characters. In the 16th century Timothe Bright received Letters Patent from Queen Elizabeth for his invention described as 'Characterie: An Arte of Shorte, Swifte and Secrete Writing by Character'. The system was difficult to learn since there was a different sign for each word, so to adopt it would be like learning a new language. The characters were made up of strokes with hooks, ticks and circles at the beginnings and ends. The following description demonstrates how unreliable it must have been. '... perhaps the most remarkable thing in the whole system is the way in which the inventor provides for the representation of words for which he had no "charactery" symbol ... If the stenographer wished to write the word abandon, which is not furnished with a special sign, he must first write the character for the synonymous word forsake, and then at the left-hand side the alphabetic character for a.'[46]

In 1589 there is a record of the first woman known to have learnt shorthand. Her name was Jeane Seager and an example of her work is in the British Museum; it was not for another three hundred years that many more women were encouraged to learn the skill.

The first workable shorthand system was published by John Willis in 1602. It was an improvement on previous systems since he used phonetics to a certain extent; he also had some shortened forms of words, although these were not related to his system.

For example, the symbol for the word 'heart' was a heart shape, which any shorthand writer knows is not quick to write down.

In the early 18th century Byron invented a system called 'Universal English Shorthand', consisting of straight and curved lines with attached circles and dots for vowels. His contemporary, James Weston, wrote 'Stenography Compleated' and the two systems were in great competition. Thomas Gurney adapted and improved upon a system invented by William Mason in 1707, producing 'Gurney's Brachygraphy' in 1750. He used this method to record sermons, and was later appointed the official shorthand writer at the Old Bailey. It was this method which Charles Dickens used when he worked as a reporter.

The number of systems invented multiplied rapidly. Between Bright's system in 1588, and 1850, two hundred and forty-two different systems were published. The function of shorthand had been largely to record sermons and in order to maintain secrecy in diaries and confidential papers, but when Parliamentary debates came to be published the demand for shorthand writing increased, until it became quite a respectable accomplishment.

One system came to be of prime importance in England; it was based on 'Stenographic Sound-Hand' described in a book written by Isaac Pitman in 1837, which further improved upon earlier attempts by Taylor and Harding. Pitman continued to work upon the system throughout his life, and the final product was very different from the systems from which it was derived. Pitman

emphasised the phonetic basis of words and this was the distinguishing feature of his approach. There was nothing original in his system because all its component characteristics can be found in earlier schemes; however, he was not aware of these and rediscovered most of them for himself. Even the title he found for his work, 'Phonography', was not, as he believed, original. Pitman's system came to be universally adopted in this country as it was considered to be the best, while Gregg's system, published in 1888, was adopted in the United States of America to which Gregg had emigrated from Liverpool. These two were the only shorthand systems to survive.

The prolific number of shorthand inventions reached a boom in the 1880s. Between 1850 and 1880 fifty-six more shorthand schemes were published, and there was great competition between proponents as to which was the best. Systems were publicised through shorthand magazines, which contained news and descriptions of their characteristics plus exercises.

The skill of shorthand writing became one more means by which women were able to earn a living. In 1878 it was recommended that a career for one's daughter might be to 'learn shorthand, and make a good thing as a reporter for journals'.[47] Miss Joseph of Shepherd's Bush reported in 1884 that she had been very successful during the season in taking shorthand reports of lectures and speeches.[48] Four years later

The Englishwoman's Review stated: 'ANOTHER occupation has been found for educated women. It is well known that a number of public men and journalists employ lady secretaries, and now political dames and leaders of fashion engage ladies to report drawing-room meetings, or write out invitations from shorthand notes. The Secretary of a London Ladies' Shorthand Association says that ladies before beginning this latter kind of work must be able to write one hundred words a minute in Pitman's style. Engagements from two to four bring in thirty-five shillings a week, and morning engagements fifteen.'[49] In 1886 the Council of the Shorthand Society passed a bye-law 'that ladies be admitted Associates of this Society'.[50]

By the end of the century, women were being employed in offices in increasing numbers, as clerks, 'type-writers', shorthand writers and shorthand-typists. By this time there was an even greater proportion of single women in the population than there had been fifty years before. The Census of 1901 shows that for every 1,000 men and women aged twenty years and upwards, in 1881, there had been 261 single women, in 1891, 281 single women and in 1901, 298. Had employment not been found for them, their situation would have been critical.

The Census of 1901 does not distinguish between the different clerical tasks undertaken by women (they are all referred to as 'commercial clerks'), but the number of women employed in this category had grown rapidly, as can be seen in Table I.1.

Table I.1 Increase in numbers of women clerical workers, 1861 - 1901

Year	No. of women clerical workers per 1,000 of occupied persons
1861	5
1871	16
1881	33
1891	72
1901	153

source: Census 1901

The Census commented, 'Commercial or Business Clerks increased between 1891 and 1901 from 247,229 including 17,859 females, to 363,673, including 55,784 females, or in the proportion of 47.1 per cent. Among male clerks the increase was equal to 34.2 per cent, whilst the female clerks more than trebled in number. The ratio of female to male clerks increased from 7.8 per cent in 1891 to not less than 18.1 per cent in 1901.'[51] It can be seen that women were not actually replacing men at work, but the total number of job vacancies had increased, and some of those vacancies had been filled by women.

Despite the obvious advantages of the new work, there were still problems to be faced. Women had been given jobs because they were willing to be paid less than men, but this in itself was a source of difficulties.[52] In 1889, Mrs. Fawcett was reported as saying that women broke down more quickly than men in their jobs, because they were less well paid, and that in

a survey in the Post Office some years earlier it had been found that newcomers especially were susceptible. This was because they earned £40 a year, were expected to dress like ladies, and many had railway fares to pay. They consequently went without food and this affected their health and subsequently their performance. As a result their pay had been increased by another £10 a year, when it was observed that they 'dined nearly every day'. Their pay was later raised to £65 per annum, but this was still less than men in the same Department received.

It was not only their poverty which was causing concern. Women office workers came from a different social class than the men who did the same work, and the low pay and consequently low standard of living, was an embarrassment to them. Not only were these women 'the cream of women workers, the girls for whom their parents have been able to provide a first-class education or special coaching; or have displayed some particular aptitude that takes them out of the common rut', but they had been used to better things. 'Their natural friends and associates are the daughters of men who live in villas at Streatham or Finchley with incomes of from £500 to £800 a year. Fresh air and cleanliness, pretty clothes, little social pleasures, the small refinements of the table and the toilet, have come naturally to them from their birth. One must remember all

this before one can realize what it means for a girl with these habits and this training to live in London, year in and year out, on 25s. a week.' Many of these girls who led 'stunted, unwholesome lives, underfed and overworked', if they appeared among their old friends at social functions were conscious of the taint of the 'shabby genteel'.[53]

This loss of social status in their own eyes was mirrored in the views of many men who felt middle class women were out of place in the work situation. Charles C. Harper wrote in 1894, 'If the time is past when women were regarded as a cross between an angel and an idiot it is quite by her own doing, and if she no longer receives the deference that is the due of an angel, nor the compassionate consideration usually accorded an idiot, no one is to blame but herself ... in the occupations of clerks, cashiers, telephonists, telegraphists and shorthand writers they have sufficiently demonstrated their unfitness, and only retain their situations by reason of the lower wages they are prepared to accept, in competition with men, and through the sexual sentimentality which would rather have a pretty woman to flirt with in the intervals of typewriting than a merely useful and unornamental man.'[54]

Despite such attitudes, women's role in the office became an established fact, and their numbers continued to increase both absolutely and relatively to men. This trend was accelerated by two World Wars in which women were required

to do jobs which were not previously in their domain, and by the general growth of business activity. It was not until the Census of 1951, however, that official statistics showed women clerical workers outnumbering men.

Table I.2 shows the growth in the numbers of men and women clerical workers between 1911 and 1951.

Table I.2 Growth in clerical work 1911 - 1951

	male clerical workers (thousands)	% of all males gainfully employed	female clerical workers (thousands)	% of all females gainfully employed
1911	708	5.48	179	3.30
1921	736	5.40	564	9.90
1931	817	5.53	648	10.34
1951	990	6.35	1,414	20.41

source: Routh, Guy, Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906-60, Cambridge University Press, 1965, Table I.

Between 1921 and 1961 the numbers of women office workers increased almost fourfold from just over half a million to nearly two millions,[55] and in 1966 women accounted for 67 per cent of all clerical workers. Among these women clerical workers, 35 per cent were typists, shorthand writers or secretaries.[56] The growth in the numbers of women office workers is represented by an increase in the numbers of girls taking up office work when they left school (31.9 per cent of all girl school leavers between fifteen and eighteen years of age took up office work in 1951, 37.6 per cent

in 1961 and 40.1 per cent in 1966),[57] and an increase in the numbers of married women who were returning to office work after having brought up families.[58]

Within the field there were considerable differences to be found in the type of office work that was done by men and by women. In 1951, for instance, while 54 per cent of book-keepers were men, men constituted only 3.5 per cent of the shorthand-typists, the rest being women.[59] In 1966, 93 per cent of office machine operators in England and Wales were women and 7 per cent men. Among typists, shorthand writers and secretaries, however, 98 per cent were women.[60]

This study is concerned with one particular group of clerical workers, women secretaries. There are no figures available which reveal the number of women secretaries who have been employed in the past, or today, since in no Census returns have they been categorised as a separate occupational group, but by 1966 there were approximately 730,000 women typists, shorthand writers and secretaries in England and Wales.[61]

The secretary's job has a long history, for, until relatively recently, the skill of writing was possessed by only a few people. Centuries ago scribes were employed to deal with the correspondence of men who either could not write themselves or were fully occupied in other activities such as governing. The word

'secretary' derives from the Latin secretum, secret, and in medieval times a secretary was the person who dealt with the correspondence of the king, or other high ranking person, and consequently with confidential and secret matters. The scribe sometimes came to undertake work other than writing on behalf of the monarch or the high ranking-person for whom he worked, and as a consequence the title of secretary came to be applied to offices associated with delegated work such as matters of State (Secretary of State), to work which was transacted on behalf of others or organisations (Company Secretary), as well as to that associated with correspondence (Personal or Private Secretary). The original notions of confidentiality and skill in correspondence are still, however, the elements which are most closely associated with the occupation with which the present study is concerned, that of the office secretary.

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CHAPTER II

METHOD

In the Introduction, the two sources from which information concerning secretaries was to be obtained were described. They were, a random sample of secretaries working in central London, to be selected according to their place of work, and the membership of two secretarial organisations, The Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries (IQPS) and The National Association of Personal Secretaries (NAPS).

It was decided to undertake first the survey of the two organisations of secretaries, since the procedure involved was relatively straightforward, and then to undertake the survey of the central London sample, which was rather more complicated.

The Questionnaire

In order to fulfil the aims of the research, a number of questions were asked on a wide range of different topics, all of which it was considered would throw some light on the employment of secretaries. The topics included basic demographic information such as age, marital status, education and social class; the reasons for becoming a secretary and the structure of careers; details of present jobs held by secretaries including conditions of work and job content; promotion and occupational mobility; job satisfaction; status; and sex-related aspects of the secretary's role.

Before the final version of the questionnaire was completed, preliminary drafts were given to twenty-five secretaries whom the investigator knew and who were willing to comment on, as well as complete, the questionnaire. The final questionnaire, together with the covering letters to secretaries in the two organisations and in the central London sample, can be seen in Appendix 1.

Survey of members of The Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries and The National Association of Personal Secretaries

Surveys conducted by mail have several disadvantages. The response rate is often low; the questionnaire can be read through before the decision to complete it is made, whereas in an interview situation questions can be put in a particular order; replies cannot be checked or supplemented with observational data. Its advantages are that it is both quicker and cheaper than interviewing and since the research was being conducted by one person these practical considerations were important. In addition it was hoped that the members of IQPS and NAPS would be responsive to a questionnaire about secretaries. The very fact that they belonged to an association for secretaries was taken to mean that they felt strongly committed to the occupation and would therefore be more willing to complete a questionnaire than is normally the case in a mail survey.

A questionnaire was sent by post to all the full members of each organisation, excepting only one male member and those who were living abroad. The way was prepared by a notice which had appeared in the journals distributed to their members by the two organisations, saying that permission had been given for the questionnaire to be distributed. Four hundred and fifty-one questionnaires were sent to members of the Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries and one hundred and forty-nine to members of the National Association of Personal Secretaries, a total of six hundred questionnaires.

It became apparent, as the questionnaires were returned by IQPS and NAPS members, that a considerable number of recipients were unable to complete the questionnaire because they were no longer working as secretaries. They were either housewives, or women who had moved to other jobs having been secretaries; the bulk of the latter were teaching secretarial subjects or employed in administrative work. Consequently two shortened versions of the original questionnaire were designed, one of which was sent to housewives and the other to former secretaries who were now working in different capacities, which would provide information concerning, in particular, the social and occupational mobility of secretaries (Appendices 2 and 3). When each completed

questionnaire was received, a personal letter of thanks was sent to the respondent, (Appendix 4).

As the original questionnaires had been sent out in June, 1969, which was possibly an inconvenient time due to summer holidays, it was decided not to send reminders until after the holiday season. A follow-up letter was then sent to non-respondents (Appendix 5) together with another questionnaire and a stamped envelope addressed to the investigator. If still no reply had been obtained, a further short reminder letter was sent.

Response Rate

The total number of completed questionnaires received from members of the two organisations was three hundred and forty-six (a response rate of 57.6 per cent); there were one hundred and seventy from full-time secretaries from IQPS, seventy-three full-time secretaries from NAPS, seventy-three from former secretaries, and thirty from housewives.

Analysis of non-response

Response rates in postal surveys are notoriously low. According to Ilersic, 'On the average, a 20 per cent response is considered good.'[1] It was hoped that as recipients in this survey would have read about the project in their journal, and have seen that it received their committee's approval, there might be a higher response rate.

Of the 254 members who did not complete questionnaires, fifty-five were returned with positive explanations of why they did not wish, or were unable, to take part. The reasons given or deduced were:

1. The nature of some of the questions (salary, parents' occupations, too personal)	14
2. No time	6
3. Breaks confidentiality of job	6
4. Only work spasmodically	4
5. Can see no use in questionnaires	3
6. Dislike answering questionnaires	2
7. No longer member of organisation	2
Also:	
8. Retired	3
9. Deceased	1
10. Moved or gone away	14

Unfortunately it is not possible to tell whether these responses were or were not representative of the general reaction. As far as the nature of questions is concerned, different people find different questions unacceptable. For example, in a test of postal surveys on political questions carried out by Lansdowne in 1971, it was found that of those who did not respond to a political questionnaire, 80 per cent did not do so because the political questions themselves were considered too personal.[2]

In this case, however, age might have influenced the response rate. Britton and Britton found that older women were less inclined than others to answer questionnaires,[3] and while 29 per cent of the IQPS respondents were aged over forty, no less than 68 per cent of NAPS fell into this age group. Although the combined response rate from the two organisations was 57.6 per cent, a greater proportion of members of IQPS (61 per cent)

than of NAPS (50 per cent) completed questionnaires.

Other factors which may have adversely affected the response rate were the length of the questionnaire, the lack of anonymity and the order of the questions. As the survey covered a number of different but related topics, the questionnaire was of necessity long, and this may well have been a deterrent. Its design, in retrospect, could have been improved upon if the first page of the questionnaire, asking for name and address, age, marital status and father's occupation, had been put at the end. Anonymity was not possible, however, if follow-up letters were to be sent and if respondents were to be thanked for taking part in the survey, both of which were thought to be important considerations. The only factor, however, which has been shown consistently to affect response rates is a reminder letter.[4] In the survey of the two organisations, 26 per cent of questionnaires were received as a result of a follow-up letter; it was particularly effective among housewives, where thirteen out of thirty (44 per cent) responded to a reminder letter.

Survey of the London Sample of Secretaries

In selecting a random sample of secretaries in central London a problem was posed by the lack of any comprehensive list of secretaries which could serve as a sample frame. Consequently a means of locating a representative sample had to be devised. It was considered that the best way in which this could be

achieved was to locate secretaries at their place of work by selecting a random sample of employers in central London and to use all the secretaries they employed as the sample. By taking a random sample of establishments and giving questionnaires to all the full-time women secretaries employed in each, a wide range of employment and employee differences would be represented. Random sampling meant that each establishment would be selected in such a way that the whole sample would be representative of the general distribution of establishments in the chosen area. Consequently by including all the secretaries employed in each establishment selected, it was hoped that the distribution of secretaries would also be representative. This method of obtaining a sample is sometimes referred to as 'cluster sampling'.

It was not possible to estimate how many establishments employed secretaries, or even the type or size of organisations which did so; hence only a fully comprehensive list of establishments could be considered as a sample frame if all types of employment situations were to be explored.

It was decided to use Thomson's London Yellow Pages Classified telephone directory[5] as the sample frame, after an examination of several other possible alternatives. This directory contained the names, addresses, telephone numbers and business classifications of all telephone users who had a business telephone, excluding only one category of business, barristers' chambers, since an entry for them was considered to be advertising. By agreement with Thomson's it was planned to use the computer list for the directory, rather than the actual publication, since the unpublished list was more up-to-date.

The area which the investigations were to cover in central London was chosen to be defined as that which fell within a two-mile radius of Charing Cross, so that the main central London business districts would be included. It stretched from King's Cross in the North, to the Oval in the South, and from Knightsbridge in the West to the eastern boundary of the City of London in the east. The two-mile circumference was then drawn on to a map. A description of the geographical area covered by each telephone exchange was obtained and superimposed upon this map. Those exchanges covering areas which fell inside the circumference were then selected for inclusion in the sample. Where an exchange area appeared to straddle the circumference, it was selected on the basis that if the major part of the area fell inside the boundary it was included, but if it fell outside the boundary it was excluded. In no case was it difficult to make a decision about whether or not to include a telephone exchange on this basis. (When the survey was subsequently carried out, only three establishments, each employing one secretary, were located significantly outside the boundary of the area, in two of the cases because the firms had moved). Fifty-four telephone exchanges were chosen in the above manner.

Since it was not possible to foretell how many establishments employed secretaries, and as the list obtained would include all types of business concern, the somewhat arbitrary number of approximately one thousand business addresses was sought. It was intended that if this number produced too many firms employing

secretaries to make the research a practical undertaking, then a sample could be taken from the original thousand.

The fifty-four exchanges selected contained approximately 61,000 business subscribers. Each subscriber, however many telephone lines he used, was treated as a single unit, unless the business was located at more than one address, in which case each address was included as a separate unit. In order to produce about one thousand names, a fractional selection of one in fifty, or 2 per cent, of the approximately 61,000 subscribers was taken by Thomson Yellow Pages Limited, resulting in a list of 1,232 names; the slightly larger number than one thousand was drawn in order to allow for some establishments having closed since they were initially registered, and because a sample of one in fifty was a convenient proportion on which to base analysis.

The list obtained in this way consisted of the name, address, telephone number and classification of business function of each establishment.

In order to divide up the establishments into manageable numbers, it was decided to treat them in batches of one hundred. The first three batches of one hundred were selected using random numbers, so that if it became necessary to use a number of establishments which was smaller than the whole sample, they would have been selected on a random basis. Each batch was sorted into alphabetical order for easy identification.

The principals of the first hundred establishments were sent a letter, signed personally by Professor Sir Robert Birley, who was the Head of the Department in which the research was being undertaken. The letter (Appendix 6) introduced the research worker and explained the purpose of the investigation. It said that the organisation would receive a telephone call from the research worker to find out whether the establishment employed a secretary or secretaries, and if so whether the employer would be willing to grant the investigator a short interview and allow questionnaires to be handed to any secretaries employed.

Allowing enough time for the letter to reach the appropriate person, the hundred recipients were telephoned, asked whether they employed secretaries, and if so whether they would be willing to grant a short interview of ten minutes to the interviewer. If the employer agreed to this, he was asked the number of secretaries employed so that the appropriate number of questionnaires could be taken to the interview. A careful record was kept of telephone calls and conversations.

Of the first hundred business establishments approached, it was found that thirty-five employed secretaries, sixty did not employ secretaries and five could not be contacted. Of those who employed secretaries, six were not willing to take part in the survey. The rest were willing to do so, and granted appointments to be visited. Where at all possible the visits were arranged so that several employers in the same region could be seen on the same day.

At the interview the employer was asked questions put to him or her from a loosely-structured questionnaire; this enabled the interview to be completed in ten minutes if the employer could spare very little time, but was capable of considerable expansion given more time (Appendix 7). The employer was then asked if the research worker could hand a questionnaire to each of the secretaries employed by the organisation at that address. For the purposes of the survey, a secretary was defined as 'anyone who is called a secretary by the person who employs her'. This definition was chosen since it would establish which employees were considered to be secretaries by employers. The matter was of some importance because it had been repeatedly claimed in the Press and during informal discussions, that 'anybody who can type is called a secretary nowadays', and it was hoped to examine the validity of this and similar claims. The definition had the disadvantage that some employees who were not called secretaries but, say, personal assistants, might not be included in the sample although they possibly performed the same role or function as a 'secretary' did elsewhere. In practice, however, the problem of definition arose in only a few instances which will be described later. It was not considered appropriate to define in advance who was a secretary because without a prior analysis of the occupation, the criteria upon which any definition would be based would be purely subjective.

The possibility of holding an interview with the secretaries was rejected, as it was considered that the response from firms willing to take part might be much lower if it entailed a loss

of the secretary's time. In the event many informal discussions with secretaries were held. When meeting a secretary, the interviewer explained very briefly the purpose of the research and asked if she would be willing to complete a questionnaire. If she agreed, she was handed a questionnaire the same as that which had been given to the members of the two organisations of secretaries, together with a letter explaining more fully the purpose of the research, and a stamped-addressed envelope. The name and home address of the secretary were taken but she was told she could complete the questionnaire anonymously if she wished. It was hoped that by handing the questionnaire to secretaries, some personal contact might be established which would help the response rate, although the method was essentially the same as that of a mail questionnaire, and suffered from the same disadvantages. In very large organisations, employing a considerable number of secretaries, it was not possible to hand questionnaires to all the secretaries personally, and they were distributed by the company.

Both employer and secretaries were told they would be informed where the results of the survey could be seen when they became available. Each employer was later thanked by letter for the interview, as was each secretary who completed a questionnaire.

The next two batches of a hundred firms were dealt with in the same manner, by which time it had become apparent that it would be possible to deal with the whole sample of 1,232 establishments.

From then onwards firms were not selected into batches by random numbers but by telephone area, so that they could be visited more effectively.

It took approximately nine months to complete this part of the survey, during which time reminder letters and second questionnaires were sent to non-respondents.

Response rates

Table II.1 shows the number of establishments employing secretaries in the chosen area of central London, and their response to the survey:

Table II.1 Sample firms employing secretaries in the chosen area of central London and their response to the survey

	No. of establishments
1. No secretaries employed by establishment	801
2. Interview obtained with employer and questionnaires given to secretaries	211
3. No interview with employer, but questionnaires given to secretaries	39
4. Interview obtained with employer but questionnaires not given to secretaries	2
5. Unwilling to take part:	
a) employer unwilling	67
b) secretaries unwilling	21
6. Unobtainable:	
a) no reply	24
b) deceased	1
c) closed or moved	54
d) wrong number	8
7. Other	4
Total	1232

From Table II.1 it can be seen that only 5 per cent of non-contact with employers can be positively attributed to the sample frame, (closed or moved, and wrong number) which indicates that the London Yellow Pages Classified directory was a reliable basis to use for contacting employers, bearing in mind that no sample frame can be completely up-to-date. In the cases of 'no reply' it can safely be assumed that no secretary was employed since the telephone was not answered although the number was rung on several different occasions; the actual reason for there being no reply, however, was not known.

Of the 1,141 employers in central London who were contacted, three hundred and forty (30 per cent) employed secretaries. Interviews were given at two hundred and thirteen establishments and two hundred and fifty-two firms participated in some way. 75 per cent of those business establishments employing secretaries took part in the survey.

Five hundred and fifteen completed questionnaires from secretaries were received from this central London sample, one thousand and nine having been distributed in the 75 per cent of establishments employing secretaries, an overall response rate from these establishments of 51 per cent.

Several factors emerged as militating against the complete representativeness of the sample. Firstly, the very largest company in the sample, although willing to discuss the employment of secretaries in detail, did not wish to allow their two hundred and thirty secretaries to answer questionnaires. In four other

large organisations a number of secretaries, selected by the employer, completed the questionnaire. This means that the number of secretaries working for large organisations is under-represented. Secondly, at some establishments a proportion of the secretaries chose not to accept a questionnaire; hence there is some discrepancy between the number of secretaries who received questionnaires and the actual number employed. This occurred in twenty-five companies and accounted for 6 per cent of all the secretaries employed.

The problem of definition arose in a few instances. In two cases the employer said there was only one 'real' secretary in the firm but he believed that the shorthand-typists called themselves secretaries, and in order not to offend them he would like them to be given questionnaires. Interestingly, in both cases only the 'real' secretary completed the questionnaire, some of the others being returned with the comment that they were not secretaries but shorthand-typists. Occasionally the employer stated that the company employed a certain number of secretaries and they were then handed questionnaires; however, this number was not then confirmed by the secretaries themselves if they did not define themselves as secretaries.

<u>Analysis of non-response</u>

Table II.2 demonstrates that the response rate by secretaries was very largely associated with the number of secretaries employed at their place of work. The response rate from secretaries in organisations employing only one secretary was 70 per cent, compared to one of 30 per cent in firms employing more than fifty secretaries.

Table II.2 Percentage of questionnaires received from secretaries in establishments employing different numbers of secretaries

		Response rate
Establishments employing:	1 secretary	70%
	2 - 5 secretaries	53%
	6 - 10 secretaries	41%
	11 - 20 secretaries	57%
	21 - 50 secretaries	53%
	More than 50 secretaries	30%

There are several possible explanations for this difference in response.

1. Personal contact. There were a number of reasons why contact was not established with a proportion of secretaries. They were either absent from work or at lunch; employers preferred to pass on the questionnaire to the secretary themselves; employers were not able or willing to give an interview, but were prepared for their secretaries to be sent questionnaires by post; finally, due to problems of size, there was no personal contact in the largest organisations, where questionnaires were distributed by the employer. Lack of personal contact is one factor which may have had an adverse effect upon the response. This explanation is supported by comparing the response rate from all secretaries according to whether they were seen by the interviewer or not, as Table II.3 shows.

Table II.3 Response rate from secretaries who were a) seen personally and b) not seen personally, according to the number of secretaries employed.

Establishments employing:	a) secretaries seen personally % response rate	b) secretaries not seen personally % response rate
1 secretary	77	43
2 - 5 secretaries	58	34
6 - 10 secretaries	51	24
11 - 20 secretaries	62	54
21 - 50 secretaries	55	49
More than 50 secretaries	35	29

In every size of establishment, measured by the number of secretaries employed, fewer of those who had not been seen personally returned questionnaires. However, it is interesting to note that the difference seems to be greater in firms employing few secretaries than in those employing many. Possible explanations for this finding may be either that those working in large organisations have lower expectations of personal contact as a result of experience of working in large organisations, and therefore do not react to a lack of it, or that secretaries working in large organisations are self-selected, and are not the kind of people who place a high value upon personal contact.

2. Collusion. This is a factor to be considered where more than one secretary was employed in an establishment. The larger the number of recipients of questionnaires in any one organisation, the greater the risk of collusion occurring, since whole departments may be affected by the influence of one vocal non-respondent.

3. In large organisations, the fact that questionnaires were in some cases distributed by the employer might have made some secretaries hesitant about co-operating for fear that the employer would in some way discover their replies, although they were assured about confidentiality.

4. Follow-up reminders were less effective in the large organisations since they often could not be sent out to individuals but had to be sent to the employer to be distributed, and in two cases employers requested that no reminder letters be sent. Follow-up is probably the least important of the explanations in this part of the survey, since of the five hundred and fifteen completed questionnaires received, only fifty-three (10 per cent) were returned as a response to reminder letters.

The problems associated with the response rate from larger organisations mean that, once more, secretaries working in such concerns are under-represented in the ~~sample~~ replies analysed. Nevertheless they still constitute the second largest group of secretaries in the sample, although had a 50 per cent response been received from them they would have been the largest single group in the sample (Table II.4).

Table II.4 Numbers of questionnaires received from establishments employing different numbers of secretaries

Establishments employing:	No. of questionnaires received
1 secretary	84
2 - 5 secretaries	128
6 - 10 secretaries	67
11 - 20 secretaries	71
21 - 50 secretaries	42
More than 50 secretaries	114
Not known*	9
	515

*anonymous replies sometimes made it difficult to identify the firm at which a secretary worked

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CHAPTER III

THE SAMPLE OF BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS IN CENTRAL LONDON

Establishments in the sample ranged in size from the very smallest concerns, which could have been termed 'nuclear firms' since they consisted only of a principal and a secretary, to large international companies.

The greatest number of business establishments in the sample, nearly half of them, employed only one secretary, while four employed more than fifty secretaries (Table III.1).

Table III.1 Business establishments classified according to the number of secretaries employed

No. of secretaries employed	No. of establishments
1	123
2 - 5	91
6 - 10	22
11 - 20	9
21 - 50	3
More than 50	4
	252

Each business establishment was asked to give details of their total number of office employees, including secretaries and executives (Appendix 7, question nos. 2 and 3) and the results were found to be very similar to those reported elsewhere.

The Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Small Firms (1971), chaired by J. E. Bolton,[1] found that 93 per cent of all firms in selected industries were small (meaning, where appropriate, that they employed fewer than 200 persons). In the present sample only 6.7 per cent of establishments employed more than 200 office workers, leaving 93.3 per cent employing fewer than two hundred. Bolton also found that 29 per cent of employees were working in small firms; in this sample 30.5 per cent of office employees were working in small firms.

Table III.2 gives the Standard Industrial Classification[2] of all the establishments in the sample, together with the numbers of secretaries and office workers employed in each category.

The greatest number of establishments were classified as Professional and Scientific Services (sixty-two); these included medical and dental (fourteen), legal (thirteen), architects and surveyors (eleven), and education (seven). Other categories within this section were accountancy, religious and research organisations. The second highest number of establishments were in Insurance, Banking, Finance and Business Services (fifty-four) including insurance (fourteen), advertising and market research (fourteen), banking (nine) and other financial institutions (nine). Miscellaneous Services (forty) included ten Trade Associations, nine charitable organisations, nine cinemas, theatre, radio and television concerns, plus hotels, catering, sports and recreational facilities and hairdressers.

Table III.2 Classification of business activity of establishments in sample, and numbers employed

Classification	No. of establish-ments	No. of secretaries employed	% of total number of secretaries	No. of all office workers employed (including secretaries)	% of all office workers (including secretaries)	1961 Census City of London (all employees)[1]	1961 Census Other Central London areas (all employees)[1]
I Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	1	1	-	not known	not known	-	-
II Mining and Quarrying	3	243	16.3	4177	28.3	-	0.3
III Food, Drink and Tobacco	4	14	0.9	153	1.0	1.1	1.5
V Chemicals and Allied Industries	9	56	3.8	206	1.4	1.5	1.7
VII Mechanical Engineering	6	8	0.5	95	0.6)		
IX Electrical Engineering	3	10	0.7	35	0.2)	1.6	5.4
X1 Vehicles	2	38	2.6	202	1.4)		
XII Metal Goods not elsewhere specified	1	1	-	3	-	0.4	1.4

Classification	No. of establishments	No. of secretaries employed	% of total number of secretaries	No. of all office workers employed (including secretaries)	% of all office workers (including secretaries)	1961 Census City of London (all employees)	1961 Census Other Central London areas (all employees)
XIII Textiles	5	12	0.8	42	0.3)		
XIV Leather, leather goods and fur	7	13	0.9	61	0.4)	2.3	4.5
XV Clothing and footwear	2	2	0.1	4	-)		
XVI Bricks, Pottery, Glass, Cement	1	2	0.1	2	-	-	-
XVIII Paper, Printing and Publishing	18	383	25.7	2658	18.0	11.1	6.3
XIX Other Manufacturing Industries	2	2	0.1	39	0.3	1.2	2.7
XX Construction	4	17	1.1	98	0.6	1.6	4.9
XXII Transport and Communication	11	24	1.6	1224	8.3	15.3	10.7
XXIII Distributive Trades	12	23	1.5	298	2.0	14.3	15.0
XXIV Insurance, Banking, Finance and Business Services	54	186	12.4	3025	20.5	31.2	4.9
XXV Professional and Scientific Services	62	327	21.9	1246	8.5	8.2	10.1

Classification	No. of establish-ments	No. of secretaries employed	% of total number of secretaries	No. of all office workers employed (including secretaries)	% of all office workers (including secretaries)	1961 Census City of London (all employees)	1961 Census Other Central London areas (all employees)
XXIV Miscellaneous Services	40	118	7.9	864	5.9	7.4	19.0
XXVII Public Administra-tion and Defence	5	10	0.7	307	2.1	2.5	10.3
	252	1490	99.6*	14739	99.8*		

1. Source: Dunning, John H., and Morgan, Victor E. (eds.), <u>An Economic Study of the City of London</u>, Economists Advisory Group, George Allen and Unwin, 1971, pp.57-58.

* do not total 100% due to rounding

With two exceptions, the numbers of office workers employed in various industries is similar to the figures in the 1961 Census for all types of employee.[3] The exceptions are one very large oil company, categorised under Mining and Quarrying, employing over four thousand office workers, whose secretaries did not take part in the survey; and Distributive Trades, possibly because fewer office workers in relation to other employees are found in this field. It can be seen that in all other respects the figures more nearly approximate to those for the City of London than for the Other Central London Areas, since not only is the proportion of sedentary office workers to others greater in the City (sixty-five per cent were office workers),[4] but the special nature of the work undertaken there means that certain industries employ more office workers than is usual for either the rest of London or the rest of the country. The Economists Advisory Group, in a study of the City of London,[5] stated that four activities accounted for 56.9 per cent of the total labour force in 1961 in that area, namely insurance, banking and finance; wholesale distribution; printing and publishing; and posts and telecommunications. In terms of office workers only the present study found that 48.8 per cent were employed in these four categories, although the figure covers business services as well as insurance, banking and finance; retail as well as wholesale distribution; paper as well as printing and publishing; and transport as well as posts and telecommunications (categories used by the Standard Industrial Classification).

The Economists Advisory Group found that 9 per cent of office workers in the City of London were in transport and communications, and 6.9 per cent in professional and scientific services. Similar proportions (8.3 and 8.9 per cent respectively) were found in the present study in central London, although only 20.5 per cent of office workers were in insurance, banking and finance, as compared to the Group's estimate of 28.7 per cent.

These similarities indicate that the sample of establishments was adequate for sampling purposes, in terms of size and function, and the secretaries in the survey are therefore likely to reflect the picture of the employment situations of secretaries in central London, with the previously mentioned exception of those working in large organisations.

Certain deductions can be made from the figures shown in Table III.2. Of all office employees working within a radius of two miles of Charing Cross, approximately 10 per cent are women secretaries. As the numbers represent a 2 per cent sample, it can be calculated that some 74,500 secretaries are likely to be working in the area. In the same way, it can be calculated that approximately 737,000 office workers of all kinds are employed there, although this may be a slight underestimation as the numbers were not known in twenty-seven establishments.

Of all types of work undertaken by establishments in the area, 21 per cent of establishments were financial in nature (fifty-four out of two hundred and fifty-two) and employed

20.5 per cent of all the office workers. However, only 12 per cent of the secretaries in the area worked for these institutions. The largest proportion of secretaries, 25.7 per cent, worked for paper, printing and publishing firms, particularly for national newspapers. Professional and scientific services employed 21.9 per cent of all the secretaries, although only 8.5 per cent of the office staff. Hence these two industries are more 'secretary intensive' than others, that is, they employ a greater proportion of secretaries than office workers generally. The reverse is the case in transport and communications, where the proportions of office workers to secretaries are 8.3 to 1.6 per cent, and in insurance, banking, finance and business services mentioned previously, where the proportion of office workers employed is 20.5 per cent and secretaries 12.4 per cent.

Employers were also asked whether their establishment was a whole organisation or part of a larger enterprise (Table III.3). One third of all the offices in the central London sample were whole organisations, the greatest proportion, although they employed fewer secretaries and office workers than Head Offices alone. It is apparent that the greatest numbers of secretaries worked for Head Offices, followed by those working for whole organisations and those employed in London, City or English offices of larger enterprises, although most establishments were whole organisations. This reflects the fact that most business

concerns are small in size, whereas Head Offices are usually large. 70 per cent of all office workers in the sample were employed by either Head Offices, or London, City or English offices of enterprises.

Table III.3 Type of office in central London sample and numbers employed

Type of office	No.of establishments	No.of secretaries	% of total no. of secretaries	No. of office workers	% of total no. of office workers
Whole organisation	83	393	26.4	1793	12.2
Head office	61	619	41.5	5136	34.8
London, City or English office	26	302	20.3	5262	35.7
Administrative office	5	18	1.2	74	0.5
Branch office	15	48	3.2	518	3.5
Divisional office	6	39	2.6	1464	9.9
Departmental office	3	8	0.5	67	0.5
Specialist function e.g. promotion, sales, design	7	20	1.3	163	1.1
One of several similar offices	5	22	1.5	108	0.7
Warehouse, depot	2	2	0.1	7	-
Medical and dental	9	13	0.9	20	0.1
Miscellaneous	3	6	0.4	127	0.9
Not known	27	-	-	-	-
Total	252	1490	99.9*	14739	99.9*

*do not total 100%
due to rounding

On average, four secretaries and twenty-two office workers were employed in complete organisations; ten secretaries and eighty-four office workers were employed in Head Offices; and twelve secretaries and two hundred and two office workers in London, City or English offices. Thus whole organisations were also more 'secretary intensive', employing 18.2 per cent of secretaries as a proportion of all office workers, whereas Head offices employed 11.9 per cent and London, City and English offices 5.9 per cent. The fact that whole organisations employed more secretaries than any other type of office structure is probably due to small firms being more likely than larger organisations to have more executives in relation to other employees, and executives are the people who have secretaries.

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5. Ibid., p.58.

CHAPTER IV

THE SAMPLE OF SECRETARIES
AGE, MARITAL STATUS AND SOCIAL CLASS

Age

The age distribution of secretaries in all three groups is shown in Table IV.1, together with the age distribution of a national sample of women full-time workers. The three groups of secretaries differed from each other and from the national sample.

Table IV.1 Age distribution of secretaries compared with a national sample (all percentages)

Age	Secretaries			Women full-time workers (national sample, U.K.)*
	Central London sample (n=515)	IQPS (n=170)	NAPS (n=73)	
Under 20	8.4	-	-	18.7
20 - 24	43.5	20.4	8.5	14.4
25 - 29	23.8	21.6	7.0	7.6
30 - 34	5.2	12.0	9.9	6.2
35 - 39	5.8	16.8	7.0	8.2
40 - 44	2.8	11.4	15.5	10.8
45 - 49	3.6	13.2	25.4	12.2
50 - 54	4.4	2.4	15.5	9.7
55 - 59	1.4	1.8	8.5	8.1
60 - 64	0.8	0.6	2.8	4.0
Over 64	0.2	-	-	not known

*source: A Survey of Women's Employment, 1968.[1]

Comparing the central London sample with the national sample, two striking differences can be seen. Firstly, approximately two-thirds (67.3 per cent) of the central London secretaries are concentrated in the age range 20 - 29, compared with approximately one-fifth (22 per cent) in the national sample of women full-time workers. Secondly, in the national sample there is a noticeable increase in the numbers of working women between the ages of forty and forty-nine; this feature is missing in the central London sample of secretaries.

These large differences cannot be explained simply on the basis of there being more young women living and working in the London area. In the Sample Census of 1966, the proportion of women aged between twenty and twenty-nine in Greater London was 7.53 per cent of all women in the area, compared to a figure of 6.46 per cent found in England and Wales as a whole.[2] Although there is a difference of just over 1 per cent (representing approximately 43,000 women aged between twenty and twenty-nine years) it would not account for the much greater proportion of young women secretaries working in central London compared with the national sample.

There are several possible explanations for the abnormal age distribution of secretaries. Central London may attract young people, firstly because the environment and facilities in the area, such as shops and entertainments, are particularly appealing and stimulating. Secondly, pay is higher in central London and this may be more important for the young and single,

especially if they are living away from home, and for young married women who are likely to be saving for a home. Thirdly, young people change their jobs more frequently than do older people.[3] As there is a wide range of jobs available in central London, they may be attracted by the degree of choice. Fourthly, the predominance of young secretaries may reflect the emphasis on youth and physical attraction which is found in many advertisements.

Conversely, the area may fail to attract older women because the majority are likely to be married and have children and would try to find work nearer to their homes; the journey into work is likely to be a greater deterrent to them than to younger women with fewer domestic responsibilities. A survey of white collar commuters[4] found that 45 per cent of married women office workers in the Outer Metropolitan Region of London had formerly worked in central London. It is also possible that women returning to work after having brought up families might consider jobs in central London to be too demanding or threatening, especially since it is well known that women who have been confined to a domestic role experience a loss of confidence.[5] The emphasis on youth, which was mentioned as a possible attraction to the young, might deter older women by making them feel they would be inadequate or out of place in an office environment.

A further difference in age distribution between the central London sample of secretaries and the national sample, is that the proportion of secretaries aged under twenty is relatively low.

This is undoubtedly due to the situation where a secretary usually begins work in a more junior capacity, for instance, as a shorthand-typist (Chapter XIII). There were only two secretaries in the London sample who were less than eighteen years of age.

When the age distributions of members of the two secretarial organisations are examined, it can be seen that they differed sharply from each other, from the central London sample, and from the national sample. They differed from each other mainly as a consequence of the concentration of members of NAPS between the ages of forty and fifty-four years. Members of IQPS tended to be younger than members of NAPS, 42 per cent of them being in the twenty to twenty-nine year range and a further 28.8 per cent in their thirties. Both organisations differed from the central London sample of secretaries basically because their members were older. Whereas only 13 per cent of London secretaries were more than forty years of age, 29 per cent of IQPS and 68 per cent of NAPS were similarly aged. On the other hand, 42 per cent of IQPS members and 15.5 per cent of NAPS members, compared with 67.3 per cent of the London sample, were in the age range 20 - 29.

The two organisations also differed from the national distribution of women full-time workers. A graph plotting this age distribution would show a bimodal curve; there would be an initial high peak representing single and young married women in

their late teens and early twenties, which fell off steeply before twenty-five years as women left the labour force to get married or have children. A second smaller peak would occur between forty and forty-nine years, representing women returning to work having completed their child-rearing. The two organisations differed from this national picture in having neither the initial nor the later peak. A larger proportion of members of IQPS than nationally were in their twenties (42 per cent) but more than a half (53.4 per cent) were in their thirties and forties. The bulk of members of NAPS on the other hand were aged between forty and fifty-four years.

These differences reflect both entry qualifications and the functions of the two organisations. Young members are excluded by both organisations since in the case of IQPS the minimum entry age for the Private Secretary's Diploma is twenty-one years. To join NAPS, all members have to have been working for a senior executive or professional person for five years. The presence of the relatively high proportion of secretaries in their thirties and forties in IQPS can be partly explained by the fact that some members take the examination when they are already well established in their careers, thus it is taken at a range of ages. In addition, the organisations probably attract different types of people; IQPS members are likely to be career-oriented and take the examinations in order to improve their job prospects. The members of NAPS, already holding senior posts, have very little motivation to

take an examination but may have joined their Association as a means of expressing dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their work, such as limited career prospects or inadequate rewards.

Audrey Hunt's survey[6] pointed out that the more highly qualified women are, the greater is the likelihood of their remaining at work, and this may be one more explanation of the age distributions of the two organisations, and in particular of the proportion of members of IQPS who were in their thirties and forties.

There were more older single women in the two organisations, compared with the London sample. It may be the case that secretaries who find they are not going to marry, or having married are not going to have children, join an organisation such as NAPS or IQPS in order to further their career which will, by then, have assumed greater importance. The higher proportion of divorced and widowed secretaries found among the two groups (8 per cent compared with 3 per cent in central London) would be consistent with this view.

However, since many members of the two organisations lived and worked outside London, the differences observed may be partly accounted for by a different age distribution among secretaries in other areas of the country.

Marital Status

Table IV.2 shows that approximately two-thirds of the London sample were single and one-third married (3.4 per cent were either widowed or divorced). As the whole sample was young, the majority of both married and single women were less than thirty years of age.

Table IV.2 Marital Status and Age

Age	LONDON				IQPS				NAPS			
	Single (n=335)		Married* (n=161)		Single (n=101)		Married* (n=56)		Single (n=38)		Married* (n=28)	
	% of all single	% of London sample	% of all married	% of London sample	% of all single	% of IQPS	% of all married	% of IQPS	% of all single	% of NAPS	% of all married	% of NAPS
16 - 19	13.0	8.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20 - 24	49.2	31.9	36.7	11.6	24.5	14.4	17.9	6.0	10.8	5.6	7.1	2.8
25 - 29	18.9	12.2	35.4	11.2	21.4	12.6	25.0	8.4	5.4	2.8	10.7	4.2
30 - 34	4.3	2.8	5.1	1.6	8.2	4.8	14.3	4.8	10.8	5.6	10.7	4.2
35 - 39	4.3	2.8	7.0	2.2	17.3	10.2	17.9	6.0	8.1	4.2	7.1	2.8
40 - 44	2.5	1.6	3.2	1.0	16.3	9.6	3.6	1.2	16.2	8.5	17.9	7.0
45 - 49	3.1	2.0	4.4	1.4	9.2	5.4	14.3	4.8	18.9	9.9	28.6	11.3
50 and over	4.6	3.0	8.2	2.6	3.1	1.8	7.1	2.4	29.7	15.5	17.9	7.0
		64.7		31.6		58.8		33.6		52.1		39.3

*excludes 3.4 per cent who were widowed or divorced

*excludes 7.8 per cent who were widowed or divorced

*excludes 8.5 per cent who were widowed or divorced

Consequently, most of those who were married (69 per cent) had been so for less than six years, although there was another group (20 per cent) who had been married for more than fifteen years.

Children

A quarter of the married secretaries in central London (26 per cent) had children, although these constituted only 9 per cent of all the secretaries in the sample. Most had either one or two children, only four secretaries having more than two. Surprisingly, more mothers were under forty than over forty, with the greatest number in their thirties. This may be an indication that secretaries with children are tending to return to work earlier than in the past.

Only six secretaries (1.2 per cent) had a first child who was less than five years old, while three (0.6 per cent) had a second child under school age. Half of the mothers, however (4 per cent of all the secretaries employed) had children under sixteen years of age. This proportion is much smaller than that found nationally, where 17.7 per cent of those women who were working full-time for an employer were responsible for school-age children.[7] The difference may be partly due to the social class distribution of secretaries (see below) who tend to come from high social class backgrounds and thus have a less pressing economic need to return to work, and partly to the difficulty of combining a secretary's job with the responsibilities of motherhood, particularly if there is a long journey involved to get to work. The study of white collar commuters[8]

found that twice as many married women with children worked in the Outer Metropolitan Region as in the central London area.

The proportion of IQPS members who were married and had children was almost the same as in the London sample, but among members of NAPS 39 per cent were married of whom just over half had children.

Social class

Fathers' occupations

Occupation is generally agreed to be the single most reliable indicator of social class, since it correlates highly with other variables such as education and income, which in turn reflect different life styles.[9]

Secretaries were asked to state their father's job, or if he was no longer living or was retired, his last job. As the ages of secretaries in the sample varied considerably, fathers would be at different stages in their careers, and so in order to standardise occupations as far as possible, secretaries were also asked to name their father's occupation when the secretaries themselves were twelve years of age. This age was selected as one which could probably be remembered by respondents (however, it was found that 12 per cent of secretaries did not know what their father's occupation was when they themselves were twelve years old). It was considered as well that this information might be more relevant in some circumstances than the father's present or last occupation, for example regarding the school a secretary attended or her choice of career.

The Registrar General's Classification of social classes is based on occupations, with the intention that 'each category is homogeneous in relation to the basic criterion of the general standing within the community of the occupations concerned.'[10] There are five categories, of which the third and fourth are divided into manual and non-manual groupings, which are described as: I. Professional (e.g. doctors), II. Intermediate (e.g. managers), III. Skilled - non-manual (e.g. clerical workers), III. Skilled - manual (e.g. carpenters), IV. Partly skilled non-manual (e.g. telephone operators), IV. Partly skilled manual (e.g. coal miners), V. Unskilled (e.g. labourers). Jobs held by fathers of secretaries are shown in Table IV.3. For comparison the national figures for the social class distribution of occupied men in 1931 and 1951 are given although classification has differed slightly between each Census.

The greatest proportion of London secretaries were the daughters of men in social class II, and if these are taken together with those who were from social class I backgrounds, they account for more than half of the London secretaries. The majority of the remainder are from social class III, with rather more having fathers from manual than non-manual occupations. Only 6 per cent of London secretaries were from social classes IV and V. A quarter of secretaries had fathers who were engaged in manual work. Fathers' occupations differ considerably from the national distribution of occupied males in 1931 and 1951; fathers of secretaries were heavily overrepresented in social classes I and II and underrepresented

Table IV.3 Fathers' occupations

Registrar General's Social Class	LONDON (n=515) Father's job	LONDON (n=515) Father's job when secretary aged 12	IQPS (n=170) Father's job	IQPS (n=170) Father's job when secretary aged 12	NAPS (n=73) Father's job	NAPS (n=73) Father's job when secretary aged 12	Social class distribution of occupied males in England and Wales* 1931	Social class distribution of occupied males in England and Wales* 1951
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I. Professional	13	12	12	10	11	8	2	3
II. Intermediate	39	33	38	32	41	34	13	14
III. Non-manual) Skilled	16) 37	13	14) 39	12	15) 36	11	49	53
III. Manual) Skilled	21)	24	25)	28	21)	23		
IV. Non-manual) Partly skilled	2	2	1	-	1	-	18	16
IV. Manual) Partly skilled	3	3	5	6	1	4		
V. Unskilled	1	1	1	1	-	1	18	13
Not known by respondent or not classifiable (including armed forces)	5	12	4	11	10	19		
	100	100	100	100	100	100		

*source: Census 1951, Occupation Tables.

in social classes II, IV and V.

Fathers' present or last jobs do not differ to a great extent from those they held when their daughters were twelve years of age; 77 per cent of fathers were doing jobs which were in the same social class categories as their present or last jobs, while 8 per cent of them had been upwardly mobile and 3 per cent downwardly mobile. Comparisons between fathers' present or last jobs and those held when the secretaries were twelve years old can only be tentative, however, since a substantial proportion of secretaries in each group (12 per cent in London, 11 per cent in IQPS and 19 per cent in NAPS) did not know their father's occupation when they themselves were twelve, and this factor may distort the distributions.

Looking at father's jobs in more detail by examining the occupational orders to which they belonged (Table IV.4), it can be seen that most fathers of London secretaries were professional and technical, sales or administrative workers. Within these groups certain occupations stand out. The single occupation in which the highest number of fathers was employed was 'clerks and cashiers', accounting for 9 per cent of all fathers of secretaries. The next most common single occupation represented was 'proprietors and managers, non-food sales', accounting for 5 per cent of fathers, and 'manager n.e.c.'(not elsewhere classified), 4 per cent. Among professional workers, accountant was the most common occupational group.

Table IV.4 Classification of fathers' occupations by Occupation Orders*

Occupation Orders	LONDON		IQPS		NAPS	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
I. Farmers, Foresters, Fishermen	17	3	5	3	1	1
II. Miners and Quarrymen	-	-	1	0.6	-	-
III. Gas, Coke and Chemical Makers	3	0.6	1	0.6	-	-
IV. Glass and Ceramics Makers	1	0.2	-	-	-	-
V. Furnace, Forge, Foundry, Rolling Mill Workers	-	-	3	2	-	-
VI. Electrical and Electronic Workers	16	3	7	4	4	6
VII. Engineering and Allied Trades Workers n.e.c.	27	5	15	9	8	11
VIII. Woodworkers	8	2	6	4	1	1
IX. Leather Workers	3	0.6	-	-	2	3
X. Textile Workers	1	0.2	1	0.6	1	1
XI. Clothing Workers	8	2	2	1	-	-
XII. Food, Drink and Tobacco Workers	4	0.8	-	-	-	-
XIII. Paper and Printing Workers	13	2	4	2	-	-
XIV. Makers of other Products	1	0.2	5	3	-	-
XV. Construction Workers	12	2	4	2	-	-
XVI. Painters and Decorators	6	1	1	0.6	1	1
XVII. Drivers of Stationary Engines, Cranes, etc.	5	1	1	0.6	-	-
XVIII. Labourers n.e.c.	8	2	1	0.6	-	-
XIX. Transport and Communications Workers	30	6	12	7	4	6
XX. Warehousemen, Storekeepers, Packers, Bottlers	5	1	4	2	-	-
XXI. Clerical Workers	47	9	22	13	11	15
XXII. Sales Workers	69	13	15	9	7	10
XXIII. Service, Sport and Recreation Workers	42	8	8	5	3	4
XXIV. Administrators and Managers	56	11	18	11	12	16
XXV. Professional, Technical Workers, Artists	102	20	27	16	11	15
XXVI. Armed Forces	8	2	-	-	4	6
Not known	23	4	7	4	3	4
	515		170		73	

*categories taken from Classification of Occupations, 1966.

Mothers' occupations

35 per cent of the mothers of London secretaries had never worked. Of those who had, half had at some time worked in occupations classified as social class III, and one quarter in jobs classified as social class II. Only 2 per cent of mothers had had jobs of a professional nature, compared with 13 per cent of fathers.

The range of jobs undertaken by mothers was narrow, and was predominantly in four areas: 'Clerical workers' (39 per cent) who had worked mainly as 'typists, shorthand writers or secretaries' and 'clerks and cashiers'; 'Sales workers' (13 per cent), the largest group being 'shop salesmen and assistants'; 'Service, sport and recreation workers' (15 per cent); and 'Professional, technical workers, artists' (17 per cent), who were mainly nurses and teachers. The limited range of jobs held by mothers, compared with fathers, is illustrated by the fact that of the two hundred and eleven possible occupational categories, one hundred and twenty were filled by fathers, whereas only fifty-four were filled by mothers. This reflects the general employment situation for women where the majority work within a limited range of occupations.

Although sex-roles may be important in determining the choice of a career for some women, the high proportion of mothers who had been in clerical occupations suggests that mothers may have had more influence on a daughter's choice of occupation than fathers. In 1951, approximately 60 per cent of all clerical workers were women,[11] but among parents of secretaries in this study 77 per cent of the clerical workers were women. This will be discussed further in Chapter VI.

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CHAPTER V

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education

In the nineteenth century the ranks of women office workers were filled by those who had received an education which was well above the average. Education then was a scarce commodity and only those with a sufficiently high attainment level succeeded in holding down their jobs. The improvement in general standards of education for all means that nowadays the level of education which in the nineteenth century was limited to only a few, is attained by the majority of school leavers. As a consequence, clerical work is open to proportionately greater numbers.

Secretarial work probably more than any other clerical occupation ideally requires a high standard of education; the persons for whom secretaries work are themselves likely to be well-educated and in order to communicate effectively with them and their colleagues the secretary needs to have in particular a wide vocabulary and a good command of the language. These skills become even more important when the employer is not particularly literate; a secretary then has to make up for his or her deficiencies.

Schools

Table V.1 shows the type of school last attended by secretaries in the three groups (Appendix 1, question no.14).

Table V.1 Last school attended by secretaries

	LONDON (n=515) %	IQPS (n=170) %	NAPS (n=73) %
1. Central	4	6	3
2. Comprehensive	6	1	-
3. Elementary	1	2	1
4. Grammar	31	44	40
5. Private	17	11	19
6. Public	9	1	9
7. Secondary Modern	18	12	7
8. Technical	8	10	14
9. Other (e.g. religious institution, private tuition)	6	13	7

The greatest proportion of secretaries attended Grammar schools, and this is particularly evident in the case of IQPS and NAPS. Those who attended Private and Public schools accounted for 26 per cent of the London sample, 12 per cent of IQPS and 28 per cent of NAPS. If Grammar, Public and Private schools are taken together they were attended by 57 per cent of London secretaries, 56 per cent of IQPS secretaries and 68 per cent of NAPS. Rather more of the London sample (24 per cent) had attended Secondary Modern and Comprehensive Schools than had IQPS and NAPS members (13 and 7 per cent respectively).

As the structure of the educational system and its institutions has changed over the years, the type of school attended by secretaries in London is related to their age.

For example, all those whose last school had been a Central school were over thirty-five years of age because that category of school was ended in 1944. In every age group, however, the largest proportion (approximately one-third) had attended Grammar schools, although fewer in the forty to forty-nine age group had done so. This latter finding is likely to be due to the different social class origins of secretaries in the forty to forty-nine age group (Chapter XIV) which can be accounted for by the effect of the Second World War. Secretaries aged forty to forty-nine were probably entering their first jobs in the period between 1940 and 1950 when the employment situation was disrupted and a greater proportion of them had last attended Central and Elementary schools, while fewer than at other times had attended Private and Grammar schools.

The tendency over the age range had been for the proportion of secretaries who attended Private and Public schools to fall, from 35 per cent of those aged over fifty, to 17 per cent of those aged under twenty, although among those aged from twenty to forty years the numbers remained steady with about a quarter of the secretaries having attended Private or Public schools. The numbers who attended Secondary Modern schools, however, grew from 19 per cent of those aged thirty to thirty-nine to 26 per cent of those aged under twenty.

In 1970, Grammar schools accounted for 20 per cent of all secondary school places,[1] so the proportion of one-third of secretaries who were educated at this type of school is higher

than might be expected on the basis of the general distribution of Grammar school places.

Schools attended by secretaries tended to reflect their social class origins, measured by their father's occupation when secretaries were twelve years of age. Hence the majority of those from social class I had attended Private and Public schools, from social classes II and III Grammar schools, and from social classes IV and V Secondary Modern schools.

Examinations

Of all the London secretaries, 88 per cent had a non-vocational educational qualification of some kind, 57 per cent holding GCE 'O' levels, and of these 17 per cent also had GCE 'A' levels (Appendix 1, question no.16). If these qualifications are combined with General School Certificate and Higher School Certificate held by older secretaries, then 67 per cent had the equivalent of 'O' level passes and 19 per cent 'A' level passes, while 3 per cent had a university degree. A large number of secretaries (28 per cent) had Royal Society of Arts qualifications in non-secretarial subjects, although it may be assumed that many of these were gained at the same time as secretarial training was undertaken. A variety of other examinations had been passed by 20 per cent of the London sample in such subjects as languages and the arts.

The Survey of Women's Employment found that of all women aged between sixteen and sixty-four, 17.5 per cent had passed at least one examination at school; GCE '0' level or its equivalent had been attained by 14.3 per cent of working women and among non-manual working women 28.1 per cent had reached that standard.[2] Hence the educational standard of secretaries in London is high compared both with the general population of working women and with non-manual working women. The difference appears even more marked when the number of '0' level passes is taken into account. Of those with '0' level passes, half had reached this level in at least five subjects, representing 29 per cent of the whole London sample.

12 per cent of all the London secretaries had no formal educational qualifications. None of those who had been to a Public school were included in this group but 4 per cent of those from Grammar schools, 12 per cent from Private schools, 17 per cent from Comprehensive schools and 21 per cent of those from Secondary Modern and Technical schools had not passed a public examination.

Table V.2 shows the educational qualifications gained by the secretaries and the type of school last attended by them. Most of those with CSE had been to Secondary Modern and Comprehensive schools; with RSA to Secondary Modern schools and with GCE'0' and 'A' levels and degrees, to Grammar schools.

Table V.2 Type of school and examinations passed (London secretaries)

	Certificate of Secondare Education (CSE)	Royal Society of Arts (RSA)	General Certificate of Education 'O' (GCE 'O')	General Certificate of Education 'A' (GCE'A')	General School Certificate (GSC)	Higher School Certificate (HSC)	Degree
n* =	27	145	302	86	48	11	15
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Central	-	8	3	-	6	-	-
Comprehensive	(37)	12	4	2	-	-	(7)
Elementary	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Grammar	-	15	38	49	33	(82)	(40)
Private	(4)	14	16	19	15	-	(20)
Public	(4)	4	11	16	15	-	(27)
Secondary Modern	(55)	34	14	1	17	-	-
Technical	-	9	7	7	2	-	-
Other	-	3	7	6	10	(18)	(7)

* some secretaries had more than one qualification
Percentages are bracketed where groups are small

Further Education (non-vocational)

A high proportion of secretaries had received non-vocational education of some kind after leaving school, accounting for 49 per cent of the London secretaries and 66 per cent of both IQPS and NAPS (Appendix 1, question no.15). This latter figure in particular is high compared with those quoted in A Survey of Women's Employment where it was reported that 44.8 per cent of women in non-manual jobs had attended a further education establishment for either vocational or non-vocational subjects.[3] Table V.3 shows at which institutions non-vocational further education was undertaken, and is divided into full-time, part-time, day release and evening classes.

It can be seen that by far the greatest number of secretaries who continued non-vocational education after leaving school, did so by attending evening classes (23 per cent of the London sample and 37 per cent of both IQPS and NAPS) and many of them had attended more than one type of evening class. These findings are consistent with those of the Henniker-Heaton Report on Day Release,[4] where it was found that, after leaving school, only at evening classes did the numbers of girls exceed boys in further education in both vocational and non-vocational subjects.

Whereas evening classes attracted secretaries from a wide range of social class backgrounds, catering as they do for all levels of ability and topics of interest, university education was confined largely to those from social classes I and II, while the majority who had attended a College of Further Education were mainly from social class III-manual.

Table V.3

Further Education

	Full-time			Part-time			Day release			Evening classes		
	LONDON %	IQPS %	NAPS %	LONDON %	IQPS %	NAPS %	LONDON %	IQPS %	NAPS %	LONDON %	IQPS %	NAPS %
University	3	2	5	1	1	1	0.4	-	-	1	4	1
Teachers' Training College or College of Education	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
College of Advanced Technology	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	-
College of Further Education	5	5	1	0.4	2	1	1	3	1	3	17	3
Technical College	4.4	3	1	0.4	-	-	1	1	1	3	13	4
Evening Institute	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	23	37	37
Classes run by organisations	0.2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	5
Correspondence course	1	1	-	3	3	5	-	-	-	-	4	1
Other (e.g.private tuition)	5	7	12									
Total*	20.6	20.0	19.0	5.8	7.0	7.0	2.4	5.0	3.0	33.0	84.0	51.0

* Total: many secretaries had received more than one kind of further education

The proportions from each type of school who had received some kind of further education were:

Central	45%
Comprehensive	30%
Elementary	17%
Grammar	56%
Private	50%
Public	57%
Secondary Modern	45%
Technical	54%

Only among secretaries who had last attended Comprehensive and Elementary schools did the proportion who had received further education of some kind fall below 45 per cent.

Educational requirements of employers

As literacy is a prime requirement for a secretary, it might be expected that employers would demand of their secretarial staff a certain level of educational attainment, assuming that academic achievement indicates a relatively high standard of literacy. It was surprising, therefore, to learn that the majority of employers (61 per cent) required no particular level of educational qualification from their secretaries (Appendix 7, question no.3).

Among those who did lay down a specific standard of education which they would like their secretaries to possess, requirements varied widely. Seven employers required GCE 'A' levels and a further thirty-three GCE 'O' levels, either in specific

subjects such as English or Mathematics, or a particular number of passes at this level. A further fourteen needed a 'high' or 'reasonable' standard of education, five more Civil Service or Local Government entry examination passes, and eight said their requirements depended on the boss or on the job. Secretaries working for dentists usually had to have a nursing qualification.

The reasons given by employers for their lack of emphasis on educational requirements varied considerably, and even where standards were laid down they were often compromised. The shortage of staff was frequently cited as a limiting factor, and some of those requiring GCE 'A' and 'O' levels were not categorical about their ruling. One employer said, 'I specify 'O' levels, but it doesn't automatically follow that I insist upon it. With the present shortage you tend to take whoever you can get and sort them out afterwards.' Similarly another remarked that he would not take less than five 'O' levels, 'but with the present labour market I have to break my own rules. If a girl seems good then I take her without these standards.'

One large organisation said that they asked for 'O' levels but for older secretaries the rule did not apply. They felt that girls with 'A' levels were probably more ambitious and consequently better, but that many secretaries had missed the opportunity to take examinations early in life and so although qualifications were considered a useful yardstick, the employer did not insist upon them.

Many employers who said that they did not ask for any particular level of educational attainment from secretaries, qualified their statements. Some said that experience was more important than educational qualifications, and that if a secretary had held a responsible job previously the employer took it for granted that she had had an adequate level of education to cope with it. Several expressed disillusionment with educational qualifications; one employer said he had had a secretary with 'A' level mathematics who could not work out simple commission sheets for representatives. Another commented, 'I had one secretary with a degree but no common sense, and in my experience girls with, for example, three 'A' levels have not been any better than those with five 'O' levels. So we have concluded that education is not the point.' A third remarked, 'Education does not worry me. If a girl has five 'O' levels and three 'A's it doesn't impress me because they may still be dim or lazy. Someone without these may just as well be brighter.' One sceptic remarked that he no longer asked about educational qualifications since he had no way of checking that what he was told was true: 'I have to believe what they say'.

Not unnaturally many employers were concerned that secretaries should have a good standard of English, and in particular emphasised spelling which a number had found to be a recurring problem.

Other general attributes which were often mentioned in lieu of educational qualifications were intelligence, common sense, a

good cultural background, a good school report, or a 'worldly education'. Three employers felt that a Grammar school education, irrespective of qualifications, was sufficient for them, and another insisted on a shorthand-typist as a secretary rather than an audio-typist, as he invariably found that the former had a better standard of education than the latter.

The problem of attracting secretarial staff to an unpleasant area was mentioned by several companies. Consequently they felt they could not insist upon any particular educational standard. One employer said, 'There is a great deal of labour in this area which is basically uneducated. We often give them day release and then find when we have trained them they leave us and go elsewhere.'

For many employers the interview played a great part in assessing the qualities of a secretary. Several indicated that the personality of the applicant was very important to them, outweighing educational considerations. 'We take a secretary on, based upon what we can see at an interview. We ask about education, but it doesn't influence us if their personality and character appear to be what we want.' Again, a personnel officer commented, 'My last secretary had no education but was excellent. The present one has 'A' levels. Directors' secretaries here have a degree. Personally I would not specify a certain standard, as personality is the most important factor.'

Thus, on the whole, employers did not place great importance upon educational qualifications; this is surprising in view of the modern tendency to value qualifications, and because of the importance of literacy to a secretary's work. Factors such as experience, personality, compatability, or general intelligence were frequently considered to be more important than, or acceptable replacements for, formal educational qualifications. It could also be the case that employers do not judge the work they give to their secretaries requires a high level of education. Other reasons for the lack of emphasis put upon educational qualifications include the possibility that many employers are older and may not themselves have such formal qualifications and so would not necessarily consider them to be important. As has been seen, some do not place much confidence in qualifications and in any case many older secretaries would not conform to certain standards. Furthermore, a highly-educated secretary may be seen as a threat by an employer who is himself not well educated, or even by an employer who is educated.

Working as a secretary can often be considered as an educational learning situation in itself. Girls who lack a background where verbal ability has been emphasised, can improve their vocabulary and knowledge of English from taking dictation, as well as acquire information about the business concern for which they work. Many secretaries undoubtedly do benefit in this way. Employers probably recognise the educational value of experience and are consequently less likely to be so particular

about academic qualifications. They realise that what a secretary learns at work may be of more practical value to them than her previous educational attainment.

Secretaries who were better qualified educationally might be expected to be attracted to certain kinds of employment situations, such as the academic or professional world. The possibility was tested and found not to be the case; secretaries with 'A' levels were employed in all types of establishment in direct proportion to other secretaries who were less well qualified.

A particular difficulty is presented by secretaries who are also graduates. Because some women have been unable to find jobs once they have left university, they have taken secretarial courses as a last resort hoping it will provide a way in to a particular field of activity, although some, of course, enjoy working as secretaries and select their occupation as a first choice rather than as a last resort. The secretary's job has always been a traditional way in which ambitious women can enter an occupational sphere.

Two surveys of the employment of graduate secretaries have been carried out by the Appointments Boards of Universities in Wales and in London, Glasgow and Belfast.[5,6] They both concluded that secretarial work in general did not allow a graduate enough scope to capitalise on her degree qualification, as alternative occupations such as teaching would have allowed her to do. A

particular problem was that most graduates who undertook secretarial training did not really want to become secretaries and one of the reports stated that none of the graduates actually wanted to do the work. Apparently they found the training quite different from anything they had had to tackle before and frequently complained of being treated like schoolchildren while they were undergoing training. The skills demanded were technical rather than intellectual; the graduates expected that their first job would give them an intellectual challenge with responsibility, not realising that it needed to be used as a training situation in order to improve their skills and find out about general office routine and procedures. However, to see this in perspective, a report on graduates in industry[7] found that 40 per cent of all graduates disliked their first jobs. One university employment board suggested that training should include a 'sandwich' situation, where actual office experience was part of the course, in order to familiarise graduates with the office situation. Graduates rarely found that they achieved job satisfaction from secretarial work because 'they are really looking for something more than a secretarial job from an employer who may not be prepared to recognise any other ability and merit they may have.'[8] An obviously dissatisfied graduate in the present study described a secretary's job as 'the manipulation of the most elementary skills, the annihilation of any important initiative and the ability to acquiesce passively.' One of the most important

recommendations made in the above reports was that only a woman graduate who really wants to become a secretary should take up the work. This can only be achieved if the graduate appreciates the problems which are likely to arise.

In general, one important consideration should be taken into account by secretaries who wish to use their jobs as a means of achieving occupational mobility - their education should be such that it will enable them to be competitive with other job applicants, at a later stage. In other words, if they expect to use the secretary's position as a stepping stone to say, a management job, they must be as well qualified educationally as other non-secretarial applicants for the managerial position would be.

Training

In the past, in order to reach the exalted rank of secretary, a woman usually had to have worked her way up from a more junior position. On the way she gained knowledge, experience and maturity so that when she reached the top she was able to make a very useful contribution to her boss's work. Today, most secretaries are young and therefore cannot have had the same experience as their older colleagues. It is perhaps this change which has led to the loss of confidence, expressed by older employers in particular, in the standards of secretaries.

Training is the one way in which to compensate for lack of experience. There is a tendency, however, for training to concentrate upon shorthand and typewriting. If a girl learns only how to receive words from the mouth of another person and reproduce them on paper, she will not know how to cope with the enormous variety of tasks and situations she may be expected to deal with as a secretary.

There is no doubt that this need has been appreciated by training institutions and in the recent past secretarial courses have expanded their range of topics from what was formerly essentially shorthand, typewriting and bookkeeping to such subjects as the use of office machinery, a knowledge of business organisations, communications, and Organisation and Methods.

The pressure for change began in the 1950s when post-war expansion increased the demand for office workers. In 1959 the National Federation of Professional Workers, a federation of thirty-five trade unions comprising workers in the professional, clerical, technical, administrative and supervisory grades in industry and employment, produced a report on the further education and training of clerical staff.[9] They pointed out that far too little attention had been given to the clerical worker by employers; they did not appreciate that a better educated and trained clerical staff would make a substantial contribution to efficient service.

The Federation believed that vocational skills should not be taught at secondary school, but only after schooling was completed. They recommended a greater use of day release for clerical staff and the institution of 'sandwich' courses, which would form part of a nationally-recognised system of clerical training, and suggested that trainees should aim to obtain the Ordinary National Certificate and the Higher National Certificate in Commerce.

In 1966 a report by the Ministry of Labour's Central Training Council's Commercial and Clerical Training Committee[10] stated that only 8 per cent of office staff under the age of 21 were being trained, and that this training was 'haphazard, unsystematic and limited in its scope'. The training of office staff was becoming increasingly important for several reasons. Firstly, administrative costs tended to increase at a higher rate than other costs; secondly, the 'natural' turnover among young women due to marriage and childbirth meant that they should be used effectively as early in their career as possible; thirdly, the competition for able workers in other fields meant that it would be more difficult to recruit office workers of a high calibre at a young age, as they would tend to stay on at school. Training, it was considered, would enable a company to employ office staff more profitably, would help to lower the turnover rate, and focus the training where it was really needed. As the demand for office staff was going to increase even further (between 1951 and 1965 over 20 per cent of young persons entering employment for the first time went into clerical work

and between 35 and 40 per cent of girls under eighteen did so), it was essential that such a large proportion of the work force should be both efficient and effective.

As far as secretaries were concerned, the Committee found from their sample of 1,671 firms that only four had training schemes which were available to secretaries. Three of them involved day release to take Royal Society of Arts or London Chamber of Commerce examinations; one had a planned syllabus, one operated job rotation and one had an induction programme. The Committee concluded that 'trainees in these firms are expected to acquire or reinforce their skills through college study, and do not receive a great deal of support from formal training arrangements in their establishments.'[11]

They consequently recommended two types of training which would be appropriate for a junior secretary. The first was to give her a year or more of 'planned experience' as a shorthand-typist, during which time she could learn about different aspects of the firm and the requirements of different departments, while one day a week she was released to attend a college where she could work for an advanced certificate. The second was for the firm itself to provide a full-time course in secretarial duties, in which a knowledge of the firm and the function of the secretary within it, played a part. One particular point stressed by the Report was that 'upward and lateral mobility must be encouraged by the training given.'[12]

One provision suggested by the Report was for a common, basic, full-time course for school leavers to be made available at technical colleges. As a result eleven colleges provided one-term courses where employees attended full-time while being paid by the employer. Unfortunately, this scheme did not succeed, possibly because the needs of employers differed one from another and a basic course was not sufficiently specific to cope with their varied requirements.

Another development in training office staff was made when Industrial Training Boards combined to organise courses in colleges throughout the country. The Industrial Training Act of 1964 set up Industrial Training Boards, which by 1972 numbered twenty-seven, with the aim of ensuring 'that enough workers with the requisite skills are available in the right places at the right time to do efficiently the jobs needing to be done'.[13] This was certainly relevant to office workers and to secretaries in particular. Funds for training were raised by a compulsory levy of a percentage of the total wages bill of each company which varied from 0.4 per cent to 3.8 per cent,[14] which could be recouped in the form of a grant from the Board, which paid for training of employees, providing that such training conformed to the conditions laid down by the Board. By introducing a levy system it was hoped that companies would be encouraged to get value for the money they were having to pay, by taking advantage of schemes, although firms were under no obligation to train their employees. It took some time for the various Boards to work out their

recommendations for office training, but most of them followed the recommendations laid down by the Ministry of Labour in Training for Commerce and the Office.[15] For example, the Gas Industry Training Board stated in their training recommendations that the principal objective was 'to give office staff an interest in the Industry, the Area Board and the Gas Council, and to create a 'sense of belonging'; to achieve maximum competence of staff in the job they are undertaking, however routine, and thereby create a sense of satisfaction in their work ...; to foster an ability and desire to absorb new procedures and skills; to give trainees a broad appreciation of the skills they are studying; to provide opportunities for trainees to acquire knowledge and experience of the practical application of theoretical principles studied and to enable trainees to acquire confidence in their dealings with systems, services, methods and people and to develop personal characteristics which will be of importance to them in their future careers.'[16]

The Shipbuilding Industry Training Board, while expressing similar advantages, put them in a different way. Training, they said, would result in an improved ability to communicate orally and in writing, it would give a broader understanding of the firm's commercial function and enable it to be seen in relation to other functions; it would enable trainees to become more mature and responsible persons and would act as a preparation for promotion and career development. Besides this, the standard of practical work would be improved.[17]

Unfortunately the system of Industrial Training Boards was not a complete success, in particular for its failure to cater adequately to the needs of small firms. Since most of the establishments in the present survey who employed secretaries can be described as 'small', Training Boards have been of little or no use to them, yet they suffer as much as larger firms from a shortage of secretarial staff. It has been proposed that the levy/grant system should be abandoned, together with the separate Boards, and a National Training Agency established in its place, which it is hoped will help to solve some of the problems of training for the office. It is intended that wider needs will be met such as the provision for the retraining of women wishing to return to secretarial work.

Secretarial Qualifications

There is currently a wide range of examinations and qualifications which a secretary can take, which are constantly being adapted to meet the needs of a changing office environment.

The main examining bodies are The Royal Society of Arts, The London Chamber of Commerce, The Scottish Council for Commercial, Administrative and Professional Education, and more specialised bodies such as Pitman's, the Institute of Office Management and Speedwriting Ltd. Examinations are held at centres all over the country; they cover single-subject courses such as shorthand and typewriting, office practice, English, or general courses including a set of subjects intended as a complete

training syllabus. These examinations and courses can be taken at different levels. The Royal Society of Arts, for example, sets examinations at three levels, depending upon the age and educational qualifications of the students. The stages are Stage I (Elementary), Stage II (Intermediate) and Stage III (Advanced). Examinations at each of these levels can be taken either in single subjects such as Office Practice, or grouped together in a general course. The London Chamber of Commerce has a Private Secretary's Certificate, with a minimum entry age of eighteen years, and a Private Secretary's Diploma, with a minimum entry age of twenty-one years, the latter being roughly equivalent to the R.S.A. Personal Assistant's qualification, and it is held by all the members of the Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries.

The reason given by the London Chamber of Commerce for initiating examinations for office workers is interesting:

> 'In the year 1887 the London Chamber of Commerce viewed with great concern the large number of foreign clerks then engaged in the commercial houses of the Metropolis and the principal provincial towns. It seemed to the Chamber that the matter demanded its serious consideration and in conjunction with the Association of Chambers of Commerce, it instituted an enquiry into the causes of what was a quietly and gradually effected foreign invasion ... As a result of their investigation,

> it came to light that upwards of 40% of the staffs in many City offices were foreigners, the greater proportion of them being Germans. The reason assigned by employers for this condition of things was that these foreign clerks were better qualified for the work than those of British nationality. Their general education was of a superior character; they possessed a greater knowledge of Continental languages, this making them of special value in business correspondence with foreign countries; and they were prepared to work longer hours and at less remuneration than Englishmen. It was evident that the real remedy lay in the improvement of the general education given in this country, and in the provision of a special training more suited to the equipment of those intended for a commercial career than had hitherto been furnished by the curricula of our schools ... a junior examination was established, scholarships and prizes of considerable value being awarded annually to successful candidates ... (at) the first Junior Examinations held in 1890 ... there were only 65 candidates of whom only 17 were qualified to receive the Chamber's Certificate of Proficiency.'[18]

Public examinations in Office Practice are held under the auspices of the Department of Education and Science including The Certificate in Office Studies, which was introduced in 1963 and is intended for young office workers who do not possess the qualifications necessary to take an Ordinary National Certificate or Diploma in Business Studies. It covers two years' part-time study and is intended for students who have been in full-time education until the age of sixteen years. From 1971 a full-time one year's course was adopted, and a one-year part-time course for students who were more experienced and better qualified. National Awards in Business Studies include the Ordinary National Certificate (ONC) and Diploma (OND), The Higher National Certificate (HNC) and the Higher National Diploma(HND), all of which provide general qualifications in office and business studies at varying levels up to degree standard.

More specialised courses for secretaries, such as in medical stenography or audio-typewriting, are also available.

Training Establishments

The types of institution at which a secretary can obtain instruction in order to pass the examinations just mentioned are various, and include the following:

1. Schools

Office skills have been taught in schools since the beginning of the century and instruction has consisted mainly of training in shorthand, typewriting and bookkeeping. The subject was initially instituted in response to an increasing demand for clerical workers and was confined largely to pupils in Central and Junior Commercial schools. After the reconstruction of the educational system resulting from the 1944 Education Act, commercial training was carried on in some Technical schools, and many Secondary Modern schools adopted such courses for pupils who, in the main, were uncommitted to other careers. More recently office skills have been included in the curricula of some Comprehensive schools. However, it was not until 1960 that teachers were given training to equip them to teach commercial subjects in schools. Previously the teaching had been carried out by people who had been experienced in office work but who had not necessarily had an academic or teaching training, although some may have had a year's course at a College of Education. The Department of Education and Science, in their education pamphlet Commercial Studies in Schools (1970),[19] said that there was little justification for teaching commercial subjects in schools before the school-leaving age was reached, since a broadly-

based education was of greater importance to young people. However, certain commercial subjects such as typing, and a knowledge of the world of commerce in general would be useful to all young people whether or not they were taking up office work.

The Department recommended different kinds of training for different ability and age groups. For the most able students commercial studies should not begin until the sixth form when either a two-year course in preparation for entry to a professional body, or College of Education, or a one-year course for those who are intending to be employed in business were suggested. It is unlikely that this one-year course would take pupils to a standard sufficient to allow them to go into office work without further training, other than as junior shorthand- or audio-typists. For average pupils, a 'structure of commerce' course was recommended, but with only one period per day being given to vocational training; this would mean that only a single skill, such as typewriting, could be covered adequately in the time allotted. Further skills, such as shorthand and bookkeeping, should be acquired after leaving school. The least able students could learn a great deal from commercial studies from the point of view of consumers, wage earners or taxpayers, and typewriting should be taught as an educational device.

Those who begin commercial education at school, and who start work immediately after leaving school, have two possible ways of obtaining further training; either they can take a very

junior post within a firm and continue studying at evening classes, or they can select an employer who will support them at a day release course. Unfortunately, studying office skills at evening classes has a very low success rate,[20] partly due to social distractions and partly to the fact that it is more difficult to concentrate on study at the end of a day's work. It is much easier to study and take examinations in a full-time setting if this is possible, and so the very best action would be to take a full-time secretarial course after leaving school. Nevertheless a great number of girls attend evening classes. The Henneker-Heaton Report on Day Release[21] calculated that 44 per cent of all girl clerical workers were attending vocational evening classes.

It has also been said that the provision of shorthand and typewriting courses at school attracts girls away from academic work which they might otherwise have undertaken.[22]

Technical Colleges, Colleges of Further Education, Commercial Colleges, Polytechnics

More than seven hundred Colleges of Further Education exist throughout the country and many include secretarial subjects within their curricula. Courses are available for all levels of educational entry, from those where no qualification is necessary, to courses for university graduates. Subjects may be taken singly or grouped together.

Training institutions such as Pitman's College provide a wide range of courses for all ability groups; these can be taken full-time, in the evening, or on day release. Pitman's also provide courses which are tailored to the needs of a particular organisation; these may be taken either at the college or on the premises of the company itself. Besides full-length courses of

one year, there are 'crash' courses, refresher courses, speed development courses, training in Pitmanscript (an adaptation of Pitman's shorthand), or vacation courses.

Private Secretarial Colleges

The type of training made available in private secretarial colleges has widened over the years. Some offer specialist courses, for example in languages, and also courses for secretaries wishing to enter particular fields such as hotel work, advertising, politics, medicine and journalism. They differ in their entry requirements, some relating courses strictly to achieved educational standards, others laying down no entry requirements other than stating that a good education is advisable for a secretary. Some colleges are residential but may also take day students, others are non-residential. They are often able to obtain jobs for their students at the end of their training. Colleges award their own diplomas, although students at most of them may sit examinations for other examining bodies.

Private 'finishing' courses

Secretarial courses may be obtained at some 'finishing' schools and one modelling school provides a secretarial course combined with a 'grooming' course. In addition to shorthand, typing, bookkeeping and office practice, girls receive tuition in deportment, flower arrangement, French cookery and art appreciation. It is also possible at one private secretarial college to obtain a 'finishing' course which combines a basic secretarial course with subjects such as music, literature, social services, law and etiquette.

Courses run by organisations

Interested bodies such as The Industrial Society run short specialised courses for secretaries on such topics as a secretary's role. There are also private commercial concerns which organise courses to which secretaries can be sent by their employer. They include courses for junior secretaries; senior and 'executive' secretaries and for secretaries who are being trained for management roles.

Secretarial training in specialist fields

Training is available for secretaries who wish to go into a specialised field, in particular medicine and agriculture. For example, courses for medical secretaries are available at Colleges of Further Education to prepare students for the Diploma awarded by the Association of Medical Secretaries. One such two-year course includes instruction in medical shorthand, in typewriting and audio-typing, introduction to psychology, sociology, first aid, medical science, medical office practice, English, business calculations and liberal studies. The entry level requires at least four GCE 'O' level passes, of which one must be in English.

According to the Institute of Agricultural Secretaries, there have been farm secretaries operating in this country for over two hundred years and until recently most of them have been male. However, the growing amount of paper work involved in farming has increased the need for secretarial help, and agricultural secretaries are now predominantly women. The first organised

training courses for agricultural secretaries were established in 1961 and more have since been instituted. The work includes farm accounting, preparation of wages and financial matters such as VAT and PAYE, farm recording including records needed by various Government Departments, as well as help with the management of the farm, general office work, payment of bills, grant and subsidy claims, shorthand and typewriting. Some farm secretaries are resident, others have a rota of different farms to visit periodically. However, it has been said that the training for this job, as provided by the course, is not adequate, as the knowledge required cannot be covered in a one-year course. The farmer is generally more concerned with the secretary's ability to deal with the agricultural subjects than with the secretarial correspondence skills, and yet training has tended to emphasise the latter. In order to overcome this problem, the Association has suggested as one solution that shorthand and typewriting should be a pre-entry requirement for the course.

Private coaching

Some secretaries have acquired their basic skills of shorthand and typewriting from private teachers, believing that it is possible to learn faster with individual attention.

Training for Graduates

Special courses for graduates are available at many further education institutions and secretarial colleges. One University, The University of Strathclyde, has two methods of producing graduate secretaries. The first is an intensive course for

graduates enabling them to learn basic office skills and is known as the Postgraduate Diploma in Secretarial Studies. Compulsory subjects are Commercial and Secretarial Practice, Business Administration, Shorthand and Typewriting; optional courses, of which two must be taken, are Office Organisation and Methods, Business Statistics, Business and The State, French or German.

The second is a BA degree course, which gives the student a BA General degree after three years, or a BA Honours degree after four. At the University Centre for Secretarial Studies in the School of Business and Administration, undergraduates who are selected on the basis of very good GCE or SCE 'A' level results, receive both education and training. The Degree course consists of a principal subject, which may be chosen from any of the principal subjects offered by the School, and a specialist subject, both of which are studied over three years; plus three basic subjects, studied for at least one year (one of which must be English) and a free choice of two other subjects from the School or from the School of Arts and Social Studies. For example a student might take as a principal subject over three years economics or industrial relations, with 'secretarial studies' as a specialist subject, English might be taken as a basic subject, and there is a choice of alternative subjects such as foreign languages, personnel administration, social administration,

social economics or accounting. By this means the secretary has a degree in a subject such as Economics, or Marketing, together with a training which enables her to start work as a secretary and yet possess the qualifications to advance in a career in commerce if she wishes.

The City of London Polytechnic has also recently instituted a degree course which fulfils the same purpose, as part of its 'Modular Degree Scheme'. One of the eighteen courses which can be taken to make up the degree is 'secretarial studies'.

Training by employers

a) Firm's own school

b) Day release or block release

c) Training in the work situation

a) Firm's own school

A few large organisations have their own training schools. These resolve several problems. Firstly, girls can be trained to have a knowledge of a particular company and its methods; secondly, a pool is provided from which girls can be drawn into different types of office work, clerical as well as secretarial; thirdly, the school can be used to 'fill in' when people are away from work due to holidays or ill health; and fourthly, the system may be cheaper than finding staff through agencies or by advertising. Firms which have instituted training courses of their own have discovered there is a considerable reduction in turnover, together with a marked increase in efficiency. One organisation which instituted training courses for their secretaries ~~found~~ claimed as a consequence that the women adopted a much more professional

attitude to their work and had a greater awareness of the importance of their role,[23] while the cost to the firm amounted to only 5 per cent of the secretary's salary which in one year they estimated was likely to be recouped in increased competence.

b. Day release or block release

As a day release or block release scheme involves bearing the cost of untrained staff for one or two years while training is undertaken, larger organisations rather than smaller ones are more likely to be able to support such a scheme. Since most of the organisations employing secretaries in central London are in fact small organisations, day release is for them not a practical proposition, although it could be if they employed clerical staff who would like to become secretaries and were willing to undergo the necessary training. In this case they would be losing a skilled worker for one day a week, on day release, but gaining a more valuable worker at the end of two years. It is to be hoped that the new proposals for training may support small firms if they are prepared to release employees.

c. Training in the work situation

This ought to be standard procedure in every type of organisation but sadly is not so. Many employers expect their employees to pick up information as they go along. It may take a secretary considerably longer to become effective if she does not understand the aims and functions of the organisation (or individual) for which she works.

The present sample of secretaries

Table V.4 shows the types of institution where the secretaries covered by the present investigation took their typewriting training (Appendix 1, question no.18). Typewriting only is shown; some secretaries learned shorthand at a different institution from the one at which they had learned to type, and twenty London secretaries had not been taught shorthand at all. The places where shorthand had been learned, were, however, very similar to those where secretaries had learned to type.

Table V.4 demonstrates that the greatest number of London secretaries first learned typewriting at school (32.2 per cent) while another 26.8 per cent were taught at a secretarial college. IQPS and NAPS differed from the London sample in their training in that a high proportion attended commercial colleges for their initial training, although IQPS follow the same trend as London secretaries where the greatest proportion first learned typing skills at school. The highest proportion of NAPS members, however, learned typewriting first at a secretarial college (37 per cent) with 22 per cent having been to commercial college. Strikingly fewer first learned shorthand and typewriting at school, only 7 per cent.

When age was related to the type of training institution attended it was found that more secretaries who were less than twenty years old first learned shorthand and typewriting at school or a college of further education than any other age group

Table V.4 Where typewriting was first learned

	Full-time			Part-time			Day release			Evening classes			All		
	LOND %	IQPS %	NAPS %	LOND %	IQPS %	NAPS %	LOND %	IQPS %	NAPS %	LOND %	IQPS %	NAPS %	LOND %	IQPS %	NAPS %
College of Further Education	5.1	8.2	2.8	0.6	-	-	0.2	1.2	1.4	2.0	2.4	1.4	7.9	11.8	5.6
Commercial College	7.3	14.1	22.0	1.0	0.6	-	0.2	-	-	1.0	2.4	-	9.5	17.1	22.0
Firm's own school	1.0	1.8	-	0.4	-	1.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.4	1.8	1.4
Secretarial college	26.8	18.1	37.9	1.4	-	-	0.4	-	-	0.4	2.4	2.8	29.0	20.5	40.7
School	32.2	22.4	7.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.6	-	-	32.8	22.4	7.0
Technical College	11.6	14.7	9.5	0.4	-	-	0.2	-	-	0.8	3.5	-	13.0	18.2	9.5
Other													5.0	7.6	11.0
No answer													1.4	0.6	2.8
Total	84.0	79.3	79.2	3.8	0.6	1.4	1.0	1.2	1.4	4.8	10.7	4.2	100.0	100.0	100.0

except those aged forty to forty-nine (again an indication of the difference in social class origin of those who became secretaries during and after the war). In other age groups, secretarial college was the most favoured initial training, closely followed by school. For all ages except those aged under twenty, approximately one-third first learned to type at school, but for those under twenty years of age, half had first learned at school.

There was a general decrease over the years in the numbers who first learned typing at a secretarial college, from 48 per cent of those aged over fifty to 19 per cent of those aged under twenty. There has been an increase in the numbers who attended colleges of further education for basic training and a decrease in those who attended technical colleges, but this may be explained by the changes in the structure of education which has taken place.

There is a distinct relationship between the type of training institution attended for initial training in shorthand and typewriting and social class background, assessed by their father's job when the secretaries were aged twelve years. From social class I, over half attended secretarial colleges and from social class II 42 per cent did so, while 26 per cent were first taught at school. From social class III (non-manual) the greatest proportion, 39 per cent, learned skills at school while only 18 per cent attended secretarial colleges. Half of those from social class III (manual) first learned at school, while only 7 per cent attended a secretarial college. This can probably be taken to reflect the cost of training at a secretarial college, as opposed to training at school or an institute of further education.

It is known that there is a relationship between social class and the type of school attended which is continued in the type of further education and training undergone. Among secretaries the majority of those who had attended Public or Private schools first learned shorthand and typewriting at a secretarial college; among those from Grammar schools, initial training varied considerably, the greatest proportion attending secretarial colleges; from Central, Comprehensive and Secondary Modern schools the majority had their initial training at school.

Table V.4 makes it clear that training in typewriting was predominantly undertaken in a full-time educational or training setting. The number who trained on a day release basis was minimal, only 1 per cent of the London sample having attended a day release course of any kind.

As far as the length of training was concerned, 44 per cent of London secretaries spent between seven and twelve months on their initial instruction; another 17 per cent took between nineteen and twenty-four months and 12 per cent six months or less. Although seven to twelve months was the modal initial training time for secretaries, length of training does seem to be used as a counterbalance to educational achievements, so that those with no educational qualification, or with few, spent more time training than those with higher educational qualifications. Secretaries who spent more than one year on their initial training

constituted half of the secretaries with no educational qualifications, 48 per cent of those with CSE, 31 per cent of those with RSA, 28 per cent of those with GCE 'O' and GCE 'A' levels and 23 per cent of those with a degree. This association may, however, simply reflect different opportunities which exist for learning typewriting at particular schools or training institutions. In other words, if a girl attended a Secondary Modern school, the training provided might be spread over two years intermittently, compared with six months intensively at a secretarial college.

The above figures cover only the secretaries' initial training in typewriting, although that training may have been part of a more comprehensive course. ~~Another~~ 29 per cent of all London secretaries went on to take further training. Of those who had first learned skills at school 45 per cent took further training, indicating that the training they had received at school was not adequate to enable many pupils to start work, or to progress once at work, without more instruction. On the other hand, it means that 55 per cent who were initially instructed at school had no further training. Nearly a third of those who first learned shorthand and typewriting at Commercial Colleges and Technical Colleges also undertook some further training, although only 16 per cent of those from a College of Further Education and 19 per cent of those from secretarial colleges did so.

93 per cent of IQPS members had undertaken further vocational training; this very high figure can be partially explained by the fact that in order to take the examination for the Diploma of the

City of London Chamber of Commerce, they probably needed some further practice although some secretaries managed to attain the standard and pass the examination without it. The members of NAPS also had a high additional training level, 42 per cent of them having attended courses after they first learnt shorthand and typewriting.

Training carried out by firms in the central London survey

Training for Commerce and the Office, the report of the investigation carried out by the Central Training Council's Commercial and Clerical Training Committee in 1966,[24] found only four schemes which provided training for secretaries in a sample of 1,671 firms. It was of interest to compare this with the sample of London firms in the present enquiry (Appendix 7, question no.2).

Three firms out of two hundred and seven (the number of establishments whose training programme was known) had training schemes of their own. They included the largest firm in the sample and all three were within the sixteen largest firms in terms of the number of office workers they employed. The training provided varied. In the largest organisation, employing over two hundred secretaries, all new entrants were trained in the techniques of the firm and learned of its business interests throughout the world. The company also ran a course for junior secretaries, who already had shorthand and typewriting skills but who needed further training in order to become secretaries. The firm had previously

tried using outside courses for junior secretaries but found the emphasis on shorthand skills was not relevant since their routine correspondence was dealt with by typing centres, receiving work through a telephone dictating system; so the company preferred to have its own course where all the teaching was related to particular needs. However, secretaries who were more senior were sent on specialist courses for senior secretaries run by outside organisations.

Another company, employing sixty-five secretaries, had two types of course. One was for school leavers with some skills who needed further training, or for girls who had been employed for only a short time already, and this consisted of a full-time course of anything from three to twelve weeks. The other was for existing staff who needed to increase their speed in shorthand. They might be secretaries already, who wished to improve their skills, or potential secretaries, to enable them to become secretaries. For this course, the girls were released from their jobs for a weekly training session, and the coaching was geared individually to the needs of the particular student.

The third firm, which employed twelve secretaries, had a 'secretarial services section' which fulfilled two functions. It provided relief help for secretaries who were absent and acted as a training school for younger girls. Some had come to the firm already trained and were learning about the firm and its way of presentation, and in this the section served the purpose of an induction course, while other girls concentrated on improvement of

skills. This firm's scheme seemed a particularly useful way of overcoming two problems, absence from work and replacement by another secretary without delay, and provision of basic training, at the same time giving experience of several departments to the trainees. The scheme seemed to reflect well the spirit of the recommendations made by the Ministry of Labour Report.

Twenty-five other firms made limited or occasional use of training facilities provided by outside sources. Five encouraged day release in order to enable girls to learn shorthand and typewriting and one of the firms released shorthand-typists to learn further skills before they could become secretaries.

In eight cases outside courses were used in order to enable clerical workers to enter the secretarial field; to enable shorthand-typists, typists and audio-typists to be promoted to secretary; or to give junior secretaries an opportunity to be promoted to more senior positions. Decisions in these companies were taken on an individual basis depending on the needs of the company and the girls concerned. Some firms emphasised that extra training and effort on the part of the secretary was rewarded financially. Two firms sent secretaries for training in the use of office machinery such as Telex and photocopying.

Five establishments had special induction courses for secretaries at which they were introduced to the work of the concern and its method of presentation. Another four companies, although they did not themselves provide training facilities, were part of larger

groups who did, and were able to avail themselves of these provisions. Hence they could occasionally send girls on courses run by Head Offices or use secretaries who had been trained from 'pool' work. One firm sent secretaries to headquarters in Geneva for training and information.

Many other establishments said that they gave 'on-the-job' training to teach secretaries about their own particular field of activity; two sent secretaries on courses to learn about the specialist nature of the firm's work.

Two firms in the survey had had training schemes but had given them up, one for reasons of economy, the other because the turnover rate was so high. The latter was within a university college; it was found that within a very short time all the trainees were engaged to be married to students there and subsequently left the scheme. This was not the only problem; the university's scheme had been one of day release over two years, and failed not only because of marriage turnover but also because the training period was too long. The trainees could not be employed as secretaries between day release classes as they were not highly-enough skilled and so they did routine clerical work and odd jobs in between classes. This represented a great waste of labour and resulted in a lack of incentive (and possibly allowed the trainees more time to get to know the students). Had the scheme been better organised it might have succeeded.

Two organisations were concerned with the training of secretaries as part of their business and so they had little trouble recruiting staff, or sending them for retraining if necessary if they were recruited from outside. Two newspaper organisations took advantage of Industrial Training Board facilities given to the industry and one other was intending to take advantage of the scheme. Several others, whose Industrial Training Boards did not provide for office work training, were not encouraged to send their secretaries for training but would have done so had they been supported in this way.

Some employers mentioned that the turnover rate among secretaries was high, as indeed it is for all young people starting on a career and so they felt that training might not be of benefit to the company which had provided it, although they were aware that general standards might be raised by this means. One organisation said that they operated a system of 'management by objectives'. Everyone had job specifications and targets with a continual appraisal of training needs. Secretaries began with an induction training and were sent on specialised courses where necessary, or in order to gain promotion. The employer paid for evening classes of any kind attended by secretaries and such education was encouraged as much as possible. Continuous training was seen as beneficial, whether or not it was actually relevant to the job itself. Before introducing training for secretarial staff, turnover had been very high among secretaries, but after induction and training were instituted secretaries had stayed on - turnover was no longer any problem.

The overall picture of training in London which emerges is relatively good compared with that found by the Ministry of Labour survey in 1966. Only four out of 1,671 establishments in their survey had any kind of training scheme yet in the present sample in 1970 three out of a total of two hundred and seven ran their own schemes, with another twenty-five having training facilities of some kind. This represents a total of 13.5 per cent of the business establishments taking part in the survey whose training policy was known. When it is considered that of all the establishments in the survey, one hundred and seventeen employed only one secretary and could therefore hardly be expected to provide training facilities on a regular basis, the numbers are very encouraging. It is likely, however, that employers in the London area would be more inclined than those in the rest of the country to adopt measures which might attract secretarial staff to them and encourage them to stay once they were employed, since the shortage of secretarial staff in central London is acute.

It was not only establishments employing large numbers of secretaries who had training schemes, as the figures in Table V.5 show, although the likelihood of their having a training scheme grew with the number of secretaries employed.

Table V.5 Number of secretaries employed by establishments having training schemes

No. of secretaries employed	No. of establishments giving training	Total number of establishments
1	4	123
2 - 5	12	91
6 - 10	4	22
11 - 20	2	9
21 - 50	3	3
More than 50	3	4
	28	252

Among employers with training schemes were some who felt that training was necessary in order to foster the impression that there was a career structure open to secretaries. They said it was difficult for secretaries to feel they had any opportunities for advancement or improvement, especially where they came to the firm already equipped with a good education, training and some experience. For such women it is not difficult to find amenable jobs as secretaries, but if they are to regard secretarial work as a career, then they must be able to see that some future upward movement is accessible to them. Secretarial work is sometimes described as 'dead end' because it has no obvious career structure, except in terms of the status of the person for whom a secretary works. Even secretaries themselves measure their prospects in this way (Chapter XIII). Training would be one way in which to mitigate the situation.

The superiority of secretarial training received abroad was mentioned by both employers and secretaries. One employer whose concern was jointly owned by a European and a British company, found that when secretaries came from their European counterpart to work in the London office they were more efficient and better educated than those already working in the company and trained in Britain, even though the visiting secretaries were working in a foreign tongue. Another employer who had until relatively recently worked in different European capitals and had experienced enthusiastic secretaries who were ambitious to take responsibility in the firm, said that he was considering leaving London again and transferring his main office to a European capital simply because he could not find a secretary who was dedicated and hard-working. He felt that any man with ambition would need to work hard to get ahead, but London girls seemed more eager to get ahead in 'matters of the heart'. One secretary who was educated in Scandinavia in a 'Handelsgymnasium' (literally 'trade school') felt that English secretaries did not receive an adequate training for the job. She had been taught such subjects as international finance, languages to a high standard, economics and law. She also felt that English girls did not have ambition and consequently paid insufficient attention to their training, anticipating that marriage would soon interfere with a career. However, she felt that if they realised that most of them would in fact be returning to work after they had had children, they would place more importance upon their initial training.

Secretarial qualifications expected by employers

Employers in the survey were asked whether their secretaries were expected to have any specific secretarial qualifications before they were employed, and whether their skills were tested at an interview (Appendix 7, question no. 4). They were found to be no more demanding on the question of the standards of secretarial skill they expected than they were on that of educational qualifications. Out of two hundred and ten employers, one hundred and fifteen (55 per cent) did not specify any particular qualifications or speed which should be attained by secretaries, although a further twenty-five (12 per cent) said they needed a high standard generally but were not prepared to put a particular figure or qualification upon it. Only fifteen employers (7 per cent) specified a minimum shorthand or typing speed below which they would not be prepared to employ a job applicant, and forty (19 per cent) gave tests to secretaries before employing them. Ten (5 per cent) said that the standards they expected, and whether they gave a test, depended upon the particular job and the job applicant.

Some employers were very careful in their selection procedures and related qualifications directly to salary scales. One gave a test by asking secretaries to type a resumé of their experience, which he felt gave an idea of their style, logic and standards - they were then given a shorthand test. All references were taken up and a questionnaire was sent to former employers. Others gave speed tests and searching interviews. Three employers had only

instituted testing recently because they felt it was now becoming necessary, or to quote one, 'we have been caught once or twice'. In one case it was felt that a test was undignified for older secretaries, so it was only given to younger ones. A few left testing to the employment agency, specifying the standards or qualifications they needed, and expected that girls would not be sent to them who had lower abilities than had been requested. Other employers checked on qualifications by asking to see diplomas or certificates and also by taking up references or by obtaining a personal recommendation. A few did not place much value upon diplomas, saying that they were not necessarily relevant as speeds might have changed owing to lack of practice and that a test was more reliable; one employer felt that it was only necessary to test someone whose diploma or certificate was outdated, as a recent one was still likely to be applicable.

Among those who did not lay down any basic standards for secretaries were those who judged other criteria to be more important for a secretary's job, or said that speeds were not relevant for their particular situation, either because there was not much letter writing, or because the secretary was expected to write her own letters. One felt that speed depended upon learning the office jargon, which made a test irrelevant.

Others used different means of assessing skills, such as the secretarial college which had been attended, or the length of training. Experience was thought to be considerably more valuable as an indication of merit than, say, a diploma, and many firms

were adamant that they would not employ a school- or college-leaver. Some did not believe in tests but employed new secretaries on either a week's or a month's trial, or on a temporary basis.

Personal attributes were sometimes felt to outweigh technical skills, as they had done for educational qualifications. 'I know who I want but those people are hard to get. They must have high speeds in shorthand and typing, but I really need someone with a nice personality who speaks English well. I tend to choose an older person like me - I feel as I get older my standards get higher and as older people seem to have the same standards as me, I go for an older person'. Some felt that compatability between people who work together must come before speeds, although almost everyone wanted a reasonable standard of technical skill. 'I pick a secretary for the kind of person I can work with, not for her qualifications'.

A woman employer who had herself worked as a secretary said that nowadays no-one really had good speeds. When she trained in 1938, when the competition for jobs was fierce, all the members of her shorthand class were able to take down shorthand at the very high speed of two hundred words per minute. One employer felt that secretaries were actually better now than they used to be, although his firm tended to employ girls who were not very skilled to begin with and then helped them to improve. This establishment said they only lost secretaries for reasons of marriage and childbirth.

Some employers did not give tests because they did not like doing so. 'We say we shall give a test but in fact we don't. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak as far as giving a test is concerned.' Another felt that applicants did not like it, so he stopped.

A considerable number of employers did not test or demand high standards, from a feeling of despair that it was so difficult to find a secretary anyway that they employed any person who was available and hoped she would improve if she was not very efficient to begin with. Some employers consequently only promoted from within the organisation, or only employed school leavers so that they could train them according to their particular requirements. Those who were not confident of finding a secretary often felt that standards were very low and remarks were made such as, 'I can't make any demands, otherwise I wouldn't get anybody', and 'We can't afford to be fussy nowadays. We're lucky to get anyone. If times were different we could be more selective.'

Older secretaries, as well as employers, shared the feeling that standards of secretaries in general had fallen. As far as educational standards of secretaries are concerned, it was shown earlier that the highest proportion of secretaries now, and in the past, have been educated at Grammar schools. However, fewer younger secretaries were educated at Public or Private schools and more were educated at Secondary Modern and Comprehensive schools. This in itself does not mean that the standards of secretaries is lower; evidence from other research showed[25] that girls from Secondary Modern Schools who take up office work were

often the most able and intelligent of their group.

The shift of emphasis in recruitment is probably due to two factors; firstly, the increasing demand and secondly, demographic changes. It has been said that the demand for office workers increases at the rate of 100,000 new jobs per year.[26] The vacancies for secretarial staff on the books of one employment agency increased by 51 per cent in 1973 compared with the same quarter of 1972.[27] In order to fill these extra jobs, recruitment has inevitably come from sources which have not traditionally provided secretarial staff, hence the increase in numbers of young secretaries who came from Secondary Modern Schools. One implication of the changing recruitment pattern, is that the social class composition of the secretarial work force may also be changing. It was shown in Chapter IV that London secretaries were mostly young. Their age distribution can be explained not only in terms of factors associated with older women not working in central London and the particular nature of secretarial work, but also in terms of other demographic changes. The excess of women over men at the turn of the century was sustained by two World Wars and secretaries were frequently older single women who had made a career of their occupation. Nowadays there are far fewer single women in the population and working women consist mainly of those who are young and single, or married with no children, and those who have returned to work

after raising families. Therefore the women who are available to fill the increased numbers of secretarial positions in central London and elsewhere are mainly young and inexperienced. The changed situation is often blamed on a reduction of standards, whereas it is in fact due to a combination of increased demand and changed population distributions.

Employers themselves have contributed towards the general impression that standards are lower, by devaluing the term 'secretary'. Jobs which would formerly have been filled by shorthand-typists, typists, clerks, or even office boys, are sometimes said to be jobs suitable for secretaries. If a shorthand-typist, doing a shorthand-typist's work, is called a secretary, then inevitably the standard of secretaries will appear to have fallen. In addition, employers often fail to use the skills and abilities which have been acquired by their secretaries. It is a sad situation that at the same time as some employers were vocalising their misgivings about the standards of secretarial work, so some secretaries were expressing their discontent at the fact that their abilities were not being utilised. An example of this problem is illustrated by one interview with an employer, during which he emphasised that his main requirement for a secretary was that she should have initiative. Speaking to his secretary afterwards, she said that her boss was always talking about initiative but what he meant by it was the

initiative to look up a telephone number without being told, or the initiative to make an entry in his diary. She felt that one did not need 'A' levels to deal with that kind of problem, and was planning to find a more demanding job.

In Chapter XVII recommendations are made which it is hoped will help to improve the present situation.

Nevertheless it must be emphasised that most employers were not dissatisfied with their secretaries, and the lack of emphasis placed by them upon educational and training qualifications is more a reflection of the special nature of the secretary's work and her relationship with her employer than with dissatisfaction at inadequate standards.

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CHAPTER VI

CHOICE OF CAREER

There are many influences which help to determine the choice of a girl's career. These can include advice from parents or teachers,[1] career consultants such as Youth Employment Officers,[2] the girl's own abilities and level of education together with the subjects she has enjoyed at school,[3] personal impressions of people who are already working in various occupations,[4] expectations about conditions of work such as pay and prospects, interest in the subject,[5] and feelings about what kind of job it is appropriate for a woman to undertake.[6]

It is generally agreed that some of the more important factors which have attracted both men and women to 'white collar work' in the past have been the relatively clean and pleasant conditions of work, the advantageous hours and holidays, the greater opportunities for advancement and the higher status associated with working in close contact with management.[7]

In a survey of GCE 'O' level candidates from different types of schools, J. H. Pheasant found that the largest number of girls in her sample chose clerical work as a career. This choice was based largely upon the impression that clerical work offered good wages, human interest and congenial working conditions, and that it required little or no training after leaving school.[8]

Joan Maizels[9] reported that 48 per cent of girl school leavers in her sample were hoping to take up clerical work: however, the

majority of these girls came from non-manual homes and were 'above average' pupils. Maizels found that an important factor in determining the choice of career was how well the pupils had enjoyed related subjects in school; in the case of clerical work, English was the subject most frequently mentioned in this regard. The girls who hoped to go into clerical work expected that, as they had enjoyed English at school, they would find clerical work particularly congenial.

Career choice by school leavers has been found to be generally realistic, in that both educational achievements and level of intelligence seem to be positively related to their aspirations.[10] When girls choose a career there is a further dimension to be considered, that is their anticipated role in society as housewives and caretakers of young children, around which they usually consider a career has to be fitted.[11] This dual role encourages women to select jobs which will not conflict with domestic responsibilities and often results in them choosing to be in types of work less demanding than those they would adopt had a career not to take second place to child-rearing. 'Knowing that her first stint in the labor force will be a short one and that her re-entry is unpredictable ... she is unlikely to think of a lifetime career when she is young. On her return to work, she finds few educational opportunities open to her. The split career thus effectively dampens interest in job preparation in youth when it could be acquired, and makes it

more essential in middle age when educational resources are limited.'[12]

Job choice is also affected by the supportive role played by women within the family, so that girls frequently tend to choose occupations which reflect their contact with children and their domestic and supportive functions. Although this tendency has placed considerable limitations on their career prospects, it has perhaps been realistic for women to capitalize on their assets in this way. A secretary's job fits in well with a woman's role expectations, since it is possibly the most supportive of work situations, certainly more so than teaching or nursing, and yet it has sufficient flexibility to fit a variety of needs.

In order to learn why the secretaries in the present three groups originally took up secretarial work, the following question was put to them: 'What was the greatest influence in helping you to decide to become a secretary?' (Appendix I, question no.21). They were asked to number a list of items in order of their importance, that is '1' for the most important influence, '2' for the next, and so on. Some respondents numbered only one or two of the items, while others numbered several or all of the alternatives in rank order of importance. Table VI.1 presents the findings showing those factors which were entered first, second and third in order of importance.

It can be seen from Table VI.1 that there was considerable concordance in the replies from all three groups. The highest proportion put first 'own decision', which can be interpreted

Table VI.1 Factors which influenced the choice of secretarial work as a career

Most important influences -	LONDON (n=515)			IQPS (n=170)			NAPS (n=73)		
	1st %	2nd %	3rd %	1st %	2nd %	3rd %	1st %	2nd %	3rd %
Parents	12	10	6	8	10	7	12	18	11
School	4	4	3	4	7	8	7	4	3
Couldn't think of anything else to do	10	6	3	5	6	3	5	5	1
Suitable occupation until marriage	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	1
Stepping stone to other jobs	9	8	7	4	11	7	1	7	5
Good salary	3	15	13	1	6	9	-	8	8
Couldn't do what I really wanted to	16	5	4	17	3	3	21	7	-
Own decision	40	13	3	52	9	2	45	7	1
Other reasons	5	3	2	8	6	1	8	5	4
No choice shown (i.e. only one or two influences named)	-	33	56	-	41	59	-	36	66
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

as respondents having had a positive desire to become secretaries, although detailed reasons for the attraction to the work were not specified.

A sizeable proportion (16 - 21 per cent) of all three groups became secretaries only because they 'couldn't do what I really wanted to'; numerically this was the second most frequently-given reason for taking up secretarial work. Respondents who marked this category were asked to state what it was they had really wished to do. Among the London sample and NAPS, thwarted careers in the arts, including acting, singing, ballet, music or art, were the most numerous, followed by teaching, a university education, a profession or nursing; while among members of IQPS teaching and a university education were the predominant alternative careers. It is difficult to know whether these stated preferences were realistic, or whether they were merely idealised ambitions. In some cases respondents explained why they had not followed their first choice of occupation, for instance, examination results not being good enough to obtain a university place, or parents not being able to afford to keep them any longer.

Third in order of importance as a first influence came 'parents'. When second and third influences are taken into consideration, it can be seen that more members of NAPS (41 per cent) than of either IQPS (25 per cent) or the London sample (28 per cent) said they had been influenced by their parents. This may be due to members of NAPS being older than secretaries in the other two groups. It is not necessarily the case that

parents had more influence over occupational choice some years ago compared with the present day, although it is likely; it might indicate that parents who had experienced the unemployment of the 'twenties and 'thirties encouraged their daughters to adopt an occupation which had then proved to be less vulnerable than most.[13] Even today, according to some respondents, parents advised their daughters to take up secretarial work for its security, feeling that it is an occupation to which they can always turn, whatever their circumstances.

It was seen in Chapter IV that 39 per cent of working mothers of London secretaries (25 per cent of all the mothers of London secretaries) were, or had been, in clerical occupations, together with 9 per cent of fathers. Among the one hundred and twenty-nine secretaries whose mothers had been in clerical occupations, 40 per cent said they had been influenced in their choice of career by their parents, compared with only 12 per cent of those three hundred and eighty-six secretaries whose mothers had not been in clerical occupations. This distribution is ~~highly~~ statistically very significant (χ^2, 1 d.f. = 53.36, $P < 0.001$). It may therefore be claimed that mothers who had been in clerical occupations influenced their daughters in their decision to become secretaries. The same did not hold for secretaries who had fathers in clerical occupations.

The random sample of secretaries in central London were more strongly influenced by salary in their choice of career (31 per cent compared with 16 per cent of IQPS and NAPS members), hence

it is likely that the apparently high salaries paid to secretaries in central London attracted many entrants to the occupation. The higher immediate rewards offered to secretaries, especially in the recent past, make it a serious financial rival to other traditional female occupations such as teaching or nursing which require much more training. Indeed a hospital employer said they had to be careful, when advertising jobs for secretaries, not to offer a salary which was higher than that earned by a ward sister.

Under the category 'any other reason(s)' a wide variety of influences were offered; and these serve to amplify some of the items subsumed under the category 'own decision'. Many respondents had found the idea of secretarial work very attractive, and it was variously described as flexible, interesting, creative, challenging, rewarding, and an occupation which gave scope and responsibility. Other advantages mentioned included the opportunity to use language skills, the possibility of travelling all over the world, and the fact that one could always find a job wherever and whenever one wished, without fear of unemployment. Work could be done at many different levels in a variety of situations, while the training received would provide useful skills and knowledge and would allow a secretary to return to the field after bringing up a family. Besides, a secretary could be employed in any type of work in which she might have an interest. For instance, one secretary said that ever since she had taken a degree she had always wanted to work in a University Department, which she now did. Another, who had wanted to become a social worker, worked in a social work department, and several secretaries liked the world of business.

Many had always wanted to work as a secretary, and one had found at school that she was fascinated by shorthand and typewriting,

while another simply felt she was suited to the work. Some secretaries said they enjoyed working in a situation in which they used words, and where a good knowledge of English was an advantage.

Family and financial considerations played an important part in career decisions for a number of secretaries. In several cases fathers had died and it became necessary to earn a living as soon as possible, or else parents could not afford to keep their daughter at school any longer than necessary. One secretary was very grateful to the system of day release which enabled her to learn secretarial skills while she still worked and earned money. Women who were widowed had turned to secretarial work when they needed to support themselves and the fairly short training time involved attracted those who had to earn a living quickly. Other members of families besides parents sometimes influenced the decision of girls to enter secretarial work. One secretary said that her elder sister was working as a secretary 'and earning a good living', so her parents felt she should do the same. A respondent whose aunt had been a secretary said that she had been intrigued with shorthand ever since childhood when she had seen her aunt using it. Another found that most of her friends were taking a secretarial training course, so she did the same.

Personal factors which influenced a choice of career included the need or desire to become independent quickly, in some cases so that girls could leave home, or illness, which meant either that a great deal of schooling had been missed, making an academic career difficult, or that a sedentary occupation was more suitable.

One respondent took up secretarial work because her husband was not academic and she felt it would not be good for their relationship to pursue her studies.

Some were attracted by the status and security of the secretary's job, one saying that she had adopted it so as to keep up with some of her 'snobby' relations. A number pointed out that in the nineteen twenties and thirties when jobs were hard to find, office work had been a comparatively easy field to enter. According to others, there was very little job choice after the Second World War, and office work at that time seemed the only opening available.

A few had become secretaries accidentally; they had taken secretarial training while filling in time before going to university, or while waiting to take up nursing or teacher training, and then discovered that they liked the work. Others had been invited to take shorthand and typing training by percipient employers, or were offered jobs before they had considered alternative careers. Some girls had found that secretarial training was part of their general syllabus when they attended a technical college or language institute, so they felt inevitably propelled towards the work. Among girls who learned shorthand and typewriting at school some said that they felt their career choice was pre-determined by their training.

Secretarial work was occasionally adopted after a first career had been unsuccessful. These careers included music teaching,

which the respondent had found unrewarding both emotionally and financially, other clerical work in which there was no prospect of advancement, photography, art, teaching in a school, and nursing. One former nurse found that after three years' nursing training she could earn more as a secretary with no training at all, and so decided to quit nursing.

Other reasons given for becoming a secretary included the feeling that it was the only alternative occupation available to women who did not wish to teach or to nurse; that a knowledge of languages could be put to use; that it was undemanding enough to leave energy for absorbing outside interests, and finally, that it was the only way in which a woman could gain an entry into the business world.

Two factors which came consistently low in the list of items which had influenced the choice of occupation as a secretary were 'a suitable occupation until marriage' and 'school'. The latter is somewhat surprising as it might have been expected that a careers adviser would encourage some girls to take up secretarial work, although the extension of careers advisory services at school is a somewhat recent development. Between 1962 and 1965, 36 per cent of all school leavers were placed in their first jobs by the Youth Employment Service.[14] Furthermore Joan Maizels had found that school was the single most important source of vocational help for would-be office workers.[15] Two out of five of her sample mentioned this source of vocational help. In contrast, among the secretaries in the present study, only 19 per cent

mentioned school, irrespective of the importance attached to it as an influence upon their career choice. The difference may be accounted for by the fact that a source of vocational help might not be the same as an influence.

Where school was mentioned among the first three most important influences, 32 per cent of secretaries had come from Central schools, 30 per cent from Comprehensive schools, 16 per cent from Secondary Modern, 8 per cent from Technical, 7 per cent from Grammar, 5 per cent from Private and 3 per cent from other schools, but none from Public schools. This finding probably reflects the provision of training facilities available at the schools attended.

The fact that 'suitable occupation until marriage' came at the bottom of the list of influencing factors is possibly because marriage is not an imminent expectation for the school leaver, and more immediate job concerns were at the forefront of their minds. Girls tend to regard their working lives differently from boys, knowing that there is a strong possibility that child-rearing will interrupt their careers. Employers often blame a casual attitude to work upon the fact - as they feel it to be - that secretaries see their work only as a temporary phase in their lives. On the other hand 'suitable occupation until marriage' might have attracted a low score because, far from being seen as an occupation only suitable in the short term, secretarial work was considered as an eminently suitable occupation to which to return after marriage, and after having had children.

That it is possible to do temporary or part-time secretarial work while running a home might be expected to attract girls to the occupation, and as more women than in the past return to work having brought up children, this factor may influence their choice.

Social class seems to have had an effect upon the factors which influenced the secretaries most in their choice of career. For each social class 'own decision' came first, but for those from social class I 'stepping stone' was the next choice, followed by the reason that they could not do what really they had wanted. For social class II secretaries, parents came second, followed by seeing the work as a stepping stone. For social class III and other classes, salary came after 'own decision', indicating that it played a more important part among those whose parents probably earned less.

Secretaries were asked whether they had at any time seriously considered any other occupation, besides that of a secretary, so that alternatives to secretarial work could be examined (Appendix 1, question no.61).

Three hundred and twenty-four (63 per cent) of London secretaries had given serious thought to another occupation, and the main alternatives can be seen in Table VI.2. In all, two hundred and nine different alternative occupations were named, ranging from doctor to 'stripper'.

It might have been expected that teaching and nursing would come high in the list of alternative occupations, since they are

Table VI.2 The main alternative occupations to secretarial work which had been considered by London secretaries

Type of occupation	Number of secretaries
Teaching	55
Air hostess	39
Nursing	25
Social work	25
Journalism, writing	25
Personnel work	14
Interpreter/translator	13
Modelling	11
Hairdressing	10
Armed services	9
Computer programming	8
Other alternative occupations	90
	324

predominantly female occupations, although it is interesting how many secretaries would have liked to have become air hostesses. Such work has a glamorous image, and the functions in some respects are similar to a secretary's job, in that both are service occupations. A proportion of secretaries can be seen to be utilising their language skills, both English and foreign, in their secretarial work, having considered journalism and translating as alternative occupations.

When secretaries gave reasons spontaneously for having chosen secretarial work in preference to the other occupations they had considered, some of them were negative, and similar to those which had been given by secretaries who had adopted secretarial work as a second-best occupation. For instance, 'I wanted to be a translator, but could not stay at school for 'A' levels - my father was ill for a long time, although I was not forced to leave school.' and, 'I wanted to be a teacher, and was accepted at a College, but was not eligible for a grant for the first year, so I couldn't take up my place for financial reasons.' Other reasons why secretarial work was seen as more suitable than alternative occupations included its opportunity for advancement, the work interest, and its contact with people.

The above findings indicate that the positive advantages of secretarial work far outweighed other reasons for its adoption, such as being frustrated in taking up an initially preferred career. Those advantages were, at the outset, seen to lie in its flexibility, interest and opportunity, as well as its relatively high rewards.

CHAPTER VI
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CHAPTER VII

JOB SELECTION

How secretaries found their present jobs

According to a survey carried out among white-collar commuters by the Location of Offices Bureau in 1967,[1] among those respondents who worked in central London 27 per cent had found their current jobs by answering advertisements, 22 per cent by personal recommendation, 19 per cent by approaching an employer personally, 15 per cent through private employment agencies and 4 per cent by using employment exchanges. The City of Westminster Chamber of Commerce,[2] in a survey among its members, found that employers who were seeking clerical staff used private employment agencies to the greatest extent (87 per cent), then advertisements (75 per cent), and Ministry Employment Exchanges (28 per cent). Private employment agencies were the most successful means of obtaining staff. Christina Fulop,[3] quoting an Institute of Personnel Management source, reported that among clerical workers in the London area, 50 per cent had found their jobs through press advertisements, 25 per cent through private employment agencies, another 20 per cent through introductions by friends and by speculative application to employers, and 5 per cent through employment exchanges.

In order to discover whether secretaries differed from other office workers in the ways in which they located their jobs, they were asked by what means they had obtained their present positions (Appendix 1, question no.29) - Table VII.1.

Table VII.1 Source for locating present job

	LONDON (n=515) %	IQPS (n=170) %	NAPS (n=73) %
Newspaper advertisement	22	41	32
Employment agency	38	16	18
Through family, friends or other people	12	6	11
By promotion within the organisation	12	20	22
Transfer within the organisation	2	1	1
By starting work as a 'temp'	3	-	-
Personal application to employer	2	8	3
Training institution, e.g. secretarial college, school	3	2	2
Other means	6	6	11
	100	100	100

In central London the greatest proportion of secretaries (38 per cent) had used an employment agency to find their present jobs, considerably more than other office workers using this means in the surveys quoted above, while another 22 per cent had found them through newspaper advertisements. This latter figure may disguise a further proportion of agency users, since many bureaux use newspapers in which to advertise job vacancies.

In order to investigate this latter point further, by examining the extent of employment agency advertising in newspapers,

an analysis was made of all the advertisements for secretaries appearing in two newspapers, The Times and the London Evening Standard, on one set day of the year from 1950 to 1970. On the advice of the advertising departments of the two newspapers concerned, the first Monday in March was selected as a representative day. There were few newspaper advertisements for secretaries altogether until 1955, when for a number of reasons, advertisements for secretaries steadily began to increase. Whereas in 1950 in the Evening Standard there was only one advertisement for a secretary, in 1955 there were seventeen, in 1960 - sixty-nine, in 1965 - ninety-nine and in 1970 - two hundred and seven. In The Times in 1950 there was one advertisement for a secretary, in 1955 - eleven, in 1960 - six, in 1965 nine, but in 1970 - one hundred and thirty-three.

There are several likely reasons for this growth, including an increase in the demand for secretaries, an increase in the number of employment agencies, a tendency for shorthand-typists to be called secretaries, a greater effort on the part of the newspapers to attract such advertising, and these factors occurred during a period of decreasing restrictions in the amount of newsprint permitted and the lifting of the obligation to report all job vacancies to the Ministry of Labour.

In the 1960s the proportion of the advertisements in newspapers for jobs for secretaries which were placed by agencies, as opposed to private employers, increased considerably. In

1960 none of the jobs advertised for secretaries in The Times were from an agency source; in 1965 one out of the nine was an agency advertisement, but in 1970, 79 per cent of the total were placed by agencies. In the Evening Standard, agency advertisements accounted for 13 per cent of jobs advertised in 1960, 36 per cent in 1965 and 72 per cent in 1970. (This topic is discussed further in Chapter XVI).

For the members of IQPS and NAPS, newspaper advertisements were the most common means of locating a job; 41 per cent of IQPS and 32 per cent of NAPS used this method to obtain their present positions; the second most common way in which they came to be in their present job was through promotion. Only 16 per cent of IQPS and 18 per cent of NAPS members had used an employment agency in order to find their present jobs.

The difference in the use of employment agencies between IQPS and NAPS on the one hand, and the London sample on the other, are probably due to the following factors. Firstly, many members of IQPS and NAPS lived outside London, where the activities of employment agencies have been less intensive than in the capital. London secretaries are bombarded with agency advertisements on the underground, buses and hoardings, as well as in newspapers, and there are branch offices of agencies in most main streets in central London, and in suburban areas. In one London street which it took the interviewer eight minutes to walk from end to end, sixteen such 'agency shops' were counted. The situation

in this respect became so disturbing in the City of London that the Corporation refused some employment agencies permission to open offices in the area as other amenities were being seriously diminished.[4] Secretaries outside of London may not be subjected to this advertising pressure and so be less prepared to use agencies, or the agencies may account for a smaller proportion of the market. Furthermore, as members of IQPS and NAPS tended to be older than London secretaries, and had been in their present jobs for a longer time, the relatively recent growth in employment agencies would have affected them less.

Promotion was the second most common way in which members of the two organisations came to be holding their present positions. While only 12 per cent of London secretaries had come to their jobs through promotion, 20 per cent of IQPS and 22 per cent of NAPS had done so. This is likely to be a consequence of the age and attitudes of the members, many of whom see their jobs as a stepping stone in a career; promotion is therefore more likely to be given a high value and sought after.

A substantial proportion of London secretaries located their jobs by informal means, through family, friends, or other people known to them. Other sources of job finding included knowing employers personally by having worked for them previously; moving with them when they changed jobs, or having been personally recommended for a position.

Only one secretary from the London sample had been found her job by a Youth Employment Officer and two from the two secretarial associations had some years earlier used a Labour Exchange, indicating how the employment agencies have filled the gap which has been left by government agencies, although the Department of Employment are competing again in the field of office employment by establishing agencies on the same lines as those run by private enterprise (Chapter XVI). One secretary who had obtained her job through a Labour Exchange said, 'At that time it was compulsory to notify the Labour Exchange of all vacancies. I would not dream of going to one now though.'

Interviewing job applicants

Some secretaries, at the pilot stage of the investigation, mentioned informally that they were sometimes selected for their jobs without ever having seen the person, or persons, for whom they were to be working. They felt that if they were to be working closely with an employer, they should at least meet him or her at an interview.

When secretaries in the London sample were asked who had interviewed them for their present jobs (Appendix 1, question no.28), it was found that 40 per cent of them had not been interviewed by their future employer. One third were interviewed by more than one person and where this occurred the second person was usually from the personnel department or was a colleague of the prospective employer.

Where secretaries were not interviewed by their future boss or bosses, 19 per cent of the total sample had been seen by the personnel department, 5 per cent by an employer other than the boss, 2 per cent by a secretary or personal assistant, and a few were interviewed by an office or staff manager, a managing clerk, supervisor, administrative officer, or a board, panel or committee. Among IQPS and NAPS members, a quarter were not interviewed by their prospective employer. In some circumstances, the question did not arise, for instance where a secretary had obtained her position through promotion, or had begun work in her present job as a temporary secretary.

There may be several reasons why job applicants are not interviewed by a prospective boss. The growth of large organisations has created a necessity for personnel departments and one of their functions is to interview job applicants. In some organisations the whole task of selection may be delegated to a personnel officer, while in others the personnel officer sifts applications and presents a short-list to the person requiring a secretary. In the former case, the personnel officer usually knows the kind of person a particular boss would like to have as a secretary and is able to make a selection on that basis, in which case the secretary would not see the person for whom she is to work. Sometimes, owing to the dearth of secretaries in central London, employers are not able to state a particular

preference, but accept any suitable job applicant as a secretary, in which case an interview would be unnecessary from the boss's point of view. Large organisations may also employ secretaries without an employer interview because they are short of secretarial staff generally and so accept the interviewee, hoping that she will fill one of several vacancies; in such a case, her particular boss has not yet been decided at the time of the interview.

In addition, large organisations may be more inclined than smaller ones to have an impersonal or bureaucratic approach to work relationships. It was hypothesised, therefore, that there would be a greater tendency for secretaries working in larger organisations than smaller ones, not to have met their prospective employer before beginning work. When the size of organisations in the present study, measured by the number of office workers employed, was related to whether or not a secretary had been interviewed by her boss before she was appointed, no ~~relationship~~ trend was found; secretaries working for small establishments were just as likely not to have been interviewed by their prospective boss as those working for larger organisations. In establishments employing fewer than fifty office employees, the majority of secretaries who were not interviewed by their prospective boss were interviewed instead by other employers who were colleagues of their future boss, by the secretary whom they were to replace, or by a personnel officer.

This finding suggests, firstly, that large organisations are no ~~less~~ more impersonal in their selection of secretarial staff than small organisations, and secondly, that for many employers and secretaries (approximately a third of them) the personal relationship between a boss and secretary is not considered to be of primary importance. For employers, the need for a competent worker (Chapter X) and for secretaries, an interesting and varied job (Chapter XII), are put before the much emphasised dyadic relationship, in which compatibility of temperament is stressed as a first requirement. The situation is encouraging, for as it will be shown later in Chapter XIII, it is this relationship which hampers the ambitions of many secretaries.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE PEOPLE FOR WHOM SECRETARIES WORK

Structurally, the most common work situation in which a secretary finds herself is as a junior member of a two-person team, in which her function is to enhance the effectiveness of the senior member of the team. This structure is apparently slowly changing; some secretaries are no longer working for a single individual, but for several (Appendix 1, question no.40). Nevertheless the two-person team still predominates (Table VIII.1).

Table VIII.1 Number of people for whom secretaries worked

	LONDON (n=515) %		IQPS (n=170) %		NAPS (n=73) %	
For one person	40	70	45	84	55	90
For one person mainly but occasionally for others	30		39		35	
For two people	14		8		5	
For three people	7		3		3	
For four people	4		1		1	
For five people	1		1		1	
For six people	3		3		-	
For more than six people	1		-		-	
	100		100		100	

Relatively few secretaries worked for more than one person and only 16 per cent in central London worked for more than two. A greater proportion of IQPS and NAPS than London secretaries worked for one person. The likelihood of a secretary working for one

person only was the same in all sizes of establishment, although it might have been expected that larger establishments would have a greater tendency than smaller ones to share secretarial services, firstly on account of cost, since many more secretaries are employed, and secondly because the presence of a greater number of executives would make it easier to match requirements.

The two-person unit is usually justified on the basis that detailed mutual knowledge, close understanding, flexibility and speed of response, results in an effective team which is more productive than two people working independently would be. That is, a boss and secretary who work closely together are more effective than a boss using say, a centralised dictating system for correspondence work. No doubt in the best employment situations such is the case; but many teams fall short of the ideal. Employers often fail to teach their secretaries, to involve them in their work, or to delegate, and instead tend to use them, as many respondents said, as 'glorified shorthand-typists'. In such circumstances the two-person team cannot be considered as the optimum use of resources; the establishment is not gaining the best it could from either the boss or the secretary; they themselves are likely to be, on the one hand overburdened and on the other, bored. Indeed, Robert Townsend[1] claimed that he was considerably more efficient without a secretary altogether, than with one. For this reason the trend in large organisations

where secretaries have been used mainly for correspondence work, is towards the adoption of centralised dictating systems.

Another justification for the two-person team uses the argument of comparative costs; it does not matter if a secretary is not fully employed providing that the boss is able to work at his or her optimium level of efficiency, since the boss's pay is so much higher than the secretary's. In other words, it is more important for the boss to be working at an optimum level than it is for the secretary. In addition, if by employing a secretary, a boss can do the work of two people, it actually costs the organisation less than it would to employ two people at the boss's level to do the same amount of work.

Some employers felt that the two-person unit would, in the future, cease to be viable owing to the chronic shortage of secretaries, particularly in central London. Restructuring, it was felt, would take two forms; in the first a secretary's job would be split into two separate functions, correspondence and administration. The correspondence function would be carried out by a central typewriting facility, while the secretary would deal mainly with administrative and organisational matters. In the second, secretaries would work for more than one person. Employers whose organisations were small, tended to attribute the shortage of secretaries to large organisations, whose secretaries, they maintained, were to a great extent underemployed.

In an attempt to discover whether secretaries were in fact underemployed, and if so whether it was related to the number of people for whom they worked, secretaries were asked if there were any times during the day when they had nothing to do (Appendix 1 question no.38). It must be borne in mind, however, that the replies to the question were subjective and the interpretation of what constituted 'nothing to do' might vary from one person to another. It is possible as well that the answers might have been biased so as to underestimate the amount of time secretaries said they had nothing to do; as, according to Walker,[2] working long hours is frequently given merit, having time to spare is likely to arouse disapproval. With these reservations in mind, the amount of time during which secretaries said they had no work to do is shown in Table VIII.2.

Table VIII.2 Amount of time during which secretaries said they had no work to do

	LONDON (n=515) %	IQPS (n=170) %	NAPS (n=73) %
Always have work to do	47	57	71
Occasionally have no work to do	25	27	19
Less than one hour per day with no work to do	17	7	8
1 - 2 hours per day with no work to do	7	6	1
3 - 4 hours per day with no work to do	1	2	-
more than 4 hours per day with nothing to do	1	1	-
No reply	2	-	1
	100	100	100

It appears that fewer of NAPS members had any time to spare; not only were more of them always busy, but fewer occasionally had no work to do, whereas among London secretaries and IQPS members 9 per cent were in jobs where for more than one hour each day there was nothing for them to do. This time of inactivity may be due to inadequacies of work flow, or, in cases where secretaries regularly had time to spare, to an inefficient use of secretarial staff. Where a considerable amount of a secretary's time is taken up with dictation then typing, she may have to wait to begin work until the post has been read, or urgent matters have been attended to by her boss. It does suggest, though, that in these cases secretaries were being used primarily as shorthand-typists, otherwise there would be other matters to which she could attend which were not dependent upon her boss's presence.

A slight association was found between the amount of time a secretary had to spare and the number of people for whom she worked - it appeared that there was a tendency for those working for more than one person to have less spare time, although upon examination the relationship was found not to be statistically significant. Of the seven secretaries who had more than four hours each day with no work to do, six worked for a single individual.

There is a striking association between being fully occupied at work and finding an interest in the job - the more spare time a secretary had, the less interesting she found her job to be (Table VIII.3).

The figures shown in Table VIII.3 could mean that to be kept occupied results in a secretary finding her work more interesting. Alternatively, it could mean that being interested in her work affects her perception of occupied time. In this connection studies of how managers spend their time have found that subjective impressions differ considerably from observers' readings.[3] Another interpretation is that a secretary who finds her work interesting may feel more committed to it, and uses potential time gaps for 'discretionary' activities.

Since secretaries who have periods of inactivity apparently find their work less interesting and tend to leave their jobs if they are bored or underemployed (Chapter XII), it must be concluded that being kept fully occupied is a very important consideration in a secretary's evaluation of her job.

One employer admitted that secretaries in her organisation were, on the whole, underemployed, but it was so important that secretaries were available when they were needed, that she did not choose to restructure jobs so that secretaries worked for more than one person. This employer felt that it was less important if a secretary's time was wasted than an executive's. To counter the problem, the bosses gave each secretary a special job for which she alone had responsibility, which could be worked at when she was not employed in her secretarial capacity.

Table VIII.3 Interest in work according to the amount of time a secretary was fully occupied (London sample only)

Work interest:	Always busy	Occasionally unoccupied	Unoccupied less than 1 hr. per day	Unoccupied 1 - 2 hrs. per day	Unoccupied 3 - 4 hrs. per day	Unoccupied more than 4 hrs. per day	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very interesting all the time (n=80, 16% of total)	69	20	10	1	-	-	100
Interesting most of the time (n=268, 52% of total)	52	25	16	5	1	1	100
Fairly interesting with dull patches (n=136, 26% of total)	34	28	23	12	2	1	100
Mostly rather boring (n=26, 5% of total)	17	21	21	21	8	12	100
Dull (n=1)						(100)	100

Most secretaries do not like to be responsible to more than one person. Part of the reason is the problem associated with giving priority to one particular person's work as opposed to another's, and the stress that such decisions can cause. Secretaries cited this explicitly as one of the things they disliked about their work (Chapter XII). If a rigid rule were to be followed, for example that work was dealt with in terms of the status of the originator, or on a strictly first-come first-served basis, then much of the anxiety would be removed from the situation; but even then, if a secretary had to turn down work for a more junior member of the staff, she would have to bear the brunt of his or her annoyance, or, in other instances would have to decide to reject (or accept) appeals for work to be done as a priority.

Status is another possible reason for secretaries being reluctant to work for more than one person. The status of a secretary is derived from the status of the person for whom she works. The secretary who works for the chairman of a large organisation has higher status than one who works for a middle manager, whatever the responsibilities of the job, or the qualifications of the secretary. If she works for more than one person, then she may feel that her status is diluted. Also, most very senior bosses have their own secretary, and so working for more than one person may appear to confirm that one's status is lower. Another possible explanation concerns identification. For some secretaries, one of the aims of, and much of the pleasure to be derived from, the secretary's job is the identification

with the person for whom she works. If a good relationship exists between the two, the secretary will learn a great deal about her boss, and the job, and will be able to represent his or her interests to others, either within the organisation, or with outside contacts. She may feel she has to protect him or her from outside interference, or to project his or her image to others. In either case she will need to identify with the employer fairly closely. If a secretary works for more than one person, however, this is much more difficult to achieve, since the relationship with each is not constant, but interrupted, and the people for whom she works may be dissimilar.

It is possible that a different type of secretary is attracted to a job which involves working for several people, one who does not place a high value upon relationships at work, but perhaps more upon the actual job content. Or she may select a job on the basis of the kind of industry in which she wishes to work (for example, advertising) and this may necessitate working for more than one person. If she is ambitious and chooses to work in a situation where she is seeking knowledge of the firm and then promotion, working for more than one person may in fact be a help, since she learns about different aspects of the work from different people.

Not only does the secretary not like to work for more than one person, the boss does not like to share his secretary with another. Many personnel officers have found this a great hindrance to making secretarial services more efficient. The

question of delays and priority of work is one cause of resistance, another is a fear of loss of status. If an employer's work does not get priority, or if a secretary is not available when she is needed, apart from the very real annoyance that is felt, it may be interpreted as a loss in status. In addition, the working relationship between a boss and secretary often develops into a form of emotional support, which is why secretaries are sometimes referred to as 'office wives'. Employers may talk a good deal to their secretary, as a means of letting off steam, or enhancing their image, or may use her as someone upon whom they can try out new ideas. She can often give valuable suggestions in the preliminary stages of a project, or in the writing of a report, which helps to make her boss more effective. It is the loss of these personal services which many bosses are not prepared to forego.

The employment status of those for whom secretaries work

The status of the person for whom a secretary works is a very important consideration, since it may well affect the regard with which she is held within an organisation, the type of people she will meet in the course of her work, the nature of the work that is done, her financial rewards, and the interest she finds in her job.

Secretaries were asked to give the title of the job held by each person for whom she worked (Appendix 1, question no.41).

It must be borne in mind that most of the establishments in the sample were small in size (although the number of secretaries employed by the largest establishments was as great as those employed by the small establishments) and so the status and function of, for example, a boss called 'director' will vary considerably from one organisation to another. Nevertheless, rough categories have been made, which give some idea of the rank of person who employed a secretary (Table VIII.4).

Three groups of employers in London had by far the largest proportion of secretaries working for them, Managers (21 per cent), Directors (14 per cent) and Managing Directors (10 per cent); while the largest general class to employ secretaries, in the breakdown used in Table VIII.4 was 'operational management'. Hence there are more secretaries working for 'middle' management than for 'top' management. If executive and senior managements are taken together, however, they accounted for 36.6 per cent of those employers in central London who had a secretary, compared with 27 per cent of 'middle' managers. In addition, a considerable proportion, between 20 and 26 per cent in all three groups, worked for professional men and women.

Members of IQPS and NAPS tended to be employed by persons of a higher rank; 43 per cent of IQPS and 47 per cent of NAPS had bosses at executive and senior management levels, while fewer of them than the London sample worked for operational management.

Table VIII.4 **Job titles of persons for whom secretaries worked**

	LONDON (n=515) %	IQPS (n=170) %	NAPS (n=73) %
Executive management:			
Chairman	3	7	15
Managing Director	10	13	12
President or Vice President	0.2	2	-
	13.2	22	27
Senior Management:			
Controller	1	-	-
Director	14	15	16
Divisional Head	1	2	1
Editor	3	-	-
Executive	2	1	-
General Manager	2	4	4
Group Head	0.2	1	-
Head of Personnel	0.2	-	-
	23.4	23	21
Operational Management:			
Assistant Manager	0.4	1	-
Assistant Secretary	1	-	-
Company Secretary	2	2	4
Manager	21	13	13
Office Manager	0.6	-	-
Personnel Officer	2	2	1
	27	18	18

continued ...

Table VIII.4 (continued) Job titles of persons for whom secretaries worked

	LONDON (n=515) %	IQPS (n=170) %	NAPS (n=73) %
Professional:			
Clerk (legal)	1	1	3
Medical practitioner	3	4	1
Partner	5	2	4
Senior Partner	2	-	4
Other professional	9	15	14
	20	22	26
Other:	14.4	13	6
Not known:	2	2	2
Total	100	100	100

It has previously been shown that more than two-thirds of secretaries in central London worked for one person only; when sharing did occur, however, it was not limited to middle and junior management. Among those who shared secretarial services, 43 per cent were executive or senior management, 25 per cent operational management and 20 per cent professionals. The implication is that secretaries who worked for more than one person are being employed on the basis of pressure of work rather than on the status of the boss.

There was a slight tendency (which was not statistically significant at the 5% level of probability) for secretaries who came from social class I and II backgrounds, to be working for executive and senior management, as opposed to middle management. Of all the secretaries from social class I backgrounds, 35 per cent worked for executive and senior management, as opposed to 27 per cent who worked for operational management; from social class II, 40 per cent worked for executive and senior management as opposed to 24 per cent for operational management; from social class III 32 per cent worked for executive and senior management as opposed to 30 per cent who worked for operational management. This tendency may be the result of selection on the part of the employer, or the secretary, or both. If one of the rewards of the secretary's job is status by association, then mixing with high-status people will be a sought-after factor. The situation can also exist in reverse, that is, employers can gain status from

having a secretary who is, say, a graduate. Four employers among those visited in central London boasted about the social standing or wealth of their secretary's father.

Pay is very much related to an employer's status. With one exception, all of the secretaries who earned more than £2,000 per annum (1970 figures) worked for executive management, while two-thirds of those earning more than £1,500 per annum worked for either executive or senior management. Professional employers paid lower salaries to their secretaries than any other group. This is probably because professionals are often working for themselves and so feel a greater reluctance to pay high salaries, since it appears to come out of their own pockets, whereas larger organisations are less conscious of the real cost to the company and are more likely to respond to competitive and market situations.

Again, the highest proportion of secretaries who found their work very interesting, worked for executive management (Table VIII.5), while fewer of the same group rated their job interest as only fair.

Table VIII.5 Employer status and job interest (London sample only)

	Very interesting	Interesting most of the time	Fairly interesting with dull patches	Boring or dull	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Executive management	25	54	18	3	100
Senior management	19	49	28	4	100
Operational management	10	56	29	5	100
Professional	17	55	26	2	100
Other	13	50	31	6	100

These findings support the opinion of those who believe that promotion for a secretary involves working for persons of an increasingly higher occupational status, for, indeed, the rewards do seem to be greater in terms of pay, prestige and job interest. A serious problem can arise, however, when a secretary who is still young works for executive or senior management. As she has then reached the top of her potential career structure in terms of the status of her boss, she is faced with no possibility of further promotion within the secretarial ranks.

The likelihood is that in future an increasing number of secretaries will find themselves working for more than one person, as a result of the persistent shortage of secretarial staff, which may involve different attitudes and expectations of the secretarial work role on the part both of secretaries and employers. This subject will be discussed further in Chapter XVII.

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CHAPTER VIII

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CHAPTER IX

CONDITIONS OF WORK

Pay

General conditions of work for 'white collar' employees including hours, holidays, security of employment and pleasant surroundings, have always been better than those for manual workers, although basic rates of pay have not necessarily been higher. Whereas before 1914 'an average clerk earned as much as a skilled manual worker', clerks are now likely to earn rates which are similar to those of semi-skilled operatives.[1] This does not apply to women clerical workers who have much higher rates of earnings than women in manual work; however, they earn only 80 per cent of the salaries paid to men clerical workers.[2]

Salaries for office secretaries are determined largely by the market situation rather than by any set salary structure; they are frequently negotiated on an individual basis, a pattern which is typical of 'salaries' as opposed to 'wages' which are usually negotiated collectively.[3] 'Wages' and 'salaries' are also terms which are commonly used to denote the type of work done by employees; wages are paid to manual workers on a weekly basis, and salaries to 'white collar' workers on a monthly basis. This distinction breaks down when applied to secretaries in London, however, as a third of the London sample were paid on a weekly basis.

Many secretaries work in situations where only one or two of them are employed and thus there is no need for any structural arrangement to govern their rates of pay. Partly as a consequence of this some secretaries earn salaries far in excess of the norm.

Salaries for secretaries in recent years have been very much governed by the demand situation. Between 1968 and 1970 shorthand- and audio-typists (many of whom were called secretaries) were credited with the sharpest increase in earnings of any clerical group, reflecting the shortage of workers with these skills and the increasing demand for their services.[4] Between 1970 and 1972, however, the increase in earnings for secretarial workers was marginally lower than it had been between 1968 and 1970, due to a slight reduction in the demand, which possibly came about as a result of an increased use of audio-typing centres.[5]

The following information concerning earnings of the secretaries studied related to the year 1970 for the London secretaries, and some months earlier for IQPS and NAPS. Although salaries generally have risen considerably since then (between 1970 and 1972 clerical salaries for women rose between 29 and 33 per cent[6] and in 1973 by another 3 - 6 per cent during a wages freeze[7]), the information is useful in demonstrating the structure of payments, and its relation to other factors.

Salaries of secretaries in the present study ranged from below £700 p.a. to £2,500 p.a. (Appendix 1, question no.24). Those who earned below £700 p.a. (twelve secretaries) were

either very young, worked shorter hours than usual, or worked for organisations with a philanthropic function. The bulk of salaries fell within a well-defined range, £1,000 to £1,300 p.a. The median salary was £1,124, with a lower quartile of £1,004 and an upper quartile of £1,278 p.a. The modal salary was between £1,000 and £1,099, a range covering 22 per cent of all central London secretaries.

Overall, the pay of secretaries in IQPS followed very closely that of London secretaries, with a median salary of £1,153, while for NAPS it was £1,200. Since many of the members of these organisations worked outside London, where clerical salaries were on average £100 p.a. behind those for Greater London (which was lower again than that for central London), the pay for these two groups was higher than that of the average secretary.

It is not known where the members of IQPS and NAPS worked, although in most cases their home addresses were known, but if the IQPS members who had a home address in the London Postal Region are taken separately, and the assumption made that they were working in central London, thus making a more direct comparison between the groups, their salaries were considerably higher than for most other secretaries in central London. They had a modal pay in the range £1,300 - £1,399, and a median salary of £1,362 (i.e. over £4.50p. per week more than London secretaries generally). Too few of NAPS members lived in London to enable a similar comparison to be made.

It has already been shown that secretaries who worked for persons with high-ranking organisational status, earned more than those who worked for middle-management employers, presumably on the basis that those at the top of the employment hierarchy had greater responsibilities, which in turn were reflected in the responsibilities and rewards of their secretaries.

Age is another determinant of pay; with increasing experience, a secretary becomes more valuable to an employer, an asset which was positively expressed by employers when interviewed. Only six secretaries in central London earned over £2,000; all but one were aged over thirty, while three were over fifty. The median salaries for London secretaries of different ages are shown in Table IX.1.

Table IX.1 Pay and age of London sample

Age	Median salaries
Under 20 (n=42)	£ 924 p.a.
20 - 29 (n=336)	£1,105 p.a.
30 - 39 (n=55)	£1,210 p.a.
40 - 49 (n=32)	£1,300 p.a.
50 and over (n=33)	£1,250 p.a.
Age or salary not known (n=17)	-

The slight reduction in median pay for secretaries in their fifties was due to the presence of several in this age group who earned low salaries, in the range below £1,000 p.a., in some cases because their hours of work were shorter than usual or because they had returned to work after a long absence and so their age did not necessarily accompany considerable experience.

Pay did not bear any relationship to educational qualification; secretaries with degrees did not earn more than those who had no educational qualifications (Table IX.2). Only two out of the thirteen secretaries with degrees earned salaries in the top quartile.*

Table IX.2 Pay of London secretaries who had no educational qualifications compared with the pay of those who had degrees

	n	Median salary
Secretaries with no educational qualifications	60	£1,170 p.a.
Secretaries with degrees	13	£1,125 p.a.

This confirms the relative disinterest employers expressed in the educational attainments of their secretaries.

The pay earned by graduates contrasts with the estimate made by economists, that the rate of return to employers of the services of a graduate are 12 per cent more than from less-qualified employees.[8] An explanation could be that more importance is placed by employers upon the skills of shorthand and typewriting than on intellectual assets, and graduates are no more likely to be outstanding in the sphere of shorthand and typewriting than are others with far less education.

There is a definite relationship between salary and the length of time a secretary has spent in a job, although the rewards for loyalty are not striking. The difference in earnings between those who have been in their jobs for less than one year (mean £1,068 p.a.) and those who have been in their jobs for

* An explanation might have been that secretaries with no qualifications were older than secretaries with degrees, but this was not the case. Both groups had the same age distribution as the total sample, approximately two-thirds of them being in their twenties.

more than ten years (mean - £1,380 p.a.) is only £6 per week, equal to an average yearly 'stability increment' of approximately £31 (Table IX.3) and even these figures may be a function of age rather than tenure. Although employers complain that secretaries change jobs frequently, it is likely under the circumstances to be financially more advantageous to switch jobs than to stay with the same employer. Nevertheless, six out of the seven secretaries earning more than £2,000 p.a. had been in their jobs for more than four years, three of them for more than ten years.

Table IX.3 Salaries of London secretaries according to the length of time spent in present jobs

Time in present job:	n	Median salary £ p.a.	Mean salary £ p.a.
Less than 1 year	191	1,061	1,068
1 year	48	1,080	1,133
2 years	73	1,150	1,147
3 years	32	1,200	1,194
4 years	33	1,140	1,208
5 years	24	1,233	1,237
6 years	21	1,143	1,202
7 years	3	-	(983)
8 years	7	1,100	1,150
9 years	8	1,250	1,362
10 years	5	-	(1,310)
More than 10 years	45	1,329	1,380
Salary or length of time in job not known	25	-	-

Certainly those who earned more tended to find their jobs more interesting. This may be because the more interesting jobs are those which involve greater responsibility, which in turn are rewarded by greater pay, or because those who earn more, work for men of a higher status and this may bring more interest to their work in terms of the people they meet or the high level of decision-making with which they are involved. Of those secretaries who found their jobs 'very interesting all the time' (Appendix 1, question no. 62), 30 per cent earned salaries which were in the top quartile, as opposed to 20 per cent who found their jobs 'interesting most of the time', 17 per cent whose jobs were 'fairly interesting with dull patches' and 7 per cent of whose whose jobs were 'mostly rather boring' or 'very dull all the time'.

It appears that secretaries working for the largest organisations, in terms of the number of secretaries they employed, did not earn the highest salaries; the larger the establishment the lower the salary tended to be. Furthermore, within the salary range, a higher proportion of those working for smaller than for larger establishments earned salaries in the top quartile (Table IX.4). This situation is a possible result of a greater proportion of junior secretaries being employed in large organisations.

All of the seven secretaries earning more than £2,000 p.a. worked in establishments employing fewer than five secretaries.

Thus, the secretaries who earned the highest salaries tended to be aged thirty or more; they worked in establishments employing

Table IX.4 Pay, according to the number of secretaries employed by establishments

No. of secretaries employed	Median salary	Percentage of secretaries earning salaries in top quartile*
1 (n=77)	£1,144	25
2 - 5 (n=118)	£1,122	19
6 - 10 (n=65)	£1,154	26
11 - 20 (n=77)	£1,120	22
21 - 30 (n=11)	£1,075	(18)
31 - 50 (n=28)	£1,029	(10)
More than 50 (n=111)	£1,094	14
No. of secretaries employed or salary unknown (n=28)	-	-

* percentages are bracketed where numbers are small

few other secretaries and for persons in senior or executive management positions; they were likely to have been in their jobs for a considerable time, and found their work very interesting. Again, for those who believe that there is no real career structure for secretaries, this is evidence to the contrary; with the important exception of promotion prospects there are considerable all-round benefits to be derived from the old traditional secretarial career structure.

Extra payments

Basic pay can be augmented quite significantly by extra payments of one kind or another, and an attempt was made to examine the extent of supplementary monetary benefits given to secretaries, such as bonuses and luncheon vouchers (Appendix 1, question no.25). Many secretaries enjoyed more than one such benefit (Table IX.5). Some of the categories in this table, for example 'paid training' or 'regular increments' have probably been included by only a few secretaries because they considered them not as extra to their basic pay, but as expected welfare benefits, or as an intrinsic part of their salary structure. The range of extra payments was wide, and some categories mentioned were uncommon, nevertheless 38.8 per cent of the London secretaries received a bonus of some kind in addition to their basic pay. In only a few cases was the actual amount of these bonuses given but they are likely to

Table IX.5 Extra financial benefits received by secretaries

Financial benefits (as described by secretaries)	LONDON	IQPS	NAPS
	% of secretaries receiving extra payments		
A. Bonuses			
Annual	5.2	5	4
Bi-annual	5	1	3
Biennial	0.2	-	-
Bonus (so described)	1.6	2	4
Christmas	23.2	14	19
Cost of living	0.2	-	-
Holiday, summer	1.4	4	5
Monthly	0.2	1	-
Occasional	0.2	-	-
Profit earning, share	1.4	2	3
Prosperity	-	1	-
Quarterly	0.2	-	-
	38.8	30	38
B. Incentive payments			
Commission	0.6	1	-
Productivity bonus	0.2	-	-
Proficiency payments	1.4	-	1
Progress payments	1.2	-	-
Responsibility allowance	0.2	-	-
Senior supervision	-	1	-
Tax free overtime	0.2	-	-
Time employed (length of)	0.2	-	-
Work bonus	0.2	-	-
	4.2	2	1
C. Welfare payments			
Free superannuation	-	1	-
Housing allowance	-	1	-
Marriage dowry	0.2	-	-
Pension scheme	0.4	5	4
Staff scheme (optional)	1	-	-
	1.6	7	4
D. Luncheon vouchers, or payment for lunches	44.0	17	12
E. Other financial benefits			
Company shares	-	1	1
Director's fees	1	1	1
Expenses	0.8	2	1
Interest (banking)	0.6	1	-
Monetary gifts	0.2	1	-
London allowance	0.4	1	4
Payment for special jobs	0.2	1	-
Regular increments	0.2	1	-
	3.4	9	7

represent a substantial addition to the basic pay received by secretaries. As far as managerial staff is concerned, it has been suggested that fringe benefits rise from 11.2 per cent of basic earnings at a salary of £1,050, to 16.5 per cent at £2,850.[9]

In addition, 44 per cent of London secretaries received luncheon vouchers or payment for lunches. Luncheon vouchers not only save the employee expense in eating out, but are also a form of tax relief, since a payment of less than 15p. per day is not taxable. Employers often use them as an added attraction when recruiting staff, similar in principle to trading stamps.

Other financial extras were received by 9.2 per cent of London secretaries.

Rather fewer of IQPS members received extra payments in the form of either bonuses or luncheon vouchers, although NAPS members received approximately the same number of bonuses.

Extra financial benefits do not seem to be used as a means of enhancing lower salaries; on the contrary, the higher the salary the greater is the likelihood of a secretary receiving both luncheon vouchers and bonuses. It is probable that in the lower paid jobs, an increase in basic pay would be more desirable than additional benefits, and that at higher levels they are used as incentives rather than as supplementary payments.

Secretaries in establishments employing fewer secretaries were found to be more likely to receive luncheon vouchers and bonuses than those working in larger organisations (Table IX.6).

Table IX.6 Percentage of secretaries receiving luncheon vouchers and bonuses, according to the number of secretaries employed (London secretaries only)

Establishments employing:	% receiving luncheon vouchers	% receiving a bonus
1 secretary	42	46
2 - 10 secretaries	54	46
11 - 30 secretaries	43	26
More than 30 secretaries	29	19

Taken together with the fact that secretaries in large organisations do not achieve the higher ranges of pay as frequently as those working for smaller organisations, the former appear to be less advantageously placed in terms of income. The same situation holds for bonuses which are paid to managerial staff; a survey of benefits given to managers revealed that nearly half the smaller firms gave bonuses compared with a third of the larger organisations.[10]

Additional benefits or 'perks'

Secretaries were also asked what other benefits they obtained from their jobs which were not financial in nature (these were referred to as 'perks' - Appendix 1, question no.26). Some of them can be seen to be financial benefits although they may not actually have been received in cash, for instance discount on goods and subsidised meals (Table IX.7).

Table IX.7 Additional benefits ('perks') received by secretaries

	LONDON (n=515) %	IQPS (n=170) %	NAPS (n=73) %
1. Products (including discount, or free products and services)	15	17	16
2. Travel (including car expenses, subsidised travel to work and abroad)	4	14	9
3. Food and drink (including free or subsidised meals, meals out)	13	17	16
4. Time (including time off in lieu, extra holidays, flexible hours)	6	6	4
5. Presents, gifts	5	3	1
6. Financial (including paid sick leave, loans, mortgages, accommodation, use of telephone etc.)	2	11	7
7. Welfare (including insurance, medical facilities, welfare services)	1	8	2
8. Leisure (including tickets for entertainments, outings, clubs, etc.)	5	7	2
9. Other	1	2	-
	52	85	57

Again the range of non-monetary advantages described was extensive, although 'Products' and 'Food and drink' were the only categories in which substantial proportions received benefits. Members of IQPS received far more 'perks' than London secretaries (85 per cent as against 52 per cent). Two secretaries had a company car in 1970, although considerable publicity was given to a company in London two years later which offered a company 'Mini' in order to attract secretarial staff.[11]

Hours

In a comparison of hours for women office workers in twenty-one different countries, it was found that in Great Britain thirty-seven and a half working hours plus an hour for lunch was the standard length of the working week. This was the fifth shortest week of the twenty-one countries; only in Eire, Greece, Portugal and Turkey, were office workers employed for fewer hours.[12]

Work for the great majority of London secretaries began between 9 and 9.30 a.m. (79 per cent), with the greatest number working from 9.30 to 5.30 p.m. (Appendix 1, question no. 30). However, there was a considerable variation in hours as Appendix 8 demonstrates; 61 per cent of full-time London secretaries worked an eight-hour day, including lunch, with 23 per cent working more and 9 per cent working less. Only 8 per cent began work before 9 a.m. and 10 per cent after 9.30 a.m. Assuming that an hour was taken for lunch, the most common practice, it means that the majority of secretaries in London worked a thirty-five working hour week. It is interesting to note that in London in 1914, over fifty years earlier, average office hours for women clerical workers with shorthand and typewriting skills were 9 a.m. to 6.30 p.m.,[13] a forty-seven and a half hour week (the length of the break for lunch is not known).

By looking at the differences in hours of IQPS and NAPS members, the situation throughout the country can be compared with that for central London. Considerably more secretaries outside London began work early and more worked for longer hours;

36 per cent of IQPS and 29 per cent of NAPS members began work before 9 a.m. compared with only 8 per cent of London secretaries, and whereas 9 per cent of London secretaries were at work for less than eight hours a day, only 2 per cent of IQPS and 5 per cent of NAPS were. Nevertheless the differences amount to only about half an hour longer outside of London since the great majority of secretaries in all three groups (between 82 and 84 per cent) were at work for between eight and eight and a half hours per day including the lunch break.

The longer hours worked outside of London is partly a reflection of longer travelling time for those who work in central London; secretaries in IQPS and NAPS lived nearer to their work than did their colleagues in London (Appendix 1, question no.51) - Table IX.8. Of the London sample, 49 per cent lived within the London Postal region, and another 35 per cent in the Home Counties, 2 per cent living farther afield in Hampshire and Bedfordshire. It should be pointed out, however, that a proportion of members of IQPS (21 per cent) and NAPS (17 per cent) lived in London, consequently the differences between the three groups are probably less marked than they might otherwise be.

Table IX.8 Distance between home and work*

	LONDON %	IQPS %	NAPS %
Under 2 miles	12	17	22
3 - 6 miles	25	36	29
7 - 10 miles	23	21	20
11 - 20 miles	27	19	19
More than 20 miles	13	7	10
	100	100	100

*The figures exclude those secretaries who sent in questionnaires anonymously, and thus their addresses are not known.

The minimum travelling times taken to get to work reveal a similar situation (Appendix 1, question no.52) - Table IX.9.

Table IX.9 Minimum time taken to get to work

	LONDON (n=515) %	IQPS (n=170) %	NAPS (n=73) %
Less than 15 minutes (up to a quarter of an hour)	2	19	26
15 - 29 minutes (a quarter to a half an hour)	11	26	23
30 - 44 minutes (half to three-quarters of an hour)	24	21	18
45 - 59 minutes (three-quarters to one hour)	20	14	12
60 - 74 minutes (one to one and a quarter hours)	28	14	16
75 - 89 minutes (one and a quarter to one and a half hours)	7	2	1
90 minutes or more (more than one and a half hours)	8	4	4
	100	100	100

Only 13 per cent of London secretaries could get to work in less than half an hour, compared with 45 per cent of IQPS and 49 per cent of NAPS who could do so; conversely twice the proportion of London secretaries than of members of IQPS and NAPS took more than an hour to get to work.

Overtime

Although official hours of work conformed on the whole to an eight or eight and a half hour day, including lunch, a considerable amount of overtime was put in by some secretaries (Appendix 1, question no.34). More than 80 per cent occasionally worked for

longer than they were officially expected to do, and in NAPS 89 per cent worked some kind of overtime. However, overtime can mean a variety of things, from an extra five minutes at the end of the day, to several hours a week. The amount of overtime worked was divided into three frequency rates, 'seldom' - where overtime was worked less than once a week, 'occasionally' - once or twice a week, and 'regularly' - more than twice a week.

The most common form of overtime in London was late working, which 61 per cent of secretaries did at some time, 17 per cent of them three or more times a week; 32.6 per cent sometimes worked through the lunch hour (6.4 per cent regularly). One unexpected finding was that 8 per cent took work home, a prerogative which we are led to believe belongs only to those working in executive positions.

More of NAPS members regularly worked late (34 per cent) than did IQPS members (24 per cent). When regular overtime was considered separately from occasional or infrequent overtime, the highest proportion was worked by NAPS members (41 per cent), the next by IQPS members (34 per cent) and the least by London secretaries (27.8 per cent).

Overtime was at one time expected to be done as one of the obligations that went with the privileges associated with office work. A common attitude towards it was expressed by one organisation visited; their 'Notes for the Guidance of Staff' says on this point, 'If a member of the staff is required to work for any substantial period over and above the normal working hours, he or she will

be compensated by a roughly equivalent amount of time off in lieu. This does not apply to the odd period of an extra half an hour, which any member of the staff must expect to have to work during a particularly busy day.'

Overtime payments were, however, being paid to a fairly high proportion of secretaries (Appendix 1, question no.35); 22 per cent in London were paid for the overtime they worked, while another 22 per cent had time off in lieu of extra hours. 53 per cent were not paid, nor did they get time off in lieu of the overtime they worked.

Saturday working

Saturday working has become unusual. In London only 3 percent of secretaries worked regularly on Saturdays, while another 10 per cent did so occasionally (Appendix 1, question no.31). In IQPS 17 per cent did occasional Saturday work as did 27 per cent of NAPS. This again is a practice more common outside London.

Punctuality

When secretaries arrived at work, most of them, as is usual among 'white collar' workers, did not have to 'clock on'. Exemption from 'clocking on' is an important privilege among clerical workers, and is considered a symbol of trust and identification with the employer rather than with the rest of the labour force. One firm, wishing to introduce a system of staggered working hours,

found that it was not acceptable to some of their office staff since it involved registering their time of arrival at work; this meant 'classing white collar workers along with blue collar workers.'[14]

Only 5 per cent of London secretaries had to 'clock on' or otherwise register their arrival (Appendix 1, question no.32), although 11 per cent of IQPS and 14 per cent of NAPS did so. Most secretaries having to do this in London worked for governmental or banking institutions. This is fewer than most clerical workers in manufacturing industry, over half of whom in one study[15] were reported as having to 'clock on', while 19 per cent of middle managers had to do so.

Since so few secretaries had any check on the time of their arrival at work, there may have been informal controls in operation so as to give employees the necessary motivation to arrive at work punctually. Secretaries were asked whether there were any repercussions for them if they were late for work (Appendix 1, question no.33); in only 4 per cent of cases was any form of sanction applied on the part of the employer. On the other hand, many respondents commented that they were never late for work, so the question was not really relevant to their situation.

Only two secretaries suffered any tangible sanction for unpunctuality; one had a proportion of her pay deducted from her salary if timekeeping was persistently bad (she worked for a stockbroker), and the other lost a time bonus of half a day's pay or half a day's leave (she worked for industrial chemists and had to 'clock on'). The other secretaries were subjected to

more informal means of control, from, at the most severe, 'If constantly late the director or manager issues a warning, and if it continues - dismissal' or 'It counts in our annual report', to 'sarcasm'.

A study which compared the differences in terms of employment between various categories of worker found that 8 per cent of clerical workers had pay deducted from their salaries for lateness, compared with 90 per cent of operatives and 1 per cent of middle managers. Secretaries were therefore more like managers in this respect.[16]

<u>Breaks</u>

Breaks during the working day are another indication of the differences between 'white collar' and manual work. Do secretaries actually 'down tools' for a morning and afternoon break, or do they carry on working while they drink their tea or coffee, and are such breaks together with lunch time, flexible or fixed? (Appendix 1, question no.36).

In London, 6 per cent recorded no break at all for lunch. This might seem surprising until it is realised that this is almost exactly the same proportion who said they worked during their lunch hour. However, they did have tea or coffee in the morning and afternoon to sustain them; 14 per cent could take their breaks when they wished.

The traditional pattern of drinking tea or coffee at the desk occurred in 45 per cent of workplaces, while an actual break in work in either the morning or afternoon was taken by 14 per cent. Of these 3 per cent had only one break, either in the morning or the afternoon. The most common patterns were firstly, to have

a lunch break with tea or coffee at one's desk in the morning and afternoon (37 per cent); secondly, lunch only with no breaks and no tea or coffee (26 per cent); and thirdly, lunch with a break in work in the morning and afternoon (which might or might not be accompanied by refreshments),(10 per cent). The same pattern was shared by both IQPS and NAPS although more of them than London secretaries had a lunch break with tea or coffee at their desks.

For lunch, the largest number of secretaries used catering facilities provided by the organisation for which they worked (Appendix 1, question no.37). This is a reflection of the number of secretaries who worked in large organisations, since it is mainly these concerns which are able to provide a meal service. In all three groups this section accounted for most secretaries' luncheon practices. Going to a restaurant, buying a snack out, and taking sandwiches, each accounted for similar proportions of London secretaries (16, 15 and 14 per cent respectively) while 2 per cent managed to go home for lunch. Here the greatest distinction between the sub-groups arises and is evidence of much that the Location of Offices Bureau points out as an advantage for living outside of London; 10 per cent of IQPS members went home for lunch, while 23 per cent of NAPS members did so. Whether many people would consider this an advantage is another matter, especially for a woman who may have to work hard to provide a meal for herself and others in the hour allotted. It would certainly mean missing the queues and rushes associated with eating out in central London, and be cheaper, while some housewives might

be glad to have the time at home. The canteen and restaurant provision made by large organisations in central London in some way compensates for the distance from home at which most people work. This, together with the system of luncheon vouchers or payments, means that the mid-day meal for almost all secretaries in central London is made considerably easier to obtain than might otherwise be the case, in terms of both time and money.

Holidays.

The standard holiday given to London secretaries was three weeks or fifteen working days, accounting for 68 per cent of holidays (Appendix 1, question no.39). Only 6 per cent had less than three weeks, and they received either two weeks, or eleven or twelve working days; 13 per cent had four weeks'holiday (or between 15 and 20 working days) while a fortunate 4 per cent had more than four weeks. The longest holiday time recorded was six weeks, which was enjoyed by ten secretaries. However, almost all of those secretaries in London who had five or six weeks' holiday were employed by one educational institution where five weeks' holiday was given for those aged under 25 years, and six weeks for those over that age, consisting of three or four weeks in the summer and a week at Christmas and Easter. Apart from these, only three secretaries had holidays of an equivalent length; one working for a market research organisation, earning a high salary and with two children; one working for a life insurance company who had an extra week above the standard four since she was over 55 years of age and had worked for the organisation for over twenty years. The third worked for a doctor, where there was no fixed holiday arrangement.

In IQPS and NAPS, fewer had the standard three weeks' holiday, although this was still the pattern for the majority (60 and 52 per cent respectively), while more had longer holidays; 23 per cent of IQPS and 28 per cent of NAPS had more than three weeks or fifteen working days. This is likely to be an effect of age distributions as the length of holidays in many firms is related to the time an individual has worked for a concern, and the members of these two organisations tended to have been in their jobs for longer than London secretaries.

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CHAPTER X

JOB CONTENT AND FUNCTION

'"But I thought a private secretary never had anything to do," said Lady Julia.'

Anthony Trollope, The Small House at Allington, 1862.

One of the most common complaints made by respondents was that the title 'secretary' covered a variety of jobs of widely differing responsibility. They felt that more distinction should be made between one secretarial job and another. How is the relative importance of different secretarial jobs to be assessed?

The evaluation of a particular job may be based upon a number of different criteria which include the degree of responsibility involved, the knowledge required and the aptitude of the job holder.[1] An assessment on these bases then determines the position of a particular job within a grade structure. Secretary's jobs, however, are often subject to a completely different assessment. Rather than ranking jobs according to the responsibilities and skills involved, they are often ranked in accordance with the status in the hierarchy of the person for whom the secretary works. Hence a senior secretary may be defined as one who works for a person of senior rank irrespective of the work she is expected to do, and she is rewarded accordingly.

The work undertaken by secretaries was examined in order to discover the range and type of tasks they undertook and to assess what part of their work was purely routine and what part required

some responsibility or initiative. Did most secretaries spend their day doing shorthand and typewriting, in which case the suspicion held by some that many secretaries are shorthand-typists calling themselves secretaries would be confirmed, or did the majority have a more diverse and responsible role? Secretarial jobs vary considerably from one situation to another; it has been reported that in an investigation of five hundred women with shorthand-typing skills, it took three hundred and fifty-five significantly different job specifications to cover the range of work they did.[2]

There are two main methods of clerical work measurement; one technique involves the observation or self-recording of work as it is actually being done, the other involves calculation as to the ideal time a certain job ought to take, using time and motion study methods.[3] Neither of these methods of investigation was possible in the present study, since most of the information was gathered through a postal questionnaire; consequently a different method had to be devised which would of necessity rely entirely upon the respondent's own description of the work she did. As was mentioned previously in Chapter VIII, the main problem associated with this type of method is that respondents may not make an accurate assessment of the time they spend on particular tasks.[4]

In attempting a job analysis, secretaries were asked to list all the jobs they performed in their work in the order of the amount of time involved. The question was phrased as follows:

'What does your present job entail? Please give details of ALL the different tasks you have to perform, e.g. answer telephone, make appointments, take shorthand notes, sort papers, etc. Please write down each activity according to the amount of time it takes up, i.e. if you spend MOST time typing, write "typing" first, then the activity which takes up the next amount of time, and so on.' (Appendix 1, question no.66).

This method meant that the actual length of time which any particular activity occupied was not known, and jobs were listed which might only be done, say, once a week or less. Hence, in any assessment only the rank order gives an indication of the length of time taken up by a particular task. In the event, some secretaries felt that they could not assess their work in this way since each day was so completely different from the next, and their job descriptions were not included in any analysis involving rank order.

Secretaries listed a wide range of tasks which they performed, one hundred and fifty in all; in some cases they described these tasks in detail and in other cases they gave general descriptions. For instance, some named 'general office work' as a particular activity, while others specified each task involved in general office work such as photocopying or filing. Consequently there was a degree of overlapping within certain groups of activities. In order to classify the tasks, the details which were listed in the above way have been set out in

Appendix 9 and divided into categories indicating general function, and to some extent the level of responsibility involved. However, by creating these categories another possible source of inaccuracy has been introduced since, for example, the group category entitled 'Delegated or independent work' is based on the judgment of the coder as to the nature of the work described, and this judgment may be incorrect. It might take a considerable amount of discretion or knowledge to perform the task listed under 'General office work' as 'sorting papers' whereas 'keeping records and statistics' subsumed under 'Delegated or independent work' might in reality involve less personal discretion. These limitations should be borne in mind when considering the following analysis.

Number and Range of Tasks

1. Number.

By looking firstly at the number of different tasks undertaken by secretaries, the variety of the work which they do can be examined, (Table X.1).

In the London sample, only a small proportion did fewer than five tasks and most did between five and nine (63 per cent), while a further 24 per cent did ten or more tasks. The members of IQPS and NAPS had a much greater variety of tasks than London secretaries; in IQPS 43 per cent did between five and nine tasks (NAPS 37 per cent), while 42 per cent did ten or more (NAPS 45 per cent).

Of the London secretaries who did fewer than five tasks, a quarter had typing skills only and no shorthand. Of these,two were found to do nothing but typewriting, while another did only 'general office work'. The others combined typewriting with

Table X.1 Number of tasks listed by secretaries

Number of tasks	LONDON (n=515) %	IQPS (n=170) %	NAPS (n=73) %
1	1	-	-
2	1	1	-
3	2	1	-
4	5	2	4
5	13	7	8
6	15	8	-
7	13	9	4
8	13	9	10
9	9	10	15
10	9	9	10
11	4	10	3
12 or more	11	23	32
Not known	4	11	14
	100	100	100

telephoning and general office work.

The shorthand-typists with a limited range of work did, in addition, mainly telephoning and general office work, such as filing, photocopying or duplicating, although two had more demanding tasks, namely research and translating.

2. Range.

Among the complete list of tasks presented in Appendix 9, those most frequently mentioned, and presumably the tasks most usually performed by London secretaries were typing, telephoning, taking shorthand, filing and making appointments (Table X.2). These tasks were undertaken by at least half of the secretaries in all three groups; almost all of the other tasks listed were performed by fewer than a quarter of secretaries, with the exception of NAPS members, approximately a third of whom kept records and statistics and made travel arrangements.

Table X.2 Tasks most commonly undertaken by secretaries

		LONDON (n=515) %	IQPS (n=170) %	NAPS (n=73) %
1.	Typing	91	89	81
2.	Telephoning	88	80	78
3.	Taking shorthand notes	79	77	64
4.	Filing	66	65	63
5.	Making appointments	56	57	52
6.	Photocopying, duplicating	24	12	4
7.	Sorting papers	19	23	23
8.	Tea/coffee making	19	6	10
9.	Travel arrangements	16	26	33
10.	Keep records, statistics, etc.	16	19	37
11.	Write own letters	13	15	16
12.	Deal with accounts, documents, forms, etc.	12	10	8
13.	Enquiries, queries	12	17	15
14.	General administration or assistance	11	13	8
15.	See clients, visitors	10	14	14
16.	Open and distribute letters	9	9	14
17.	Post	8	3	11
18.	Collect information	5	11	11
19.	Check incomes, expenses, etc.	4	9	14
20.	Wages, salaries, payments	4	4	12
21.	Take, deal with minutes	4	15	5
22.	Supervise other staff	4	12	18
23.	Liaise with other staff	4	10	10

Table X.2 points to the fact that not all secretaries typed; 9 per cent of the London sample either could not do so or were employed in situations where it was not required. The latter is more likely to be the case, since 10 per cent fewer of NAPS members were required to type in their jobs than London secretaries (three secretaries gave dictation themselves) and the suggestion is that as secretaries become

more senior, their routine work is replaced by administrative or delegated tasks.

The figures in Table X.2 appear to be consistent with the idea that the secretaries belonging to the two organisations, IQPS and NAPS, tended, in comparison with the secretaries in the London sample, to hold more senior and responsible positions. This is shown by less typing, telephoning, shorthand, photocopying, tea or coffee making, and more travel arrangements, keeping records and statistics, collecting information, taking and dealing with minutes, supervising staff and liaising with other people.

The two groups differed from each other in the kind of work their members did. Fewer of the members of NAPS than of IQPS typed, took shorthand, did photocopying or duplicating; more of them, however, made travel arrangements, kept records and statistics, dealt with financial matters and supervised staff. They also dealt with the post more than the other two groups. Members of IQPS seemed to fall half way between the London sample and NAPS members in the proportions who did various types of work. This is likely to be because they were younger than members of NAPS and so could not yet have achieved the same seniority, despite the fact that they were well qualified. More of members of IQPS than either NAPS or the London sample dealt with minutes of meetings, no doubt reflecting their special training in this area.

The length of time spent on different tasks

When the different tasks are considered in their rank order, that is in terms of the relative amount of time they occupied,

letter writing and correspondence tasks for London secretaries outweighed all others, as might have been expected.

By taking together those categories which were ranked first and second, so taking up most time, it was found that letters and correspondence tasks were mentioned by 60 per cent of the London sample, 51 per cent of IQPS and 43 per cent of NAPS, a reflection not of the actual proportion of time spent on this work, but on the time relative to other kinds of tasks undertaken. Of the London secretaries, five times as many spent their days doing mainly correspondence tasks as doing the next most time-consuming category, communications. For IQPS, four times (and for NAPS three times) as many did mainly correspondence compared to the next most time-consuming occupation, delegated work. Hence relatively fewer of IQPS and NAPS spent most of their time doing correspondence work.

Since the actual time devoted to each task was not known, a simple weighting was given to each factor, so that for every task which was mentioned first, that is taking up the most amount of time, twelve points were allotted, eleven were allotted to the task taking up the second longest time, ten to that taking up the third greatest amount of time, and so on to the twelfth task, which was given one point. This can only be considered as an approximation since the real time given to each task will have varied from person to person, and some factors might consequently become exaggerated. For instance, if a secretary spent seven hours a day doing correspondence tasks and one hour a day doing other tasks, and she

listed her activities as: 1) typing, 2) shorthand notes, 3) photocopying, 4) telephoning, 5) post; then correspondence would be allotted twenty-three points and the rest twenty-seven points, hence giving an exaggerated picture of the last three tasks. This method does not include, either, situations where secretaries did more than twelve tasks, although of course those tasks at the bottom of the list would have taken up relatively little time.

In the above way, Figure 1 was constructed, which gives a rough indication of the relative amounts of time spent on the different categories of work. For the London sample, while correspondence took up the greatest amount of time, general office work also accounted for a considerable proportion, followed by communications, delegated or independent work, and appointments and meetings. Other types of work such as dealing with the post, travel arrangements, social,personal and specialist work, took up, overall, relatively small amounts of time.

It is clear that IQPS and NAPS secretaries spent relatively less time than the London sample doing correspondence, communications and general office work, while spending comparatively more time on appointments and meetings, travel arrangements, and in particular, delegated or independent work.

This may be compared with the experience of one large organisation visited during the study. They had examined the work undertaken by their secretaries using the method of 'activity sampling' which involves recording by observation activities which are being done at randomly selected times throughout the day.

Figure 1 Time occupied by different types of secretarial task

General Office Work (A)
Letters & Correspondence (B)
Post (C)
Communications (D)
Appointments & Meetings (E)
Travel Arrangements (F)
Delegated or Own Work (G)
Specialist Work (H)
Social (I)
Personal (J)

London
IQPS
NAPS

Index of time taken

32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Their findings indicated that typing took up one third of their secretaries' time, general office work 18.6 per cent, communications 20.1 per cent, post 4.4 per cent, and travel arrangements 0.4 per cent.[5] These findings are similar to those found in the present study using the weighting system described above, which suggests that it is a fair representation of the real situation.

Job evaluation and responsibility

When organisations institute 'job evaluation' for their employees, the purpose is usually to enable criteria to be set down in relation to which decisions on such matters as pay or promotion may be based. Without such criteria, judgments may be made which are purely subjective and which may consequently cause resentment that such decisions are unfair or biased. Job evaluation is claimed to lead to the best use and development of staff; 'If the individual chosen should fall short of the real requirements the job will suffer and the individual is not likely to develop as well as if he were doing a more appropriate job. On the other hand, if the individual is too good for his job he will either have to be paid more than it is worth or less than he is worth, judged according to what he might do.'[6] On the other hand, job descriptions have been criticised for encouraging people to 'take too narrow a view of their job as being necessarily bounded by and limited to the specified responsibilities, when other work may need to be done', and allowing the individual less scope for initiative.[7] Owing to the present demand situation,

decisions about pay awards for secretaries are, to a large extent, affected favourably for the secretary, by the market situation. However, it is in terms of the actual job content and its evaluation that secretaries may derive most benefit from job evaluation, for if jobs were graded in terms of the amount of responsibility involved, then career paths could be constructed. This should help to mitigate what often appears to be a confused and sometimes arbitrary allocation of personnel and salaries.

There are various ways in which jobs may be evaluated, usually involving an analysis which defines the duties to be performed and the level of skill and responsibility required to carry them out. Sometimes the qualities of the persons needed to fill the jobs are also specified. Once jobs have been evaluated they are arranged in some sort of hierarchy, indicating levels of importance and grades of pay appropriate to each level. According to the National Board for Prices and Incomes Report[8] Job Evaluation, there are four main methods of job evaluation in common use, 'the ranking method, the grading or classification method, the factor comparison method, and the points rating method. The first two are normally described as non-analytical or non-quantitative; and the second two, as analytical or quantitative. Non-analytical methods produce simple job ranking in order of importance, whereas the analytical methods express the rankings and rank distances numerically.' There are also 'hybrid' systems which combine features of different types of analyses. In addition, a measurement of responsibility alone may be used to evaluate jobs.

The term 'responsibility' in relation to work has come to mean than an individual is capable of undertaking a 'charge, trust or duty'[9] on his own. For a secretary it involves tackling work either without reference to another, or on another's instructions but unsupervised, an ability otherwise described by employers as 'initiative'.

Elliott Jaques attempted to measure responsibility by employing the idea of a 'time span of discretion'.[10] According to him, work consists of two basic elements, one part of which is 'prescribed' that is, work 'about which the member was left no authorized choice', and is performed as the result of an instruction, for instance to type a letter; the other part is'discretionary' and covers the area of work over which there is some choice in the way it is carried out. Responsibility, according to Jaques, can only be associated with 'discretionary' elements of work. According to Jacques' proposed method of measurement, the 'time span of discretion' describes the maximum length of time that elapses before a superior checks that a decision made by a subordinate has been of an adequate standard. Conflicting views about the usefulness of this form of measurement have been expressed; on the one hand it has been said that the method is subjective and lacking in scientific objectivity,[11] on the other, that it correlates highly with results from other systems of job evaluation.[12]

T. T. Paterson has related responsibility to the level and frequency of decision-making involved in the performance of a job.[13] The relative importance of decisions can be judged in terms of their effect on the survival of the firm. The further ahead predictions based on decisions can be made, the greater are the chances of the firm surviving. In his system, all jobs involve decisions, of which there are several levels or 'bands'.

'Policy-making' decisions are taken by top management, 'programming' by senior management, 'interpretive' by middle management, 'routine' by skilled workers, 'automatic' by the semi-skilled and 'defined' by the unskilled.

The Office Management Association (now known as the Institute of Administrative Management) produced guidelines for grading clerical jobs which, for those who use typing, shorthand or audio-typing in their work, range from grades B to F, each grade with an increasing degree of skill and responsibility.[14] Copy-typing, for instance, can vary between grades B and D, depending on the typing speed required and the complexity of the subject matter in terms of its organisation and presentation, so that 'Preparation of straightforward documents by simple copying from a clear statement, including manuscript' is grade B, and 'Preparation of documents about technical matter which necessitates tabulation and careful layout, including working from corrected drafts to produce complicated statements or words and figures in finished form' is grade D.

Shorthand-typing, involving an addition skill, varies between grades C and F, the former involving 'Taking down in shorthand and transcribing simple routine matter into statements not involving tabulation or special layout', and the latter, 'Taking down verbatim the proceedings of meetings and discussions on involved subjects and the subsequent transcription and preparation of a report.'

The work of a private secretary, according to the Office Management Association grading scheme, falls into two categories, E and F. E is described as 'Private secretarial work of a limited character for an executive, including the taking down of shorthand and the transcription of it, preparing masters for duplication, and dealing with the normal correspondence in and out and filing.'; F grade private secretarial work is described as 'Private secretarial work in a complete sense for a senior executive, involving the work described under E grade but also includes fixing appointments, arranging journeys, receiving callers, dealing with telephone inquiries in the first place, arranging for information to be obtained and given on minor matters of the executive's work, generally dealing with his routine affairs not delegated to an assistant and, in the executive's absence, making arrangements for important matters to be dealt with.'

One problem of using this method of grading secretarial jobs is that it offers no precise criteria for distinguishing one job from another, consequently it 'leaves assessors more open to influence by their familiarity with the existing grades and pay levels and the personal qualities of individuals currently occupying the jobs.'[15] A further limitation of this grading scheme is that it applies only to clerical workers; it is not known how the gradings compare with other rankings, for, say, junior management, supervisors or other occupations.

As mentioned previously, in attempting to relate responsibility to the tasks undertaken by secretaries, certain categorisation problems arose. The tasks listed under General Office Work and Post in Appendix 9 are assumed to require less individual ability

or skill than other categories. Besides this, Letters and Correspondence may call for differing levels of skill, initiative and intelligence or education, depending upon the individual work situation. A considerable amount of office correspondence covers routine matters, and involves the use of a standard vocabulary which would not stretch the abilities of most people. On the other hand, where employers are highly articulate and correspond with people at a similar level, the demands on the secretary are considerably greater. One of the paradoxes of the secretary's job is that in order to deal with what is basically the thoughts of another, by recording them and reproducing them on paper, a level of education is required which is higher than that which is necessary for the manual skill involved in carrying out the task. That is, someone who engages in shorthand-typing for an articulate and well-educated person needs to be articulate and well-educated herself in order to put those thoughts correctly on to paper; yet an educated secretary working for such a person is not using her own education to the full, since she is not initiating the thoughts, but simply reproducing them. Alternatively some bosses expect their secretaries to compensate for their own educational or verbal inadequacies. This can be seen as the traditional function of the secretary, who was first employed by people who were illiterate or unskilled in writing. Hence a responsible secretary would not transcribe a letter which was dictated in an ungrammatical form so as to repeat the error, but would correct it.

As a consequence, the degree of discretion involved in shorthand-typing may be considerable and should ideally be measured according to the verbal skills of the boss and his or her ability to dictate in good English, as well as the potentiality in terms of skill, education and literacy of the secretary. Such a system of measurement is, however, impractical.

Because of this situational variability, it is difficult to put the letter-writing tasks of a secretary in to some sort of ranking system in terms of responsibility. Although different educational levels may be necessary in different working situations, essentially shorthand and typing are jobs which are initiated by the boss, and involve the use of techniques and skills rather than independent thought. Using Jaques' 'time span of discretion', a dictated letter would not rate highly in terms of responsibility, since, if it is read and signed by the dictator in the same day, the supervision can be considered to be fairly close. If, on the other hand, an employer does not read the letter but simply signs it knowing he or she can rely upon the secretary's skill and judgment, a different level of responsibility is reached.

Considering Table X.1 and Figure I, it can be seen that members of IQPS and NAPS have a greater number of tasks than London secretaries. They also spend a greater proportion of their time on what can be classified as responsible tasks, in particular delegated work. It would appear that greater variety accompanies greater responsibility.

Paterson's evaluation would support this association. He stated that the higher a job is in the decision-making hierarchy, 'the more difficult and complex the decision process; this difficulty reflects the increasing number of factors to be considered at each stage of the process'[16], and, 'The greater the number of decisions of a grade required for a job the more difficult is the job of that grade, and so its importance' ... '<u>It can be stated, in general terms that in any one grade, those jobs requiring more decisions of that grade are more difficult, so more important, and so should be rewarded more.</u>'[17]

Jaques maintained that there was an innate sense of what constituted fair pay, and that this was related to the 'time span of discretion'. He asserted that the greater the responsibility, the higher was the pay of the members of staff. If variety of tasks is also an indication of increased responsibility, then, if Jaques' postulate is correct, secretaries who did a greater number of tasks should have earned more than those who did fewer. The pay received by London secretaries undertaking fewer than ten tasks was compared with the pay of those who performed ten or more tasks; the median pay of the former was £1,124 and of the latter £1,268 per annum, or nearly £3 a week more, suggesting that responsibility for secretaries, measured by variety, is indeed rewarded by higher pay. If variety can be equated with responsibility, it might help to explain why the greatest number of secretaries felt that variety was the aspect of their work which they liked the most (Chapter XII).

A oonsiderable degree of responsibility has been shown to be held, in particular, by medical secretaries. A job evaluation of medical secretaries, employing a composite system of analysis,[18] found that a considerable proportion of their work was discretionary in character and involved responsibilities and decision-making of an order beyond the grading allowed for their posts. The secretaries 'exercised degrees of initiative, judgment and decision without reference to a superior in respect of an appreciable part of their work. This role greatly facilitated the work of a busy general and specialist medical unit.' For example, they decided 'what interpretation to put on requests from general practitioners and how to deal with them and what questions to ask and how to maintain a good relationship with all doctors, patients and relatives.'

The responsibility held by secretaries in a medical setting was emphasised by two employers in this study. One described the work of her secretary as follows: 'She must be wedded to the telephone, both in making calls and coping with extraordinary questions. It includes dealing with deranged people. She often has to listen to long case histories from, say, old people, and be sympathetic. This is peculiar to hospital work. Young secretaries are very good at this because they are more compassionate than older generations.'

It is not only medical secretaries who hold this level of responsibility, although for other secretaries the repercussions for inadequate performance might not be counted in the same human terms. Such work as that involved in financial matters, supplying information, arranging travel, writing reports, standing in for a

boss, or organising courses, may have serious consequences if performed inadequately. One employer visited in the survey was the manager of the London office of a large oriental company; he could hardly speak English and his secretary had to help him answer the questions which were put to him. She was in fact responsible for the entire running of that office, apart from the contact with Head Office abroad, which was in a foreign language.

Much of the responsibility carried by secretaries lies in intangible areas such as social relationships, or the giving of initial impressions by talking to clients, visitors, customers or patients, which may influence an outsider's impression of the organisation. One secretary remarked in this connection, 'A secretary is the soul of a firm. If I am kind, even if only on the telephone and not face to face, people would say the firm was kind; if I am helpful they would say the firm was helpful.'

Confidentiality is one aspect of a secretary's work which is vitally important in determining her value to an employer. Secretaries are in a position to learn a great deal of secret information about a company, other employees or outside individuals; to divulge this could have serious consequences. For this reason confidentiality probably contributes towards a secretary ('one who is privy to a secret')[19] having an elite status among office workers. She has acquired this status not only from a close association with people in important positions, but from the value of the knowledge to which she has access. Confidentiality

justifies to some extent the present system of rewarding secretaries according to the status of the boss, since the importance of the information she may learn tends to increase with the rank of the employer. One London employer emphasised this aspect of his secretary's work by saying,'There is a considerable amount of confidential work here, some of it is dynamite - famous people in trouble or mergers between companies. If this information leaked out it would be a disaster.'

A personnel officer who had attempted to evaluate the secretary's job had become very disheartened, for she felt none of the systems available gave sufficient credit for the variety and subtleties of the job a secretary had to do. It was not possible to measure output, because output was entirely dependent on the work situation, nor could her job be evaluated in terms of the cost of an error to the company, since the cost was often in terms of public relations. She might also have added that the responsibility involved in any one job was dependent upon the individual boss's willingness to give scope for independent action. Consequently each job was dependent upon the particular boss and secretary and not upon its basic constituents. For instance, one employer said, 'I am pedantic enough to want to dictate and punctuate my own letters and not have someone else do it for me.'

Under these circumstances, any evaluation of a secretary's job would have to be re-assessed each time either a boss or secretary changed, unless the job specification laid down the areas of activity which were to be allotted to the secretary and

these were strictly adhered to. It might be possible to overcome this problem, however. As a consequence of the apparent association between variety and responsibility which was described above, the number of different tasks a secretary undertook might be a useful tool of measurement in the construction of a grading system based on responsibility. Taking Appendix 9 as a framework in order to illustrate the possibilities, points could be allotted to different tasks in the list so that, say, tasks included under the heading "General Office Work' could be allotted one point, under Letters and Correspondence two points, Post - 1 point, Communications - two points, Appointments and Meetings - two points, Travel - two points, Delegated or Independent Work three points, Specialist work - three points, and Social and Personal work - one point. (The number of points suggested are only for the purpose of illustration, and each task would have to be examined in greater detail before a score was given in practice). Hence a secretary who did six tasks, shorthand, typewriting, answering the telephone, filing, photocopying and Telex, would score ten points, and another with ten tasks, namely shorthand, typewriting, answering the telephone, filing, making appointments, dealing with wages, supervising junior staff, supplying information, making coffee and translating, would score twenty-two points.

On this basis a grading structure could be made so that a grade I secretary would, say, score up to fifteen points, a grade II secretary from sixteen to thirty points, and a grade III secretary from thirty points onwards. The framework is only tentative at this stage and would have to be tested to see if it were practicable.

Such a system would have four particular advantages. Firstly, a secretary's grading would be dependent upon her job content and not upon her boss's status. Although the tendency is for greater responsibility to accompany working for a higher status boss, this is by no means always true. Also, as a personnel officer complained, a grading structure for secretaries may be very difficult to maintain because many bosses considered secretaries to be status symbols. Recently, for instance, she had received a request from a Divisional Controller that, as a result of his position, he should have a personal assistant and not a secretary, although his secretary's job had in no way altered. This kind of attitude led to a swift devaluation of any grading structure for secretaries that the establishment may have had.

Secondly, if a boss knew that his or her secretary was dependent for her grading upon the work she was given, it might encourage bosses, if only for the sake of their own status, to give their secretaries more responsible work; secretaries would also demand more responsible work because salaries would be tied to the points scale.

Thirdly, it will be shown in Chapter XII that variety is the aspect of their work which secretaries liked the most; by adopting the type of scale suggested, which encourages greater variety, she would be gaining greater job satisfaction. Job enlargement for secretaries has been shown to have favourable consequences.

One organisation, for instance, suffered from high turnover rates and discovered the reason secretaries left was that at the initial interview they had been led to expect the work would be demanding; in reality it was not. The organisation decided to restructure secretarial work so as to give secretaries greater challenge and scope for responsibility. This was achieved by delegating some aspects of the bosses' work to their secretaries and by training the secretaries to carry out the work efficiently. Some of the new tasks they were given included writing all business letters themselves, dealing with advertising copy and attending press conferences. In order to deal with these tasks successfully, they were given training in letter-writing techniques, the technical aspects of publishing and techniques of reporting. By this means turnover was drastically reduced.[20]

The fourth advantage of the suggested system is that it would be seen to be fair, so that complaints that secretaries were 'only shorthand-typists' would be scotched, and those in more responsible jobs would be justly rewarded.

By undertaking delegated work, that is, work which would normally be performed by the employer, a secretary may be working at the same level as, say, an executive; for this reason many secretaries expressed a feeling of dissatisfaction that the level of their work was not recognized and that they were often thought of primarily as shorthand-typists. Certainly many secretaries are supervisors; 11 per cent of London secretaries, 26 per cent of IQPS and 33 per cent of NAPS supervised staff.

The real essence of the difference between a secretary undertaking part of an employer's work and the employer doing it himself, lies in the other meaning of the word 'responsibility'. For whereas a secretary may take decisions and actions without reference to her employer and so accept 'responsibility', she is not, in the last resort, responsible in terms of being accountable for her decisions or actions, which are still the liability of her boss.

It seems reasonable that once a secretary ceases to have a correspondence function and works only on organisational or administrative matters at a managerial level, she should no longer be called a secretary, but a manager. The fact that she may be responsible to one person only does not make her a secretary, since any hierarchy of authority involves taking orders from the incumbent of a higher rank and this applies equally to managers as to secretaries. The adoption of the terms 'personal assistant' and more recently 'executive secretary' is partly an attempt by secretaries and employers to distinguish a secretary with greater responsibility from one with less responsibility. The use of these terms may, however, have the disadvantage of limiting upward mobility for secretaries by temporarily placating the demands of some secretaries to be acknowledged for what they may well be, that is managers. It might be advisable to create a new term for a secretary who is a manager, perhaps 'managing secretary' or 'manager secretary'. Such a title would recognise the types of skill and function which differentiate a secretary from other managers and at the same time

credit her with having responsibility in her own right by being accountable for her own decisions. The term 'personal assistant' does not achieve this because it means personal assistant <u>to</u> another individual, indicating only limited responsibility.

Employers' views on a secretary's function

While secretaries in central London were asked about the tasks they performed at work, employers were asked what work they expected their secretaries to do (Appendix 7, question no. 6). It was hoped that by this means another perspective could be added to complete the picture of a secretary's function.

A few employers considered their secretaries to have a very limited or minor function, and stated that they were employed mainly as typists or shorthand-typists, or even clerks, although some of these employers indicated that they felt some sense of guilt or regret at the fact.

> 'My secretary does mainly typing - quite a lot, regrettably. I use her to do menial things which I would have to do, like giving messages to people, especially when they are inclined to be long-winded. Often I use her as a clerk.'
>
> 'Apart from the top two, secretaries here are glorified shorthand-typists. This company is not conducive to having high-powered secretaries and the boss does his own work which usually a girl does elsewhere. I don't know whether they like it, but they obviously accept it because they are still here.'

'They are not used as well as they might be. They do mainly shorthand and typing and answer the telephone. It's not their fault but they are not used properly - the men haven't time to tell them what we are doing. It would need much more time and consequently there are often job changes. Girls begin enthusiastically and then become dispirited.' (personnel officer).

Other employers emphasised the general nature of the work done by their secretaries:

'They do anything that has to be done.'

'She has to do everything, which is unfair really - I expect one person to do the work of three.'

'She has to do all those things which I have neither time nor inclination to do.'

'Filing, typing letters, telex, general office work ... Some do personal or private secretarial work of an unofficial nature - spare parts for ships and so on. It's more of a man's job for a girl who has been here for some time.'

Other employers emphasised the importance of a secretary's contact with other people by liaising with other staff or talking to visitors: 'She has to be able to get on with eminent people' said one. Her presence was often found to be a stimulus to hard work, 'She keeps me up to the mark.' She was also important in acting as a substitute in their absence. It was frequently said that a secretary should attempt to learn everything she could about the boss's work, so as to be able to fulfil this latter task successfully. By so doing she would be able to take over more of the work herself.

She was also valued as a 'buffer', so that distracting or unwanted people could be kept at bay. It has been shown that on average managers spend two-thirds of their time with other people,[21] consequently it may be possible for a manager to save more time by a careful organisation of contacts with other people than in any other type of activity. The secretary can be invaluable here in answering minor queries herself and by seeing that her boss is undisturbed when important discussions are taking place. On the other hand, by blocking lines of communication a 'buffer' may be making the job of others considerably more difficult by, for instance, delaying decision-making. Several employers expressed annoyance at the fact that when they asked to speak to a colleague they were diverted through a secretary, and this often created bad feeling between one principal and another. A celebrated example of this, was the case of the Australian Prime Minister whose secretary was accused of blocking communications between him and his Cabinet Ministers.[22] A technique which was also described as infuriating was for a secretary to obtain a person on the telephone who was then asked to wait while the caller was located. An interpretation was put upon this action that the secretary chose to keep the receiver of the call waiting rather than her boss, implying that the boss's status was more important or his time more valuable. Two employers said they always took their calls themselves deliberately so as to create the impression that they were always accessible, and hence could give a reliable and

prompt service. It is status-enhancing for a manager to be removed from the imperative of the telephone, since it gives the impression that the individual is further removed from those below him or her in the hierarchy, thus creating a sense of distance based upon inaccessibility.

A secretary who acts as a 'buffer' may make her boss more efficient by preserving his time, but the organisation less efficient by blocking communications. In a similar vein, criticism can be levelled against another aspect of a secretary's work, or her attitude towards it, which is often mentioned as important, and that is 'loyalty'. It is part of a secretary's function, many believe, to try to enhance her boss's image. A problem arises when loyalty to the boss, through over-protection, prevarication on his behalf, or blocking access to him, may prove to be disloyal to the interest of the company, by, for instance, making an inadequate boss appear to be efficient.

Some employers expressed their descriptions of the secretary's work more in terms of her role than of her function:

> 'Her job spills over into the family and she becomes part of it. Sometimes she comes to the house and takes charge. It's not a 9 - 5 job but a way of life.'
>
> 'She is a logical extension of me, therefore I expect her to volunteer to operate in all activities in which I operate. She is like a detached member of the family.'
>
> 'A wife in the business sense - someone to look after me.'

'She should be a creative person who will look after everything I do, for example know about restaurants, help me with my book, arrange trips. I tell her about my problems with my car and even things like my razor needing repairing. It makes all the difference between a shorthand-typist and a secretary, so I bring her in on everything. She has to be able to talk well and attend cocktail parties ...'

There were, as well, many employers who gave their secretaries a considerable amount of responsibility:

'My secretary does very little day-to-day typing as routine letters are dealt with centrally. She deals with conference matters, especially the organisational part which is very important for me. She arranges my meetings, agendas, accommodation, etc. She also works on specific projects which come up in the organisation. She is very much a p.a.'

'I expect a high quality personal service. She must use her initiative at all times ... She must be a participant in what we are doing and takes on certain parts of the work entirely. She even forges my signature and does the whole thing herself.'

'Her work is very varied - she mainly investigates information for reports - has certain projects to investigate. She correlates the information from Head Office and sees what is most important for me to take action on and what can be left. She is virtually training herself to do my thinking for me.'

'Secretaries do the whole work of the firm. I watch them early and if they have initiative I give them more responsibility and put them on their own. It's a better way of keeping staff. I believe in encouraging them and not being frightened to show it. They get a pat on the back for doing something good.'

'She is expected to do the same work as I do although she's paid less for it - then she can act as my substitute.'

This variety of needs and expectations of their secretaries, expressed by employers, has a distinct advantage since it means that secretaries with differing levels of skill and aspirations should be able to find a job to suit their particular requirements.

<u>Qualities ideally sought by employers in their secretaries</u>

Employers were asked the question, 'What do you ideally look for in a secretary?' (Appendix 7, question no.5). It was hoped that the answers would provide a picture of employers' general expectations and throw some further light on a secretary's function. The replies (Table X.3) indicated that of prime importance were a secretary's basic skills, abilities and knowledge, followed by certain desirable attitudes to work, personality and appearance, and the fulfilment of particular functions. The importance placed on good shorthand and typing emphasises that correspondence was the function valued by most employers.

Table X.3 Features ideally required of secretaries by employers

Technical skills, personal ability and knowledge	No. of employers (n=212)
Good basic skills of shorthand and typewriting	59
Initiative	38
Intelligence	34
Efficiency	29
Common sense	25
Accuracy	18
Organisational ability	13
Speed	11
Good spelling, grammar, English, literacy	10
Knowledge of work, business	7
Ability to write own letters	6
Good memory	4
Good all-rounder	4
Able to supervise staff	4
Good general knowledge	3
Able to anticipate	2
Knowledge of languages	2
Good presentation of work	2
Methodical	1
Social abilities	
Ability to mix well	20
Pleasant manner with people	17
Good telephone manner	12
Diplomatic	10
Easy to get on with	2
Able to project a good image	1
Good hostess	1
Attitudes to work	
Discreet, confidential, trustworthy, integrity	19
Willing	17
Interested in work, keen	16
Loyal	13
Sense of responsibility	11
Good timekeeper	11
Reliable, dependable	9
Hard worker	8
Committed to work	7
Cooperative	4
Conscientious	3
Alert	3
Independent	1
Team spirit	1
Respect for boss	1
Tolerant of uneven work pace	1

Table X.3 (continued)

	No. of employers
Personality	
Pleasant or pleasing personality	35
Compatible with, complementary to boss	27
Even-tempered, unflappable	9
Cheerful	9
Adaptable, flexible	8
Sense of humour	8
Charming	4
Unobtrusive, reticent	3
Kind	2
Thick-skinned, no tears	2
Patient	2
Placid, tranquil	2
Amiable	2
Extrovert	1
Likeable	1
Spirited	1
Appearance and personal attributes	
Pleasant, attractive appearance	17
Pleasant voice	10
Well dressed, well groomed, smart	9
Presentable	7
Clean, neat, tidy	6
Poised	1
Function	
Filter, buffer	8
Good stand-in	6
Provider of ideas	3
Relieve burden	1
Other	
Good background, cultured	6
Experienced	4
'Nice type of girl'	2
A Christian	1
Refined	1
Lives near to work	1
Not too expensive	1
Will stay for five years	1

The items most frequently mentioned were good basic skills, initiative, a pleasant personality, intelligence, efficiency, compatibility with the boss, common sense, and the ability to mix well.

Hence, employers can be said to want secretaries who are efficient, intelligent workers, who are pleasant and likeable people with whom they feel compatible.

When employers were asked whether they had any particular criticisms to make of secretaries generally, or whether secretaries posed any particular problems for the employer compared with any other occupational group (Appendix 7, question no. 13), most had no complaints at all, but rather the contrary in some cases, as several employers were very keen to point out that secretaries were less of a problem than any other employees. Thirty-five employers (16 per cent)made some criticism of secretaries.

The main problem was that of turnover. Recruitment was difficult and once a secretary began work the problem was then to keep her:

> 'This secretary is the fourth we have had in two years. We can't offer her company, so there is the problem of loneliness, and a basement office does not seem to appeal to them. That means that every six months there is a search for a Girl Friday and trying to keep her is a constant problem.'

> 'Younger girls are easily tempted away - in this area we are surrounded by agencies. We train them, and then they leave.'

A slightly more exotic reason for turnover was described by one employer:

> 'We tend to get girls here who have their own private incomes, but they are restless. They tend to give up for

skiing and long summer holidays.'

One other type of problem was that secretaries were all women, and as such typified what were felt to be the general problems of employing female staff:

> 'The only problem is that they are women and so we have to make special provisions for them such as rest rooms. They rely on a manager's discretion to bear with them at certain times.'
>
> 'Female staff have a higher sickness rate than men although that is not just secretaries but women in general. It's naturally feminine.'

Despite these handicaps, the number of times that 'women's problems' were mentioned as a difficulty was far outweighed by the number of employers who felt that secretaries were less trouble than other employees, so 'women's problems' are presumably not very obtrusive (unless of course male employers found it embarrassing to mention the fact spontaneously).

Several employers felt that women, much more than men, were inclined to bring outside problems into the office. If they had problems in their domestic lives or their love lives, it affected their work, whereas men rarely made their problems known in their work situation. Women were felt to be more 'emotional' generally, 'I would have a male secretary preferably, because they are less emotional. They don't bring their problems to the office and are more career-oriented, not marriage-oriented.'

General standards were some cause of concern and complaints in this category were mainly in the nature of resentment that so many girls called themselves secretaries who were not entitled to do so. 'Miss Nobody will come out of a Secondary Modern at sixteen, and expect £1,000 a year, and call herself a secretary to boot.'

Other problems mentioned included a lack of willingness to help each other out, which was interpreted either as laziness or status consciousness. 'If the phone rings on the other desk they won't answer it for another secretary. They don't lift a finger if they don't have to. Sometimes you can even find them reading. The fault may rest with the bosses, but somehow we don't like to have to lay down rules like that, as it is the kind of cooperation we would normally expect without having to state it. We certainly never get this problem with men.'
A lack of interest in the work, insufficient initiative, poor timekeeping and too much chatting, were also mentioned.

In sharp contrast, the value placed upon secretaries by employers was considerable, for when they were asked, 'How important do you think secretaries are to you (and to your organisation)?' (Appendix 7, question no. 7) only fourteen employers out of more than two hundred used anything less than superlatives or imperatives in order to describe their worth. Expressions such as 'absolutely vital', 'indispensible', 'essential', 'utterly invaluable' were the most common ways of answering the question, and a recurring phrase was 'worth their weight in gold.' Only

one employer made an adverse comment upon their importance, and he said that secretaries were 'an unfortunate necessity and strangling the life of this profession (law) and most other offices.'

The employers who felt secretaries were of only moderate importance based this on the belief that the type of work they were expected to do was not particularly demanding, or that standards generally were not very high.

> 'To this organisation secretaries are not vastly important because we have so few (three for one hundred and forty people). It's a case of keeping the top brass happy. Possibly we don't use secretaries at a very high level - it's rather elementary stuff and we can use clerical staff for many of the jobs.'

> 'I don't use my secretary as a personal assistant so she plays a minimal role in my framework. I really use them for rather menial work. Their role is as general administrative assistants who can deal with the paper work and let me get on with my professional activity.'

> 'They are not very important because we are not big enough to afford the best type of secretary that is available.'

Three employers felt that for many people who called themselves secretaries, mechanisation would take over their jobs, and so they were not indispensible:

> 'At the moment they are indispensible because we haven't any other means of communication. If a machine were invented instead of shorthand-typing they would become superfluous.'

Others reserved their opinion, saying that it depended upon how a secretary was used, whether she was important or not. Three employers felt that secretaries were no more important than any other members of their organisation - they were all important.

The vast majority of employers rated the importance of secretaries highly, and the reasons they gave varied. In the first place, the amount of correspondence and writing which had to be dealt with was a vital function of any organisation and in that sense she was indispensible since the work had to be dealt with:

> 'Secretaries are essential, because typing is essential. In this organisation, with fourteen separate committees, there is a constant circulation of paper.'
>
> 'Absolutely vital - I couldn't do without a secretary, unless I was going to do all my letters by longhand.'
>
> 'Ninety per cent of contact with clients is through the post, and presentation should reflect your efficiency.'

Although this work could be done by a typist, or a shorthand-typist or audio-typist, many employers voiced the opinion that this was not the only function she had to perform and that people who used secretaries simply to deal with correspondence were wasting their assets.

Another important function was seen to be her ability to act as a substitute for her boss when he or she was not in the office:

> 'Secretaries are extremely important in this office. They

act as anchor people while everyone else is out.'

'I travel a lot but I can leave things to be tackled by my secretaries so they are a really vital part of the organisation.'

'They are the absolute life-line of the firm.'

'We could not work without them. If staff are out selling they can't be expected to answer the telephone. I always insist that a man sits in the same room as his secretary so that she can cope with his work in his absence.'

Secretaries were also seen as valuable because they increased the general output of the organisation, or of the individual boss:

'She is vital. Correspondence could be done by a pool and dictating machines, but a busy man or woman can't cope with minor problems, for example keeping a diary, and his voluntary work. She has to arrange these things for him.'

'A good secretary can save her boss a tremendous amount of work and worry, very often doing things she knows have to be done off her own bat.'

'If she is away sick, my earnings would drop 50 per cent and my income by 100 per cent.'

'I could manage with anyone until Miss --- came and I didn't need much. But she has increasingly taken the work load away from me and now she is on holiday I miss her very much indeed.'

'The more senior the boss is, the more important is the secretary. I wouldn't be half as efficient without her. Of course if they are not good they are a disaster because they reduce your efficiency.'

She was valued for the image she projected to others. A doctor said that a good secretary could make or break a practice. A large organisation felt that their importance, particularly on the telephone, could not be overestimated, because she was the first advertisement for the company. Also a machine couldn't answer the telephone or tell a white lie.

One factor that was repeatedly emphasised was that a good secretary was invaluable but that a bad one was worse than nothing at all. 'A man with a bad secretary is only 60 per cent efficient, so they are 40 per cent important. With a bad secretary I have to do 40 per cent more work.'

Some employers said that their secretaries were of such importance to them that things 'ground to a halt' if they were sick, or on holiday, and one went so far as to declare that if his secretary left to have a family he would retire as well.

The size of firm seemed to have no relevance to the importance placed upon a secretary's work except that in the larger organisations more reference was made to secretaries being valuable to senior personnel only, an indication that secretaries to more junior managers were not used to their best advantage. Whatever the size of the employer organisation, expressions of appreciation of the task that is performed by secretaries was overwhelming.

Secretaries views of their function

Secretaries, in describing what they felt their jobs should be, placed differing emphases on the various tasks they felt it was appropriate for them to undertake, some declaring that any tasks, however menial, should be tackled, while others felt that only the more traditional tasks, or only the more responsible ones, should fall within their province.

Contained within their replies, however, was a consistent element indicating that, for many, a set of values underlay their work and its function; when they described what they felt their _jobs_ ought to be, they frequently expressed what the secretary as a person, and her attitudes, ought to be. For instance, a secretary should be 'loyal', 'understanding', 'respectful', 'sympathetic'. The emphasis which was given to such qualities as if they were primary functions, suggests that many secretaries considered their actual work to be secondary to their supportive role. This will be discussed further in Chapter XV.

The main points in this chapter may be summarised as follows: A job-content analysis shows that many secretaries are undertaking responsible work, although the greatest amount of time is spent dealing with correspondence; each employment situation has different needs which are dependent not only upon the demands of the particular job but also upon the education, abilities and responsibilities of the particular boss and secretary. It may be possible to construct a grading system for secretaries based on two variables, variety and responsibility. The needs of employers varied considerably and reflected the range of responsibilities involved in different secretarial positions. Basically employers sought secretaries who were efficient and intelligent and who were pleasant people with whom to work. Employers had very few criticisms of secretaries but emphasised the importance of the secretary's job.

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