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Access to Educational Opportunity:
The Case of Kwun Tong

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by

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Formal education has been expanding in Hong Kong, especially in

the last decade or so, in terms of both the number of schools, primary

and secondary, and the size of student enrolment. In 1961, for example,

84 per cent of the total population, aged 6 - 12, were attending

school; in 1971, this rose to 95 per cent.[1] The ratio of secondary

school enrolment to the population in the 13 - 18 age group was 27

per cent in 1961 and 41 per cent in 1971.[2] Considering just the

economically active portion of the population, for most of whom the

level of educational attainment may be considered "finalized," the

proportion who have attained some secondary education or above

increased from 27 per cent in 1961 to 33 per cent in 1971.[3] As the

effect of the current expansion takes shape some years later with

the influx of the graduates (especially at the secondary level or

above) into the working force, the proportion of more highly educated

members would be even higher.

While the increase in school enrolment rates may be interpreted

as a sign of increasing equality of educational and social opportunity,

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[1] Calculated from Census figures of 1961 and 1971.
Most of these are primary school pupils.

[2] Calculated from Census figures of 1961 and 1971, and from secondary
school (day) enrolment statistics issued by the Director of
Education in the Triennual Surveys of 1958 - 1961 and 1964 - 1967,
and the Annual Summary of 1970 - 1971.

[3] Taken from Census statistics of 1961 and 1971.

the question of to what extent attaining a certain level of education

has or has not improved for people from various socioeconomic strata

over a period of time still remains largely unanswered. What increase

in enrolment rates shows is merely expansion on an aggregate level

which must be distinguished from the distributional trend in

education, i.e., how aggregate changes in school attainment are

distributed among individuals from different social backgrounds. In

a population with rising levels of school attainment, such as what

Hong Kong is currently experiencing, it is possible that a youth

can receive more schooling than his father without, however,

necessarily advancing educationally compared with his peers. For

children whose fathers have little primary or no schooling, upward

educational mobility is achieved by merely graduation from primary

school. For children of fathers with some secondary schooling or

more, upward educational mobility means at least graduation from

secondary school. It is therefore possible that upward educational

mobility may operate independently of rates of access to given levels

of educational attainment. As indicated by Census statistics the

proportion of white-collar workers (administrative, executive and

managerial workers) with a primary education or less has diminished

from 60 per cent in 1966 to 46 per cent in 1971. Increasingly,

secondary school completion is becoming a minimum qualification for

entry into white-collar jobs. For children of poorly educated fathers,

therefore, merely having more education than fathers is not a

sufficient preparation for the job market if white-collar work is

desired. It is thus relevant to ask if, for example, completion of

primary school has improved for children with poorly educated fathers

as much as for the children of well educated fathers (e.g., secondary schooling or above). Furthermore, it is even more significant to ask whether, once having completed primary school, the chances of attending at least some secondary school have improved for children of varying social backgrounds.

The Data and Kwun Tong

The data used for the analyses reported in this paper were taken from data collected by the Life Quality Study, part of the Kwun Tong Industrial Community Research Programme undertaken by the Social Research Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in the summer of 1971.[4] Subjects included in the present analysis are male members of households listed in the Life Quality Study who were, at the time of collection of the data, living with their fathers and out of school (either employed or unemployed). In some cases, therefore, several members from the same household are included.

The dependent variable in this paper is the highest level of school education obtained by the subject. Two independent variables are included: the subject's age and father's educational background. Both the subject's education and father's education are classified under five categories (no education, some primary, primary graduate, some secondary and secondary graduate or more). Father's education is used as a rough indicator of family socioeconomic status. Since most

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[4] The study was supported by a grant from the Harvard-Yenching Institute. The sample taken was a stratified (according to housing types) random one, resulting in a total of 1,065 households.

of the subjects are quite young, their ages are categorized into three groups: 19 or younger, 20 - 24, and 25 or older.

Kwun Tong was an undeveloped area in the mid-fifties with a population of a few thousand in a sprinkling of villages. Today, after roughly twenty years, it has become a major industrial-residential "satellite town" of Hong Kong, boasting a population of half a million. Approximately 1,600 factories of all sorts in 1971 were employing 16 per cent of the total working force in Hong Kong's industries.[5] In addition, many large public housing schemes, an important part of the new towns development efforts of the Hong Kong Government, have provided residences for over three-quarters of Kwun Tong's population.[6] Kwun Tong is thus a new creation which plays a significant role in the social and economic development of Hong Kong as a whole. Kwun Tong being a planned community, knowledge of the educational attainment and hence potential contribution of its people to the quality of manpower should be an important ingredient in the planning process. Such knowledge should also stimulate thinking about the improvement of educational and other social services which are essential to the development of a community.

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[5] Chan Ying-keung, The Rise and Growth of Kwun Tong: A Study of Planned Urban Development, research report of the Social Research Centre, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1973, p. 22.

[6] Unpublished 1971 Census data, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

FINDINGS

Overall pattern of educational mobility

The proportion of sons with more schooling than their fathers has remained roughly constant over time, being slightly over half of each of the three age cohorts (Table 1). The chances of becoming upwardly mobile educationally have not been improved. In fact, indications are that they may have dropped somewhat over the past decade or so when paternal levels of schooling do not seem to have improved. (The proportions of sons whose fathers have completed primary schooling or above are 33 per cent, 43 per cent, and 33 per cent, respectively, among the 25-or-older, 20-24, and 19-or-younger age groups.)

Since whether sons have more education than their fathers may be less important than how much education a son has actually received in terms of securing job opportunities and social mobility, we should consider not just aggregate rates of educational mobility but also the differences in rates of actual educational attainment.

Access to different levels of education

In Table 2, we are considering differential access to four levels of education: (a) some primary school, (b) primary school graduation, (d) some secondary school, and (d) secondary school graduation or more. Each cell within a given section (corresponding to a given level of education) of the table indicates the percentage of sons with a particular family background (represented by father's education) and age who had reached a specified level of education.

Table 1. Intergenerational Educational Mobility* by Age

Age	Educational Mobility			Total	
	Upward	Stable	Downward	%	N
19 or younger	55.0	33.3	11.7	100.0	171
20 - 24	56.0	36.3	7.7	100.0	168
25 or older	57.1	31.7	11.1	99.9	126

*
Derived from comparing son's educational attainment with that of his father.

The first question that concerns us here is: has there been a steady increase over time in the completion of successively higher levels of education for sons from each social stratum? As the figures in Table 2 indicate, the answer appears to be in the negative. It is true, though, that more sons of fathers with no or some primary schooling have attained at least some primary schooling over time. Such attainment is approaching 100 per cent, which has been the case for sons of fathers who had completed primary school or above. For the attainment levels of "primary graduate" and "some secondary," by comparison, the percentage reaching the education level concerned shows some increase, in almost all social strata, from the 25-or-older age-group to the 20-24 age group, but decreases among the 19-or-younger age-group. In the case of graduating from secondary school or above, it is quite clear that very few of the 19-or-younger age group have been able to attain this level of education relative to the two older age-groups. Overall, then, there is not, with

Table 2 Percentage of sons obtaining a given level of
education by father's education and age

| Son's age | Father's education | | | | | Attainment gap (%) (col.5 - col. 1) |
	No schooling (1)	Some primary (2)	Primary graduate (3)	Some secondary (4)	Secondary graduate or more (5)	
A. Some primary						
19 or younger	91.5 (35)*	100 (80)	100 (30)	100 (15)	100 (11)	+ 8.5
20 - 24	84.8 (33)	98.4 (62)	100 (45)	100 (16)	100 (12)	+15.2
25 or older	83.7 (43)	90.2 (41)	100 (19)	92.8 (14)	100 (9)	+16.3
B. Primary graduate						
19 or younger	57.1	53.7	96.7	73.3	90.9	+33.8
20 - 24	60.6	67.7	93.4	87.5	100	+39.4
25 or older	37.3	56.1	100	78.6	100	+62.7
C. Some secondary						
19 or younger	11.4	22.5	30.0	33.3	72.7	+61.3
20 - 24	36.4	37.1	46.6	68.8	91.7	+55.3
25 or older	23.3	36.6	63.2	50.0	100	+76.7
D. Secondary graduate or more						
19 or younger	0	2.5	10.0	0	18.2	+18.2
20 - 24	12.1	9.7	28.9	18.5	66.7	+54.6
25 or older	9.3	14.6	31.6	7.1	66.7	+57.4
Partial Gammas: Son's ed. x age/ father's ed.#	.085	.075	.353	.176	.549	

*Base N for the percentage, the same for the given age-group from the given
social background (father's education) at different levels of educational
attainment.

#Son's ed. x father's ed./age : 19 or younger : .404; 20 - 24 : .395;
25 or older : .501

few exceptions, a pattern of steady increase over time in the percentage
of sons completing a given level of education. Indeed, indications are
that <u>fewer sons of the younger cohorts attained the same level of education</u>
<u>as did those of the older cohort</u> (the partial Gammas between son's
education and age are all positive, especially for sons whose fathers
had completed primary schooling or above), <u>particularly in post-primary</u>
<u>schooling</u>.

Secondly, let us consider whether, for each age cohort, an
association exists between the chances of attaining a given level of
education and father's education. Take, for example, the 35 sons in
the upper-left-hand cell of each section in Table 2 aged 19 or younger
whose fathers received no schooling. We notice that 91 per cent of them
had some primary schooling, 57 per cent graduated from primary school,
11 per cent had some secondary schooling, and nobody graduated from
secondary school. By contrast, among sons of fathers who had graduated
from secondary school or above, 100 per cent had some primary schooling,
91 per cent finished primary school, 73 per cent reached some secondary
school, and 18 per cent graduated from secondary school or above.

Our findings in Table 2 indicate that, <u>for each age cohort, the</u>
<u>chances of reaching any given level of education</u> tend to increase with
<u>father's education</u>. The differential is not very large for reaching
some primary school, probably because primary schooling is commonly
accepted as "basic" and also because it has expanded very rapidly in
the last decade or so. For graduation from primary school and above,
the chances of attainment clearly improve with "better" social origin,
although there are some irregularities when it comes to graduation from
secondary school or above. The improvement is often quite substantial

(as much as 77 percentage points for reaching some secondary school among the sons in the 25-or-older age group from the two extreme social origin categories). The effect of father's education on son's education clearly exists at all levels of educational attainment. This is also indicated by the fairly high and positive partial Gammas between son's education and father's education controlling for son's age.

Since father's education does make a difference in the chances of reaching a given education level for each age cohort and since rates of completion fluctuate (except at the "some primary" level) fairly consistently across age cohorts, we should examine whether the educational "attainment gap" between children from the two extreme strata appears to have increased or decreased over time. For each age cohort, this gap is represented by the difference between the percentage of sons with uneducated fathers who reached a given level of education and those whose fathers had completed secondary school or above who also reached that level of education (see column 6 in Table 2).

In section A of Table 1, we can see that status differences in some primary school attendance diminish from 16 per cent for those in the 25-or-older age group to 8.5 per cent among those aged 19 or younger. The attainment gap for this level of education has thus decreased, reflecting the effect of expansion of primary schooling.

Differences in graduation from primary school are considerably larger, as compared with those in some primary school attendance. There is, however, noticeable decline in status disparities over time, from a difference of 63 per cent among those aged 25 or older to 34 per cent in the youngest group. Such disparities are likely to continue to diminish as the percentage of sons of better educated fathers who complete

primary school approaches 100 per cent and the effect of free primary

schooling is allowed a longer time to crystallize. Nevertheless, it

should be noted that over 40 per cent of the youngest men of fathers with

some primary or no schooling do not have the chance of finishing primary

school.

For secondary school attendance, the size of the attainment gap

is even larger. Status differences in going to secondary school fluctuate

over time, being as large as 77 per cent in the 25-or-older age group,

decreasing to 55 per cent in the 20-24 age group, but increasing again to

61 per cent among the youngest group. Even if we use the sons of men who

had at least some primary schooling as the "bottom" social category in

calculating the attainment gap, the disparities due to social background

in the chances of reaching some secondary school are still quite

substantial, being at least 50 per cent. In either case, the opportunity

gap among the two younger age cohorts is not as wide as that among those

aged 25 or more.

The gap in graduation from secondary school also seems to have

narrowed over time, from 57 per cent to 18 per cent. However, the

situation here contains some irregularities. First, the rates of

completing secondary school among the youngest cohort are considerably

lower than in the other two age cohorts, which may be partly due to

the fact that some members in the 19 or younger cohort are not old enough

to have completed secondary school anyway. Second, the rates of attainment

among sons of fathers who had some secondary schooling are even lower

than for those whose fathers had only finished primary school. Our

data are insufficient to suggest any clues as to why this is so. At

any rate, the decrease in the attainment gap over time at the level

of secondary school graduation may be more apparent than real and would

probably be much less of a decrease if all of the youngest cohort are old

enough to have passed the average secondary school graduation age.

As already pointed out, the relative sizes of the attainment

gaps at various levels of education are such that the status effects on

attainment are much more pronounced at the primary school graduation

level and above than at the some primary school attendance level. This

reflects that having some primary education may be considered basic by

all social categories alike. It is also related to the expansion of

primary educationa and the provision of free school places at Government

and Government-assisted schools in Hong Kong. At the higher levels of

schooling, however, environmental influences, including those due to

family background, may be more important in determining the chances

of attainment. Indeed, besides and beyond father's education, such.

factors as motivation on the part of the son, his competitive ability,

distractions affecting academic performance, and family's economic

condition all may influence the likelihood with which the son will

attain a given level of education. That such factors may be operative

is suggested by the variability in rates of completion of secondary

school or above in each age cohort.

Conditional Probabilities of Access

So far we have been considering gross rates of access to

various levels of education in different social categories. Since the

proportion of sons who attain a given level of education diminishes at

successively higher levels, we can view the educational system as a

selection process weeding out at various points individuals who lack

the ability, motivation, and resources to proceed further. In addition

to examining gross rates of access, therefore, we can also look at

conditional rates of access to see how likely sons from different social backgrounds may continue to "survive" the system after having crossed a previous hurdle in the selection process.

The data in Table 2 are reorganized and presented in Table 3, for which the interpretation of the figures has changed. Section A of Table 3 shows the percentage of sons in each age and status cohort who reached primary school that eventually graduated from primary school. Section B shows the percentage of primary school graduates who had some secondary schooling, and Section C indicates what percentage of these who had some secondary schooling eventually graduated. Among the youngest sons of some-primary-educated fathers, for example, 66 per cent (Section A) of those who entered primary school eventually graduated. Of these graduates, 34 per cent (Section B) went on to some secondary school, and 11 per cent (Section C) of those who so went eventually finished secondary school. By contrast, the conditional probabilities for sons of fathers who had completed secondary school or more are considerably higher at every stage of education: 91, 80, and 25 per cent respectively. Overall, we see that the influence of social background on conditional access to education is fairly consistent: with a few irregularities (particularly at the level of secondary school graduation), the conditional probabilities increase by at least 25 percentage points (attainment gap) as father's education improves.

Have the conditional probabilities of educational attainment improved over time? One would expect that, in a society where school enrolments are expanding, probabilities of educational attainment would improve over time. Contrary to expectation, however, conditional probabilities have on the whole declined at all three specified

Table 3 Conditional probabilities of sons obtaining a given
level of education by father's education and age

Son's age	Father's education					Attainment gap (%) (Col. 5 - col. 1)	PG1[d]
	No schooling (1)	Some primary (2)	Primary graduate (3)	Some secondary (4)	Secondary graduate or more (5)		
	A. Proportion graduating from primary school among those reaching some primary school						
19 or younger	$62.5_{(32)}$[a]	$66.3_{(80)}$	$96.7_{(30)}$	$37.3_{(15)}$	$90.9_{(11)}$	+27.4	+.400
20 - 24	$71.5_{(28)}$	$68.8_{(61)}$	$93.4_{(45)}$	$87.5_{(16)}$	$100_{(12)}$	+28.5	+.492
25 or older	$44.5_{(36)}$	$62.2_{(37)}$	$100_{(19)}$	$84.6_{(13)}$	$100_{(9)}$	+55.5	+.683
PG2[e]	-.263	-.032	+.151	+.258	1.0	.....	.....
	B. Proportion attaining at least some secondary school among those graduating from primary school						
19 or younger	$20.0_{(20)}$[b]	$34.0_{(53)}$	$31.0_{(29)}$	$45.5_{(11)}$	$80.0_{(10)}$	+60.0	+.344
20 - 24	$60.0_{(20)}$	$54.8_{(42)}$	$50.0_{(42)}$	$78.6_{(14)}$	$91.6_{(12)}$	+31.6	+.211
25 or older	$62.5_{(16)}$	$65.3_{(23)}$	$63.2_{(19)}$	$63.6_{(11)}$	$100_{(9)}$	+37.5	+.220
PG2	+.543	+.414	+.391	+.240	+.719	.....	.....
	C. Proportion graduating from secondary school or above among those reaching at least some secondary school						
19 or younger	$0_{(4)}$[c]	$11.1_{(18)}$	$33.3_{(9)}$	$0_{(5)}$	$25.0_{(8)}$	+25.0	+.320
20 - 24	$33.3_{(12)}$	$26.1_{(23)}$	$61.8_{(21)}$	$27.3_{(11)}$	$72.7_{(11)}$	+39.4	+.322
25 or older	$40.0_{(10)}$	$40.0_{(15)}$	$50.0_{(12)}$	$14.6_{(7)}$	$66.7_{(9)}$	+26.7	+.120
PG2	+.455	+.470	+.149	+.217	+.478	.....	.....

[a] Number of sons reaching some primary school base N for the percentage in the cell concerned.

[b] Number of sons graduating from primary school, base N for the percentage in the cell concerned.

[c] Number of sons reaching some secondary school, base N for the percentage in the cell concerned.

[d] PG1: Partial Gammas: son's ed. x father's ed./age.

[e] PG2: Partial Gammas: son's ed. x age/father's ed.

educational levels, as indicated by the probability figures themselves as well as the magnitude and direction (positive) of the partial Gammas (Son's education X age/father's education, listed at the bottom of each section in Table 3). Only among the sons of fathers with primary or no schooling have the probabilities shown some relative improvement over time concerning graduation from primary school given some primary school attendance (partial Gammas of son's education X age are negative). Among high-status sons, such probabilities have slightly declined. The net result is that the primary school graduation attainment gap has quite clearly narrowed over time.

At the level of some secondary school attendance given primary school graduation, the conditional probabilities have declined for all social categories over time, more so for low-status groups (where fathers completed no more than primary school) than for high-status groups (whose fathers had some secondary schooling or more). The percentage of primary school graduates from the top stratum (whose fathers were at least secondary school graduates) who went on to some secondary school decreased from 100 per cent to 80 per cent, while that from the lowest stratum (whose fathers were uneducated) dropped from 63 per cent to 20 per cent. Despite the overall decline in attainment probabilities, therefore, the attainment gap between the top and bottom strata has in fact widened, from 37 per cent to 60 per cent. Even if we use the stratum with some primary-educated fathers as the bottom strata for comparison, the gap still has widened from 35 per cent to 46 per cent. This finding is significant in that it provides new and different information on the chances of reaching secondary school. When we were examining gross attainment rates earlier, we saw that the attainment

gap at this level of education seems to have diminished somewhat over time although there is some fluctuation. Given that the hurdle of primary school graduation is passed, however, it appears that being from a low social stratum is more handicapped than before (attainment gap widening) in reaching some secondary school. This is reflected in the relatively higher partial Gamma (son's education X father's education = .344) for the youngest age cohort than for the two older cohorts at this level of educational attainment.

Finally, as shown in section C of Table 3, it is clear that probabilities of graduating from secondary school given some secondary school attendance have generally decreased over time, although they have improved somewhat for the 20-24 cohort as compared with the oldest cohort whose fathers were primary school graduates or above. Over time, the attainment gap seems to have first widened (from 25 per cent to 39 per cent), and then retreated in the oldest cohort (27 per cent). But the trend is not entirely clear partly because, as indicated before when discussing gross attainment rates, some members in the youngest cohort are too young for secondary school graduation. Furthermore, the conditional attainment rates, like the gross rates, do not vary linearly with social background although the higher rates tend to be found in the high-status groups, which reflects the point made earlier that family background per se may have less systematic effect on higher levels of educational attainment. This may be particularly the case once the individual has already reached secondary school. That this may be so is also reflected in the higher partial Gammas in section A compared with those in sections B and C for each age cohort. We can infer that father's education probably affects the chances of graduation from

primary school (although this itself has weakened over time) more than

the chances of attending secondary school once you finished primary school

or of completing secondary school once you are there. Other environmental

factors may well come into play in determining whether the individual

will eventually complete secondary school. Our data are, however,

insufficient for such an inquiry.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We have in this report provided some empirical data for

examining the patterns of educational mobility and attainment among some

residents of the industrial town of Kwun Tong in Hong Kong.

Given that school enrolment rates have been on the increase

during this time, one would expect that more children of various social

strata, especially those from the lower strata, would have attained a

given level of education. Our data show that although practically all

children of various social strata have had at least some primary education,

the proportions completing primary school and reaching successively higher

levels have generally declined over time for all strata.

The selection process of schooling starts early in the primary

school years, much to the disadvantage of lower status sons, so that,

for instance, as few as 45 per cent of those from the "bottom" stratum

(fathers had no schooling) who entered primary school in the nineteen

fifties or earlier (25-or-older age group) eventually graduated. It

seems, however, that the expansion of primary schooling has improved the

chances of primary school graduation for children of deprived families,

for the attainment gap between sons of the top and bottom strata at this

level of education has clearly dwindled over the years. This may also

indicate that primary school graduation has increasingly become a norm

of basic education that has spread to and accepted by the lower strata of
the society. This trend is significant in that father's education used to
have a considerable influence on the chances of graduation from primary
school, more so than on the chances of going from primary to secondary
school or graduation from secondary school once you are there, which
suggests that in those days (roughly fifteen years ago) completing primary
school was the more important and difficult hurdle to cross for lower
strata children. At present, this level of educational attainment is
without question the very minimum requirement for entry into the job market.

While the influence of father's education on the chances of
graduation from primary school has decreased (but still rather substantial),
we found that the relative chances of the sons of uneducated fathers
having graduated from primary school and reached some secondary school,
compared with the sons of better educated fathers, have diminished over
time. Furthermore, having poorly educated fathers has also been somewhat
a handicap in finishing secondary school once entering it, but here the
differential due to father's education is not monotonic. This suggests
that whether parents will send their children to secondary school when
they graduate from primary school is probably a bigger decision for parents
to make, largely depending on parents' own education and financial ability,
than the decision to carry their children through secondary school once
they are already in. With employment opportunities for child labor
(legal minimum employment age in Hong Kong is 14) easily available in
the industrial town of Kwun Tong, it is not unlikely that parents in
deprived families would rather send their children to work than to
school when they finish primary education.[7]

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[7] In the 1971 Census it was reported that an especially high rate of
employment (80 per cent) of out-of-school children aged 10 to 16 was
found in New Kowloon of which Kwun Tong is part.

Interpretation of the trend in differential educational attainment among the various social strata has to be limited since the age groups contained in our data spread over only a short time period. At the same time the pattern of decrease over time in the proportions of sons reaching a given level of education, as shown in the data described in this paper, may not adequately represent the overall educational situation in Hong Kong, but may be partly due to Kwun Tong's being an industrial town offering many job opportunities. It may be that most of the sons in our sample, hence those in Kwun Tong as a whole as well, belong to the lower socio-economic classes of Hong Kong society, in which case it is possible that older children are given a higher priority in receiving education. It may also be that some of the older subjects in our sample went to secondary school before their families moved into Kwun Tong which has relatively few secondary schools.[8] Those children who began their schooling in Kwun Tong would thus be partly handicapped by the lack of secondary school places, and would have to seek such places in other parts of Hong Kong which would incur extra expenses and certain inconveniences to parents. Since our data do not provide controls for such factors as family income, son's birth order, family's length of residence in Kwun Tong, and location of schools attended, these interpretations are merely speculative and have yet to be tested.

Despite the absence of controls on other variables which are not possible in our data, our findings do point to the existence of discrepancies in educational opportunity among the various social strata. In most cases, sons of poorly educated fathers, as compared with those of better educated fathers, are at a disadvantage in reaching any given level of education and in proceeding further given that a particular level is

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[8] According to the list of community organizations in Kwun Tong compiled in March, 1972 by the Kwun Tong Community Centre of the Government's Social Welfare Department, there were at that time 77 primary and 15 secondary schools in Kwun Tong.

reached. What precisely accounts for the disadvantage is an important research problem which, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

Finally, our findings suggest that any claim of improvement in the educational system cannot be based only or even largely on increases in aggregate school enrolment figures. Even the finding that over half of our subjects in a given age group have had more schooling than their fathers does not really say much about any real improvement in educational attainment relative to peers. It is only when we examine attainment rates at given educational levels among different social groups that we begin to see variations in access to educational opportunities. Such variations would serve as a basis for evaluating the degree to which the goal of educational equality of opportunity is achieved.