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YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF THE YOUTH TRAINING  
SCHEME:  
A CASE STUDY OF RECENT STATE INTERVENTION IN THE YOUTH  
LABOUR MARKET

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## SUMMARY

The Youth Training Scheme (YTS) is a state sponsored training programme for 16 and 17 year old school-leavers. This thesis sets out to explore how young people experience leaving school and enter the YTS. It draws on data generated by a one-off survey of fifth form school pupils, semi-structured interviews amongst a sample of YTS trainees and previously unpublished figures from the Training Agency's '100% Follow-Up Survey of YTS Leavers'. The thesis takes some of the key assumptions and assertions on which YTS' claimed successes have been built and examines them in relation to the actual ways in which young people make sense of, and cope with, the transition from school to a training scheme.

There has been much written about the development of YTS but there is an acknowledged dearth of information on the views and experiences of young people themselves. In addressing this problem, the thesis provides an addition to the existing body of sociological knowledge relating to young people and their movement into the labour market. Furthermore, the thesis addresses some important policy considerations relating to Britain's continued inability to provide youngsters with quality training for jobs.

Contrary to claims that YTS has 'revolutionized' young people's attitudes towards training and the labour market, the research illustrates its continued failure to provide them with a credible training alternative on leaving school. YTS fails to grasp the significance of work for many working class youngsters, as they grow up and prepare to leave school, and so ignores their consequent ambivalence towards the training package offered by the Scheme. In addition, it illustrates that YTS has failed to provide youngsters with a period of quality foundation training and explores some of the mechanisms that account for the Scheme's chronic inability to retain youngsters for the full length of their training programmes. It also explores young people's attitudes towards compulsory training and concludes with some pointers as to the likely achievements of its successor, Youth Training.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMB	Area Manpower Board
ATO	Approved Training Organisation
CPRS	Central Policy Review Staff
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education
ITB	Industrial Training Programme
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
JCP	Job Creation Programme
LEA	Local Education Authority
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NTI	New Training Initiative
OTF	Occupational Training Family
RSA	Royal Society for the Arts
RSLA	Raising of the School Leaving AGE
TA	Training Agency
TECs	Training and Enterprise Councils
TC	Training Commission
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TOC	Training Occupational Classification
WEP	Work Experience Programme
YOP	Youth Opportunities Programme
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

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"Career opportunities are the ones that never knock"  
(Career Opportunities, The Clash, CBS, 1977)

"In that process of growing up working class most of the lessons are harsh, negative and alienating. It is time that the entry into work of the vast majority of young people was designed consciously so that the experience encountered and the skills developed can be integrated and extended as part of their general education. Britain needs highly-skilled and educated young workers, it does not need 'spare parts' or 'cannon fodder' for employers" (Dan Finn, Training Without Jobs, MacMillan, 1987:200).

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH TRAINING IN BRITAIN

#### Introduction

The movement from school to work has undergone considerable change over recent years. Full employment after World War Two meant jobs for working class youngsters were plentiful and their gradual entry into the labour market could be accommodated. However, as economic conditions deteriorated during the 1970s, the transition into work took on a new meaning for many school-leavers. Employers could now pick and choose their new recruits and young people experienced increasing competition for available vacancies from other sections of the work force.

With rising unemployment disproportionately affecting the young, the problem became associated with the supply qualities of school-leavers themselves. Young people were defined as lacking the skills and attributes that employers now needed and, as such, increasing state intervention in the labour market sought to remedy these deficiencies. Through a series of special measures, labour market programmes for the young unemployed culminated with the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) in 1983.

The YTS represented state intervention in the labour market on a massive scale. Unlike the temporary measures of the past, it was to be a permanent route by which young people would enter work. The scheme was aimed at all school-leavers, not just the unemployed,

intending to provide a comprehensive training framework that would simultaneously get youngsters back into work and address Britain's chronic lack of skilled workers. Its budget ran into billions, the number of trainees into millions and it spawned an extensive network of training and work experience providers. Yet, despite the scheme's considerable scale, the attitude of school-leavers remained deeply ambivalent.

### **The changing transition from school to work**

Young people's entry patterns into work have undergone radical change over the past four decades. Throughout the affluent years of the post-war reconstruction, movement from full-time education into the labour market was considered relatively unproblematic for most working class school-leavers. Employers' demands for labour meant that jobs, at all levels, were plentiful. By 1950, one third of male school-leavers were receiving training through apprenticeships, although employers' reluctance to take on and train young women meant only 8% received comparable opportunities (Keil et al, 1966:117). For those who could not, or did not want to, secure "good jobs" (Ainley, 1987:79), employment opportunities in semi- and unskilled work, often well-paid and relatively secure, were easily available.

Much of the academic literature of the period underlies the ease with which working class youngsters were making the transition into work. "For most young people there is a basic continuity in their experience

at home, at school and at work" (Ashton & Field, 1976:12). More detailed studies revealed the enthusiasm with which many youngsters anticipated leaving education, "to many children the values of school had always appeared irrelevant to life as it was actually lived, but the values of work fitted in with those of home and in the neighbourhood" (Carter, 1962:210). The expectation of work was a fundamental part of the process of growing up working class, and the limited freedom offered by the wage held an almost emancipatory appeal after the often oppressive experience of education. It "gave a dignity and a sense of freedom which had not been felt at school" and the "status of worker ... was something to be cherished" (ibid:72-3).

For most, moving from school to work was accomplished with only minimum disruption, "the gap to them was no more than a modest change of routine" (ibid:211). Youngsters displayed a considerable familiarity with what lay ahead and, consequently, "many children had not expected much from work" (203). But, like many other working class youngsters during this period (Allen & Smith, 1975::87; Corrigan, 1979:92) the banalities of wage labour produced a tendency to change their jobs frequently. Job hopping offered "a way to cope with the world of work rather than problems of adjusting to it: children had the confidence to change jobs" (Carter, 1962:187) before the constraints of long-term instrumentalism set in.

Although focusing almost exclusively on the

experiences of white males, other studies underlined the competencies which youngsters brought to their new working environments and the consequent ease with which they made the transition. Although employers often assumed that their new recruits lacked knowledge of the demands of work, it was found that "young people have a wide range of knowledge about their work situations" and that this knowledge was "acquired before work begins" (Keil, 1976:134-5, their emphasis). In 1977, a study of new recruits to GEC, in Rugby, found that they entered work with modest expectations. "The reasons why many of them expressed satisfaction was that their expectations of the shop floor had been realistic: they did not expect to find clean jobs and comfort". Indeed, the expectancy of "the engineering industry in particular is often thought to be dirty, noisy and smelly with employees confined to workshops" (Simon, 1977:21).

This is not to suggest that the transition to work, for school-leavers, was not unaccompanied by anxieties and uncertainties, but it was not the quantum leap that some had suggested (e.g. Bazelgette, 1973). Knowledge of, and entry into, work had to be located within wider cultural processes involved in growing up "where family, neighbourhood, peer group and school combine to forge sets of attitudes towards, and expectations about, work" (Brannen, 1980:25). In a comprehensive review of the literature, it was concluded that "the assumption that the entry into work

is generally a traumatic one is largely unsupported by the evidence" (Clarke, 1980:1).

### **The return to mass unemployment**

The ease with which most working class youngsters entered work was interrupted by the deterioration of employment prospects during the latter half of the 1960s. In the immediate post-war period, unemployment was heralded as a thing of the past, averaging 1.7% between 1951 and 1966 and bottoming out at less than 1% in 1955-56 (Deacon, 1981:67). Demand for young workers was such that average unemployment rates for the under 25s, over the same period, were even lower. However, the deflationary policies introduced by the 1966 Labour Government produced a leap in the general level of unemployment and the upward trend continued into the 1970s, reaching 3% by 1971 (Sinfield & Showler, 1981:3). As the effects of the oil crisis worked their way through the economy, unemployment took another jump, and by 1976 it had reached 5.4% (Wells, 1983:27).

Whilst the economy was buoyant, young people experienced lower general levels of unemployment but as the crisis deepened, employers' demands for young workers decreased at a disproportionate rate. The rapid deterioration in economic performance, during this period, exposed young people's often tenuous grip on the labour market. Between 1974 and 1975, unemployment amongst the under 25s leapt from 5.2% to 10.9%, whilst the comparative increase for the over 25s was 1.5%

(Ashton, 1986:105). Amongst minimum age school-leavers the rise was even more prolific, increasing from 4.3%, in 1974, to 12.6% in 1975 (Wells, 1983:ibid). By 1980, 16.1% of the under 25 age group were unemployed, but this had risen to 21.1% for the under 18s, against a national average of 6.7% (Ashton, 1986:ibid).

Young people's particular sensitivity to changes in the general demand for labour was vividly illustrated by Department of Employment estimates that showed an increase of 1% in male unemployment rates, was accompanied by a 1.7% increase amongst male teenagers. For young women the problem was even more acute, the same 1% increase in rates of unemployment amongst adult women leading to a 3% increase for teenagers (Employment Gazette, March 1980). By August 1986, when unemployment had reached its peak, rates amongst the 18 to 19 age group had risen to 23%, compared to 15% for the 25 to 34 age group, and 9.5% for the 35 to 44 age range (Lewis, 1986:1).

#### **The vulnerability of young people in the labour market**

Young people's susceptibility to unemployment was the product of a number of factors. Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s the number of young people as a proportion of the working population steadily increased. The raising of the school-leaving age in 1973 reduced the size of the youth cohort coming into the labour market by about one quarter but between 1970 and 1976 the number of young people actually seeking work increased by about 100,000 (Makeham, 1980:12-3).

However, demographic increases during the late 1950s and early 1960s were not accompanied by similar rises in unemployment amongst the young and, although aggravating the overall situation, other factors proved more significant.

Against a backdrop of the general slackening in employers' demands for labour, young people faced growing competition from adult workers with proven employment track records and work experience. For many older workers, the threat of unemployment meant readjusting their job expectations downwards into areas previously occupied by the young, and an uncertain labour market meant those in jobs showed greater reluctance to leave. New openings for the young were thus squeezed (Roberts, 1984:87). In addition, employers could draw their new recruits from the increasing number of adult women returning to work. In contrast to the young, employers tended to perceive adult women as a more stable and flexible work force, open to greater control and more tolerant of monotonous and repetitive jobs (Raffe, 1983a:17).

The increase in redundancy programmes also affected levels of youth unemployment. Mass redundancies, through rationalisation and streamlining, meant last in, first out policies disproportionately affected newer recruits. Furthermore, higher levels of unionisation amongst older workers meant they were in a better position to protect their jobs, as the spate of industrial legislation in the 1960s and 1970s gave



certain categories of established workers greater job security. The Redundancy Payments Act of 1975 made severance payments obligatory for certain groups of long service employees (Sinfield and Showler, 1981:22) making young workers cheaper and easier to dispose of.

The acceleration of structural changes in the economy also affected young people's chances of securing work. Manufacturing industry shed around three million jobs during the 1970s and 1980s (Jackson, 1985:65) and this long-term decline heavily influenced unemployment levels amongst the young, particularly in the area of apprenticeship provision (Makeham, 1982:3). The expansion of the service sector failed to off-set this decline since it tended to draw its new recruits from women returners to the labour market. Within manufacturing industry, the increasing trend towards the automation of production techniques displaced existing settings for production workers whilst creating more technical and administrative posts (Roberts et al, *ibid*:243, Ashton & MaGuire, 1982:45). Where there were vacancies, firms were increasingly looking to better qualified youngsters to fill their recruitment needs and the demands for less qualified and unskilled young people became almost non-existent in certain areas.

With the squeeze on profits, many firms' training budgets were the first to feel the pinch. After reaching a peak in the mid 1960s, the number of apprenticeships, the traditional preserve of school-

leavers, had been halved by 1980 (Roberts, 1984:47). Short-term considerations of profit meant long-term investment suffered.

"What employers were concerned about ... was the total cost of employing an inexperienced young person which included not just the cost of wages but the cost of supervision, disruption of production and the waste of materials involved in training" (Roberts et al, 1986:38).

Those apprenticeships that remained became massively over-subscribed (Lee & Wrench, 1983:15) and fewer job opportunities, generally, meant employers could become increasingly selective in those youngsters that they took on and trained.

As monetarism gained economic and political ascendancy, greater emphasis was given to the relationship between labour costs and unemployment. Through a comparative study of national unemployment statistics and labour market trends, it was argued that employment levels amongst under 18s were reduced as the wage differentials between adult and young workers declined (Wells, 1983:1). Young people were, in effect, becoming relatively too expensive for employers to hire. Yet the Department of Employment's own research from the Incomes Data Service contradicted this, claiming that, between 1959 and 1976, "the average levels of relative pay had little to do with the totals of youth unemployment" (IDS quoted in Allum & Quigley, 1983:9). Thus "there is no empirical data to sustain the Government's claim that growing rates for young

workers deter kindly capitalists from taking on school-leavers" (ibid:9-10).

However, the overpricing of young labour provided the rationale behind concerted government attempts to drive down wage rates. The failure of the allowance, paid to participants on the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), to keep pace with inflation fuelled criticism that the government was trying to force down the price of young workers. Added strength was given to these claims when, in 1982, the Young Worker Scheme, and its successor, the New Worker Scheme, offered employers a subsidy to take on young workers below a fixed wage level. The reform of the Wages Councils, in 1986, removed approximately half a million under 21s from legal controls over minimum wages (Lewis, 1986:13) and the development of the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) maintained the offensive against young workers' wage rates. Young people, it was argued, needed to be priced back into employment.

Monetarist theory also equated rising unemployment with the expansion of state benefits for the unemployed. The availability of a guaranteed income, it was argued, produced a disincentive to work and accounted for the increase in voluntary unemployment in the post-war period. However,

"the empirical evidence suggests that redundancy payments have had virtually no effect, and that unemployment, earnings-related and supplementary benefits may have had some marginal unemployment-inducing effects up to the early 1970s but

that little additional inducement  
is likely to exist subsequently"  
(Showler, 1983:45).

### **Crisis and the deficient young**

By the late 1970s, the traditional pattern of entry into work was no longer valid and increasing numbers of working class school-leavers were experiencing periods of unemployment as endemic to their entry into the labour market (e.g. Markall & Finn, 1981:18). As more and more youngsters failed to find jobs, the emerging gap between school and work became redefined as a mismatch between education and the needs of industry (Finn, 1982:49-50). Schooling was identified as responsible for failing to provide young workers with the qualities that employers were now demanding. Building on this idea of a mismatch, the increasingly politically sensitive issue of unemployment amongst the young became firmly located on the shoulders of school-leavers themselves. A young person's inability to make a successful transition into the occupational structure became associated with the lack of qualities needed by employers, thus shifting the focus of debate away from the performance of the economy, problems of investment and the organisation of work, towards the supply qualities of young labour.

The idea of young people as deficient workers began to be articulated at the highest levels during the 1970s. The so-called 'Great Debate' on education, fuelled by James Callaghan's Oxford speech in 1976, marked the political acceptance that rising

unemployment, amongst the young, was the product of the falling quality of school-leavers coming into the labour market (Davies, 1986:28). Particular emphasis was given to the increasingly vociferous complaints by employers and industrialists who, for the first time in the post-war period, extended their concern over the quality of labour, into the education system as a whole (Brown, 1989:108).

It was claimed that progressive teaching techniques, the erosion of traditional values in school, and anti-industrial bias amongst teachers, were producing young workers who were not only underqualified but who also lacked the discipline needed for work, and who were ignorant of the demands of adult working life (Frith, 1980a:8). Research commissioned for the Holland Report, published in 1977, articulated employers' criticisms of educational standards, concluding that "the calibre of young people had deteriorated over the past five years" (MSC, 1977:17). But as Frith (1980b) pointed out, these criticisms of falling standards were closely associated with complaints about young people's individual dispositions. That they lacked an acceptable "attitude/personality, appearance/manners and inadequate knowledge of the 'three Rs'" (MSC, 1977:17).

Paradoxically, it was not their new recruits' lack of knowledge of work that lay at the heart of employers' complaints, but their actual familiarity with what lay ahead (Frith, 1980b:34). Youngsters were

clearly realistic about the types of jobs on offer and what working life entailed. "Young workers' restlessness, their readiness to chop and change jobs for 'trivial reasons', their immunity from the constraints of long-term instrumentality" were all recognized traits (ibid:38). Whilst the economy remained buoyant, school-leavers showed little difficulty in making the successful transition into the labour market and employers' recruitment strategies anticipated the consequent high level of labour turnover (Ainley, 1987:76). It was young people's knowledge that work was often unpleasant, repetitive and intrinsically unrewarding that employers would no longer accommodate.

#### **The rise of state intervention in the youth labour market**

It was this mismatch between education and the needs of employers that provided the basis for increasing state intervention in the labour market aimed at the young. Where school had failed to instil the discipline required by employers, the state could succeed. Added to this, rising unemployment amongst school-leavers renewed fears about its impact on the social fabric and the consequent possibilities of social unrest from youngsters exposed to unemployment for long periods (Mungham, 1982:36-7). As such, Edward Heath's Conservative Government embarked on a major expansion of vocational preparation for young people in 1972, introducing the Training Opportunities Programme

(TOPs), in which 20,000 of the 100,000 proposed places were to be reserved for young people (Lindley, 1983:348).

Pressure to do something about the politically embarrassing levels of youth unemployment, and a genuine desire to help youngsters into work, led to a rapid expansion in the range and quantity of special measures under the next Labour Government. Channelled through the newly created Manpower Services Commission (MSC), the new measures were planned as short-term palliatives, reflecting the continued labour movement orthodoxy that the rise in unemployment was a temporary measure and could be solved through the general reflation of the economy (Gregory & Noble, 1982:71-2).

MSC special measures began in 1975 with the Job Creation Programme (JCP), followed closely by the Work Experience Programme (WEP), in 1976, which catered specifically for the needs of young people. WEP represented by far the greatest penetration of special measures into the labour market, paying a fixed, non-negotiable rate, well below junior apprentice levels, for young people to gain experience in a work environment (ibid:71-2).

The increasing equation of unemployment with deficiencies in the supply of labour was again illustrated by the publication of a MSC document, 'Training for Vital Skills', in 1976. This marked a significant change in industrial policy, viewing the

main problems associated with a slack labour market as one of securing a sufficient supply of general or transferable skills (Lindley, 1983:348). Its recommendations included increasing financial support to apprenticeships, through the system of Industrial Training Boards (ITBs), and a programme of collective funding to cover the training needs of the whole population. This was rapidly followed by another MSC document, 'Towards a Comprehensive Manpower Policy', which argued that it was becoming increasingly urgent to turn the ad hoc responses to unemployment into a systematically developed, comprehensive labour market policy that would "create a new attitude towards manpower" (MSC, 1976:6). Again, the focus of its argument rested on the quality of youth labour entering the market and it identified the problem as one of "too many young people lacking the basic skills and knowledge needed for work" (ibid:20). As a result, it was necessary "to ensure that policy towards young people is not fragmented" (ibid:21).

The search for a unified approach to youth unemployment was outlined the following year. In the Holland Report, it was accepted that levels of youth unemployment were likely to remain high for some time and the solution was presented in the form of "a new programme of opportunities for young people". At its heart lay the belief that "young people must have adequate preparation for their working lives" (MSC, 1977:33-4). To this end, it recommended the



establishing of the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) which was to provide a mass programme of vocational preparation and work experience for unemployed school-leavers.

### **A new opportunity for young people?**

Between 1978 and 1983, the Youth Opportunities Programme established the beginnings of a new relationship between education, training and the labour market. A new vocabulary of preparatory training and vocational skills arose, presenting themselves as meeting the requirements of school-leavers in a rapidly changing labour market. In doing so, young workers were actively redefined to accommodate the changing needs of the economy.

The Youth Opportunities Programme contained two broad categories of help for the young unemployed, whilst paying them an allowance of £23.50 per week. The first created a series of work preparation courses, mainly in schools, colleges and workshops, lasting for anything up to 10 weeks. Absorbing WEP, the second category offered several ways for youngsters to obtain work experience, ranging from community service, to the most common, the unfortunately named Work Experience on Employers Premises (WEEP).

YOP was to expand the existing provision for unemployed school-leavers by allowing mainstream private enterprise and public services to enter the scheme, providing places lasting between six and 12 months. Although essentially an employer-led scheme,

industry would not have to face any additional costs as both trainees' allowances, and any overheads incurred in providing places, were met by the MSC through a direct subsidy to employers.

It was initially a success, providing 162,000 places during the first year, rising to 550,000 places by 1981-82; half of all school-leavers (Raffe, 1983b:299). The majority of these places were on WEEP schemes, approximately 250,000 during 1981 (Williamson 1982:84), with work experience programmes generally accounting for 84% of YOP participants during this period (Atkinson & Rees, 1982:7). Its successful selling to industry was equalled by its initial popularity with the young, only 1600 places remained vacant during its first year (Roberts, 1984:82). This popularity was almost matched by its success in leading youngsters into jobs, with 70% of its first year participants going on to secure full-time employment after completing their programmes (Finn, 1983a:18).

However, as the 1980s progressed and the British economy lurched further into crisis, the early consensus around YOP began to crumble. After its first year, employment rates among YOP graduates fell sharply so that even the MSC was admitting that less than 40% were finding full-time work on leaving (Finn, 1983a:ibid). Trade union estimates put the figure as low as 10% in some areas (Gregory & Noble, 1982:75). Criticisms were also made of the programme's off-the-job training, an element that had been crucial in

securing TUC co-operation, with only one third of trainees enjoying the recommended provision (ibid:85). It was being increasingly claimed that YOP was no more than a cosmetic measure, designed mainly to keep young people off the unemployment statistics, raising their aspirations only to return them to the dole.

The programme was also accused of providing employers with a source of cheap labour. The MSC conceded that WEEP was concentrated in small work places beyond the network of formal trade union control, and that 30% of employers were using WEEP participants as a way to substitute for full-time workers (Williamson, 1982:85). These findings were subsequently reinforced by a Youthaid report (Finn, 1983b:21).

The quality of work experience and training came under sharp scrutiny as over 3,000 accidents were recorded during YOP's lifetime, including five fatalities and 23 amputations. The policing of YOP proved almost impossible for the 26 Area Manpower Boards (AMBs) set up to monitor its development. Civil servants were expected to carry out a monitoring process whilst simultaneously being pressurized into expanding the programme as unemployment continued to rise. By 1981, when the backlog of schemes requiring checking by MSC officials was written off, it became clear that monitoring, at best, would be sporadic, at worst, many schemes would operate with only nominal approval. Many trade unions became reluctant to

sanction individual schemes as reported abuses grew with the size of the programme and individual trade unions began to withdraw their support.

By the 1981 Trade Union Congress, support for YOP was beginning to disintegrate and individual affiliates were pressurizing for the withdrawal of co-operation from the programme. However, the threat of losing support for YOP was pre-empted by the first Thatcher Government's New Training Initiative (NTI) announced earlier in the year. Promising a revolution in training for young workers, the Scheme paved the way for a new consensus around continued state intervention in the youth labour market.

#### **A New Training Initiative**

The election of a Conservative Government, in 1979, committed to rolling back the frontiers of the state and reasserting the primacy of market forces, produced real anxieties over continued state intervention in the labour market. Although YOP continued to expand under the new administration, these fears proved initially well-founded and, under pressure of public expenditure cuts, the MSC was forced to cut its already partial guidance service. After 1980, some training programmes began to contract and parts of the MSC were forced into commercial agencies (Jackson, 1986:34). Concerns were again realised by the abolition of all but seven of the 28 Industrial Training Boards, the ending of funding to group training associations and the end of grants to employers which had helped

keep buoyant the rapidly sinking apprenticeship system.

During the summer of 1981, fears about the impact of unemployment on the social fabric were confirmed by the inner city uprisings (Hall, 1987:47). In the wake of the unrest, the Government appeared to do a 'U-turn' over the MSC, guaranteeing future support and paving the way for a new consensus around youth unemployment and training. Articulated through the New Training Initiative, published that year, "the government declared its intention of transforming the relationship between working class youth and the labour market" (Finn, 1987:155).

Endorsing an MSC consultative document, published earlier in the year, the NTI contained "three major national objectives for the future of industrial training" (Department of Employment, 1981:para 1). It proposed to increase training opportunities for both employed and unemployed adult workers and to reform and develop the apprenticeship system for young people. Its main intention, however, was a one billion pound Youth Training Scheme (YTS) to facilitate the

"move towards a position where all young people under the age of 18 have the opportunity either of continuing in full-time education or of entering a period of planned work experience combined with work-related training and education" (ibid:para 1).

The new Scheme was to be a radical departure from the special measures of the past, providing a period of planned work experience and training for both

unemployed and employed school-leavers. Announced one month after the government had decided to abolish the majority of ITBs, and with fewer young people entering apprenticeships than ever before, the declared emphasis was now on the provision of quality training for jobs, and a move away from the unemployment palliatives associated with YOP (Davies, 1986:58). It was to be "first and last a training scheme" and "not about youth unemployment" (MSC, 1981a:1).

However, the scheme maintained some important continuities with YOP. It sought to expand much of its earlier provision and, like its predecessor, was to be an employer-led scheme. YTS was to provide a one year, broad-based training programme that included a minimum commitment to 13 weeks off-the-job training for all trainees. For the first year, 300,000 Mode A places, based with employers, were made available together with 160,000 Mode B places, which were to be located mainly with local authorities and voluntary organisations. Individual schemes were to be monitored by the creation of 55 AMBs which were to reflect the tripartite structure of the MSC, where employers, trade unionists, educationalists and other interest groups were all guaranteed places. With such an extensive monitoring network, it was anticipated that YTS would not displace existing jobs, since it would be well policed, and all schemes would operate with the consent of a relevant trade union.

In response to rising unemployment amongst

the young, the need for the Scheme's swift expansion led to many of these early aims being quickly abandoned. The build up to its launch, in September 1983, was accompanied by an extensive advertising campaign aimed at encouraging employers to participate. But in tempting employers into the Scheme, a number of concessions were made that further removed trainees from the protective parameters of collective bargaining. Trainees on the new Scheme were exempt from the Employment Protection Act and from large areas of race and sex discrimination legislation. They also became marginalized from legislation relating to health and safety protection. Despite recommendations, the training allowance failed to keep pace with inflation and, although provision was made for trade unions to negotiate increases in the allowance at work place level, 80% of trainees still received the basic training allowance (Finn, 1986:56).

The urgent need for places meant AMBs quickly proved ineffective in monitoring the quality of training delivered, and a large number of schemes began without trade union approval. This included removing the trade union veto from schemes run by the Large Companies Unit, which organized schemes on a nationwide basis, and which accounted for one third of all YTS places. Thus, hairdressing schemes, which had been stopped from providing places under YOP, were now allowed to run a YTS under a national agreement.

By their organisational structure, the power

of the AMBs lay in the hands of civil servants, who held a monopoly over the collection and presentation of data relating to the Scheme's performance, and who were responsible for the development of local training policy. "Their [AMBs] lack of real power and influence" (Randall, 1987:8) was reinforced by dividing the Scheme's operational responsibility amongst a host of providers, thus curtailing collective criticism and protecting the MSC's central authority (Ball, 1981). Trade union participation on some boards became, at best, advisory, at worst, a rubber stamping exercise (New Society, 25/10/85).

The original proposal for YTS to cover both employed and unemployed school-leavers was quickly revised as the Scheme failed to attract youngsters already in employment, into YTS' training framework. Its general failure to convince youngsters that it offered quality training was underlined when only 400,000 places were filled in its first year (New Society 08/11/85) and when 80,000 trainees left during the first six months (Dutton, 1984:486). One in five youngsters were leaving their schemes early and one third of YTS 'graduates' were returning to the dole. Young people's reluctance was further evident when, in the 12 months between November 1983 and 1984, 10,701 youngsters suffered benefit penalties for leaving their schemes without good cause, and another 1,163 for failing to take a suitable training place (Finn, 1986:65). In the face of such hostility, the number of



planned places was reduced to 400,000 for the Scheme's second year of which 389,000 places were filled. Ten per cent of these were youngsters rejoining YTS for a second or third time (Thomson & Rosenberg, 1986:139).

Despite previous assurances, the MSC's own research illustrated that 24% of trainees were occupying jobs for school-leavers that had been brought within the Scheme, and 7% of trainees had been taken on in preference to older workers (Employment Gazette, August 1985). YTS was also having a profound impact on recruitment procedures. In the same survey, over half the Managing Agents and one third of work experience providers said they were using YTS as a screening practice for the recruitment of their permanent employees. This was not surprising considering Lord Young's, then Chairperson on the MSC, encouragement to employers to avail themselves of

"the opportunity (through YTS) to take on young men and women, train them and let them work for you almost entirely at our expense, and then decide whether or not you want to employ them" (quoted in Davies, 1986:59).

The YTS also introduced a new tier of organisation into the provision of youth training. Instead of dealing directly with employers, as under YOP, the MSC created a network of organisations through which it was to subcontract training delivery. The Managing Agent was to be "an organisation which will be able to contract with the Manpower Services Commission to design, manage and deliver a year long package of

training and work experience" (Youth Training News, January 1983). For providing this 'package', Managing Agents receive, in 1990, a fee of £110 per year, per contracted place, plus a basic grant of £1,920 per filled place. With the extension of the Scheme to a two year programme, in April 1986, the basic distinction between Mode A and Mode B places was ended; they had "become equated in some minds with first and second class provision" (MSC, 1985:para 6.3). In their place, a smaller number of premium places were created to cater for youngsters with special needs or for those who lived in areas of high unemployment. Premium grants could be paid to Managing Agents on top of the basic grant and, in April 1989, a five tier structure of premium payments, payable at £500 for each tier, was introduced (Department of Employment Press Notice, 18 January 1989).

The extent of the network created by Managing Agents was revealed in 1985, when around 4,200 Managing Agents were involved in the provision of YTS, using over 100,000 different work places. In a survey of YTS providers, just over half retained trainees in their own work places and over a quarter subcontracted trainees out on work experience placements with other employers. These placements were almost exclusively in the private sector and were dominated by very small work places (Employment Gazette, August 1985).

Criticisms over quality were met, in 1984, by the creation, in each MSC area office, of teams of 20

programme assessors who were to carry out YTS' monitoring requirements at quarterly intervals. However, critics pointed out that the programme assessors had little or no experience of training and education, being drawn mainly from the lower ranks of the civil service, and local demands meant they would have to monitor between 500 and 600 places each (Times Educational Supplement 29/06/84).

Despite an explicit commitment to equal opportunities, YTS was serving to reinforce many employers' discriminatory recruitment practices. The 1985 survey of providers found that schemes providing 20% of Mode A places would not recruit youngsters with learning difficulties or ex-offenders, "while schemes covering 16% of trainees did not accept young people with disabilities" (Employment Gazette, August 1985:309).

The Scheme continued to operate on assumptions which viewed the movement of young people into the labour market as characterised by the experience of young white males. As such YTS reinforced the racial and sexual division of labour. Black youngsters were far less likely to get taken on to Mode A schemes, predominantly employer-led and offering better chances of subsequent employment (Cross, 1987b:55), and young women were still being recruited into a far narrower range of occupational training areas than young men (Fawcett Society, 1985). More detailed research illustrated the way in which training

schemes continued to restrict the opportunities available to young women, and how it had failed to engage with those mechanisms which reproduced young women's confinement to certain labour market segments (Brelsford et al, 1982; Cockburn, 1987). Its self-stated aim of equal opportunities for young people appeared another hollow promise.

### **The two year YTS**

In response to the erosion of consent around the one year Scheme YTS was extended to a two year programme in April 1986. Sixteen year old school-leavers were now guaranteed two years training, 17 year olds one year and, under the new programme, YTS was to provide a more comprehensive programme of off-the-job training integrated with the work experience element. Year one was to be concentrated around broad-based training whilst year two was supposed to develop a more occupationally based approach. Schemes were required to provide a minimum of 20 weeks off-the-job training over the two years, 13 weeks in the first year and seven in the second, and one year schemes a minimum of seven weeks. For their endeavours, the first year trainees would receive a weekly allowance of £27.30, rising to £35 in the second year.

Quality was seen as the key to the new Scheme's legitimation amongst both young people and employers; "the Scheme will be nothing unless it provides high quality training" (MSC, 1985:para 3.6). From 1986, the MSC set itself the objective of ensuring

that YTS was to be delivered only by Managing Agents who had achieved Approved Training Organisation (ATO) status. To qualify for ATO status, Managing Agents had to satisfy "ten demanding criteria" (Training Commission, 1987/88:29) which included, a previous record on training, competence of staff, effective programme review, a positive commitment to health and safety and equal opportunities, and financial viability. Despite the record of the one year Scheme, by April 1989 nine out of 10 Managing Agents had secured ATO status, half the remainder had provisional status, and only 21 applications had been rejected.

The move towards quality was to be further emphasised by the increasing importance of trainees' opportunities to gain qualifications whilst on the Scheme. Since 1986, there has been a requirement that all trainees be offered access to a Vocational Qualification or a credit towards one. The same year the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was established to develop a national vocational qualification framework which would assist employers and others to judge the value of accredited qualifications. By 1990, four levels of accreditation had been developed ranging from a basic level, which included a foundation of broad-based vocational education and training, through to a higher level, which was seen as appropriate for specialist supervisory or professional occupations (NCVQ, March 1987).

However, falling numbers of school-leavers entering the labour market produced new tensions for the Scheme. Fears that young people would be attracted away from YTS into jobs that offered little or no training led to a watering down of the Scheme's original training structure (Times Educational Supplement 03/02/89). The changes, in effect, marked a radical departure from YTS' original training ethos. Schemes no longer had to run for two years and the mandatory commitment to providing a minimum of 20 weeks off-the-job training was also dropped. Further emphasis was given to training-related outcomes, particularly the numbers of youngsters leaving schemes with qualifications and those entering jobs, rather than the Scheme's original commitment to ensuring that a young person entered a quality training framework. In an effort to encourage more employers to come within its remit it was hoped that an increasingly market-led YTS would provide the basis for the Scheme's continued existence.

Yet the move towards a market-led YTS was accompanied by increased pressure on employers to contribute more to training expenditure. Outlay on the two year Scheme was broadly similar to expenditure on the one year programme and the added costs were to be recouped through greater employer contributions. Public expenditure figures show that from an estimated out-turn of £1,010 millions in 1989/90, the planned expenditure for 1992/93 would fall to £763 millions (HM

Treasury, 1990:8). This means a reduction in Government expenditure on youth training from £50 per trainee week in 1989/90 to £33 per trainee week in 1992/93.

The Government has justified the reduction in funding by pointing towards the fall in unemployment and the need for greater employer contributions. However, YTS was to be about the provision of quality training for all school-leavers and not simply a measure linked to levels of unemployment. Similarly, employers' track record on training school-leavers accounts for the particularly acute shortage of skilled workers that Britain now faces. The scale of the problem was clearly underlined in a recent survey of 10 European Economic Community member states. The survey found that only 38% of the UK's work force were classified as skilled, the next lowest being Portugal with 50%, whereas France topped the league table with 80% (European Economy, 1989:2).

The Government's own research begins to reveal the scale of the problem Britain now faces. In 1987, two thirds of economically active adults between 19 and 59 claimed not to have received any job-related training within the previous three years. Employers did claim to have provided just under half of their employees with training in 1986-87 but it was limited to an average of 14.5 days (Training Agency, 1989a:2). The situation for young people appeared slightly better as job-related training in the UK tends to be concentrated at the start of working life. In contrast

to older age groups, the under 25s were more likely to have reported receiving training in the previous three years and evidence suggests this was primarily concentrated in the 16 to 18 age group. YTS was seen as specifically responsible for this improvement. However, women were less likely than men to receive training provided by an employer and, of the employer funded training they did receive, it tended to be of shorter duration than that experienced by men (Training Agency, 1989b:49-50).

Relying on the market to provide training for young people has failed in the past. But the Government's return to short-term financial considerations, instead of building on its original commitment to fund quality training provision for school-leavers, looks set to deepen this crisis.

### **The thesis**

Clearly, the Youth Training Scheme has come to dominate the initial adult labour market experience for a vast number of working class school-leavers. Much has been written about the Scheme and its development but unfortunately, systematic and in-depth research accounts of young people's own experiences of leaving school and training on YTS are lacking. Those accounts that do exist focus on youngsters who have refused to train on the Scheme or who drop-out early (Kirby & Roberts, 1985; Horton, 1986), or concentrated on the Scheme's early development (Gray & King, 1986). Others have made use of extensive data sets to increase our



understanding of young people's attitudes towards YTS (Raffe & Smith, 1987; Roberts & Parsell, 1988; Raffe, 1989). But little research exists on how young people move from school into the Scheme and their experiences whilst training. This is particularly true of its most recent history.

To those who have an interest in youth training it would almost appear that the issue no longer commands the academic and public attention and debate it so badly needs. In a period that is witnessing a reduction in the numbers of young people coming into the labour market and the continuance of chronic skill shortages in the United Kingdom, it is an area that demands increasing resources and attention.

To this end, the research sought to address some of these short-falls. It takes as its basis the experiences of young people themselves. Through exploring some of the processes involved in growing up and training on YTS it was hoped that the research could add to the sociological knowledge of young people as they enter their adult working lives. In addition, I believe the research carries with it some important implications regarding the future policy of youth training. It is young people who are the ultimate consumers of state sponsored training programmes and it is the way in which they make sense of and utilise this provision that any future successful training policy must take into consideration. Without understanding the complex and often contradictory ways in which they

experience the movement from school into training, future policy, at best, is destined for only partial success.

The research, therefore, set out to explore some of the key assumptions and claims that lay at the heart of government provision of youth training. Chapter Two presents a methodological account of the research project outlining the development of the project, discusses some of the main problems encountered and illustrates how the research sought to solve them. It sketches the development of the field work strategy and discusses the criteria by which it was governed, together with an account of the way in which the project drew on data from a survey of fifth form pupils and a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews with YTS trainees. It also outlined how data from the TA's 100% Follow Up Survey of YTS Leavers was incorporated into the research.

Chapter Three takes as its basis the current orthodoxy that young people lack knowledge of the demands of working life and so need a period of vocational preparation before they can enter the labour market proper. It argues that this 'deficiency model' of the working class school-leaver ignores much of the cultural and material significance of work for young people as they grow up and prepare to leave school. At its most immediate, work for young people has a very real meaning before they even leave the confines of compulsory education and it is through part-time

working whilst at school that many youngsters first come into direct contact with the realities of wage labour. In doing so, part-time working provides an important source of continuity between the juvenile experiences of school and the wider world of the adult labour market.

It is young people's desire for jobs in a labour market that has become increasingly dominated by government schemes that lies at the heart of Chapter Four. The YTS was originally designed as a route into work for all minimum age school-leavers but the research shows that young people still display considerable ambivalence towards its claims to offer a credible training alternative to work. Ministers have been quick to proclaim the Scheme's success in attracting youngsters into training but the realities point towards a more complex picture. Shorter-term instrumentalism and wider pressures of money, unemployment and family obligations are far more important than any longer-term notions of training. It is in this way that YTS has come to represent a vehicle for youngsters to negotiate a labour market that offers few opportunities for 'real jobs'.

Chapter Five provides an analysis of the actual experience of training undertaken by young people on YTS. The Scheme has been marketed as a qualitative break with the piecemeal special measures of the past and it was to provide a period of quality foundation training that would equip young people with

the necessary skills and qualities on which their future working lives could be built. But training on the Scheme points towards a more complex reality. In a series of case studies the actual training, the tasks involved and the relevance of off-the-job training comes under scrutiny. For most trainees, training on YTS is dominated by the demands of semi- and unskilled tasks rather than quality skills training for life.

Chapter Six looks at the Scheme's claims to provide a permanent bridge between school and work. In this chapter, and the preceding two, data from the Training Agency's follow-up survey of YTS leavers is incorporated with the original fieldwork data. Much of the TA's information comes into the public domain for the first time here. It analyses YTS' continued acute inability to retain youngsters for the full two years training and explores how training on the Scheme comes into conflict with young people's desire for 'real jobs'. It is a delicate contradiction on which the Scheme rests and, in a period of demographic change and economic upturn, the implications of this for the future of training on YTS are explored.

Chapter Seven continues the theme of early leaving but this time attempts to explore the hidden side to training on YTS. The Scheme has become a central plank of government policy to price youngsters back into jobs but the low level of training allowance produces its own dynamic. The feeling of being undervalued, underpaid and being denied the status of

adult worker which goes with a wage, all produce a powerful incentive for young people to look beyond their training schemes.

In Chapter Eight the issue of compulsory training is explored. The changes to social security legislation in 1988 meant that, for a new generation of school-leavers, the Scheme has come to represent their only regular source of income. In denying young people state unemployment benefits YTS has effectively become compulsory but the Government has continually argued that, with the guarantee of a training place, unemployment should no longer be an option. How young people experience this and some possible implications for future training are also explored.

Finally, Chapter Nine presents some concluding remarks on the thesis and draws out three major points around the areas of training deficient workers, YTS' role in reproducing inequality and what this means for young people's career trajectories. It also outlines the implications of the research for the future development of training policy for school-leavers in Britain.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A METHODOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

#### Introduction

Starting postgraduate sociological research at Warwick University includes attending a "core methodology course" titled 'The Research Process and Research Design'. As well as providing an excellent opportunity to discuss the progress of projects in a supportive environment, the course recommended the keeping of a diary outlining the development of the project and the experiences involved in doing sociological research. Although my entries were sporadic, trailing away further after the completion of the field work, it has provided an interesting, often humorous, and fruitful account of the research process on which this chapter draws.

In the process of undertaking this project many problems have been encountered, both methodological and personal, requiring careful thought and consideration for their successful solution. In doing so, the research took on new directions and emphasis, with the final project differing significantly from that set out in the original design. It is by tracing these subtle and not so subtle changes and by outlining the problems, and the way in which they were solved, that this methodological account of the research process will be presented.

### **Defining the problem**

Re-reading my initial research proposal, two things now strike me. Firstly, the sureness with which the proposal was written and, secondly, the contrast between what it set out to do and the finished product.

The apparent sureness of the proposal obscured a much greater sense of uncertainty that is clearly evident from the initial diary entries. Uncertainty, because "to describe a research project in 1,000 words that would take around four years to complete seems almost a futile exercise" (diary entry 13/11/86) to a newcomer. And uncertainty because, from the outside, the world of postgraduate research seemed almost mystical to somebody coming straight from an undergraduate course. Part of the subsequent educative impact, for me, has been to demystify this and to emphasise that "social research is a social and political activity" (Bell & Encel, 1978:5). Therefore, like all other social processes it generates its own contradictions and compromises.

Despite the underlying anxieties, the proposal did serve the essential function of beginning "to define the 'problem' I want to research" (diary entry 06/05/87). Like Becker et al's project (1961:17), the proposal contained no carefully worked out hypothesis to be tested and no analytically tight procedure to be followed. What it did do, quite carefully, was to outline in a moderate attempt at detail the areas in which the research was to take

place, suggest possible fruitful avenues to pursue and tentatively begin to bring together some ideas about how this could successfully be achieved. Despite the uncertainty it provided a clear point of reference from which the subsequent project developed.

The ideas generated in the proposal had their primary origins in my undergraduate studies. During this time an interest had grown in trade unionism and the problems encountered during recent years. Marrying this together with a long-standing interest in young people, the product of my own juvenile fascination with youth sub-cultures, produced a proposal that was to concentrate on young people's attitudes towards trade unionism in the context of the development of the Youth Training Scheme. I was aware of the extent to which the state had intervened in preparing young people for work and I wanted to assess what role, if any, trade unions played in this. I was also determined that the study would be empirically based, especially as there was a dearth of information regarding young people's attitudes towards and experiences of trade unions. The idea that "social research is advanced by ideas; it is only disciplined by facts" (Wright Mills, 1959:71) was an attractive one and by generating these 'facts' some 'discipline' could be brought to a much neglected area.

The intention to research this relationship remained central to the project for a long time, although as the finished project illustrates it underwent a number of important shifts. Looking back



there are "important lines of thought" (Pahl, 1985:6) that stretch from the proposal to the final thesis. But certain key factors can be identified as accounting for the steadily increasing focus on YTS.

Social research takes place "inside the whale" (Bell & Encel, 1978) and is therefore in constant interaction with wider social processes. This project proved no exception and the increasing importance of time constraints for the postgraduate researcher were brought to bear on the research process; consequently "I was involved in completing a package and had only a finite time in which to do it" (Bottomley, 1978:219, his emphasis). Constraints of time militated against fully developing the trade union dimension to the study and as the thesis took shape, it became clear that there would also be insufficient space. As such, the trade union aspect of the study became relegated in importance to a position whereby it was eventually dropped from the final drafts. This is despite the fact that I now possess a large amount of data, much of it highly original, which addresses itself to how young people perceive and experience trade unions. This will now have to find its public dissemination in other ways.

Time constraints were also working in conjunction with other influences that were moulding the project. During the early stages of the research, considerable efforts were made to develop contacts with both trade unions and other organisations involved in

the monitoring of YTS. Visits to national trade union officers were interesting and informative but they proved unsuccessful at giving the project any greater focus: "none of them provided me with any of the sparks of inspiration that I was looking and hoping for" (diary entry 06/05/87). Despite certain initiatives, for example the Transport and General Workers Union's 'Link-Up' campaign, there appeared little activity aimed at either increasing recruitment amongst trainees or raising trade union awareness amongst young people in general. It was amongst local organisations, monitoring groups and resource centres, that a greater and more visible effort was being made to address the rapid policy changes that were accompanying the Scheme's development. It was this greater visibility that attracted me towards an involvement with them, further relegating trade union concerns behind those of YTS in general.

This involvement also explains the policy themes to emerge from the study. The organisations with which I became involved were predominantly concerned with the wider impact of YTS on young people. It was to alleviate its worst excesses and to develop local responses to the many changes emanating from the MSC/TA that provided the rationale for their existence. It was their attempts to engage with state initiatives and to provide alternative ideas that further influenced the project.

The problem also developed greater definition

from a review of the available literature on the Scheme. The written work relating to YTS is extensive but from early on it became readily apparent that systematic accounts of young people's experiences of growing up and entering the Scheme were lacking. Research focusing on young people as consumers, and potential consumers, of the Scheme tended to be fragmented or partial, or relied on large quantitative data sets generated by extensive survey techniques. Whilst these studies are clearly valuable in developing a greater understanding of the Scheme's dynamics and of young peoples' entry into the labour market, even their practitioners acknowledged the need for a greater qualitative understanding of young people's perceptions and experiences of YTS (see Chapter Four). It was these gaps in the existing research that provided the basic methodological underpinning of the field work.

#### **Developing a field work strategy**

Prior to embarking on my own field work I had been fortunate to work on two other research projects utilising contrasting approaches. These proved very significant in helping to define my own field work strategy. One was the UK component of an ESRC/CNRS sponsored Anglo-French project, on 'Unemployment and Attitudes to Work', which undertook an extensive survey utilising a highly structured questionnaire. The second, a Barrow Cadbury Fund Ltd. sponsored project, on the experiences of Restart interviews among the long-term unemployed also involved survey work. But

this time it combined a short, structured survey questionnaire with a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews (McCabe & Finn, 1989).

The former's ability to generate data was impressive, for an insecure postgraduate student this takes on additional significance, but in interviewing respondents its inability to capture adequately some of their experiences and opinions was disappointing. "What people experience, the way they deal with events and the meaning they make of their lives, is the bedrock of history" (Cockburn, 1983:10). It was these experiences, and the lived contradictions they exposed, that I wanted to explore. I therefore sought to adopt a strategy that could generate a significant data set, in the context of the limited information available on young people and trade unions this was important, but which could also be developed in greater detail through a series of interviews which gave more emphasis to qualitative techniques.

All field work strategies are shaped by the type of information the researcher needs (Burgess, 1984:161). Other research had emphasised the active way in which young people made sense of the transition from school into the labour market (Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1979; Griffin, 1985) and it was this transition as an active process that the research wanted to capture. The initial idea of following a group of youngsters from their last year of schooling into training schemes quickly proved prohibitive. By this time, the first

year of the funding for the project was nearly exhausted and such a strategy would have meant a field work project lasting 18 months to two years. By this time I hoped to be in a position to write the thesis proper. An alternative strategy that could still capture some sense of this process within the given time constraints was therefore sought.

With a longitudinal design prohibitive a field work project was developed that would generate the necessary data in two cross-sectional stages; firstly, amongst young people approaching the end of their compulsory schooling; and secondly, amongst young people who were coming towards the end of their first year's training on YTS. The intention was to examine the processes involved in leaving school and entering a scheme through exploring the youngsters' perceptions and experiences at two stages which were identified as important in this transition. As such, a one-off survey of attitudes amongst a sample of Coventry fifth form pupils was decided on, which would be developed in greater detail through a series of one-off semi-structured interviews with YTS trainees.

The information required from both the survey questionnaire and the interview schedule evolved from an assessment of the literature available and a review of recent and intended policy changes. From this the structure of both questionnaire and schedule fell into three separate but complimentary sections. In reviewing the literature, an interest had been generated in the

significance of working class youngsters' experiences of child labour, and its implications for the movement into the adult labour market and training schemes. Government training schemes, ranging from YTS to Employment Training (ET), are premised on an individual's ignorance of work and their consequent inability to satisfy employers' 'needs'. There was also a debate as to the actual extent and significance of child working and it was hoped the research could bring some clarification to this. Within the literature on YTS four important areas appeared to provide the focus for the data needed: a greater qualitative understanding of young people's views of the Scheme, their experiences and perceptions of the training opportunity provided, its relation to their perceived future working needs and the likely impact of its then impending compulsion. The last section of both the questionnaire and schedule was to concentrate on young people's views and perceptions of trade unions and, since there was very little other information in this area, it modestly sought to generate some general opinions and ideas.

Because of the lack of any systematic information on young people and trade unions, the survey amongst the fifth form pupils was designed to generate norms which could then be explored in more detail through the interviews. But in deciding on a combined strategy the intention was to retain a qualitative emphasis where possible. This involved

constructing a format for the survey questionnaire that developed the structured questions, if appropriate, by encouraging respondents to give written comments to their answers through open-ended questions (see Appendix A). Corrigan has pointed to the difficulties involved in such an approach and many of the boys who took part in his abortive attempt at survey work had difficulty in reading and writing (Corrigan, 1979). However, the pilot of the survey proved successful and, taking note of these apparent limitations, it was decided to maintain such a strategy for the main project.

The standard of written comment did vary ranging from the clearly articulate, to the one word or phrase explanation, to those few who did not attempt to answer the open-ended questions. However, generally the quality of the data was encouraging although the questionnaire was undoubtedly too long. It was noticeable that the further into the questionnaire the quality, depth and frequency of the written comments declined. In retrospect, a short, sharp questionnaire many have been even more effective. Whilst the pupils demonstrated a considerable willingness to write down their thoughts, a shorter, more specific questionnaire may have improved the overall quality of the data.

Furthermore, the structure of the questionnaire was influenced by the decision to use SPSS-x to process the data and to ease its subsequent analysis. For the structured questions this meant a

simple coding framework which would allow its easy organization into a usable data set. For the open-ended questions, the 'Multi-Response' facility of SPSS-x allowed the clear themes to emerge from the written comments also to be organized into a coherent data set. For somebody who regarded themselves as "completely computer illiterate" (diary entry 15/04/88) this represented another skill to be acquired and its complexities were sufficiently mastered to allow the simple cross-tabulations the data required.

### **Why Coventry**

Having decided on the field work strategy, Coventry was selected as the site of research for a number of reasons. Apart from its obvious convenience, an important consideration for a researcher with very limited resources, government training schemes had become an established and formidable feature of the local labour market as employment opportunities for young people were decimated by the economic downturn of the 1970s and 1980s.

Coventry's decline from 'boom town' to 'ghost town' was as rapid as it was sudden. The city's post-war prosperity had been built around the historical significance of manufacturing and in particular the importance of the engineering sector as a source of local employment. Figures from the Census of Employment show that by 1981 40% of the city's workforce was employed in the engineering sector, against a national average of 13%, with vehicles accounting for the single



biggest proportion (Dutton, 1987:9-10). There was also a sizeable public administration sector employing around the average for the country as a whole but in agriculture, mining and the service sector, employment fell well below the national average. The dominance on manufacturing was further underlined by the fact that, in 1978, the top five employers provided 58% of manufacturing jobs and 32% of total jobs in the city (Confederation of British Industry, 1983:para 6.2.2).

It was to this base that Coventry's reputation as a high wage, fully employed and expanding post-war city was attributed. Such prosperity was short-lived, however, and as economic performance began to deteriorate the people of Coventry felt the full force of the slowdown. For over two decades the source of the city's prosperity, it was now this reliance on the manufacturing sector for jobs that accounted for this drastic change of fortunes, as the recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s hit manufacturing especially hard and the engineering sector in particular (Institute for Employment Research, 1985:28). As a consequence, between 1973 and 1981 the number of people in employment fell by 24%, with unemployment rising from 3% in 1975 to around 18% by 1982, when the proportion unemployed in the city reached its peak (Coventry City Council, September 1986:12-13). The dramatic fall in manufacturing employment, mainly full-time male jobs, was slightly cushioned by an increase in jobs in the service sector

but, consistent with national trends, these new jobs were predominantly part-time openings for women.

Within the overall decline, job opportunities for the young were particularly hard hit. Openings in low skilled but relatively well paid jobs traditionally entered by school-leavers were undermined as young people were forced to compete with the increasing pool of available adult labour. Those labour market segments traditionally the preserve of school-leavers contracted as employers cut back their expenditure on training. Between 1980 and 1981 alone the number of apprenticeships available in the city fell from 456 to 248 (Confederation of British Industry, 1983:para 6.2.3). As a consequence levels of unemployment among young people in the city showed a sharp increase.

Whilst there are no official statistics for rates of unemployment amongst the 16 to 18 age group, unofficial sources illustrate the scale of the problem faced by Coventry's school-leavers. In 1979, 3,161 youngsters were registered with the Careers Service as unemployed or on a government training scheme, of whom 1,641 (52%) were on programmes. However, after peaking in 1985 the number unemployed or training remained high and during the period of field work, 5,559 young people were registered with the careers service as either wholly unemployed or training. Of these just under half (49.3%) were on schemes (Coventry City Council, September 1986:13). In the same year, 39.5% of Coventry's fifth form pupils were staying on in full-

time education, 7% were entering unemployment, 17% were still managing to find work and 32.5% were entering schemes (Coventry Careers, 1988). By the period of research, the YTS had thus become established as one of the major routes into the labour market for substantial numbers of Coventry's young people.

#### **The school research**

In selecting the school, or schools, for research several factors needed to be taken into consideration. Firstly, they needed to cover mixed ability pupils, as it was essential to capture a cross-section of the age group, thus covering those likely to utilise the different routes open to young people on finishing compulsory education. Secondly, I wanted to explore the significance of gender so mixed sex schools were also essential, and thirdly, I initially wanted to explore the importance of ethnicity, although as we shall see this proved increasingly problematic. With these factors in mind approaches were made to schools who satisfied these criteria.

Burgess has noted that "group leaders and the institutionally powerful are seen by some researchers as the gatekeepers who can grant access" (1982:17) and during this period I had established some important contacts with local schools. One of the contacts was the Headmaster of a large, mixed sex comprehensive school which drew its pupils from an extensive catchment area. He was also an influential figure in the Local Education Authority (LEA) and had strong

links with both the Sociology Department and the University. In addition, by securing his cooperation representation to the LEA, whose sanctioning of the project was essential, would be made considerably easier.

The Headmaster was approached by letter, accompanied by a copy of the survey questionnaire, stating explicitly the content and purpose of the research and indicating that I would contact him within the next few days. The follow-up telephone call was unnecessary and shortly afterwards I was invited along to the school to discuss the project. At the meeting "he appeared very positive. He was happy with the project and said he would pass on the details to his staff" (field notes 12/12/87). He also suggested that, in return, I might like to address the fifth form social studies students about doing social research and studying at university. This I gladly agreed to do. He also suggested that the survey would make a good basis for a careers or social studies lesson and said he would contact the Careers Adviser, who would make contact with me, and with whom it would be best to deal with in future.

After two weeks silence the Head was contacted again where he suggested contacting the Careers Adviser directly. On contacting the Careers Adviser he claimed that he had not been notified by the Head but I explained the project and posted him a copy of the questionnaire. The Head had originally given an

undertaking that the survey could be completed before the end of the Christmas term 1987 but the delays had meant that this was no longer feasible due to timetabling constraints. However, over the telephone, the Careers Adviser gave two possible dates at the beginning of January 1988 and asked me to call to confirm this after the Christmas break.

Over the telephone, the Careers Adviser also mentioned that there might be a problem with the YTS element to the questionnaire as the school did not introduce the Scheme to youngsters as a separate subject. It was contained under an umbrella title of "opportunities for youngsters" which included both jobs and training schemes. Some youngsters, he continued, went on to training programmes not knowing that they came under YTS and it was presented in this way because "most young people have a negative image of YTS" (field notes 06/01/88). A note was made to pursue this further when we met but unfortunately the opportunity did not arise.

While this was taking place a small pilot survey was undertaken to establish the effectiveness of the questionnaire, it was suspected that the pupils might have difficulty with some of the questions on trade unions, and if it could generate sufficient comment for the emphasis on open-ended questions to be merited. Also, it was important that it be completed within the space of one lesson, approximately one hour. I therefore contacted a friend who taught sociology at

a comprehensive school in the South West of England and he agreed to help. He was not too optimistic about my chances, the school had recently refused access to a group of Japanese sociologists undertaking a comparative educational study, but agreed to approach the Head. However, after the Head had gone through the questionnaire "with a fine tooth comb" (field notes 25/11/87) he agreed to the pilot providing one or two minor alterations were made.

It had not occurred to me before but this school was situated in an area that had been involved in considerable national controversy during the mid 1980s, over the issue of trade union membership. With this still in mind the Head asked for the omission of the requirement that pupils put their names to the questionnaire, something adopted for the main survey, to protect the confidentiality of the pupils and their parents. This was readily acceded to and the pilot was conducted amongst a class of mixed ability pupils as part of their sociology course. It produced some good quality data and highlighted areas where the questionnaire could be improved; most notably its structure and the wording of one or two questions.

During this period, negotiations were also underway to secure the consent of the LEA in Coventry. A letter had been written to the Director of Secondary Education explaining the project and stating that an informal approach to the Head of the school had been made. After requesting a copy of the questionnaire, it

was approved without any comments and, in anticipation of the main survey, 300 copies were printed.

Returning from the Christmas break I received a message from the school asking me to contact the Careers Adviser. On telephoning he proceeded to express a number of objections to several parts of the questionnaire. That this should occur after such lengthy negotiations came as a surprise. He informed me that both himself and the Head of the Fifth Year were in agreement that parts to the questionnaire were unacceptable. Pressing him for details he proceeded to list the questions to which they had objections and when asked whether the problem questions were negotiable, he replied that the questions on political allegiances and trade unions were totally unacceptable. He informed me that previously they had tried to introduce topics of current political concern into the curriculum but had failed when the pupils had "turned upside down" (field notes 06/01/88) the topics under discussion. When I interrupted to say that both the Director of Secondary Education and the Head had seen the questionnaire and approved its use, he asked me to telephone again the next day.

On telephoning he reiterated his earlier objections saying that the questions on political allegiances and the whole section on trade unions was totally unacceptable and the Head was now in agreement. He again outlined his earlier objections saying that it would produce "a storm of protests from parents". He

appreciated that the sections of concern were central to my research and that the objections undermined the school's ability to cooperate. But if I was still interested in pursuing the topic of the Youth Training Scheme then he would be willing to help me "re-work the relevant questions" (field notes 07/01/88). After lengthy negotiations, my position with the school had been totally undermined and three months had been wasted.

Despite the setback, another contact was pursued, this time a sociology teacher at a slightly smaller comprehensive which also satisfied the criteria for the research. She had been interested in my project at an earlier meeting and had offered help with the pilot if need be. She had been a postgraduate student at Warwick and had maintained strong links with the Department through bringing in her 'A' level students to visit and sit in on lectures. Although she was off school for several weeks due to illness she offered to approach the Deputy Head for me who, I was assured, would also be sympathetic. Again, a copy of the questionnaire was requested which was circulated amongst the relevant staff.

But, again, a few days later a note was received saying that the Careers Adviser at the school was not keen on putting out the questionnaire and asking me to telephone. On the telephone the Deputy Head expressed his genuine regret and that the Careers Adviser had objected to a number of the questions,



again ostensibly focusing on the trade union section. He began to list them and when asked if they were negotiable he broke off and contacted the Careers Adviser. On returning, he informed me that the Careers Adviser was "strongly against putting the questionnaire out in any form" (field notes 13/01/88) and that there was nothing he could do about it. Again, attempts at negotiating access had been totally undermined by a careers officer.

It may be argued that the questionnaire was biased or leading and that this was the root of the problem, but careful attention had been given to the wording of the questionnaire so as to avoid any one-sided perspective. The feeling that it was not obviously biased was borne out by its acceptability to the Director of Secondary Education at the LEA and to the Headmaster of the school where the pilot had been conducted. Indeed, I would suggest that access was denied not because of any overt bias in the questionnaire but because of the contentious implications of the research, especially the YTS content, and its possible ramifications for careers education within the schools.

Burgess (1984) has argued that the whole issue of negotiating access to schools is crucial to the researcher. He notes that "access has, until relatively recently, not been regarded as a problem by many researchers ... In some studies access had been taken for granted or ignored completely" (ibid:34) and

goes on to point out that "in short, the negotiation of access, while being fundamental to the research process, can also reveal to the researcher the pattern of social relationships at the research site" (ibid:40).

Although the objections to access ostensibly focused on the trade union content of the questionnaire, which in itself seemed a legitimate area of educational concern, the problems encountered reveal deeper social processes at work. The first school's almost clandestine presentation of YTS points towards a commonality of outlook amongst both staff and pupils that accepts the Scheme's position as a low status opportunity. YTS commands a massive presence in the labour market and a considerable number of pupils were destined to start their adult working lives as trainees. Yet it was not presented as a separate subject and staff recognised that pupils often held hostile or negative perceptions of the training opportunity it offered. Much of the subsequent thesis explores young peoples' ambivalence to YTS and it would appear that staff appreciated this. Not dealing with the Scheme directly may have offered teaching staff a strategy which underplayed YTS' importance for the youngsters, therefore contributing to the maintenance of discipline and control during the last year at school. At a time when many fifth formers are actively contemplating their imminent entry into the labour market, any undue focus on opportunities which are

unpopular may have been felt to merely compound pupils' feelings of helplessness and school's increasing irrelevance to their overall task of securing a job. Singling out YTS as a likely post-school option could then have resulted in aggravated rates of absenteeism and increased possibilities of disruption.

For the pupils this may mean leaving school with only partial or inadequate knowledge of the training opportunities open to them and severely questions the careers service's guidance and counselling role. YTS' claims to offer young people a comprehensive choice of training is therefore severely undermined by the school's unwillingness to deal with the Scheme directly. Furthermore, the lack of free and open debate in school can only serve to lock the Scheme more deeply into the 'vicious circle of low status', described more fully in Chapter Four, since the school's actions merely reinforce its wider perception as a low status opportunity. It is only through including young people directly in the debate about the nature and content of youth training that any real developments in this area will be made.

#### **Harwood and Crompton Schools**

Eventually access to two smaller Coventry comprehensive schools was successfully negotiated. In contrast to approaching research sites where 'gatekeepers' were known, Harwood and Crompton (1) were

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1. At the request of both the LEA and the Head Teachers the names of both schools have been changed.

approached without any prior contacts. A letter to the respective Headmasters, followed by a telephone call, led to meetings with other senior teaching staff who then provided the necessary facilities for the successful completion of the survey.

The ease with which access to Harwood and Crompton was gained contrasted sharply with the previous experience and this distinction provides further insight into the underlying social relationships operating within the schools. The most obvious point of contrast were the sizes of the respective schools; both Harwood and Crompton being considerable smaller than the first two schools approached. During the period of research, the LEA operated the unusual system of placing its own careers advisers in individual schools and in the first ones approached it was these individuals who exercised their veto over the research. This implies that, within larger schools, the increased importance of careers education and the growing vocational component to the curriculum has allowed careers advisers to develop a considerable interventionist role within a school's structure. A role sufficient enough for them to canvas support to change or override the initial decision of the Head and Deputy Head teachers and, speculatively, to influence and control wider curriculum content and development. It is this that may account for their ability to play down the significance of YTS as a route into the labour market in its own right. Indeed, with

respect to both Harwood and Crompton schools, access was obtained avoiding direct contact with their careers advisers and, in both cases, it was the Deputy Head who was given responsibility for organizing the survey.

The survey was eventually carried out between February and March 1988 with both schools satisfying the selection criteria of the original research design. Crompton School and Community College was one of the city's most recent secondary schools housed in modern, purpose-built accommodation. Standing on the outskirts of the city it drew its mainly white pupils from a large surrounding council estate. It was one of the city's smaller comprehensives having a capacity of well under 1000 pupils, although its role for the 1987/88 academic year stood at under half this total. This included a small sixth form of approximately 40 pupils.

The school's relatively modern origins were reflected in its design and appearance. From the outside "the buildings look smart and in a good general state of repair and these back onto rugby and football pitches, and two floodlit tennis courts". On being given a guided tour "the classrooms appear relatively well-equipped and have a spacious air to them, and there is an overall 'light and breezy' feel to the school". The centre-piece of the school was a large sports/assembly hall, from which the remainder of the school buildings led off, and the modern feel was underlined by the "small but impressive open-plan office space shared by the Deputy Heads and senior

teachers". Leaving the school after my first visit I was confident that "the staff seem genuinely interested and willing to help" (field notes 03/03/88).

In contrast, Harwood School was established originally as a single sex grammar school at the turn of the century, becoming a mixed comprehensive during the 1970s and a designated Community College shortly afterwards. Its longer and more varied history was clearly evident from its appearance, "red brick Victorian buildings, 1960s-type development and what now seem like ubiquitous 'temporary huts'", which gave the school a more subdued atmosphere than that of Crompton. Many of the classrooms and corridors were decorated by the pupil's art and craft work but this could not overcome the impression that "the school appears to need some refurbishing and some new equipment. It also seems like there are no large, purpose-built play areas - just mud" (field notes 02/02/88).

The school stood just outside the inner city drawing its pupils from a large, established working class area. The catchment area covered one of the city's poorer districts and the school had been identified as "having particular problems" relating to "high or above average" rates for a group of social characteristics used as indicators of relative deprivation (2). The area was also racially diverse

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2. Information supplied by the Local Education Authority from a confidential report on the nature, extent and location of deprivation in Coventry and its

with the school's prospectus indicating that approximately one third of its pupils had their "origins outside the UK". This had given rise to "an anti-racist policy which it [the school] pursues with vigour", together with a strong commitment to multi-cultural education. The school had also recently been threatened with closure due to contracting pupil numbers, but "after a fierce campaign by teachers, parents and pupils" (3) the LEA had backed down. Its role for 1987/88 stood at just under 1,000 pupils of which 70 were sixth formers.

In both schools the survey questionnaires were administered on a form group by form group basis. One hundred and fifty two were completed and returned, 81 from Harwood (57%) and 71 from Crompton (43%), which represented 51% of the total number of pupils in both fifth years. Table 2.1 gives the breakdown of the sample by school, gender and ethnicity.

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Table 2.1 School pupils surveyed (n=152)

	Male	Female	Total	Europ	Non-Eu
Harwood School	43	38	81	45	36
Crompton School	44	27	71	71	0
Total	87	65	152	116	36

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The data from the school survey was divided into categories of stayers and leavers. The distinction

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relation to future education provision.

3. Reported in the Coventry Evening Telegraph

was based on those pupils who, at the time of survey, intended to leave school at the earliest possible opportunity, either before or after any examinations, and those who had decided to remain in full-time education. It is likely that some of the leavers may have subsequently reconsidered their positions in the light of examination successes or failures, and their ability to secure employment in the wider labour market (see Brown, 1987:40). However, the purpose was to create a distinction between those young people who had rejected full-time education in favour of jobs and those who intended to continue. As we shall see, in terms of their participation in part-time work and their orientation to the YTS this distinction proves significant.

Much research on young people making the transition from school to work has been criticized for its implicit stereotyping where the 'experience' of all young people has been interpreted through the experiences of young white males (Griffin, 1985:6; Cockburn, 1988:Chp.1). Yet the impact of gender is of prime importance in any understanding of the processes of growing up and leaving school and its implications for the young people who took part in the research will be fully explored.

The school survey also included significant numbers of young people of non-European origin, mainly Asian (4) pupils, but the focus of the research tended

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4. Asian is used throughout this thesis to denote those



to marginalize many of their experiences. While the relationship of black youngsters to YTS is fully explored, the inability of the project to examine directly the experiences of black youngsters in the transition from school into the labour market, meant they were largely excluded from analysis of the field work data.

The actual response rate of the survey was disappointing given the 'captive' audience that was deemed an advantage of carrying out the survey in schools and, clearly, the survey failed to achieve the total census of opinion that was originally intended. There are a number of possible reasons that could have contributed to the poor response rate. Timetabling constraints meant that I had to rely on the good will of the teaching staff for the successful execution of the survey and in doing so overall control was lost. Despite writing a short covering note for each of the individual teachers, explaining the project and outlining the cooperation hoped for, unaccounted for questionnaires bear testament to the problems faced by the social researcher undertaking survey work in schools.

Harwood returned, including the unused questionnaires, 27 less than the original number delivered. Subsequent enquiries to the Deputy Head revealed no further information as to their

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young people of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan descent.

whereabouts. Similarly, with Crompton School an initial number of questionnaires were returned, together with the promise of another 'twenty odd' after the Easter break. Later information revealed that no more questionnaires could be found and subsequent enquiries failed to locate them despite 19 questionnaires, completed or uncompleted, being unaccounted for.

It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions as to the whereabouts of these questionnaires and whether they were ever completed. Taking into consideration the events involved in unsuccessfully negotiating access to the other schools it is possible that a small number of questionnaires could have been retained by the schools; possibly in an act of censorship. However, this seems unlikely because both schools remained highly cooperative throughout the study. Probably nearer to the truth, the survey added to an already busy curriculum and passing overall control to the school meant it failed to generate the attention ideally hoped for. The missing questionnaires suggest not so much a conspiracy to withhold information but rather a reflection of the limited time and resources the schools could give to the project.

Furthermore, delays in obtaining access meant that the original intention to do the survey before Christmas 1987 had to be postponed until the Spring Term of the following year. During consultation with the relevant members of staff it was made known that a number of pupils were already "voting with their feet"

(field notes 22/02/88) and had decided no longer to attend school. Given that exams were looming, together with the rapidly approaching end of their compulsory schooling, it is impossible to estimate what real impact this had on the final coverage rates. But it was important enough for both schools to mention the fact.

The loss of this group of youngsters also has qualitative implications for the information generated. The idea was to carry out a census of each school's fifth year and so cover the entire range of pupils within the schools. Failure to capture the experiences of those youngsters who had already decided to no longer attend school means that an important part of the schools' cohort of fifth formers was missed. Having already rejected school, it was these youngsters who were most likely to have been involved in child labour and would most probably have joined YTS.

It is also likely that a number of pupils refused to complete the survey questionnaire or were sufficiently disinterested so as not to bother. Corrigan (1979) warns of the possibilities of researchers becoming too closely identified with the schools they are researching, thus prohibiting the collection of certain forms of data. Whilst the staff organized and executed the survey, avoiding the risk of the my becoming too closely associated with the school as an institution, it is probable that the survey was experienced by some as another aspect of the overall oppressive experience of schooling. Although at pains

to emphasise that the questionnaire was not an exam and that the research was genuinely concerned with finding out the views of young people themselves, it is doubtful whether the research could have remained totally free from these associations. It is therefore likely that this further contributed to the less than anticipated completion rates. As such, the final cohort cannot be said to 'representative' of the schools fifth form population as a whole. But, for the purposes of the study, sufficient numbers of pupils from across the fifth form cohort took part in the survey to allow the relevant analytical categories to be fully explored.

#### **The scheme research**

The selection of schemes for research was the product of a number of factors. Similar to the picture for Great Britain as a whole the training provision on offer to school-leavers in Coventry was dominated by a small number of Training Occupational Classifications (TOCs). Previously unpublished figures from the Training Agency's 'Two Year YTS 100% Follow-Up' survey revealed that, between December 1986 and November 1988, 71% of all leavers in Coventry came from six TOCs. 'Office work' accounted for 21.9% of all leavers, 'Selling or Warehouse work' 12.2%, 'Building and Construction work' 11.6%, 'Engineering work' 11.4%, 'Community and Health Service work' 8.2%, and 'Repairing Motor Vehicles' 5.2% (TA, May, 1989). Together with a scheme which trained youngsters in the 'Cooking/Service/Food or Drink' TOC, it was from these

areas that the schemes for research were drawn.

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**Table 2.2 Managing Agents, schemes and trainees from which sample was drawn**

	Female	Male	Total
<b>Chamber of Commerce</b>			
Retail scheme	2	2	4
Clerical scheme	4	0	4
Engineering scheme	0	4	4
<b>City Council</b>			
Carpentry scheme	0	3	3
Plumbing scheme	0	2	2
Clerical scheme	4	1	5
<b>Tile Hill College</b>			
Passenger Service Vehicle scheme	0	4	4
Horticulture scheme	2	2	4
Community Care scheme	2	2	4
<b>Edgewick Centre</b>			
Catering scheme	4	0	4
Construction scheme	0	2	2
Maintenance and Construction	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>42</b>

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Discussions with the Assistant Principle Careers Officer for Coventry identified a small number of Managing Agents who offered schemes in the relevant training areas and "who would give a good idea of the type of training on offer in the area" (field notes 18/01/88). He also felt they would be "receptive" to the type of research I was undertaking. Table 2.2 outlines the schemes, the number of trainees interviewed and their gender, whilst a more detailed description of each individual scheme is contained in Chapter Five.

Problems in getting into the schools fuelled

an anxiety that obtaining access to trainees on their schemes would be even more problematic. In particular, it was felt that the trade union content of the interview schedule could be unacceptable to Managing Agents (see Appendix B). The social and life skills element of YTS had explicitly stated that trainees be excluded from discussions "related to the organisation and functioning of society in general" (quoted in Ainley, 1987:110) and focusing on trade unions may have contravened this. However, after requesting a copy of the questionnaire all the Managing Agents initially approached agreed to participate in the research, providing the trainees' confidentiality could be guaranteed (5). Indeed, they and their staff gave their time and cooperation generously throughout the project and the 42 interviews were completed between February and August 1988.

Again, a brief comment is needed on why negotiating access to schools, which it was anticipated would be easier, in fact turned out to considerably more problematic than gaining access to trainees. My attempts at access point towards a concern amongst those involved with YTS which focuses on persuading young people to train on the Scheme in the first place. This is supported by the evidence contained within Chapter Four. It would appear that once young people

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5. Although the trainees were not concerned about remaining anonymous, access was negotiated guaranteeing their confidentiality. Therefore, the names of trainees have been changed throughout the thesis.

have made the move onto a training scheme the possibility of outside influences affecting the trainee's perceptions of the Scheme, or their decision to join or leave, appears greatly diminished.

Whilst the selection of schemes could be successfully controlled for the sampling of trainees proved slightly more problematic. During the negotiation of access it was indicated that a cross-section of trainees, taking into consideration gender, ethnicity and ability, was required to give the research a representative content. To this end, the training providers were relied on to select suitable respondents and the subsequent sampling of trainees took place largely on the days agreed for interviewing. This was, in part, because of chronic absenteeism which appears endemic to the Scheme: "we don't know who's coming in from one week to the next" (field notes 18/08/88). One Managing Agent did provide an advance list of trainees to be interviewed assuring me it was suitably representative. However, the list underwent several revisions during my visits as absenteeism meant original choices became unavailable.

To this extent sample selection was taken out of my control but the research retained a high degree of success in its original intention to draw from a cross-section of trainees. Approximately equal numbers of young women and young men of varying ability were interviewed but efforts to ensure that a representative number of black youngster proved unsuccessful. Although

three Asian youngsters, two young men and a young woman, were interviewed black youngsters were noticeably under-represented on the schemes researched. This was despite the fact that the sample was designed to accommodate those schemes black youngsters were thought to occupy.

A more detailed account of the discrimination black youngsters face on YTS, and its implications for their participation, is contained in Chapter Four. It is worth noting here that the high proportion of Asian people in Coventry had important implications for the research design and provided further evidence for YTS' role in supporting the existing racial division of labour. Other research has illustrated the importance of "friends, acquaintances and relatives" (Hoel, 1982:82) for young Asian women seeking to avoid unemployment and obtain 'sweated' work in Coventry's clothing factories. Chapter Three presents tentative evidence that these networks are important for Asian youngsters looking for part-time work whilst at school.

The extension of these networks to school-leavers therefore offers young Asian people a way to avoid training schemes and an alternative route into much prized 'real jobs'. In doing so, they further illustrate the failure of the Scheme to engage with the way in which youngsters experience YTS and how this to their movement into the labour market. Through Asian youngsters' desire to avoid the Scheme, and its inability to represent a credible alternative to the



lure of 'real jobs' whatever their quality, they effectively become locked into a series of networks which lead into low paid, arduous work that offers no possibility of training or further development. In this way the position of black youngsters in the lower segments of the labour market is indirectly reproduced and YTS' commitment to equal opportunities seriously questioned.

### **Interviewing young people**

The fact that most young people still live at home can produce specific problems for the field researcher interested in young people. Roberts et al's (1983:83-4) experiences illustrate that interviews taking place within the home can be subject to pressure from parents; possibly through interruptions or by inhibiting the respondent from expressing their own views. More so, where parents are hostile to the research or the parental home is not a conducive environment in which to interview, most school-leavers do not have a place of their own in which any interview can take place. Some of the interviews for Roberts et al's project took place in a friend's homes and one in the field researcher's car.

Interviewing the youngsters whilst training on their schemes circumvented these problems and the majority took place while the trainees were doing their off-the-job component. Only the City Council's clerical trainees were 'at work' whilst being interviewed. Although interviewing whilst training may have

inhibited the respondents, throughout the field work a room or office was provided to ensure confidentiality and minimal disturbance. Indeed, it was even stated by one tutor, "it's nice to get them [the trainees] out of my hair for a while" (field notes 12/04/88). My initial presence on some of the schemes was usually something of a novelty and, to begin with, the interviews were occasionally disturbed by curious visitors. However, once my purpose became known the intrusions became non-existent and the majority of interviews proceeded without interruption.

The researcher needs to be sympathetic towards respondents' other commitments and since their training was organized around a set timetable, I quickly discovered that it was important to time interviews so they did not over-run into lunch or coffee breaks. Whilst the trainees were willingly interviewed this was better timed to take place during the periods when they should have been training. Indeed, Chapter Five illustrates the indifference many of the youngsters felt towards their off-the-job training and it is possible that the interviews constituted a welcome interruption to its usual routine.

All but one of the youngsters appeared happy to be interviewed, the exception clearly found it an unsettling experience and one she was keen to leave. She was the only trainee who declined to give her name and address in the unlikely event that they could be

contacted again at some point in the future. The shortest interview lasted 40 minutes and the longest 90 minutes. In contrast to expectations, the more interviews completed the longer they were taking. It had been anticipated that greater familiarity with the questionnaire and the development of a more proficient method of recording the data would have led to a more efficient completion rate. In fact the converse appeared true.

One reason for this is the possibility that the use of a semi-structured schedule allows the researcher to develop an increasing familiarity with the possible responses to questions. In this way the researcher can use the interview schedule as a way of generating greater depth to the data by teasing out more detail to the responses or by following up interesting points or comments. Such a use of an interview schedule can only add to the overall richness of data gathered.

There is also another important dynamic that facilitated the successful completion of the interviewing. Over recent years field researchers have become increasingly aware of the dynamics of gender and race within social research and the way this impacts on the collection and presentation of data (for a brief overview see Burgess, 1984:90-2). Similarly, generational differences between the researcher and the subjects of their research must also be taken into account.

This point was most graphically illustrated whilst working on an project organized by the Unemployment Unit (McCabe & Finn, 1989), when I turned up to interview a young woman who had just secured her own flat after long-running problems with the social services. When she answered the door she appeared physically relieved and, after making me a cup of coffee, went on to explain that she had been expecting a middle age man, in a suit and carrying a briefcase. What this point illustrates is that youngsters can associate generation differences with authority, particularly so where research takes place in an institutional setting. For my own project I made the conscious decision to 'dress down' and attempted to keep as an informal atmosphere to the interview as possible. Bearing in mind Corrigan's (1979) warning to the researcher not to become too closely associated with the institution they are researching, the offer of lunch with the training staff was declined on a number of visits to the training providers. The time was either spent beginning to write up the interviews or accompanying one or two of the youngsters to the chip shop or corner store. Whilst this may have raised a few eyebrows amongst the staff it was felt more appropriate considering the research's overall focus.

The success of the interviewing was further borne out by the number of trainees who accepted the invitation to ask me questions at the end of each interview. Although only just under half took the

opportunity, this was more than expected and the majority of these questioned me about my opinions on politics and trade unions, since this was the topic on which we ended the interviews. A few also asked for more information about the research and what university was like, two more asked me about my social life, where I went out and what sort of music I listened to, and one young woman told me about the problems she was currently having with her parents and boyfriend.

The determination to keep the interviews informal was also a primary factor in recording them through written notes which were subsequently written up into a full report. Since the interviews were only one-off events they precluded the development of any trusting relationship on which many research situations depend.

"Where the interviewer has strong rapport, informants may accept the [tape] machine with little hesitation, but in the early stages of the study the introduction of the machine may place a serious obstacle in the way of his efforts to get himself (sic) established" (Burgess, 1982:118).

The original intention had been to tape and then transcribe the interviews but previous experience of noting interviews and then compiling them into a fuller report convinced me of the flexibility of this alternative.

Before I began my own project I had already logged approximately 30 hours interviewing time using this method and had developed my own shorthand way of

recording interviews (McCabe & Finn, 1989). Burgess (1982:ibid) points out that one of the disadvantages of this method is that the researcher is continually a few seconds behind what the respondent is saying and therefore can miss valuable points of information. Similarly, the interview can be punctuated by periods of silence as the interviewer seeks to record what was said. Although this can never be completely eliminated, practice can reduce such interruptions to a minimum whilst still maintaining an active relationship between the interviewer and the respondent.

Such a technique, however, does allow the researcher to edit out surplus information at source, making writing up and analysing the data a simpler task. Spending long periods transcribing taped interviews is also avoided, although writing up written notes into a coherent and accurate account of the interview brings its own demands. I endeavoured to write up the full report of the interview as quickly as possible, some beginning during lunch and coffee breaks, or that same evening, often stretching into the early hours. This produced its own strains, both physically and psychologically, but it meant the interviews were undertaken and fully written up in a very short period of time.

Where the interviews are quoted in the main text, they reflect what the respondents said verbatim. These quotes were written down as said during the interview but the researcher's limited ability to

remember accurately lengthy comments accounts for their often concise nature. Consequently, I did not share other researcher's confidence to utilise lengthy quotes recorded from interviews in this way (e.g. Seabrook, 1983).

#### **Other sources of data**

During my postgraduate studies, the politics of research has become increasingly apparent. Research is ultimately about power and the control of information. How that information is generated and in what way it is brought into the public domain is crucial for the wider implications of any project.

"Men (sic) are free to make history, but some men are much freer than others. Such freedom requires access to the means of decisions and of power by which history may now be made" (Wright Mills, 1959:201).

This belief led to my involvement in a number of research and campaigning organisations which culminated in my working as a Political Researcher for one of the Labour Party's Employment Spokespeople during 1990. In doing so, it opened up previously closed sources of information which has added to the overall rigour of the research. In particular, I became aware of the rich source of information contained within Hansard. As such, both Parliamentary debates and the wealth of information contained within Parliamentary written questions have been widely utilised within the thesis.

Furthermore, access to the House of Commons

Library facilities also provided the opportunity to obtain information from the Training Agency's '100% Follow-Up Survey' of YTS leavers. The results of the survey are updated quarterly and copies are placed in the Norman Shore North Library at the House of Commons. As a consequence they are not readily available for public scrutiny to assess government claims about YTS' performance. It is from the leavers' survey that Government ministers base their claims over the scheme's successes and failures, although, as we have seen, the way the findings are presented tends to obscure some of the more complex aspects of its achievements. Much of the data from the leavers' survey utilised in this thesis comes into the public domain for the first time here.

The leavers' survey is an impressive piece of research and commands resources way beyond the means of any individual researcher, and most groups. Its scale can be grasped by the fact that, between January 1988 and December 1989, the most recent period for which results are available, of the 745,384 leavers, 706,883 questionnaires were issued. Of these 391,008 returned the six page questionnaire; a response rate of 55.3% (TA, May 1990). It thus provides the TA with a data set which would make any research student green with envy.

A copy of the questionnaire is sent to every trainee three months after leaving their schemes and they are provided with a pre-paid envelope in which to return the completed questionnaire. Although the



covering letter states clearly that the survey is undertaken on behalf of the Training Agency, it emphasises that the actual research is undertaken by Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR), a market research organisation, who also analyse the information on their behalf.

### **Completing the project**

I have spoken at some length about the constraints that shaped my project and the way in which these were overcome in an attempt to retain the rigour that sociological research demands. In particular, the research student now faces time constraints not experienced by contemporaries five or 10 years ago. My experience of doing postgraduate sociological research has convinced me that four years is sufficient time to produce a quality piece of work meriting a Ph.D. But there are considerable forces working against this.

Funding is probably the most important. Without an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) award to support the research, the project would have been unthinkable but, as the experiences of a growing number of friends bear testament, research awards are few and far between. Furthermore, in being in the relatively advantageous position of actually obtaining an award for three years, it appears that a fourth year, in part or whole, is now accepted as normal for many social science Ph.Ds. Even though the award was just sufficient to cover my everyday needs, I found myself in the strange position of doing research but

being unable to buy the books I so badly needed. Spending a fourth year of the project meant searching for additional means of support.

Signing on as unemployed offered the most attractive option. Despite the low income and technically having to be available for work, it offered the opportunity to continue full-time with the research. However, recent changes mean that the unemployed can now be called upon to prove that they are actively seeking work each week and the increasing frequency of Restart interviews are used to reinforce this. Pressure from the benefit authorities was one of the factors that led me to look for another means of support. Securing a part-time job meant that I could pay the bills but it also meant two or three days each week could no longer be committed to the research.

The pressure to finish came to a head when it was made known that the ESRC's target completion rates necessitated my finishing by September 1990. The pressure was intensified by a period of personal upheaval which distracted considerably from the task in hand. However, I gave an undertaking to try to complete by this time and the experience has provided some useful insights.

Writing to a strict timetable meant that I had to become relatively proficient at producing quality pieces of work within a short period. This, in itself, is a good discipline for the research student to master. Especially if the student, like myself,

tends to get overly possessive about their work and therefore reluctant to hand it in unless it satisfies their ideas of perfection. Having to produce work to a given date meant that I could no longer ponder excessively over its merits, or lack of them, and in doing so instilled a certain confidence in my ability to produce written work, of acceptable standard, within a short period of time.

The pressure to complete also brought greater focus to the research. It meant that exploring areas, which would have been desirable given more time, was no longer possible. This, I believe, in no way detracted from the quality of the work, but it did give me a greater sense of proportion about what is required from a Ph.D. thesis. Instead of writing an epic account of young people and the YTS it gave a sharper focus and definition to the more immediate problems I was addressing.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### IN THE KNOW: YOUNG PEOPLE AND PART-TIME WORKING

##### Introduction

At the heart of training provision for school-leavers lies a "deficiency model" (Davies, 1982:12) of young workers. This is a 'model' that equates young people's inability to secure employment less with the structure of the labour market and more with their presumed individual capacities and their inability to provide employers with the basic attributes required. In the 1980s, successive Government initiatives, from the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) to Employment Training, have taken this stance and have created a model of training structured by employers' perceptions and largely taking place in work experience-type placements.

This redefinition of young workers took shape in the context of the economic crises of the 1970s. Against a background of rapidly rising unemployment, young people's inexperience and their gradual transition into the labour market became interpreted as a 'deficiency model'. The focus of the problem was seen to lie with the deficiencies of the individual as increasingly defined by the demands of employers. Central to this redefinition were the interests of senior industrialists who, for the first time in the post-war period, entered the debate, criticizing schools for producing a new generation of workers lacking the qualities they needed. As such, "after one

of the longest periods of compulsory education in Europe, young people seemed ill-equipped for almost any kind of employment and woefully ignorant about the basic economic facts" (Sir John Methven, 1978, Director General of the CBI, quoted in Brown, 1987:108).

Employers saw young people as a "headache", they had "a reputation for moving in and out of jobs in a casual, undisciplined and aimless way; [and] of performing poorly in jobs they do hold down however temporarily" (ITRU, 1979:2).

In the words of Sir Richard O'Brien, then chairperson of the MSC, what young people needed was "knowledge of what it means to have a job ... its opportunities, disciplines and rights" (quoted in Finn, 1984:17). Articulated through the New Training Initiative (NTI), the YTS sought to remedy this deficiency by providing youngsters with a training scheme which would allow them "to develop basic and recognized skills which employers will require in the future" through a period of "planned and supervised work experience and properly designed opportunities for off-the-job training or further education" (Department of Employment, 1981:para 24-5).

Yet the 'deficiency model' pays little attention to the ways in which the working class young have historically experienced growing up and entering the labour market. As such,

"the factor that is continually left out of account is that pupils do have knowledge of the world of

work. They are members of working communities and they are brought up to work. They gain indirect knowledge through parents, relations and friends and direct knowledge from out-of-school jobs" (their emphasis, Moore, 1983:83).

Through exploring one aspect of the centrality of work to growing up working class, and its implications for young people's knowledge of the 'world of work', I want to question the 'deficiency model' that informs much of post-school training provision for young people. By looking at work in its most immediate and direct form, through 'out-of-school jobs', I want to establish the extent to which working class youngsters accumulate first-hand experience of the social relations of work as they grow up and prepare to leave school.

The research was designed to illuminate the extent to which part-time working whilst at school equipped young people for the demands of waged labour. To what extent were the pupils involved in part-time work? Indeed, can we speak of child labour as such or was there a degree of inter-changeability between the jobs done by the child workers and those more commonly associated with adult work? What did part-time working mean in terms of hours and working conditions? What did it mean in terms of rates of pay and levels of income? What was the significance of part-time working for the pupils themselves? And, finally, was there any direct relationship between part-time employment and post-school working?

### **The significance of part-time working**

Studies of part-time working amongst school pupils have usually been motivated by concerns over its impact on educational achievement or attempts to assess the effectiveness of local bye-laws covering child workers (Fyfe, 1989:34). Few attempts have been made to evaluate the extent and significance of child labour and its wider relationship to post-school working. In one of the few systematic investigations of school pupils and part-time work Finn (1984) shows how this 'child labour' is an important formative experience for the young working class. In part-time working, young people have a central "learning experience" (ibid:44) through which they gain first-hand knowledge of the demands and disciplines of waged labour, of how to secure paid employment, earn and spend an independent income and knowledge of what is involved in employment relationships. This experience is all the more significant because it involves knowledge of work at its most mundane, "contact with the 'dull compulsion' of capitalist economic relations is with capital at its dullest" (ibid:18). For many of the young people surveyed, the work was devoid of any intrinsic value but it marked their initiation into the 'world of work' in many important ways.

For Finn, the direct knowledge gained from part-time working also provides a continuity between the social relations of schooling and those of work. As such, the orthodox view that sees the transition from

school to work as a quantum leap, fails to engage with the material realities of growing up working class. Whilst not undermining the important changes involved in leaving school, many youngsters have already acquired a reservoir of knowledge and experience, much of it directly accumulated from part-time working, that lubricates this process. Far from being ill-prepared for a working life, the majority of young people are "ready culturally and socially to make the transition to work" (ibid:59).

Furthermore, it is this experience of part-time working, and its relation to the disciplines and freedoms of domestic labour and school, that young people draw on when making choices about moving into the labour market or continuing in full-time education. It is these experiences, in combination with the influence of family and friends, that largely structure how young people make sense of the opportunities available to them on leaving school and, thus, provide an important prefigurative framework through which they take up their wider roles in the social and sexual division of labour.

The significance that Finn attaches to part-time working as a source of work experience is not an uncontested one. For Ken Roberts et al (1986), Finn over-emphasizes the role of part-time working in preparing young people for work. They question the importance of 'spare-time' working and doubt its role for working class youngsters to "become streetwise,



learn how to hold jobs, to earn and spend their own money and to handle relationships with employers" (ibid:91). For them, it is school and, in particular, "the advantage of formal careers lessons" (ibid), that provide the crucial socializing factors for work. Where they do see spare-time working as important, however, is for young people who remain in full-time education beyond their fifth year at school. They suggest that an Americanization of attitudes is taking place and these young people are increasingly being encouraged by their parents to work whilst staying on at school. As such, viewing spare-time employment in relation to working class youngsters who reject school is misplaced. Indeed, the converse is true and it is these "bright sixth formers and college students" (ibid:92) who employers prefer to fill their part-time and temporary vacancies, squeezing opportunities for the "less able pupils"(ibid).

#### **The extent of part-time working**

Since there are no nationally recognized figures for child working in Britain and no centrally collected statistics, it is difficult to establish a comprehensive picture. What research is available would suggest that child working is extensive, including, at any one time, between one third and two thirds of all school pupils. The Emrys Davies Report, commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) in 1972, covered pupils in 40 schools and in 10 different regions (Quoted in TUC/UNICEF, 1985:21). Davies found

that three quarters of 13 to 15 year olds were involved in some form of work and that around half held paid employment. Three years later, a DHSS estimate on the effects of compulsory registration for child workers put the figure at 33% of the child population for the first year of registration. Their figures for yearly additions imply that at least one in four children were involved in part-time working, other than babysitting and running errands (Quoted in MacLennan et al, 1985:15). More recently, a survey of 33,000 young people, by Exeter University's Health Education Unit, found that, at 15, just over half their sample held a paid job during term time (Guardian 29/11/89).

Two studies by the Low Pay Unit further support this picture of extensive working amongst school pupils (Low Pay Unit, 1982; MacLennan et al, 1985). In their survey of 'Child Labour in London' the Low Pay Unit found that 35% of their sample, from 6 comprehensive schools, were currently engaged in part-time work. This excluded an additional 17% who were involved in babysitting and a further 12% who held more than one job (1982:6). In a follow-up survey (MacLennan et al, 1985), 40% of their sample were working, during term time, in paid employment other than babysitting and running errands. They calculated that if this figure were applied nationally then some two and a half million children would be involved in part-time work.

Although the extent of part-time working appears to vary on a regional basis, more localized

studies reinforce the conclusion that it is more extensive than many would assume. The strength of Roberts et al's (1986:91) conclusions are surprising given that 42% of their sample had worked before leaving school, a far from insignificant minority. They also chose to exclude babysitting as a legitimate form of 'spare-time' employment, a factor we will deal with later, further depressing rates. Similarly, Brown's (1987:113) early 1980s study of a South Wales comprehensive school found that around half the fifth form pupils held a part-time job. Wallace's study of young people on the Isle of Sheppey found that every one of her respondents "already had extensive working experience before they left school" (1987b:64), through part-time or casual working.

Finn's (1984:36) own study of fifth form pupils in Rugby and Coventry found that 75% of the sample had, at one time, held a part-time job, including those who babysat. Similarly, a senior teacher at a Scarborough comprehensive school (Combes, 1987), prompted by falling attendances to out-of-school activities, carried out an informal survey among his pupils. Around 75% of the second years reported having a job and, although many were involved in dog walking and digging the garden, he found a 'worrying' number working as babysitters, delivering newspapers and working in the hotel and catering sector of Scarborough's tourist industry. Furthermore, it was an increasing trend:

"the clash between school commitments and a part-time job is not something new, but it used to be a Saturday morning problem confined to the 15 plus age group. Now many youngsters aged from 12 upwards have jobs before and after school" (1987:22).

My own study supports these findings. Of a survey of 152 fifth form pupils in Coventry, 104 (69%) had held a part-time job at one time or another. The distribution of part-time working is shown in Table 2.2, where the stayers were less likely to have held a part-time job than the leavers and, in particular, the girl leavers were less likely to have worked than the boy leavers. Comparable to rates of activity amongst the leavers, separate interviews with 44 YTS trainees revealed that 32 (76%) had worked whilst at school. Similarly, rates of activity amongst the trainees also differed according to gender; of the 18 young women interviewed 12 had held jobs compared to 20 of the 24 boys.

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Table 3.1 School pupils who had been involved in part-time working (as percentage n=104).

	Males	Females	Total	Europ	Non-Europ
stayers	15	17	32	24	8
leavers	39	29	68	63	13
Total	54	46	100	87	13

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Furthermore, 62 of the pupils, 41% of the total sample, currently held part-time jobs. This included a group of four boys who currently held two

jobs, in each case a morning and an evening paper round. Whilst inconclusive, this contrast between the total number of pupils who had experience of part-time working and those currently working, tends to support Finn's claim that child working is characterized by its "fluidity" (1984:36). A pattern which sees child workers exhibit a considerable degree of movement around the labour market, analagous to the 'job-hopping' of young workers once they enter the labour market on a full-time basis (e.g. Carter, 1962), and, as a consequence, where rates of turnover are high.

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Table 3.2 School pupils currently working (as a percentage n=66)

	Males	Females	Total	Europ	Non-Europ
stayers	21	13	34	26	8
leavers	37	29	66	64	2
Total	58	42	100	90	10

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This is further supported by the high number of trainees that had been involved in part-time work. Indeed, whilst the research was not designed to elucidate the comprehensive work histories for young people, the 32 child workers recalled 42 jobs. This included seven who had held two jobs simultaneously, three of whom did evening and morning paper rounds and another two who combined delivery work with Saturday jobs. One young woman held a Saturday job, and also did regular holiday work as a cleaner or receptionist at a

local exhibition centre, and a young man who worked in a factory each evening after school, as well as a porter in a hotel on Saturday mornings. One young woman could recall an extensive work history, beginning when she was 13, holding at least five different jobs ranging from newspaper deliveries to telephone canvassing.

### **Its different for girls**

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 also show the already clearly differentiated experience of work among the boys and girls and among the European and non-European pupils. The low number of working non-European pupils is particularly surprising given that children from many ethnic minorities are actively encouraged to work (Head, 1988; Wilce, 1988). In the West Midlands, the 'rag trade' is dominated by many Asian-run small firms who rely heavily on the low paid labour of women and children. Despite Coventry being identified as a centre for this (Observer 13/5/84), and the high number of Asian pupils in the sample, rates of activity were low.

It is possible that the wording of the question excluded many young non-Europeans who were involved in work for family or friends, since this may not have been strictly interpreted as paid employment. Indeed, the importance of kinship networks was illustrated by some of those non-European pupils who did work. Of the seven non-European pupils who stated they were currently working, one Asian girl worked in her parent's shop, another in a relative's shop and

another babysat for friends and relatives. Similarly, one Asian boy worked at his father's engineering firm and another as a waiter in a friend's Indian restaurant. Furthermore, in looking at part-time working amongst non-European pupils we must also take into consideration the likelihood that they too suffer discrimination from employers. Young black people suffer consistently higher rates of unemployment than their white peers and research has illustrated the persistent racial discrimination suffered by black YTS trainees (see Chapter Four). If the 'adult' labour market is characterized by extensive discriminatory recruitment practices then the experience of child workers is unlikely to differ significantly.

Other studies (e.g. Low Pay Unit, 1982; Finn, 1984; MacLennan et al, 1985; Roberts et al, 1986) have already identified the clearly gendered experience of part-time working amongst school pupils. In each study, the boys were more heavily involved in work than the girls, although, significantly, all but Finn tend to ignore the importance of wage labour in relation to the constraints of domestic labour. Thus Roberts et al (1986) exclude babysitting from their definition of 'spare-time' employment and the studies by the Low Pay Unit (1982; 1985) tend to relegate it below considerations of more regulated forms of employment.

For young women, their relationship to the labour market is mediated through assumptions about their domestic responsibilities and future working

lives. As they mature, girls are expected to play an increasingly important role within the family (McRobbie, 1978; Lees, 1986) which, as well as reinforcing their subordinate role, structures their relationship to waged labour. Both McRobbie and Lees found 12 to 14 hours a week domestic labour about the norm for adolescent working class girls, whereas the associated commitment from any brothers was almost negligible.

The centrality of domestic labour also subjects girls to different forms of control within the family. Where girls have no independent source of income they are expected to earn any pocket money. In effect, "the girls are hired on a subcontractural basis by their mother" (McRobbie, 1978:100). Their brothers were not subject to the same restrictions and had the relative independence to dispose of their time, in many cases through part-time working, and pocket money as they pleased. Furthermore, girls are subject to greater parental control of their leisure (Frith, 1983:225) and so it would appear that parents exercise more control over the type of work they might do and the hours they would work.

Failure to recognize babysitting, and related tasks, as a legitimate form of part-time employment ignores an early facet of the sexual division of labour and, in particular, fails to grasp the common connection between the work young women do both inside and outside the home. For many young women, babysitting



is an acceptable and accessible form of employment. It may offer a young woman relative autonomy, the chance to leave their own domestic environment, albeit for another one. In McRobbie's study, the working class girls rarely had the opportunity to leave the estate on which they lived (1978:100). Here, babysitting may offer the chance to find some space, away from the confines of their own home, and freedom, for a short time anyway, from the intrusions of adults. As one girl leaver describes it, "when I babysit, she leaves me food and drink, no spirits, and I'm allowed a friend around". It would also seem a more acceptable form of employment to parents, since it was usually done for friends and relatives, those people generally known to the family. The young women would be in the relatively safe environment of the home of someone known and, if there was any distance to travel, they were usually assured of a lift home if it was late at night.

Beyond this, Table 3.4 shows an already clearly gendered pattern of work. The girls held jobs as sales assistants, supermarket workers, assistants to hairdressers or cleaners. The boys were more likely to be involved in delivery work, mainly delivering newspapers, and labouring work appeared the prerogative of the boys. They were also likely to work as attendants at petrol stations, doing postal deliveries and where there was work in electrical or engineering jobs these too went to the boys.

Within the categories of Table 2.4, work was

also strongly delineated by gender. In shop and retail work, the girls were more likely to work on checkouts

Table 3.3 Range of part-time jobs

	Pupils n=66			Trainees n=44		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. Paper deliveries	13	1	14	8	3	11
2. Other deliveries incl, egg & milk	7	1	8	2	1	3
3. Retail/shopwork	3	4	7	2	7	9
4. Babysitting	1	10	11	0	2	2
5. Cleaning, incl. office & car.	2	3	5	2	1	3
6. Catering/hotel	4	4	8	2	3	5
7. Labouring	3	1	4	7	0	7
8. Door to door selling /canvassing, incl. telephone canvassing.	1	2	3	0	1	1
9. Stewarding /attendant	2	0	2	0	0	0
10. Printing/picture framing.	1	0	1	0	1	1
11. Engineering /electrical	2	0	2	0	0	0
12. Miscellaneous	0	0	0	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>44</b>

or as sales assistants in high street shops. Where the boys worked in shops, it was in DIY stores or Saturday jobs with a butcher. The girls were more likely to be involved in cleaning offices, shops or domestic cleaners, whereas the boys were car cleaners, warehouse or factory cleaners, "industrial cleaning" (1) as one trainee put it. Similarly, within catering and hotel work, the girls were waitresses or counter assistants in cafes and coffee or snack bars, whereas the boys

1. Neil - Community Care trainee

were glass collectors in social clubs or hotel porters.

### **Child's play?**

Having seen the type of work the young people were involved in, I now wanted to examine what was actually involved in their jobs. Table 2.4 shows that around one third of the school pupils and a quarter of the trainees had been involved in babysitting or newspaper deliveries; forms of employment more 'traditionally' associated with child labour. Indeed, MacLennan et al (1986:24) found that approximately one third of their child workers were involved in delivering newspapers. However, conceiving this type of work as the domain of child labour should not undermine its importance for a multi-million pound industry. A move to ban Sunday working amongst children in Gloucestershire in 1988, following the abduction and murder of a paper boy, met with strong protests from the county's 400 newsagents. In addition, a spokesperson for the multi-national media group, News International, underlined their importance as a source of labour when he commented that, "he was extremely concerned about what happened ... but deliveries by newspaper boys and girls are an essential part of the industry" (Sunday Times 14/2/88).

However, as the Low Pay Unit states, "contrary to common belief the employment of children is not limited to such jobs as babysitting or paper deliveries, but includes many jobs which adults do on a full-time basis" (1982:3). As Table 4 illustrates, many

of the jobs occupied by the child workers, who took part in my research, clearly overlapped with work more commonly regarded as the preserve of adults. The pupils worked as petrol station attendants, shop workers, waiters and waitresses, office cleaners and on milk rounds. Similarly, the trainees had also worked in shops, as labourers for builders, industrial cleaners and hotel and catering workers.

Despite the degree of overlap between 'adult' and 'child' labour, the work mainly involved unskilled, manual tasks. As a first taste of the realities of waged labour it was work devoid of much intrinsic value. For the school pupils, work involved delivering newspapers or on a milk round, stacking shelves in supermarkets, washing out bottles and stacking crates in dairies, cleaning offices or cars, serving in coffee or snack bars, waiting on tables or labouring for bricklayers and plasterers. "Tasks such as till operating, shelf-stacking and serving delicatessen foods" was the comment of one girl stayer. As one boy leaver summed up the experience, in relation to his work for a potato deliverer,

"we always have to say the right things, run all the time. He [the boss] does what he wants. He just sits there driving the van and Anthony, his full-time worker, just sits in the van making pre-packs and eating sweets"

Two jobs may have required some skill but these were the exception rather than the rule. One young Asian stayer worked in his father's engineering

firm on Saturdays, "drilling holes in jobs and deburring them". Another boy leaver worked for a self-employed electrician, also on Saturdays, "repairing fridges and freezers", although what this specifically involved was unclear from his comments.

The trainees' experiences of child labour were of a similar quality. Beyond delivering newspapers and babysitting, they too held a variety of jobs more commonly associated with adult work and, like the pupils, none of their 44 jobs had much skill content. In this way, the experiences of the young women and men were similar.

For the two young women who held newsagents jobs, work meant "most of the time I did general shopwork, like serving customers and keeping the shop in order" (2), or "menial jobs", "mainly in stacking the shelves and cleaning the shop. I never got to work on the till much" (3). For Fiona, waitressing at 13 meant long hours at physically demanding work, having to be on your feet the whole time and "constantly on the go" (4). Working in a high street chain store of stationers meant getting all the "rotten jobs" (5), like shelf-filling or cleaning, which meant it was often difficult to maintain the courteous public image demanded by the employer.

The young men, too, described unskilled work

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2. Frances - Retail trainee
  3. Julia - Clerical trainee
  4. Fiona - Clerical trainee
  5. Kath - Clerical trainee

largely made up of manual tasks. For newspaper deliveries it meant an early start to the day, often, during the winter, before it was light or having to start after a day at school. It was not so much a picture of youngsters earning a few easy pounds but "hard work in all weathers" (6). Disciplining yourself to get up early each day and, as such, "I was knackered sometimes and that was before I even got to school" (7). Unskilled manual work meant labouring for a builder, "doing things like help fitting windows, bricklaying, roofing, cleaning up whenever he needed a hand" (8), or working in a garden centre "humping stuff around, cleaning up and helping pot plants" (9). For Luke, his work at a social club involved "collecting empty glasses from tables and taking them to be washed" (10). For another, "industrial cleaning" (11) meant having to carry heavy loads and work at a pace that meant you were "shagged" by the end.

#### **The demand for child labour**

For their employers, the child workers clearly represented a flexible, low cost source of labour. Finn suggests that, in the context of the rapid rise in unemployment during the early 1980s, employers were eager to utilize this hidden source of labour. Citing evidence from Forester (quoted in Finn,

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6. Robert - Engineering trainee
  7. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee
  8. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee
  9. Richard - Construction trainee plumber
  10. Luke - Retail trainee
  11. Neil - Community Care trainee

1984:45), he shows the steep rise in registered child workers in Birmingham, during the 1970s, compared to the previous decade. Although part of this rise could be explained by the more effective registration of child workers, the 'registered' workers still failed to take into account an estimated 3000 school pupils working illegally (ibid).

Even though unemployment has levelled out, evidence would suggest that changing employment patterns, demographic changes, work organization and economic imperatives are having an impact on the demand for child workers. Early in 1988, the principle child employment officer for London predicted a rise in the number of child workers in the capital (Independent 28/1/88). Furthermore, privatization and the trend towards contracting out jobs and services, like cleaning and gardening work, mean financial savings are made through contractors paying lower wages and utilising different sources of labour. One consequence has been the use of child labour (Lamb and Piercy, 1987; TUC/UNICEF, 1985:24). The TUC has presented evidence of the use of child labour by contractors carrying out privatized services (ibid). In the London borough of Merton, one private cleaning agency was found to be using child labour as young as 13. In a similar incident, one of the country's leading paediatricians resigned, in 1984, over the use of child labour by contract cleaners in the Cambridgeshire hospital where he worked. It was claimed that, "the

firm has used children because it cannot find adults to work for the pay and conditions it is offering" (ibid).

My own research underlies the degree to which child labour could be utilised by employers' subcontracting work which has grown in preminence in recent years. Two of the girl leavers worked for the same employer, "office cleaning", every evening after school, and another girl leaver also cleaned offices, "it includes emptying the bins, polishing tables and desks and Hoovering floors". In addition, one boy stayer worked "delivering post for a private firm". Amongst the trainees, Sarah worked as a cleaner, at a local exhibition centre, and Neil spent his Saturday mornings doing cleaning work in a factory.

#### **All work and no play**

In emphasising the overlap between jobs done by children and those more commonly associated with adults, I am not suggesting that child workers are directly displacing adult workers, although, as we have seen, there is evidence that this does happen. However, they do represent a source of labour that is willing to work hours that may be inconvenient for many adult workers, for example, shop work at weekends, office cleaning for a couple of hours in the evening or labouring for a builder on Saturday mornings. Indeed, some of the hours they worked may not even be considered by most adults, for example, delivering newspapers or working the early hours of Saturday mornings with the extra weekend deliveries of milk.



This flexibility around hours and times of work, despite limits on shift working, is one of their major attractions as a source of labour.

Furthermore, this flexibility should not lessen the significance of part-time working as a source of work discipline. Putting an exact figure on the time pupils spend in paid employment is problematic, but Finn (1984:42) found that although most of the child workers in his research worked for under 10 hours per week, 40% worked for longer. Assessing the implications of working such hours, MacLennan et al suggest that, "added to hours actually spent in school, ... even a short working week may mean that a child is 'at work' much longer than the average adult" (1985:26).

For the child workers who took part in my research, a similar picture to Finn's emerged. Of the 62 currently working pupils, 47 indicated that they worked on a regular basis and another seven "when needed". Of these, 47 worked on more than one day a week and of the 14 who worked on just one day, 10 held Saturday jobs. In 51 cases it was possible to establish the total number of hours worked each week and, in the remaining cases, it either depended on when they were needed or the information was not provided. On average the pupils worked around seven hours a week, almost an extra working day, and the figure remained remarkably constant for both the girls and the boys. Furthermore, the average hours worked by the leavers each week,

seven and a half, were significantly longer than those worked by the stayers, five and a half.

Time spent working could range from two or three hours collecting glasses, serving in a coffee bar or delivering newspapers. Others worked nine hours on a Saturday for a hairdresser or as a petrol station attendant, or two hours every day cleaning offices after school. Of the 51 pupils for whom a weekly rate could be established, 19 worked over eight hours a week, 15 of whom were leavers and 11 of whom were boys. This included one boy leaver, for whom the term part-time is not really applicable, delivering potatoes 28 hours a week in addition to, or possibly in spite of, his school commitments.

For the 32 trainees, the hours worked each week could be established in 24 cases, including the total hours of those who held two jobs. For the other eight, it was impossible to establish an hourly rate, usually because they worked irregularly or at short notice, with time spent at work varying during and through the weeks. Overall, the trainees tended to work longer than both the pupils as a whole and the leavers, on average 10 hours a week, easily the equivalent of an additional working day. This time, however, the girls tended to average just over 10 hours per week and the boys just over nine hours.

Again, the actual hours they spent working varied widely. For the young women, work consisted of two to three hours babysitting, or nine hours in a

newsagents or fashion shop on Saturdays, to 12 hours a week on a market stall. For the young men too, work hours varied considerably, from a couple of hours delivering newspapers each week to nine hours at a garden centre, or 13 hours in a supermarket. Of the 20 young men who held a part-time job whilst at school, weekly hours could be established in 15 cases and nine of these involved working over eight hours a week. This included four young men who worked over 13 hours a week; collecting glasses, working in a supermarket and working two large paper rounds. One young man managed two jobs, one in a chemical factory and the other as a hotel porter, which meant he was working 25 hours a week.

#### **A source of cheap labour?**

The continuity between the experience of child labour and adult labour was further illustrated through average rates of pay. Potter (1989:15) suggests that, by any measure, the majority of young 'adult' workers now fall below thresholds of low pay, and that the wages of the 16 to 18 age group are particularly low. He produces figures from the Department of Employment's New Earnings Survey which show average basic pay for 16 and 17 year olds at around £74.50 per week. For a 38 hour week, this would mean an hourly rate of approximately £1.96. He also gives figures, from a recent nationwide survey of 170 firms, which show comparable rates of pay. Obviously, average rates obscure the vast differences in young people's pay, for

example, due to regional variations, manual or non-manual employment and the impact of gender and race, but Table 2.5 does provide a useful point of comparison.

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Table 3.4 Rates of pay for the 16 to 18 age group.

	per year	Average pay per week	£ per 38 hour week
16	3,406	65.50	1.73
17	3,978	76.50	2.01
18	4,922	94.65	2.49

Source: Professional Personnel Consultants (PPC) Ltd (Quoted in Potter, 1989:15).

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For some of the child workers in my research, the often casual nature of their work meant it was difficult to establish an hourly rate. Five of the school pupils were paid on a commission-only basis, delivering or selling door-to-door, one of whom was paid 18p for every delivery. An hourly rate was therefore impossible to calculate. For others, payment would be by lump sum but here it was usually possible to calculate an approximate hourly rate through dividing it by the number of hours they worked. In this way, it was possible to establish hourly rates for 47 of the 66 jobs held.

The resulting average hourly rate for the school pupils was £1.60 per hour, a figure below both that of the New Earnings Survey and the PPC findings cited by Potter but not incompatible with it. Within

this there were some important variations. Just as young women 'adult' workers tend to earn lower rates than their male counterparts (Potter, 1989:15), so too did female child workers. Like the experiences of the pupils that took part in Finn's research (1984:44) and the recent findings of the Exeter University study (Guardian 29/11/89), the girls who took part in my research were already experiencing lower average hourly rates of pay; £1.62 per hour in contrast to the boy's £1.77. Furthermore, a similar contrast existed between the stayers and the leavers with the latter averaging £1.55 per hour and the former £1.88 per hour.

It would appear that the different average hourly rates of the stayers and the leavers again prefigure the likely future pattern of their participation in the labour market. The leavers are more likely to find themselves in manual or semi-skilled work, that is, if they make an uninterrupted transition into employment. For the stayers, remaining in full-time education was more likely to open up the possibility of employment further up the job hierarchy, in work characterized by greater security and increased wages. In addition, Roberts et al found that many of the employers they interviewed, especially in the hotel, catering and distribution trades, preferred to employ 'brighter' young people in their part-time vacancies. "Their ability to pick things up quickly and the up-market atmosphere they could help to create ... made them attractive to the employers" (1986:92).

Specific emphasis on average hourly rates obscures wider variations. Two girl leavers babysat for 50p per hour and another for 75p per hour. Pay for paper rounds varied between £1 and £1.25 per hour, although one boy leaver delivered newspapers every morning for 65p per hour. At the other end of the scale only 15 of the 66 jobs paid over the average hourly rate. One boy leaver earned £3.30 per hour working as a sales assistant for his sister, another boy stayer £4 per hour at his father's engineering firm and a girl stayer £5 per hour also working for her father.

The rates of pay amongst the trainees supports the experiences of the pupils. Of the 44 jobs they held an hourly rate of pay could be established in 31 cases, averaging £1.66 per hour. Although slightly higher than the leavers this was still below, but not incompatible with, rates for the young workers in Potter's study.

Again, the young women had been suffering lower hourly rates than the young men. Of the 20 jobs they held, an hourly rate averaging £1.39 could be established in 13 cases. At the higher end only four held jobs paying £1.50 per hour for work that was often demanding. A paper round "was sometimes really hard, especially when it was raining or cold. I used to hate getting up that early in the morning, especially during the holidays" (12). Even work that Finn calls "the aristocracy of paid jobs" (1984:44) meant low pay, one

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12. Jane - Catering trainee

young woman working in a chain store of stationers for £1.47 per hour and another for a chain of fashion shops at £2 per hour. The best hourly rate went to a young woman cleaning at a local exhibition centre. At the other end of the scale, babysitters were paid 85p or £1.15 per hour but another worked as a waitress for 75p per hour and a fourth on a 'fruit and veg' stall for 85p per hour.

The young men fared slightly better although the variations in hourly rate were large. One youngster delivered papers every morning for 20p per hour although for others it meant 67p to 77p per hour. Doing "fucking hard work" (13) in a garden centre paid 70p per hour or labouring for a carpet fitter £1 per hour. A young man, who illustrated a considerable amount of initiative on his "self-employed" "egg, bacon and pop round" (14), brought in £2.50 per hour for 12 hours on a Friday when he was supposed to be at school. At the top of their wage hierarchy, cleaning in a factory on Saturday mornings paid £3 per hour.

#### **The importance of their income**

Although low paid, the importance of their income should not be underestimated. The rapid increase in unemployment during the late 1970s and early 1980s made income earned in this way more important, especially where "high levels of unemployment mean that a child may be the only breadwinner in the family"

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13. Richard - Construction trainee plumber

14. Jim - Construction trainee plumber

(Head, 1988:20). Even though unemployment has dropped from those extreme levels, where a family is on a low income, a child's wage may represent an important addition. A BBC Brass Tacks television programme (Quoted in TUC/UNICEF, 1985) found that children in an agricultural community were encouraged by their family to work 'carrot-topping' for as little as 70p per hour: "parents approved, and the mothers even put their children on the gang labour busses after school" (ibid:27).

Whilst the research was not designed to explore the relationship between the income from child labour and the family economy, paid employment clearly represented an important, and often substantial, source of independent income for the youngsters. Of the currently working school pupils, a weekly income could be established in 49 cases, averaging £13.70 per week. Whilst there were wide variations in their 'take home' pay, the majority earned under £15 per week. This ranged from £3 to £5 per week, babysitting, delivering newspapers or washing up in a cafe, to £7 per week working after school in a shop or £8 per week waitressing. However, a high number of the working pupils, 16 (33%), were earning £15 or over each week. This included 11 leavers and five stayers, seven of whom were earning over £20 per week. One girl leaver earned £22 per week working in a cafe, another £36 through door-to-door selling, a boy leaver earned between £20 and £40 per week, depending on how many



deliveries he had to make, and another boy leaver £40 per week as a cloak room attendant.

For the 32 trainees who had worked whilst at school, it was possible to establish a weekly income in 26 cases. Overall, weekly income averaged around £14 with only a slight difference between the males and the females; for the former it was just over £14 and the latter just over £13 per week. This was comparable with the average for the school pupils as a whole. Again, this hides large variations in income, ranging from £8 per hour for an eight hour day in a newsagents, to £12 for a Saturday's work in a stationer's store, through to one young woman who earned £20 for eight hours, on a Saturday, in a rest home for the elderly.

A similar contrast existed for the young men, although a small number had high weekly incomes. In 10 cases the young men's income exceeded £10 per week and four of these earned over £20 per week. In relation to their low average hourly rates of pay, these levels of income represent a considerable effort. This latter group of four included one young man who collected glasses three nights a week in a social club, and another who worked 12 hours on Fridays on his delivery round. The last of this group performed the considerable feat of holding two jobs simultaneously which brought him in the considerable total of £42 per week.

### **The experience of work**

As we have seen, the jobs held by the child workers were characterized by their low pay and the considerable effort required to produce their independent incomes. The tasks they had to undertake were dominated by the requirements of semi- and unskilled work which often clearly overlapped with work more commonly associated with adults. Indeed, exposes of child working often focus on the exploitation and hazards that child workers face. MacLennan et al found that four out of five of their child workers were working illegally and one third reported having accidents while working, a number of whom had to see a doctor as a consequence (1985:27-8). The Agricultural and Allied Workers National Trade Group, of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), have undertaken a long campaign to have the legal age at which children can drive tractors raised from 13 to 17. This is in response to the high number of children killed or seriously injured on British farms whilst working. Employers have steadfastly resisted these demands (TUC/UNICEF, 1985:25).

But despite the often arduous and unrewarding nature of the work they did, its importance for the young people themselves should not be underestimated. "Most school children look upon a casual job as a valuable asset - a source of independence, responsibility, financial freedom and work experience" (Head, 1988:20). Furthermore, research has illustrated

the enthusiasm with which many working class youngsters enter 'dead-end' jobs or condemn themselves to a life of unskilled, manual labour (Willis, 1977). So how did the young people experience their part-time work?

Generally the pupils were happy with their work. Only 10 (18%) of the 56 pupils who gave information felt they were treated unfairly by their employers. The main complaints related to the low levels of pay, "I think we are not being paid the right amount of money for the consumer goods on sale today" was the comment of one girl stayer who earned £1 per hour waitressing. Some also resented being given the "bad" or "rotten" jobs to do, or "being bossed around", whilst others, one boy stayer and one boy leaver, felt they were clearly being exploited by their employers and that their work held no use for the future: "the job I do [delivering leaflets] is a bit of a slave labour job and gives me no experience". Similarly, "the jobs that we do [milk round] are a stage of slave labour and give no experience at all".

The other 46 pupils (82%) were generally satisfied with their work. The major criteria appeared to be the fairness of the pay and the tasks they were expected to perform, "fair hours and pay" as one girl leaver put it. However, many placed considerable emphasis on the quality of their work relations. Indeed, Brown (1987:58) has suggested that it is wrong to see working class youngsters' orientations to work in purely instrumental terms and attention must be paid

to their more qualitative concerns. The comments of the child workers would support this. "My supervisor is very kind and polite and if things really need to be done she will ask you in the right attitude" commented one girl leaver about her cleaning job. Another felt "I am treated fairly by my present employer. She treats me well and doesn't look down on me, like my last employer before, who did not care about her employees, only herself", about her door-to-door selling job. Indeed, one boy stayer derived considerable pleasure from his job at a screen printers, "I enjoy the people I work with and find it satisfying that things I have worked on are seen all over the country".

The trainees were more critical of their part-time working, although the majority felt that they had been treated fairly by their employers. In all, 22 (69%) felt "the boss was a good bloke. He treated me fairly and paid a good wage" (15). They too appreciated good work relations, "they treated me fairly, it was nice and clean and the people were friendly. We had a good rest room and the meals were cheap" (16). Similarly, "he was a good boss, the work was OK and the pay alright. If you worked hard you got paid OK" (17). Some even valued their experience, "it was good experience. It gave me confidence in meeting and dealing with people in their own homes" (18).

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15. Frances - Retail trainee

16. Glenn - Public Service Vehicle trainee

17. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee

18. Thomas - Construction trainee carpenter

For the remaining 10 (31%), the experience had been less satisfying. Sometimes the demands placed on them became unacceptable, for example, being asked to come in earlier and earlier until, "finally I had to tell them where to stick their job" (19). Working on a 'fruit and veg' stall in a market meant, "I was treated like a bloke, expected to shift heavy bags of fruit and veg', doing all the cleaning and stuff and getting paid rubbish for it. That's why I left" (20). Holding two jobs meant "I was usually pretty knackered at the end of the week" (21), or having to deal with customers in the shop just got too much.

"Sometimes it was really horrible. Customers would often swear at you, some of the people were so ignorant". "It was very trying, at times I really hated it". "At work they didn't appreciate you or the work you did anyway. You usually got all the rotten jobs"(22).

#### **Involvement in part-time working and its relationship to full-time work**

Finn also suggests that, whilst experiences of part-time work do not determine later choice, they play an important role in "predisposing [young people] towards certain positions in the full-time labour market" (Finn, 1984:41). Others see possibilities of a more direct relationship between the two, so that "for children, time spent in a part-time job could seem more important to their chances of future employment than

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- 19. Lucy - Community Care trainee
  - 20. Anne - Community Care trainee
  - 21. Chris - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 22. Kath - Clerical trainee

school" (Head, 1988:21).

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Table 3.5 Would you be willing to continue working for your employer after you left school (as a percentage, n=61)?

	stayers	leavers	total	male	female
yes	10	34	44	23	21
no	23	30	53	33	20
don't know	0	3	3	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>43</b>

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So were these experiences of part-time working in anyway related to future working intentions? Table 2.6 shows that a majority of the pupils indicated that they would not be willing to continue working for their employer after they had left school. Given the nature of their work, and its often casual basis, this is not surprising. Indeed, similar research by Finn (1984) found an overwhelming majority of pupils unwilling to work full-time in their part-time occupations.

But what Table 2.6 does show is the high level of the young people who felt they would be willing to continue working for their part-time employers. Indeed, amongst the leavers there was almost equal agreement between those who would, and those who would not, continue working. With severely limited opportunities for full-time employment for school-leavers, this would suggest that part-time work is increasingly being valued as a way of achieving the

much-coverted status of having a real job.

The trainees were asked whether they felt their experience of part-time working had any influence on what they wanted to do on leaving school and in 16 cases (50%) they felt it had not. Here, they pointed to part-time work as just a way of earning some money, "it was a way of getting a few quid together. I had a few complaints but it was just for some pocket money" (23), or "I got through OK. I needed the money. It meant getting up early but I could handle it" (24).

For eight of the remaining 16, part-time working had given them a negative insight into work, a view of the sort of work they did not want to do again. Stacking shelves and cleaning in a shop meant, "I didn't want to work in a newsagents again" (25), or working in a factory meant, "it made me not want to do factory work again" (26). Their part-time working had predisposed them against entering similar types of full-time work. For this reason, later occupational choices would obviously be influenced by the experiences of part-time work.

For the other eight, part-time working also played a direct role in formulating their full-time occupational choice, but this time it was a more positive relationship. For these young people, part-time working had exposed them to something they enjoyed

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- 23. Louis - Construction trainee carpenter
  - 24. Robert - Engineering trainee
  - 25. Julia - Clerical trainee
  - 26. Chris - Public Service Vehicle trainee

or valued. Sarah felt the light secretarial work she had done, in addition to her cleaning job, had influenced her eventual decision to try for a secretarial job. Patrick felt his job at a DIY store had helped him to "deal with people in a work situation" (27) and had given him the confidence to try for an apprenticeship. John thought his work at a garden centre had contributed to his choice of a horticulture training scheme and Derrick's labouring for a builder meant, "I found building work easier than I expected" (28), thus, influencing him to enter a construction scheme. Thomas, too, felt that working for a carpet fitter had influenced his decision to join a construction scheme, as he liked working with his hands, and Lucy's Saturday job in a rest home influenced her entry into a community care scheme. Keith felt that, as he had grown up around machines at the circus, it was a logical step to enter a scheme that allowed him to work with machines. For these young people, the experience of part-time work provided a direct continuity to their eventual occupational choice. At its strongest this link was a vivid one. One young woman had done work experience whilst at school in a newsagents, secured a Saturday job there when she left, and then did her off-the-job YTS training there when her employer indicated that he could not afford to take her on full-time.

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27. Patrick - Engineering trainee

28. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee



## Conclusion

In looking at knowledge of the 'world of work' in its most immediate form, through experiences of part-time working, I have argued that the 'deficiency model' of young workers fails to engage with the way in which the working class young have historically experienced growing up and leaving school. Work is central to any understanding of this process and, for most working class youngsters, part-time work conveys direct knowledge of the demands of waged-labour. This is mainly through contact with capital at its most unrewarding, in jobs dominated by the demands of semi- and unskilled work. In this way, it is part-time work that provides the most direct continuity between the social relations of schooling and those of work.

It is inadequate to see the work undertaken by child workers as specifically 'children's work'. In doing so, it is easy to underestimate the importance of work undertaken by young people and its relationship to post-school working. This is not to question the importance of leaving school and entering work as a period of significant change. Indeed it is. But it is also essential to grasp the very real continuities which prepare the young working class for a life of waged-labour. Much of the work undertaken by the child workers clearly overlapped with work more commonly associated with adult status. Furthermore, experiences of part-time working are already clearly structured by

considerations of gender. Girls tend to occupy jobs more commonly associated with 'womens' work', their rates of economic activity are less than the boys and they are already experiencing lower hourly rates of pay. As such, part-time working, and its relationship to the family, provides a powerful determinant through which young people take up their wider position in the sexual division of labour.

Moreover, although the experience of working whilst at school is characterized by unrewarding, arduous and low paid work, most young people express satisfaction with it. Research has consistently illustrated the willingness, sometimes verging on hedonism, with which the working class young enter 'dead-end' jobs. It is a knowledge of work most directly derived from their experiences of part-time working. Indeed, my evidence would suggest that, in the context of limited job opportunities for school-leavers, an increasing number viewed their part-time working as a direct way into full-time work. It is this movement into the 'adult' labour market and, more specifically into a training scheme, that we will deal with in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FROM SCHOOL TO YTS: NEGOTIATING THE LABOUR MARKET

#### Introduction

In Chapter Three we saw that YTS' development has been based on the mistaken assumption that young people are ignorant about the 'world of work'. In this chapter, we examine how young people have reacted to this through the provision of training schemes that offer the opportunity for participation on programmes essentially dominated by work experience-based placements.

The YTS was to mark a qualitative break with the temporary measures of the past. As part of a comprehensive economic strategy, it was to herald a move towards a quality training programme that would provide young people with a permanent route into the labour market. Consequently, its planners were ambitious, "our aim has been to design a scheme so attractive to employers and to young people that a minority of people enter jobs outside the scheme or remain unemployed rather than join the scheme" (MSC, 1982:para 4.8).

The Scheme's advocates claim that, in the main, YTS has succeeded in its objectives of attracting young people into training. After only eight months, Government Ministers were already in congratulatory mood proclaiming, amongst its accomplishments, that "young people have voted YTS a success. They know full well what the government have done and will be doing for them" (Peter Morrison, then Employment Minister, quoted in Kirby & Roberts, 1985:1). Since then its 'successes' have

been constantly reiterated. Reviewing the third year of the YTS, Bryan Nicholson, then Chairperson of the MSC, commented that "YTS has become an integral part of post 16 life for young people, who have responded with great enthusiasm and in great numbers" (Youth Training News, September 1986:32). Three years later, with YTS seemingly established as a two year programme, the Government claimed that the Scheme had been a "resounding success". Testament to this, they argued, were the two million youngsters who had trained on the Scheme since 1983, a million of whom had trained on the two year programme. In September 1988 alone, 435,500 young people were training on the YTS (DE, 1988a:para 6.9).

With the dramatic reduction in job opportunities for school-leavers during the eighties, the YTS has, indeed, commanded a significant presence within the labour market. Although the number of participants began to fall between 1986 and 1988, during this period just under half of all minimum age school-leavers entered the Scheme (Employment Gazette, May 1989:262-3).

The penetration of YTS across the country has depended heavily on the structure of local labour markets. "Their impact has varied tremendously from place-to-place because some areas are relatively well-stocked with expanding, and others with fast declining businesses" (Roberts et al, 1986:2). Within Coventry, the impact of the recession on the city's manufacturing base had particularly adverse effects for youngsters as employers cut back heavily on the number of school-

leavers they recruited. With fewer opportunities for direct entry into work, young people were increasingly forced to look to Government schemes as a refuge from unemployment (Finn, 1984:23). With the introduction of YTS, large numbers of young people were attracted onto the Scheme. Between 1985 and 1987 approximately one third of all the city's 16 year olds were entering the Scheme. In 1987 alone, YTS accounted for approximately 54% (1490) of all Coventry's minimum age school-leavers, compared to only 28% (764) who went directly into employment outside the Scheme (Coventry Careers, 1988:2).

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Table 4.1 Destination of fifth form pupils in Coventry (as a percentage)

	1985	1986	1987
In f-t ed	39.5	37.0	39.5
Work	13.5	14.5	17.0
YTS	35.5	35.5	32.5
Unemployed	7.0	8.5	7.0
Unknown	4.5	4.5	4.0
Total	100	100	100

Source: Coventry Careers, 1988.

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Numerically, YTS has been a success in bringing large numbers of school-leavers into training. But are numbers alone enough to evaluate its success in changing young people's attitudes towards training? How do young people themselves perceive the choices open to them at 16 and what role does training on YTS play within this? What are young people's attitudes towards the Scheme? Has it persuaded them that it is a viable alternative to further

education or employment outside of the Scheme? And how do young people actually arrive on the Scheme? It is these questions that we addressed below by looking at the experiences of young people in the transition from school to YTS.

#### **Choices at 16: The Stayers**

The decisions young people face at 16 have taken on greater significance as unemployment levels have risen. In this context, the research sought to examine the hopes and intentions of young people during their last year at school. As the opportunities for direct entry into work decreased, a process of "trading down" has taken place amongst first time entrants into the labour market (Roberts, 1984:49-50). At all levels, from graduate downwards, young people have been forced to re-adjust their job expectations as increased competition for fewer places allowed employers greater selectivity. Although recruitment is never based solely on levels of educational achievement, in times of high unemployment they take on additional significance. For those with no or few qualifications, there has been nowhere downwards to trade and for both men and women, unemployment increases the lower the level of qualification (DE, 1990)

Yet many youngsters still reject sheltering in full-time education as an alternative to an uncertain labour market. Whilst, in recent years, the general trend has been towards greater numbers of young people staying on at school or college, there has not been the dramatic increase that unemployment led many people to believe

would take place (Ainley, 1987:7). At the height of the recession, between 1981 and 1983, there was only a modest increase in the proportion of young people staying on in full-time education after the minimum leaving age (Employment Gazette, July 1989). Between 1980 and 1987 the proportion actually fell from 34 to 31 per cent, although predictions to 2001 show levels again rising to those of the early eighties.

Whilst entering the labour market directly on leaving school holds many uncertainties, staying on is also not without its risks. Further qualifications may enhance employability but they do not guarantee it and the extra time spent in education may even serve to exclude young people from certain jobs. For example, a further education course may make a young person too old for an apprenticeship (Lee & Wrench, 1983:13). Further education may also fail to provide youngsters with the 'second chance' it proclaims. For many working class young men, rather than offering a route for occupational mobility, non-advanced further education has reinforced their class position through courses effectively preparing them for a life of manual labour (Raffe, 1983c:155-6). For black youngsters too, further education has served to reproduce the divisions of a labour market highly segregated by race. "A second chance for ethnic minorities through further education when seen in the context of labour market structures and other experiences appears at best irrelevant, at worst obfuscating" (Dex, 1983:178).

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Table 4.2 What the fifth form pupils hoped to be doing in one year's time (n=152)

	Male	Female	Total	European	Non-Europ
Full-time education	28	26	54	31	23
Craft tech\appr incl. hairdress	21	2	23	20	3
Banking\finance \estate agents	4	1	5	4	1
Nursing	0	3	3	0	0
Acting\Art\Sport	5	3	8	8	0
Secretarial\Office	1	4	5	4	1
Retail	3	2	5	5	0
Hotel\Catering	0	3	3	2	1
Armed Forces\Police	3	0	3	2	1
Factory	4	1	5	5	0
YTS	11	15	26	22	4
Any job\job with money	7	5	12	10	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>36</b>

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It has been suggested that young people do use further education as a shelter from an uncertain labour market. "In order to avoid the dole or Government schemes" a greater number of young people tend to stay on in further education than actually plan to do so (Brown, 1987:40). At first glance, my research would tend to contradict these findings. Amongst the fifth form pupils surveyed, 54 (36%) hoped to stay on in further education; a figure only slightly lower than the proportion for Coventry as a whole (see Table 4.1). Of these, two hoped to go to art college, five wanted to do more vocationally orientated courses, like the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education or a secretarial course, and the rest wanted to study for 'A' levels, either at college or



their sixth form.

It is possible that the number of stayers in my research was approximately representative of both local and national trends because of the high proportion of pupils of Asian descent who took part in the research. Overall black youngsters, and Asian youngsters in particular, are significantly more likely to stay in full-time education than white youngsters (Craft & Craft, 1983:10). This is unsurprising given that "every study to compare their prospects has found that black and brown (sic) school-leavers are less successful than whites in the quality of jobs obtained and avoiding unemployment" (Roberts, 1987:52). Black people still suffer higher rates of unemployment than white people (DE, 1990). The most recent Policy Studies Institute study found that many employers failed to recruit black workers and, where they did take them on, they tended to be in lower paid and lower status jobs than their white peers (Brown, 1984). As such, it would appear that many black youngsters are actively encouraged by their parents to stay on in full-time education, in the hope that it may offer them the opportunity of escaping the cycle of low status and low pay experienced by previous generations of black workers (Craft & Craft, 1983:ibid).

Employers' demands for differentiated labour power, and their assumptions about the 'natural' attributes of women workers, also go some way to explain the greater tendency for young women to remain in further education after the minimum school-leaving age (Keil &

Newton, 1980:98-9). Because employers assume that women are not 'naturally' committed to the labour market, and are therefore relatively short-term workers, young women are drawn into highly segregated areas of work. As such, qualified 16 year old girls are much more likely to enter further education than boys but the difference is accounted for by the extremely high number of girls who join secretarial courses (Cockburn, 1987:6-7).

### **The Leavers: preparing for work**

Despite the obvious uncertainties that lay ahead of them, the great majority of pupils were still hoping to enter the labour market on leaving school. Clearly, unemployment has failed to dull young peoples' eagerness to enter work. The enthusiasm with which many working class youngsters face the prospect of entry into the labour market has been noted in many studies and it is in part this desire for adult worker status, and the rejection of school, that helps facilitate the entry into work.

On the part of working class youngsters, this desire for work is guided by a 'reality principle' regarding the type and nature of work available to them. A reality principle which derives its meaning from the centrality of work to the experiences of growing up working class, and which structures the type and nature of work that youngsters perceive open to them (Moore, 1984). Carter's influential study of Sheffield school-leavers, during the fifties, found "the general tendency was for children to be cautious rather than adventurous,

to underestimate their competence rather than overestimate it" in their search for work (Carter, 1962:134). Ashton and Field, too, have noted the general modesty of school-leavers' aspirations and the enthusiasm with which they enter dead-end jobs (1976:12). For Paul Willis' 'lads', it was through the conscious rejection of school and its values by which they condemned themselves to a life of manual labour (Willis, 1977).

Here too, the pupils hoped to enter jobs traditionally open to working class youngsters, a choice further shaped by gender. We have already seen in Chapter Three how the demands of family relationships and underlying family ideology structure young people's experiences of waged work from an early age. Together with employers' demands for certain types of labour power, this has given many jobs their own gender identity (Cockburn, 1987:6) and, as such, young people tend to sex stereotype jobs strongly from an early age (Sharpe, 1976). It is within these constraints, and how they are reinforced by schooling, that young people's self-selection for jobs take place (Keil & Newton, 1980:98).

The opportunities available to the young people are obviously determined by the demands of local employers. However, in Table 4.2 the greater tendency for boys to seek and enter skilled or manual work (Keil & Newton, *ibid*:103) was evident from the number who hoped to enter apprentice/technician training or who wanted factory work. The two girls in the former category both wanted to be hairdressers. The boys were also much more

likely to aspire to professional occupations, like banking and estate agency, areas which tend to exclude women on the assumption that their commitment to the labour market is more unstable than that of boys (ibid:99). The boys alone wanted to enter the armed services and the police.

Alternatively, the girls wanted to work in the service sector, in hotel and catering, or as 'carers' in nursery or medical nursing. They were also much more likely to want to work in offices or doing secretarial work. Within the occupational categories the girls wanted to work on checkouts in supermarkets or as sales assistants in fashion shops, whereas the boys were more interested in warehouse work or work in a menswear shop. In the acting/art/sport category the boys wanted to become professional footballers while the girls hoped to become professional dancers or actresses.

#### **Training for All?**

Within the perceived choices open to them, 26 (27%) of the leavers hoped to be training on YTS in twelve months time. Although this is well below the proportion of Coventry school-leavers destined to begin their adult working life on YTS, it still represents a significant number. So has the YTS succeeded in persuading young people that it is a viable training alternative in the 'choices' now open to young people at 16?

As Raffe and Smith point out, little is known about young people's attitudes towards YTS across the age

group as whole (1987:242). This is important because the original proposal for the Scheme was that it would provide the opportunity for work experience, linked to vocational education and training, for all school-leavers under 18. That is, the traditional alternatives of education or employment were to be broadened to include a new programme of training. However, what is known suggests that amongst better qualified youngsters, that is those YTS needs to attract to raise its status, the Scheme has failed to free itself from its association with the unemployment palliatives of the seventies and early eighties.

Shortly after its launch, Raffe argued that YTS risked "being stigmatised as a scheme for the less able, the less motivated and above all the less employable" (Raffe, 1987:5). Following YOP, its prime function of alleviating high levels of youth unemployment, and thus its association with remedial functions for those who could not make the direct entry into employment, proved antagonistic to its aim of providing school-leavers with a quality training programme. It is a tension which YTS has been unable to resolve. Failure to attract better qualified youngsters, who still have the choice of further education or employment outside of the Scheme, has perpetuated its low standing regardless of any commitment to high quality training. As such, YTS has become locked into a "vicious circle of low status" (ibid).

As Raffe suggests, if YTS is to break out of

this vicious circle and persuade young people that it is a credible training alternative, its training philosophy needs to be more widely accepted across its client age group as a whole. However, data from Scottish school-leavers shows that there has been "a hardening of attitudes" amongst the very group YTS directly needs to attract; those who go straight into employment outside of the Scheme (Raffe & Smith, 1987:251).

Raffe and Smith's data refers to young people who have already left school but even less is known about attitudes towards the Scheme that youngsters bring with them into the labour market. Table 4.3 illustrates that there is already a clear differentiation in attitudes towards the Scheme amongst fifth form pupils.

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Table 4.3 Would you be willing to train on a YTS? (as a percentage n=148)

	Total	Stayers	Leavers	Male	Female	Europ	Non-Europ
Yes	50	14	71	44	58	59	21
No	45	86	21	49	40	36	74
D/K	5	0	8	7	2	5	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

---

In particular, the stayers and the leavers demonstrate sharply contrasting levels of willingness to train on the Scheme. Almost three quarters of the leavers indicated they would train on YTS compared to 14% of the stayers. As Brown points out, we would expect pupil orientations towards training on government schemes to reflect their perceptions of what is on offer to them

(1987:119). For the stayers, those young people more likely to progress through the educational hierarchy, YTS appears to offer very little. It is from amongst these pupils that YTS' failed training philosophy needs wider acceptance but it has clearly failed to persuade them that it offers a credible training alternative to further education. Indeed, Lord Young's assertion that the YTS certificate will "be more important in employment prospects for young people than even 'O' or 'A' levels" has failed to convince its target group (Quoted in Finn, 1986:62). Indeed, Lord Young's predictions have proved unfounded and youngsters with the YTS Certificate are still more likely to be unemployed than those with more traditional forms of qualifications (DE, 1990).

As Table 4.4 illustrates, for the stayers YTS was, "something I'm just not interested in" and "I prefer further education to YTS". Training on the Scheme was inferior to traditional routes of education, "you learn more at college" or "college gives you a much better way of learning than YTS".

For the stayers, YTS was clearly perceived as a poor alternative on leaving school. It was "a waste of time if you want a good job", "because you end up being used by employers as cheap labour. Nothing else". YTS, to them, meant "slave labour", "poor training", "not much of a start in life" and only "poor job prospects". "Its got a poor reputation among employers" because it is "a scheme for thickies", "a scheme for those who don't know where to go" and "only for people who can't get work".

Table 4.4 Reasons why the pupils would or would not be willing to go onto a YTS (as a percentage of responses)

	Stayers (n=81, mc=1)			Leavers (n=143, mc=4)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Positive reasons</b>						
Training	1	6	7	18	17	35
Experience	1	4	5	6	9	15
Better job chances	3	4	7	8	3	11
<b>Negative reasons</b>						
Better than dole	0	0	0	4	4	8
No choice	0	1	1	5	3	8
Poor training\slave lab.	26	23	49	10	9	19
Scheme for thickies	4	1	5	1	0	1
Prefer f.e.	10	6	16	0	0	0
Crafty Govt.	1	3	4	2	1	3
Not interested	4	3	7	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>101</b>

The comments of the leavers too included significant reference to the Scheme's negative aspects, despite the substantial majority who were willing to train on the Scheme. Clearly, its progression into a two year programme has failed to dispel the strong undercurrent of suspicion that has accompanied young people's perceptions of the Scheme's development. However, approximately 60% of the leavers responses focused on three major positive reasons why they would be willing to train on YTS. These included, "the training opportunity YTS gives you", the chance of "learning how to do a job properly" or as "a way to get skills". They were willing to train on the Scheme because, "it gives you work experience" or "you can get some experience in a working situation". Ultimately, this could lead to "the



chance of a job" or even "it's possible you might get taken on at the end". It is this instrumentalism that we will deal with in more detail below.

### **Race equality and YTS**

What is also noticeable from Table 4.3 is the low number of non-European pupils who were willing to train on YTS. The small sample size prohibits any detailed analysis of their responses and, unfortunately, means their continued use as an analytical category is precluded.

However, we have suggested that the greater likelihood of black youngsters staying on in full-time education is related to the disadvantages they suffer in the labour market. At its inception, it was hoped that YTS, too, would help black youngsters overcome these problems by opening up previously closed areas of work. The MSC/TA have constantly reiterated that "YTS is an equal opportunities programme, and is open equally to all eligible young people regardless of race, religion, sex or disability" (MSC, 1986:1). Evidence would suggest that these claims have been unrealized and YTS has failed to break the cycle of discrimination faced by black youngsters.

Earlier findings in Coventry and the West Midlands illustrate the extent of the problem young black people face within YTS (REITS, 1985; REITS, 1987; YETRU, 1988). It was found that the more prestigious training schemes, which had guaranteed jobs at the end, did not take on and train black youngsters. Young black people

tended to be concentrated in schemes run by voluntary organisations and private training agencies which offered fewer job opportunities. It is therefore unsurprising that many black youngsters expressed a negative reaction to the Scheme.

Although some employers and Managing Agents have been more successful than others in recruiting and training black youngsters on YTS (Mizen, 1990), others claim they cannot recruit young black people because they do not apply for their vacancies in the first place. This is then explained in terms of 'cultural' factors, for example, the tendency for young Asian people to stay on at school or the unrealistic aspirations of Afro-Caribbean youngsters. However, such arguments merely serve to equate the specific difficulties experienced by black youngsters with their own abilities or attributes. Whilst 'cultural' factors undoubtedly influence the choices made by black youngsters, to explain their labour market position in this way means that "the result is perhaps the most tenacious and insidious of assumptions: that ethnic minorities in general ... are disadvantaged in a way that is analogous to mental and physical disabilities" (Cross, 1987a:3).

The assumptions on which claims for these 'cultural' factors are made are clearly unfounded. Afro-Caribbean and Asian young people, from inner cities, are likely to be at least as well qualified as their white peers on entering YTS. Furthermore, they are generally more enthusiastic about learning a skill, to the extent

that they much more readily forgo short-term earnings for long-term benefits, and there is no evidence to suggest that they are less willing to travel to seek work or training opportunities (ibid:4). It is to the discriminatory recruitment practices of employers, Managing Agents and the Careers Service that we must look to for the root of the problem.

A recent survey of London's Career Offices found 60% reported that some employers and Managing Agents refused to take black youngsters onto their training schemes (Greater London Action for Race Equality, 1989:2). The Careers Service itself has attracted substantial criticism for accommodating employers and Managing Agents' racist preferences and for stereotyping the needs and abilities of black youngsters (Pollert, 1985). They have also been accused of "protective channelling" of young black people, in an attempt to 'shield' them from the racist practices of employers, by not sending them for interviews where it is known they will be discriminated against (Wrench, 1989). Such practices, however, have served to reinforce the discriminatory recruitment practices of many employers and Managing Agents.

#### **Training for jobs**

The pupils' mixed feelings about YTS is supported by other research. Data from Scotland has also illustrated that, overall, young peoples' attitudes towards YTS are, at best, contradictory (Raffe & Smith, 1987:248). Across the different year groups sampled,

respondents were likely to identify both good and bad points to the Scheme. Many respondents agreed that YTS helped unemployed people to find jobs and that it gave them interesting things to do. However, a much larger proportion felt YTS was just to keep the unemployment figures down and over three quarters felt it offered employers cheap labour. The extension of the Scheme to two years heralded some advance in attitudes "but the scale of improvement was small compared to the expectations which the launch of YTS-2 in 1986 may have aroused in some people" (Raffe, 1989:137).

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Table 4.5 Do you think the YTS offers young people a good training opportunity? (as a percentage n=147)

	Total	Stayers	Leavers	Male	Female
Yes	83	70	90	84	81
No	15	27	8	14	16
D/K	2	3	2	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100

---

At first glance, my survey evidence points towards YTS' success in persuading young people that it offers a good training opportunity. In all, just over 80% of the pupils felt that this was the case. Although both groups showed a clear majority in favour of the question, there were again significant differences between the stayers and the leavers, although no real difference between the boys and the girls. However, their comments illustrate that young people appreciate the training offered by the Scheme in very narrow terms.

Table 4.6 Reasons why the YTS did or did not offer a young person a good training opportunity (as a percentage of responses)

	Stayers (n=78, mc=2)			Leavers (n=135, mc=8)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Positive reasons</b>						
Training	13	15	28	23	15	38
Experience	7	6	13	11	11	22
Increases job chances	3	6	9	7	3	10
Choice	4	3	7	4	4	8
<b>Negative reasons</b>						
Better than no job	3	2	5	3	2	5
Slave labour	11	6	17	3	1	4
Only if job at end	6	6	12	4	2	6
Misc.	4	5	9	6	1	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>

Whilst the stayers were more likely to dismiss the training on YTS as "cheap" or "slave labour", they were also more likely to relate the training offered directly to the chances of employment - "only if you get kept on at the end". This may well reflect their belief in the value of traditional forms of education in providing a direct route into work. However, like the leavers, they too tended to present the training opportunity YTS offered largely in terms of the chance to get "training" and "experience".

The 'training' and 'experience' YTS offered was phrased in very specific terms. It was seen mainly in relation to its ability to allow school-leavers access to the arena of work. YTS could give you "training in the work place", "on-the-job training" or the "chance of working with people who are trained". It could also offer a chance of "learning the ropes at work", "give you an

idea of what its all about" or "getting you used to working with other people". This was based on an understanding that "employers want experience" and "employers want people who know how to work". It meant you could "get your foot in the door", "a chance to work your way up" and, ultimately, "the chance of a better job".

Other studies have also noted young people's "pervasive instrumentalism towards the scheme" (Raffe, 1989:130). Instead of persuading young people of the intrinsic merits of training, most still view YTS in relation to its ability to open up the largely closed world of work. This is not to suggest that YTS' training opportunity is perceived exclusively in terms of its direct ability to lead to jobs. Rather, it is also viewed in terms of its ability to offer young people the opportunity to be seen to be doing something. It gives them the chance of keeping themselves in circulation, thereby demonstrating to employers that they are available for work and willing to make the effort (Brown, 1987:143).

But what these studies have failed to grasp fully is that this instrumentalism has also led young people to appropriate the meaning of training on YTS. For these youngsters, it is not an understanding of training that reflects the Government's emphasis on acquiring transferable skills or a recognized vocational qualification, but an understanding of training as a means to an end. YTS is a way to negotiate a labour

market that offers very few opportunities for school-leavers to enter work directly from school.

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Table 4.7 Do you think the YTS improves a school-leaver's chances of getting a job (as a percentage n=146)

	Total	Stayers	Leavers	Male	Female
Yes	78	58	89	81	74
No	19	39	8	18	21
D/K	3	3	3	1	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100

---

It is this instrumentalism that accounts for the large majority of pupils who agreed that YTS improves a school-leaver's chances of getting a job. Although the stayers were again considerably more suspicious of this claim than the leavers.

The stayers were more likely to dismiss the Scheme's claims to improve job chances as inadequate in relation to the existing structure of educational achievement. For these young people, YTS has failed to transcend the wider constraints of a labour market that was still largely structured around the value of existing education qualifications. These young people knew "you have to compete with people who have got real qualifications" and that "employers want people with qualifications".

Table 4.8 Reasons why the pupils thought the YTS would or would not improve a school-leaver's job chances (as a percentage of responses)

	Stayers (n=71, mc=2)			Leavers (n=117, mc=9)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Positive reasons</b>						
Training	15	8	23	23	8	31
Experience	10	10	20	17	16	33
Might get taken on	4	7	11	8	5	13
<b>Negative reasons</b>						
You need Qs.	10	9	19	0	1	1
No jobs at end	5	7	12	3	4	7
Helps less able	7	4	11	2	4	6
Depends on scheme	3	1	4	7	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>101</b>

In contrast, the leavers again placed great emphasis on 'training' and 'experience' and the instrumental value of this in improving job chances. Training could help lead directly into work, "training for a particular job", or offer the chance to be seen to be active within the labour process, "training gives you more knowledge of work" or "training gives you a chance in a work place". This served an important function because "employers are looking for experienced people" and "YTS provides the employer what they are looking for".

#### 'A real job, not a YTS'

We have looked in some detail at the role of YTS in relation to the choices that young people perceive open to them on leaving school. It is apparent that although YTS has come to occupy a significant position within the choices perceived by young people at 16, it has still failed to convince school pupils that it is a



credible training alternative to further education or employment. Even where they do appreciate the YTS' claims, this is perceived in largely instrumental terms and does not represent an endorsement of the training philosophy behind the Scheme. As the rest of this chapter illustrates, turning to the YTS trainees in the study, the experiences of young people who have attempted to negotiate the labour market via YTS reinforce many of the expectations of the pupils.

Raffe and Smith have shown that young peoples' reasons for actually joining YTS are also characterized by instrumentalism. Amongst Scottish youngsters, their main reason for entering the Scheme was a belief that it would eventually help them get a job. However, only slightly fewer had joined because they could not find a job and around half joined merely because they wanted something to do. Indeed, only just under half the respondents had joined YTS because they had wanted to be trained (Raffe & Smith, 1987:245).

Since the Scheme's inception, young people's reservations have been consistently recorded. During its first year, less than three quarters of the available places were occupied and since then the Scheme has suffered a consistent shortfall of trainees in relation to the number of places provided (Finn, 1986:63). Before its effective compulsion in 1988, it was conservatively estimated that one in ten youngsters were refusing the offer of a place (Horton, 1986:6). 'Refusers' were more likely to see the Scheme as cheap labour, 'workfare', and

as a way for the government to manipulate the unemployment statistics (Kirby & Roberts, 1985; Craig, 1986). "Implicit in most of [their] answers was the assumption that YTS was a second-best option, and that permanent jobs or alternative educational opportunities were to be preferred if available" (Raffe & Smith, 1987:246).

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Table 4.9 Aspirations on leaving school (n=49)

	Male	Female	Total
Shop / Retail	3	2	5
Drivers incl. lorry & coach	2	0	2
Secretarial / Office	0	5	5
Nursing incl. care assistant	2	1	3
Electrical / engineering incl. motor mechanic	5	1	6
Armed forces / Police	2	1	3
Gardening / Horticulture	1	1	2
Hairdressing / Beautician	0	3	3
Builder incl. carpentry, painting & decorating	6	2	8
Catering	0	3	3
Miscellaneous	3	1	4
Don't know	2	3	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>49</b>

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My research suggests that even amongst those young people who had decided to train on the Scheme, YTS was still largely regarded as a 'second-best option'. To begin with, when asked what they had wanted to do on leaving school, all of the trainees indicated that they had wanted employment outside of the Scheme. As Table 4.9 illustrates, YTS played no immediate part in their original job aspirations. Of the 42 trainees, 37 had specific ideas about what they had wanted to do,

including seven, five women and two men, who had nurtured two ideas. The remaining five, whilst indicating they had wanted employment outside of YTS, had no specific ideas about what they had wanted to do. Only, as one young man recalls, "I wanted a real job, not a YTS" (1).

Where the others had definite ideas about the 'real jobs' they wanted to do, they too aspired to traditional areas of work entered by working class youngsters. Only four young people in the 'Miscellaneous' category had unusual aspirations. One young man wanted to be a snooker coach, another a publican, a third a computer programmer and one young woman wanted to be a social worker. However, even here, their aspirations were not unrealistic. One of the young men was already playing snooker on the local circuit of pubs and clubs, but was too young to be considered for a coaching course, another wanted to start out helping in his father's pub, but had to leave the area when his parents' separated, and the third was involved in computers as a hobby. For Lucy, the idea of becoming a social worker was "the highest thing I could aim for" but her teachers had persuaded her that it was unattainable given the qualifications needed. Her aspiration did not prove unduly unrealistic, however, "I was told I had no chance of passing my exams but came out with nine 'O' levels" (2).

Some comment needs to be made on the discrepancy between the pupils' and the trainees' hopes

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1. Clive - Clerical trainee
  2. Lucy - Community Care trainee

and why the latter's contained no reference to YTS. For the trainees, looking back on leaving school, YTS had little role to play in the way in which they had hoped to enter the labour market. They had wanted to go directly into 'real jobs' and YTS was a 'second-best' option. For the leavers, however, approaching the end of their fifth year, and looking forward to an imminent entry into the labour market, the prospect of having to train on YTS was becoming an increasingly likely way into work. Indeed, 22 of the 26 pupils stated what type of YTS they hoped to do and it is possible that many had already arranged a place. With the prospect of leaving school approaching, it was rapidly becoming something that they felt they had to do.

**'At least you get experience'**

For all forty two trainees, the YTS had not been their preferred option on leaving school and all had wanted to enter employment directly outside the Scheme. So what had they known about the Scheme, whilst they had been at school, and what were their opinions of it?

Raffe and Smith have called for a greater qualitative understanding of young people's views on YTS (1987:254). Despite the emphasis of their own research on a quantitative examination of school-leavers' views, they have taken a tentative step in this direction using the small amount of qualitative data from their questionnaire. This has led them to suggest that "substantial personal ignorance of the scheme exists" amongst many youngsters (ibid:256).

More conclusively, my evidence would suggest that many youngsters do, indeed, leave school with little knowledge of the Scheme. Whilst at school, the vast majority of the trainees admitted to having little knowledge of it and, in all, thirty eight trainees (90%) felt they had known "hardly anything" (3) or "not a lot" (4). Only four (10%) claimed to have been well informed about the Scheme, Derrick claiming, "I knew everything about it" (5), but it became apparent as the interviews progressed that these young people's knowledge was much the same as the other youngsters.

Very little is known about how young people actually develop their attitudes towards the Scheme. Here three main sources of information emerged. Firstly, eleven trainees (26%) mentioned the role that the careers service had played in providing them with information. This is surprisingly low given that in Coventry, at the time of the research, each school had its own resident careers staff (6). In addition, careers teaching has become an established part of the curriculum over recent years and, in the absence of direct routes into work, its major function has been to place youngsters on the Scheme (Bates, 1984). As such, three of these youngsters had experienced their careers advice in coercive terms rather than helping them to find suitable employment: "they

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3. Bob - Engineering trainee
  4. Sarah - Clerical trainee
  5. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee
  6. For a more detailed discussion of the increasing importance of careers teachers within schools see Chapter Eight.

would rather force you into a YTS than help you find a job. That's what I wanted, a job not a YTS" (7).

Bhovinder simply recalled, "the careers teacher really pushed the YTS" (8).

Only four trainees (10%) mentioned the MSC/TA as a source of information. Given the extensive campaigns undertaken to promote the Scheme amongst young people (Finn, 1987:182), this is again surprising. Furthermore, in the six month period prior to the start of the field work, the MSC had launched another extensive television and newspaper advertising campaign which had as its theme, "the best advertisement for YTS is the people who've done one" (Youth Training News, July 1987). However, the sophisticated advertising techniques employed in the campaign had little lasting effect. Indeed, for Terry, they were "pretty depressing", "they just made it clearer that the YTS was the only thing open to me" (9).

Raffe and Smith have also suggested that a "folk mythology or demonology" has developed amongst teenagers with regards to YTS (1987:256). They see this as best illustrated by the use of a number of key words and phrases, for example 'slave' and 'cheap labour', which have proved durable over time. Indeed, the youngsters' opinions of the Scheme, whilst at school, were dominated by the belief that it was "slave labour", that trainees were exploited by employers and the

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7. Clive - Clerical trainee

8. Bhovinder - Clerical trainee

9. Terry - Public Service Vehicle trainee

Government and that "the money was shit" (10). "I heard that it was slave labour, that you got given all the shitty jobs and that the money was poor" (11). In all, 33 of the trainees (75%) had known that the "the pay was lousy" (12), "you got paid peanuts for working your back off" (13) and that "it gives employers a dogsbody for nothing" (14). As Glenn summed up, "it was very unpopular at school" (15).

A constant theme of this thesis is that working class youngsters do have a realistic grasp of what awaits them on leaving school. We must therefore be careful in relegating such popular sentiment to the realms of 'myths' and 'demons' because, in doing so, we imply that young peoples' understanding of the Scheme is located in fiction. Whilst the youngsters openly admitted lacking any precise knowledge of the YTS, they did have an extensive source of information from friends, family and relatives who had had contact with the Scheme.

Eight trainees (19%) commented that they had family, friends or relatives who had trained on YTS "so I knew it was rubbish" (16). From these sources they knew that "it was a way for them [employers] to get cheap labour" (17), that you were used as a "skivvy" (18) and that you were given the dirtiest and most physically

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- 10. Colin - Community Care trainee
  - 11. Neil - Community Care trainee
  - 12. Wendy - Clerical trainee
  - 13. Frances - Retail trainee
  - 14. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee
  - 15. Glenn - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 16. Clare - Horticulture trainee
  - 17. Louis - Construction trainee
  - 18. Terry - Public Service Vehicle trainee

arduous jobs. "People at school said if you get on one, then don't do any work. You're getting shit money for hard graft" (19).

Although their knowledge and opinions were dominated by the more negative aspects of the Scheme, the basis of their instrumentalism was already established. In all, 12 of the trainees (30%) commented on the Scheme's positive aspects. Seven (17%) of these had heard that "you went to college and that could have been good. You could get some extra qualifications as well" (20). Derrick, too, had "never thought much about it [YTS] before I left school". He, too, had heard that it was 'slave labour' and that the money was poor but he took no notice. "I wasn't very good at school so I needed to catch up after I left". He knew that YTS would "help to improve my reading and writing and help me get some qualifications" (21).

They were also appreciative of the training opportunity. Six of the trainees (14%) knew that YTS could train them, that they could acquire specific skills or a trade. In the context of YTS' purported claims to offer quality training, this is an extremely low number, but, as we have seen, there is a clear appreciation of YTS as an opportunity to obtain training and experience in a slack labour market. It is this that helps many youngsters to overcome their initial reservations about the Scheme and provides the justification for their

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19. Neil - Community Care trainee

20. Clare - Horticulture trainee

21. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee



participation. Samantha knew "it could give you some training" and that was important because "it would make my chances of getting a job more safe and secure" (22). Thomas knew you could get "training for a job" because "a job is something you can't get now without training" (23).

Six of the trainees (14%) also knew that YTS offered a young person the chance to get some experience. "I knew it was good experience-wise. You can't get a job without experience these days" (24). Niki too knew that it offered the "chance to get some training and some experience" because "that's what employers are demanding" (25). The whole contradictory perception of YTS was summed up by Clare and Joe. She knew "it was slave labour, but at least you get experience" (26). For Joe, he knew that "it was a rip off", that you spent most of the time messing about and doing nothing. But, "I needed experience and YTS was the only way of getting it. I thought it would be a way into full-time work" (27).

#### **From School to YTS: Negotiating the Labour Market**

All 42 of the trainees had hoped to make a direct transition into full-time employment outside of YTS. At school, most held considerable reservations about the Scheme and what knowledge they did have tended to be dominated by negative considerations. Yet, despite these

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- 22. Samantha - Clerical trainee
  - 23. Thomas - Construction trainee carpenter
  - 24. Lucy - Community Care trainee
  - 25. Niki - Clerical trainee
  - 26. Clare - Horticulture trainee
  - 27. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee

anxieties, YTS appeared as the great leveller and all were beginning their adult working life as trainees. How, then, had these youngsters come to find themselves training on YTS?

Young peoples' instrumentalism has, rightly, been emphasized in explaining their decisions to train on the Scheme.

"The data suggest that trainees were as cynical as other young people about the motives behind YTS, whether of employers or of government, but that they were more appreciative of the opportunities it offered them as individuals, in terms of interest and of employment and training opportunities" (Raffe & Smith, 1987:251).

My research has shown this clearly to be the case. But the result of focusing exclusively on this individual instrumentalism has been to obscure wider social processes that guide young people's 'choices'. As we shall see, these wider pressures provide a powerful motivating force to train on the Scheme.

The structural limitations to choice on leaving school are readily visible. Early theories viewed occupational choices made by school-leavers as a result of socio-psychological decision-making processes (Roberts, 1968:140). As an individual young person matured, they developed an increasing appreciation of their own abilities and interests, together with a greater understanding of the demands of work. It was through the creation of a stable self-identity, and its relationship to the world of work, that young people made

their future job choices.

Mass unemployment questioned the validity of these assumptions as the constraints that governed young people's entry into the labour market became increasingly obvious.

"Sociological studies drew attention to how stratified patterns of family life, education and occupations interlocked to present different groups of school-leavers with contrasting opportunity structures, and thus set definite limits to their scope for genuine choice" (Roberts, 1980:16).

Young people enter a labour market segregated by class, race, gender and educational qualifications and many take jobs out of desperation and necessity rather than out of choice (West and Newton, 1983).

Although in no way exhaustive, the research illustrates a number of these structural processes and how they act upon school-leavers to provide a powerful motivating force to train on YTS.

**(i) from school to YTS**

Seventeen (40%) trainees had not actively looked for work or applied for jobs on leaving school. This could not be interpreted as a positive endorsement of YTS but was a recognition of the limited opportunities available to school-leavers outside of the Scheme. It represented a reluctant acceptance that work opportunities were unavailable to them and that YTS was the most likely way to secure a job.

Experiences of school conspired to reinforce this view. Lucy had been told that nursing or the YTS

were the only way into 'caring' work. Since nursing held no appeal she felt she had little option but to go on a training scheme, "they told me it was what I had to do" (28). Colin was also told that working with the elderly meant a YTS, "I was told this would be the most effective way into doing what I wanted to do" (29).

Frances received similar advice when her careers adviser told her that staying on at school would be no use to her and that she had no chance of finding permanent work straight from school. In the end, she felt she had little choice other than to accept a retail training scheme. For Kath, when she realised that being a policewoman would mean moving away she decided to think again. She did not want to go onto a YTS, "I said I would never go on one", but it quickly became clear that "YTS is the only way into things now". She continued, "everyone at school said it was slave labour but when it came to it I didn't have much choice really. There wasn't much else available" (30).

**(ii) looking for jobs**

The remaining 25 (60%) trainees had all made attempts to look for work "in a proper job" (31) outside of YTS. Keil and Newton have noted that the majority of school-leavers are quite familiar with the formal and informal mechanisms through which jobs become available (1980:102). Here too, considerable attempts were made to

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28. Lucy - Community Care trainee

29. Colin - Community Care trainee

30. Kath - Clerical trainee

31. Thomas - Construction trainee carpenter

find work, mainly through visits to the Careers Service, looking in local newspapers, following up word of mouth suggestions and asking employers "on the off chance" (32). The difficulties they faced were clearly evident and four remembered that some employers had even not acknowledged their replies. However, seven had managed to get as far as an interview, although two of these could have been for YTS places, and one young man had managed to get a job. This had been working in the garage, where he had worked part-time at school, until his employer suggested he train on YTS.

The result of these failed attempts to find work was a gradual 'trading down' of aspirations as it became apparent that employers could ask unrealisable levels of qualifications. After unsuccessfully applying for several clerical posts, one young woman concluded,

"in the end it's not easy getting a job. I didn't have much choice in the matter. My exam results weren't very good and that's what you need to get a job these days. YTS was the only thing I could do"(33).

This constant lack of success made a training scheme increasingly likely, "if you didn't get a job you would go on a YTS" (34). Bob, too, had similar problems. After applying for a number of jobs with engineering firms he was eventually forced to contemplate a YTS, "I thought it was rubbish ... but I couldn't get a job" (35).

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- 32. Bhovinder - Clerical trainee
  - 33. Julia - Clerical trainee
  - 34. Clare - Horticulture trainee
  - 35. Bob - Engineering trainee

Nine (21%) young men had searched for apprenticeships outside of YTS, although only two were currently apprentices within the Scheme. Another was completing 36 weeks in-house training before he too received apprenticeship status. The five construction scheme trainees, on the City Council's course, were part of a pool from which second year apprentices were drawn. However, only two, both carpenters, had been selected to complete their training as apprentices and the remaining three were contemplating their futures.

All these young men had searched locally for an apprenticeship, unsuccessfully applying to the 'cream' of local employers, for example, Jaguar cars and Massey Ferguson tractors, which gave their apprentices trade union negotiated rates of pay and the guarantee of a job. After repeated failure, Robert had "got desperate" (36) and decided to consider YTS as an alternative route into an apprenticeship. He applied for a scheme, got accepted, and after a three month trial, received apprentice status and rates of pay. Patrick too had failed to get an apprenticeship with one of the larger engineering firms and, after hearing about it from a friend, approached a small engineering firm who were looking for an apprentice. He was given an interview at which he was told he would have to train on YTS and asked to sit an aptitude test. Although he was "weary at first" he accepted the place because it guaranteed a job, paid apprentice rates and "I knew I'd have trouble getting

something any better" (37).

These young men most vividly illustrate the instrumentalism with which many young people approach the YTS. As Harinder commented, "for me the YTS has just been a way into an apprenticeship", "if I hadn't have got taken on [as an apprentice] I wouldn't have stayed for the second year" (38). For Louis too, "I wanted a job without going on the YTS but the only way I could get a job was by going on one". He continued, "I knew that if I was lucky enough I'd be taken on at the end" (39). Unfortunately, Louis had not been one of the 'lucky' ones.

**(iii) the prospect of unemployment**

"Among all the trainees I met there was a sense of urgency about getting work, a pervasive fear of long-term unemployment" (Cockburn, 1987:46). For these young people too, it was the prospect of unemployment that provided further momentum to train on a Scheme.

Contrary to the more popular myths surrounding young people and unemployment, the trainees were generally hostile to the idea of signing on as unemployed. Although, technically available for work, school-leavers, at this time, were not eligible for Income Support until the September after they had left school and only five, four men and one woman, had actually experienced registered unemployment. For three of these, this had lasted for under two months, but

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37. Patrick - Engineering trainee

38. Harinder - Construction trainee carpenter

39. Louis - Construction trainee carpenter

Rajesh had spent almost a year on the dole. During this time he had unsuccessfully applied for both 'real jobs' and further education courses involving car maintenance. Like many other unemployed youngsters, he found the 'spare time' unemployment brought with it had little structure and was difficult to fill with no money (Coffield et al, 1986:68-72). Consequently, "it was boring being on the dole" (40) and YTS became an increasingly attractive option.

Despite being unemployed for only eight weeks Elaine too found it an unpleasant experience. Whilst unemployed, she had unsuccessfully looked for a job as a hairdresser but most had meant training on YTS. Unemployment meant she was "lying around the house all day" doing nothing and getting bored in the process. For her, life on the dole quickly acquired a dull routine of staying at home, due to lack of money, or passing the time between her own and a friend's house. Eventually YTS became the only way she could escape this, "a chance to meet people and to get out and have a laugh at the same time" (41).

It was not just the direct experience of unemployment that provided a strong motivation to train on the Scheme. The mere threat compounded this. Unemployment was associated with a no hope culture of little money, nothing to do, being confined to the house or having to hang around the city centre, and few

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40. Rajesh - Motor Vehicle trainee

41. Elaine - Catering trainee



prospects. In all, nine (21%) trainees explicitly stated it as a reason why they had opted for a training place. It offered the possibility of a 'real job', or at least a temporary stop-gap until one could be found, whereas unemployment was a dead end: "you've got no guarantee of a job at the end but its more of a possibility than being on the dole" (42). This contributed to them overcoming their own and their peer's doubts about the Scheme, "I took no notice of them [his friends], anything would be better than the dole" (43).

**(iv) 'staying on' and no money**

The possibility of staying in full-time education was also considered and rejected by a number of the trainees. In all, twelve trainees (29%), nine women and three men, mentioned that they had considered the possibility of staying on. This was either to retake failed exams or pursue other academic or vocational courses, but they had decided against the idea for a number of reasons. Poor exam results put paid to any ideas of studying for 'A' levels, considered by two trainees, although the young woman who achieved nine 'O' levels was still considering the idea.

For another six (14%), staying on meant going back to school and thus a further period with no income. For Anne, unsuccessful attempts to find work meant that staying on or YTS became the only real options. However, "I hated school, the last year was piss-boring and a

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42. Bhovinder - Clerical trainee

43. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee

waste of time" (44). For Wendy also, "I hated being at school, so I thought college would be the same and I could earn more money from going to work" (45). 'Work' in this case meant YTS. Beyond forgoing another period during which they could be earning, staying on also meant additional financial hardship. Elaine had contemplated doing a hairdressing course at college but it meant buying her own equipment and having to rely on her parents for support. Since neither she or her parents "could really afford it" (46) YTS had become the only realistic option. "School was a laugh, well some bits of it. But I wanted to get out and earn some money so I could start enjoying myself properly" (47).

**(v) the pressure to do something**

Pressure from parents also contributed to their joining a training scheme. Coffield et al have suggested that unemployment may be the cause of tension between parents and siblings, especially where parents have not experienced unemployment themselves (1986:75). More recent research has highlighted a stronger connection. Wallace identified unemployment and its impact of family relationships as a contributory factor in young unemployed people's decision to leave home (1987:10). In Hutson and Jenkins' study, parents frequently "nagged" their children into visiting the Jobcentre or on the importance of maintaining the 'right' attitude towards

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- 44. Anne - Community Care trainee
  - 45. Wendy - Clerical trainee
  - 46. Elaine - Catering trainee
  - 47. Sarah - Clerical trainee

work whilst they were unemployed (1987:42). For Cockburn too, parental pressure played a decisive role and "in the background was often a parent who, though superficially sympathetic, was showing at a deeper level of mistrust and alarm" (1987:46).

Thirteen (31%) of the young people, six men and seven women, mentioned the role their parents played in their decision to join a training scheme. Although many were reluctant to discuss their parents, and their relationship with them, it is clear that parental pressure bore heavily on their decision.

Although, at school, Fiona claimed she would "never go on YTS", pressure from her mum, lack of money and prospects made her look towards a training scheme: "it was mum that really kicked my arse" (48). Derrick too had been a reluctant participant and he eventually joined a scheme after pressure from his parents. Their eagerness for him to do something was such that they even accompanied him to his interview for his scheme. For Clare, after leaving school with no job, and spending time at home with her mum, she was reluctantly pressed into looking for a scheme: "it was my mum and dad that were really keen for me to go on YTS" (49). For the remainder, their parents' played a lower key, if no less important, role in their decision to train on YTS. For Samantha, "my mum suggested the idea" (50) and for Chris, "they [his parents] said at least it would be better than

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48. Fiona - Clerical trainee

49. Clare - Horticulture trainee

50. Samantha - Clerical trainee

the dole" (51).

### **Conclusion**

The deficiency model of school-leavers has provided the rationale behind YTS offering young people up to two years training based mainly around work experience-type placements. The Government has argued that young people's response to this has provided a vindication of their stance. They claim that youngsters have responded to this opportunity in great numbers and with considerable enthusiasm. However, the research indicates that young people's lived realities of the Scheme paint a far more complex picture.

The evidence points towards YTS' failure to attract young people away from staying on in full-time education. In doing so, it failed to provide a credible alternative opportunity to the traditional avenues open to young people at 16. Indeed, the stayers appeared particularly hostile to the idea of training on YTS and were consistently more suspicious of its claims to offer young people a good training opportunity or improve their chances of finding a job. As other research has pointed out, it is precisely these youngsters that the Scheme needs to attract if it is to raise its status and become a credible alternative on leaving school.

Similarly, for black youngsters, the Scheme has failed to break the cycle of discrimination experienced in the labour market. Despite YTS' overt commitment to equal opportunities, black youngsters are still

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51. Chris - Public Service Vehicle trainee

discriminated against in relation to the type of schemes open to them and the quality of training on offer. Young black people tended to be concentrated in schemes run by voluntary organisations and private training agencies which offered fewer job opportunities. It is therefore unsurprising that black youngsters preferred the more traditional route of staying on in full-time education.

However, for the majority of youngsters, the increase in unemployment has done little to dull the enthusiasm which they bring to the labour market. Although generally increasing, staying on rates have shown little overall improvement over recent years as young people have continued to seek wider employment opportunities. Here too, the youngsters hopes on leaving school were dominated by considerations of jobs outside of YTS' training framework, in areas that have traditionally provided young people's first points of entry into the adult labour market.

The YTS appeared peripheral to their main hopes on leaving school. Although a small number of the fifth form leavers did hope to enter a YTS, in the overall context of the research, we have suggested that this was more the product of its increasing inevitability as the end of compulsory schooling loomed, rather than any real commitment to the Scheme. Although the leavers showed a greater appreciation of YTS' claims to offer a young person a good training opportunity and the chance to improve their job prospects, it did not reflect any real endorsement of YTS as a way to acquire quality foundation

training. Indeed, the pupils' understanding of 'training' and 'experience' offered by YTS indicates a greater appreciation of the Scheme as a way to enter the labour market and of remaining in circulation in the hope of attracting the attention of employers. It is this instrumentalism that lies at the heart of any understanding of young people's approach to training on YTS.

This was further emphasised by the experiences of the trainees. Exclusively, they had not wanted to train on the Scheme after leaving school and all had wanted to enter 'real jobs' that fell outside of the YTS training framework. They too had been suspicious of its claims whilst at school but they showed a clear appreciation that the Scheme offered them a way to gain 'training' and 'experience'. It was these perceived qualities that employers were now looking for.

Yet despite their desire for employment outside of YTS all had ended up on a training scheme. In examining their transition from school to YTS it was apparent that the Scheme had become a way for them to negotiate a labour market that offered few opportunities for school-leavers. For those who had not looked for work outside of the Scheme, despite their often considerable reservations, YTS was presented as the only way of securing a job. Similarly, the lack of success of those looking for 'real jobs' meant that the prospect of a training scheme became an increasing reality. But even here their instrumentalism was clearly apparent. It was

YTS as a source of possible future employment that proved crucial in securing their consent and in no way did it represent an overall endorsement of the Scheme's claim to offer quality foundation training.

But beyond the constraints of a labour market offering limited opportunities for school-leavers, there were clearly other processes influencing the youngsters' decisions to train on the Scheme. The fear of unemployment provided a powerful motivation to train despite the realisation that the Scheme could not guarantee a job at the end. Furthermore, negative experiences of school and the prospect of a further period without a regular income meant staying on at school was not considered a real option. At least by training on YTS a weekly training allowance was guaranteed.

Also pressure from parents contributed to their decision to train on the Scheme, even where they held considerable reservations themselves. This manifested itself through direct parental pressure to take a scheme or, more subtly, over a genuine concern over the prospect of longer-term unemployment.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**A REVOLUTION IN TRAINING OR LOW SKILLED**  
**WORK EXPERIENCE?**

**Introduction**

Despite claims to the contrary, the training opportunity provided by YTS has failed to persuade the majority of school-leavers that it offers a credible training alternative. Although appreciative of the opportunity it allows in entering the labour market, the Scheme has still to convince many school-leavers that it can provide up to two years quality training. In this Chapter, in a series of case studies, I wanted to examine these perceptions of the Scheme through the content of training actually provided.

The Scheme was officially presented as both a decisive break with the ad hoc special employment measures of its predecessors and as a way to rationalize UK training provision for school-leavers. It was to constitute part of a comprehensive training policy which would help raise the skills base of the UK economy and this commitment provided the rationale for the Scheme's development into a two year programme (Finn, 1987:158). The two year YTS was to provide quality training around a period of planned work experience, integrated with off-the-job training. Indeed, YTS2 was given revolutionary status and proclaimed as a turning point in the history of UK training provision:

"we are moving rapidly towards



achieving the kind of high quality permanent training provision that young people, industry and the country need and deserve.

The training process has been part of an evaluation, I would say revolution, in which work-based learning linked to period of off-the-job training has proved to be popular and successful" (Bryan Nicholson, former Chairperson of the MSC, Youth Training News, September 1986).

It was YTS' proclaimed 'revolutionary' status that I wanted to explore through the experiences of young people actually training on the Scheme. How did the young people experience their training and what did it actually involve for them? How did these youngsters make sense of their training? Was it intrinsically valued or did it fit in with their more instrumental approach to training? How did they experience the much prized off-the-job training element? What, if any, value did they give to qualifications whilst training? Did they feel their training was benefiting them and, if so, how? And did they view themselves as the flexible workers YTS was supposed to herald?

### **Training for skills**

In outlining its commitment to provide quality skills training for school-leavers, the New Training Initiative (NTI) reflected underlying changes within government thought that sought to redefine young workers in relation to the demands of a rapidly changing labour process. A 1980 Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) report criticized traditional notions of skill and apprenticeship training as anachronistic and

out of touch with the future needs of British industry (Finn, 1987:138). Traditional craft training, it argued, was more concerned with restrictive practices and the demands of collective bargaining rather than any specific skill needs. As such, it suggested notions of skill needed to be replaced with 'competencies', as determined by the specific needs of employers, and traditional methods of time serving should be replaced by training to standards.

The CPRS report set the agenda for subsequent government action. For YTS, the notion of skills needed for a modern and internationally competitive economy became classified into eleven 'occupational training families' (Ainley, 1987:106). Each 'family' was supposed to represent an area of the economy within which individual trainee's could acquire a set of general skills. Workers were to be separated from the idea that skills training would tie them to specific work for life and encouraged to view youth training as a foundation for subsequent flexibility between jobs and tasks (Roberts et al, 1986:50). Although the concept of training families has lost favour with the Training Agency, it has been replaced with TOCs which continue to organize training along similar lines (Ainley, 1987:107).

In focusing on areas of competence, TOCs have provided an ideological justification for training constructed around the demands of low skilled work, rather than in technical skills or job-specific

training (Finn, 1987:179). As such, critics of the scheme have questioned YTS' real value in providing quality training and have suggested that the Scheme "is not concerned with training for real skills in the traditional or craft sense. A few traineeships involve real skill training but most centre on experience of semi- or unskilled work" (Ainley, 1987:105).

It was this notion of YTS as dominated by low-level skills training that I wanted to explore through the experiences of the trainees themselves. The notion of defining skill, and what constitutes skilled work, is a highly problematic one but for our purposes it is useful to unpack any understanding of skill in three ways (Cockburn, 1983:113).

Firstly, there is the skill of the individual worker. That is, the actual abilities each worker possesses and accumulates over time, where each new task adds something to the totality of skill they hold. Secondly, there is the skill demanded by the tasks the worker is performing. And thirdly, there is the political definition of skill; the way collective labour can defend their position in relation to the interests of capital or of other groups of workers. It is in relation to these dimensions of skill that we will analyse the youngsters' experiences of training on YTS.

## **Tile Hill College**

### **(i) the public service vehicle scheme**

Tile Hill was a large tertiary college running a mixture of 'A' and 'O' level provision, together with a number of more vocationally orientated options. The College ran five YTS schemes offering around 105 places for first and second year trainees. The public service vehicle scheme provided 21 places, all occupied by young men, offering training in a range of heavy vehicle maintenance skills related to the bus and coach industry. The scheme recruited on a national basis and some of the youngsters came from work experience placements located at various points around the country. Because of this the first year off-the-job training provision was organized into two ten week block periods, during which those youngsters from outside the Coventry area were housed in temporary lodgings.

Whilst off-the-job, the training was divided between the classrooms at the college's main site and a "smallish garage come workshop which was littered with engine parts, a couple of rundown coaches and various tools and mechanical devices". The workshop was on an industrial estate a short distance from the college and on my only visit there I encountered

"a group of lads, gathered around what appeared to be an engine, in the midst of some sort of demonstration ... On being introduced to them [the supervisor] explained my project and informed them that I wanted to interview a

number of them at some future point. Although the announcement was met with a number of groans they were made in what appeared good humour and I am optimistic that the trainees will co-operate" (field notes 11/03/88).

Back at the college the trainees spent time in and around the technical workshops and classrooms and it was on one of these rooms that the interviews took place.

Throughout the research, the importance of small, private sector employers for work experience placements was clearly evident with all the trainees here on placements with small coach firms. In a 1985 survey of YTS providers, it was found that "two thirds of trainees mainly spent their work experience time assisting other people to do their normal jobs or doing work similar to that of other employees in the work place" (Employment Gazette, August 1985). For the youngsters here, this often meant unsupervised training with very little formal structure, "I do any work they want me to do, really" (1). This 'work' was dominated by the demands of low skilled tasks, "doing the easier stuff to begin with", for example "wheel work", such as changing tyres and helping check the brakes. Work with engine components had been confined to cleaning parts for other mechanics. Training was dominated by "an assortment of general work all over the coach. Both mechanics and body work" (2). This involved a variety of tasks, like rubbing down and filling body work and

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1. Keith - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  2. Terry - Public Service Vehicle trainee

responsibility for checking the oil and water levels of the coaches after they had returned to the garage.

For others, training was even less demanding. Glenn had began with responsibility for checking and refuelling the coaches but, instead of progressing, things had deteriorated and in recent weeks he had lost virtually all direct contact with the vehicles he was supposed to be training to service. Now, much to his resentment, training involved "sweeping up and making the tea" (3). Complaints to his boss, the college and the MSC had met with little response and now, sadly, he had become resigned to tolerating the situation until either "something else comes up or the boss starts to rely on me more".

**(ii) the horticulture scheme**

The picture of training led by the demands of low skilled work continued with the college's horticulture scheme. The scheme catered for 20 trainees around half of whom were on placement four days a week with small employers running golf courses, nurseries and landscape gardens. Where no external work experience provider could be found, the on-the-job training was centred around the college's garden project across the city from the college. The garden project consisted of

"a large area of land which contained a range of horticultural type settings ... A greenhouse, what looked like an allotment, an overgrown area, a larger area of

lawn and flowerbeds, and two prefabricated huts. One contained the project's office, tools and equipment whilst the other was a cold, dark hut which the trainees used for their breaks" (field notes 11/04/88).

At the project, training was directed around mundane, mainly manual tasks, such as weeding and clearing bushes, and, here too, any formal training structure appeared lacking; "the supervisors end up giving you the jobs that they don't want to do themselves so you end up learning nothing". They also covered planting and the caring of flowers and shrubs but experience of working with garden machinery had been limited to mowing the lawns. Much of the training was repetitive and had little depth or content, "down at the project they have difficulty finding work to keep us occupied", "we're doing things just to pass the time" (4).

The quality of training on work experience placement showed no real qualitative improvement. Training on "a large fruit farm", meant "general gardening work", assisting the public to "pick your own" (5) and serving in the farm shop. Training at a nursery meant "I move trays around, that sort of stuff", planting out flowers, "pricking out and labelling the plants" (6). For a landscape gardener it was almost entirely manual labouring, "help with digging, planting and laying lawns" (7).

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4. Clare - Horticulture trainee
  5. John - Horticulture trainee
  6. Lorraine - Horticulture trainee
  7. Adam - Horticulture trainee

**(iii) the community care scheme**

The community care scheme ran places for 40 trainees, the vast majority of whom were young women, offering training in work with children, the elderly and the mentally and physically handicapped. The first year of the course required the youngsters to spend three periods, each of three months, on placement in different areas of caring work which could lead to specialisation in the second year. External work experience placements were usually found in local authority rest homes or other care facilities but recently there had been a trend towards accepting placements from the private sector. The trainees spent one day a week doing their off-the-job component, the morning of which was spent in facilities owned by a nearby secondary school, before being moved to the college for the afternoon. A more detailed description of these facilities is contained in the section below on 'Lack of provision' but these arrangements were uniformly unpopular with the trainees.

For these youngsters, YTS' emphasis on broad-based training meant experience of a number of different work environments but even rotating placements brought little change in the level and quality of training. Work experience placements in a rest home for the elderly, at a day nursery and at a school for children with learning difficulties had been characterized by undemanding, repetitive, and mainly, domestic tasks; "once you get into the swing of things



and you've learnt the ropes, the training doesn't really come into it. Off you go and do your job". Much time was spent merely supervising the "clients", "keeping them occupied or entertained" (8), making sure they could feed themselves properly and sometimes cleaning and bathing them.

Training could often mean being little more than an extra pair of hands, "keeping the clients entertained", helping them with their food or taking them to the toilet. It meant "its easy to pick up", "you know what you're doing after a while. Then the training doesn't come into it" (9).

The similarities in the quality of training on offer were often remarkable. On placement at a nursery school, training involved playing with the children or helping them with projects like painting, and this had been repeated at a school for children with learning difficulties. At a rest home for the elderly it meant being little more than a domestic, washing, ironing and cleaning the toilets; "they really did rely on you there. There was no one else to do the washing up" (10).

#### **The Edgewick Centre**

The Centre was funded by the Local Education Authority and provided a variety of work experience and training opportunities for both school pupils and workers then on the Community Programme. The vast

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8. Lucy - Community Care trainee
  9. Colin - Community Care trainee
  10. Anne - Community Care trainee

majority of its 150 YTS trainees brought with them learning difficulties and most of the openings were designated premium places. The Centre was located in an older working class area of the city and was housed in a large, single storey building that had once been used as a factory. Now showing distinct signs of wear and tear, the building had been converted for use by the Centre and was organised into sections which provided office and classroom space, as well as a small number of relatively well equipped workshops. On a guided tour, the Developmental Skills Unit was singled with particular pride as one of the few facilities in the city which catered for youngsters who needed special needs training in a sheltered working environment. Indeed, the Director of Training continually stressed what he saw as the Centre's primary role in providing trainees with the possibility for a staged entry into the labour market.

The Centre seemed to have a "lively atmosphere, most probably the result of the large number of school pupils there on work experience projects who seemed to roam the corridors with no apparent purpose" (field notes 29/02/88). The staff I met appeared enthusiastic and committed to YTS and its ability to meet the specific needs of their trainees. Because of its special needs emphasis, the Centre accepted trainees on a roll-on roll-off basis and after an initial period of six months in-house training and assessment, attempts were made to find them outside

work experience placements. However, during the period of research this process of gradual entry into work was being reassessed in the light of local authority expenditure cuts. Against their better judgement they had now been reluctantly forced into trying to find trainees outside placements as soon as possible and, consequently, felt their special needs emphasis was being slowly eroded: "morale among the staff is at an all time low and I'm afraid its rubbing off on the kids" (Director of Training, field notes 28/04/88).

**(i) the catering scheme**

Training on the 40 place catering scheme covered the preparation and cooking of food and revolved around the Centre's canteen and catering service. The canteen consisted of a large serving area, extensive seating facilities for its large number of users, a kitchen and adjacent storeroom. Like the rest of the Centre it appeared clean and well kept although, like much of the building, it was beginning to show signs of its age and heavy use.

Training in the canteen covered "general kitchen work" (11), like the preparation and serving of hot and cold food, and the washing and cleaning of kitchen utensils. They were also trained in menu planning, food hygiene practices, health and safety and till work. On outside placements the familiar pattern of semi- and unskilled work experience continued. Seven weeks training in a cafe meant "cooking, counter work

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11. Jane - Catering trainee

[serving food], food preparation and washing up" (12). Six weeks on placement at a delicatessen had involved "shop work", washing and cleaning, and serving the customers, whilst a placement at a rest home for the elderly had contained only a nominal commitment to catering: "six weeks of washing and drying up in their kitchen" (13).

**(ii) the motor vehicle maintenance scheme**

The motor vehicle maintenance scheme ran places for 24 youngsters, all of whom were young men, and was based in the Centre's motor vehicle workshop. The workshop appeared relatively well equipped and whilst there trainees were introduced to the basic maintenance and servicing requirements of a range of vehicles, including minor welding and repair jobs. The Centre's limited resources meant that training on-the-job was largely determined by the availability of vehicles to work on, many of whom belonged to staff and their families, either helping service or preparing them for MOT testing. The workshop had also acquired a small number of vehicles, either donated or bought, which were renovated as projects or taken apart for scrap. But in general, the limited resources meant staff appeared pressed to find a sufficient number of different tasks to maintain the scheme's commitment to quality training.

Training revolved around minor engine

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12. Sue - Catering trainee  
13. Jane - Catering trainee

maintenance and repairs, like the servicing and reassembly of engine components and the checking and changing of oil and spark plugs. They also did simple body work maintenance, like preparation for respraying and minor welding jobs, and dealt with vehicle electrical systems. Neither of the motor vehicle trainees had yet been on outside placement, although Rajesh had been for an interview with a small garage and was due to start training there the following week.

**(ii) the maintenance and construction scheme**

Training for the 14 young men on the Centre's maintenance and construction scheme was also structured by the Centre's limited resources. Based in the construction workshop, much of the practical training was dictated to by the maintenance requirements of the Centre itself; basic painting and decorating tasks, helping erect some boards for a wall partition and the removal, repair and painting of some replacement windows. For another youngster, training had involved basic painting and decorating, as well as some wallpaper hanging, and six to seven months helping rewire the Centre. Attempts were made to introduce some form of specialisation and since Joe had enjoyed electrical work he had tried to concentrate in this area by helping with general electrical repairs and maintenance. He had also spent a short time out on placement at a YMCA hostel which had involved assisting the caretaker/handyperson with general building maintenance and repairs.

## **The City Council**

### **(i) construction scheme**

The City Council ran two YTS schemes with places for about 90 youngsters. Training on the first year of the construction scheme was based in the Apprentice Training School, where the youngsters were introduced to basic construction and maintenance work. There were places for approximately 30 youngsters and, like many other training providers, the council used this as "an internal pool" (Roberts et al, 1988:60) from which to select their yearly requirement of apprentices. Those unsuccessful in getting onto the apprenticeship training course continued into their second years as YTS trainees.

The training school was located at one of the council's main engineering depots and had been purpose built some years ago as part of their apprentice training programme. Although the school was small "the facilities were relatively impressive and included a classroom and adjoining workshops, although a couple of the lads complained there was nowhere for them to have a smoke without going outside" (field notes 20/06/90). The trainees shared the canteen used by the rest of the depot, occasionally spent time with craft workers in the other main workshops and spent time out on site with a craft worker. Apart from these interruptions, first year training was largely centred around the workshop and adjoining rooms.

Three of the five young men I interviewed

were trainee carpenters and the remaining two were trainee plumbers. For both groups, the daily routine at the apprentice training school was punctuated by day release to a local college, and each trainee spent six weeks "out on site with a tradesman". The first year had been spent doing mainly routine tasks in "workshop-based training", familiarising themselves with the tools, materials and techniques used on the job. They had also done "general carpentry" (14) like learning the different types of joints and their uses, hanging doors, doing casement work, general shuttering and an introduction to plumbing.

Two of the trainees had been selected to start their second year's training as apprentices and were eagerly anticipating this increased specialisation: "it will give us the chance to do something a bit more exciting than just hanging around the workshop". Apprentices were required to spend three month periods in different sections of the Council's Building Services Department and both appreciated its greater specificity; "the first year is just basic stuff, getting to know your way around. The second year is the real thing" (15).

The trainee plumbers described their training in similar ways, "we do basic plumbing skills, really" (16). Their first year training had revolved around the plumbing workshop, doing general tasks, such as

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14. Thomas - Construction trainee carpenter

15. Harinder - Construction trainee carpenter

16. Jim - Construction trainee plumber

familiarising themselves with the tools and materials, as well as some basic heating and ventilation work. However, this year the Council did not need any apprentice plumbers and, much to their disillusionment, both were facing the prospect of a second year's training on YTS.

**(ii) the clerical scheme**

The clerical scheme had places for 60 youngsters and allowed work placements in a variety of council departments. This covered reception work, typing, finance, telephone or switchboard work, keyboarding, filing and photocopying. One day per week was spent on day release to a local college where they were encouraged to follow courses leading to B-Tec diplomas. No visits were paid to their individual work placements, which were scattered throughout the city, although I spent time talking to the youngsters at one of the council's main offices in the city centre. This was under the watchful eye of a personnel assistant but the interviews all took place in a room specifically provided for the purpose.

Training on the scheme appeared governed by the demands of low skilled office work, "we were just doing routine jobs like filing all the time", and as a consequence "the first six months were a drag. The work was boring and it was sometimes difficult to motivate myself to get in on time" (17). Julia's first placement had been at a comprehensive school where she had one

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17. Clive - Clerical trainee



typing, filing and answered the telephone. Another trainee, Kath, had been fortunate enough to secure herself a 'real job' with the Council but she also recalled her training as involving mainly personnel filing, receptionist work, dealing with the public and, at one placement, she remembered photocopying for much of the day. Now a Council employee proper, she provided an interesting point of contrast with the way in which many youngsters experience work as a liberation after leaving the confines of a training scheme: "if you're on YTS you can't do a clerk's job. YTS is more like general training" (18). It was with great relief that she had left her 'general training' behind.

#### **The Chamber of Commerce**

##### **(i) the clerical scheme**

The Chamber of Commerce was one of the largest Managing Agents in the area, offering six schemes covering around 260 youngsters, but recently had cancelled its Optical Grinding and Beauty/Reception schemes due to lack of demand. Training on the clerical scheme was organised on a similar basis to that of the City Council's clerical scheme covering keyboard skills, word processing and reception work. The major difference between the schemes was that trainees undertook their on-the-job training with employers in the private sector. The scheme ran places for 50 youngsters, all of whom were women, where four days a week were spent with their work experience provider and

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18. Kath - Clerical trainee

the fifth at the Chamber's own 'college' (for more details see section below on 'Lack of provision') where they were encouraged to follow general clerical courses or Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education modules. As the interviews were conducted during their off-the-job training it was impossible to assess the nature of their placements although from their comments their range and nature differed considerably.

The four young women interviewed all described training that followed a similar pattern of low skilled clerical and secretarial work. Sarah had trained doing a number of basic administrative tasks in the accounts department of the distribution firm where she did her work experience, "typing and filing and anything to do with office work really". She had also trained as a receptionist, answering the telephone and "dealing with the public" (19). Another spent much of her work experience moving between different tasks in the administrative section of her work experience provider. The morning would be spent doing typing or word processing, and possibly some book-keeping, before spending most afternoons doing general office and telephone work. For Niki too, training had involved "general secretarial skills" (20), which included a variety of tasks ranging from typing, to filing and word processing.

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19. Sarah - Clerical trainee

20. Niki - Clerical trainee

**(ii) the retail scheme**

The retail scheme offered places for 60 youngsters and concentrated around areas of retail, distribution and warehouse work. The trainees spent four days a week doing work experience mainly at placements in small, private sector retail outlets. The fifth day was spent at the Chamber's college which they attended on alternate days to the clerical trainees. Again I was unable to visit their individual work experience placements and all the interviews took place whilst they were off-the-job.

Whilst we have seen a pattern of YTS dominated by low skills training we must not neglect the Scheme's role in introducing formal training structures into previously neglected areas. In particular the garage, engineering, hotels and retail sectors have all benefited in this way. For the latter two "some firms did not have formal training schemes before the introduction of YTS" (Deakin and Pratten, 1987:496), although here too YTS' emphasis on broad-based training has failed to deliver its promise of quality skills.

Frances' work experience placement at a newsagents involved general shop work, cleaning, working on the till and administering the newspaper bills. For another, training with a small chain of DIY stores meant tasks like loading delivery vans, pricing up goods on display, helping with stock checks and working on the till. For Luke, work experience in a

menswear shop meant training as a sales assistant but, much to his disgust, also being required to vacuum, tidy and polish the shop at the end of each working day. This he experienced as a clear affront to his masculinity: "my sister does stuff like that at home" (21).

**(iii) the engineering scheme**

Much of the training experienced by the youngsters was led by the demands of semi- and unskilled tasks. In relation to our understanding of skill, they were engaged in training that made only modest demands on their abilities and allowed only minimal opportunity to take up and develop new qualities. The emphasis on broad-based training revolved around work tasks that were often mundane and repetitive and which failed to allow the development of any real depth to the new skills they were supposed to be learning.

In contrast, the training on the Chamber's engineering scheme had a much more clearly demonstrable commitment to quality skill provision through training around job-specific and technical tasks. The majority of the youngsters on the scheme were apprentices with small engineering firms who did not have the commitment, ability or resources to run their own training programmes. YTS was allowing these firms to support existing training provision and "to recover from earlier cut-backs and expand trainee intakes to

their preferred levels" (Roberts et al, 1986:40). In addition to the apprentices, there were a small number of youngsters training on the scheme as trainees but these too appeared to benefit from the greater emphasis on job-specific and technical training.

Research into the impact of YTS on engineering apprenticeships in Coventry has demonstrated its failure to reform apprentice training provision (Dutton, 1987). Across sectors of the economy, many employers have been reluctant to change their training practices to include YTS' generic emphasis, as "broad-based training was considered inferior and wasteful" (Roberts et al, 1986:58). Within the engineering industry, employers have often participated in the Scheme more out of notions of social responsibility rather than any real commitment to YTS' training philosophy (Dutton, 1987:viii), and many firms have been reluctant to risk using YTS as a way to recruit. Despite high unemployment, competition for better qualified school-leavers has remained strong and employers feared association with the Scheme would deter potential applicants (ibid:65). Coupled with trade union resistance, firms involvement with the YTS has been used predominantly to support or maintain existing training provision through the YTS grant and, paradoxically, "it appears that apprenticeship has influenced the content and quality of the engineering YTS rather than YTS innovating apprenticeship" (ibid:viii).

The Chamber's scheme ran places for 35 youngsters and was based in the purpose-built training centre of a subsidiary of a large multinational corporation. On my visits to the centre its facilities appeared under-utilised and, although well resourced, much of the machinery appeared dated; an observation confirmed in a later conversation with a training instructor (field notes 17/03/88). Whilst off-the-job the youngsters were largely confined to the workshop as health and safety considerations meant they were unable to wander the extensive site. At lunch time they shared the works canteen but had to make do with a hot drinks machine for coffee and tea breaks. The only other time they were allowed away from the training workshop was if they needed to visit the First Aid Centre. The four young men trainees I interviewed - two apprentices, one about to achieve apprentice status, and one trainee - came to the workshop for their off-the-job training, two of them doing block release and the others day release. In addition to the Chamber's trainees, they shared the facilities and part of the training curriculum with a number of trainees and apprentices, the "top lads" (22) as the latter were known, who were training on the multinational's own scheme.

The content of their training appeared well-defined including techniques and methods more familiar to traditional craft and technical skills. Robert had spent an initial three months assessment at his

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22. Robert - Engineering trainee

engineering firm and much of this initial work had involved mundane tasks, like sweeping up and cleaning the machinery. However, two months into his nine months block release to the centre things had improved and he was now learning job-specific skills defined by the Engineering Industrial Training Board, mainly milling, grinding and turning work.

Patrick, the other apprentice, spent four days a week at the engineering firm where he was employed and his training too had involved inspection work, milling and turning. In addition to these specific skills, he reflected that his training had allowed him to develop greater confidence and a growing ability to solve problems. For Frank too, spending nine months on block release had allowed him to acquire "good skills for life" (23), including, machining, milling, welding and some drawing board work. On his return to his placement, he would achieve apprentice status.

The last of the engineering trainees was training as a laser cutter. Four days a week were spent at his work experience placement with a firm specialising in laser techniques, where he claimed to be training in some of the most modern laser technology. He had covered laser cutting and had worked with Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) machines, covering their use, installation and servicing. However, he felt the specific nature of his training

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23. Frank - Engineering trainee

could not be properly accommodated by the scheme and, as the training staff were unfamiliar with laser technology, they could not provide the expertise or resources that he felt his training needed.

The experiences of the trainees clearly illustrate YTS' failure to provide youngsters with quality training for skills. The move towards a system of training 'competencies' has been constructed around the demands of semi- and unskilled work and, together with a broad-based emphasis, has provided the rationale for their training. For the majority of the youngsters, the tasks they had to perform called for little individual skill and opportunities to accumulate and develop these abilities over time were severely limited. Instead, it was training dominated by the experience of mundane and repetitive tasks that required little specific skill and which could quickly be acquired.

This point is further underlined by the experiences of the engineering trainees. Here, their training had retained much of its craft skill emphasis and, as such, the youngsters were enjoying the benefit of training to a much higher standard. Employers' concerns over maintaining the ability to recruit suitably qualified youngsters, and trade union resistance to the introduction of YTS into apprenticeships, have ensured the maintenance of greater job-specific training to recognized standards. It is in the context of the latter, that Cockburn's



(1983) political dimension to skill is most clearly visible. It is through organised labour's ability to protect their relative position and its relation to capital's continued demand for skilled young workers that have enabled the historical link between skill and craft status to be maintained.

#### **Training for him and training for her**

Training for skills on YTS has another dimension that needs to be explored; its sex/gender dynamic. The classification of work as skilled "has much more to do with the sex of the person who does it than the real demands of the work" (Cockburn, 1984:116-7). Men dominate categories of skilled work but even where men and women are found to be doing similar jobs, men have tended to retain a higher status (Coyle, 1982:14).

From containing an explicit commitment to extending young women's' access to 'quality training' in all areas of the economy, "in the process of realising the Youth Training Scheme the Manpower Services Commission dropped the commitment to positive action for women" (Cockburn, 1987:73). An early study of YTS concluded that young women training in areas of non-traditional work were "VERY difficult to find" (Fawcett Society, 1985:6, their emphasis). They tended to be confined to narrow areas of training characterized by "large employer-based schemes, the traditional employers of low-paid, unorganized female work forces, where 'high street' distribution and other

non-union work places predominate" (Marsh, 1986:161-2).

Cockburn's extensive study of how and why working class young women 'choose' YTS placements in women's jobs reveals the pervasive sexual division of labour within the Scheme (Cockburn, 1987:8). She too found that YTS was "highly sex-segregated" and that young women were concentrated into a small number of training categories (ibid:9). These were mainly in areas traditionally associated with women's work, 'caring', 'clerical' and 'personal services and sales work'. Only in the area of 'food preparation and service' was there anything approaching equal numbers of women and men. Furthermore, segregation occurred within schemes and placements. For example, male clerical trainees were much more likely to occupy general administrative posts whereas young women tended to be involved in typing and clerical work.

More recent work illustrates that this gendertyping has been reinforced by the Scheme's development and that

"overall, MSC's lack of power to influence the pattern of schemes in the surrogate labour market and to radically change employers' behaviour in hiring young people could be seen most clearly in the persistence of gender stereotyping in placements" (Lee et al, 1990:71).

At first glance (see Table 2.2) it would appear that amongst the schemes I researched YTS had made some progress in breaking down the reproduction of the sexual division of labour. Although rigid gender

barriers were evident in the Chamber of Commerce's clerical and engineering schemes, in the college's public service vehicle scheme, and in the schemes run by both the City Council and the training centre, there was, on the face of it, some clear exceptions. I interviewed both young women and men on the Chamber of Commerce's retail scheme and the college's horticulture and community care schemes.

However, this in itself, fails to vindicate YTS' claims to challenge the rigid sexual division of labour that school-leavers face. Of the total number of 60 trainees on the Chamber's retail scheme, only eight were young men and both those I interviewed were on work placements more familiar to masculine work. One worked in a menswear shop, the other in the warehouse of a DIY store, whilst both the young women worked in newsagents.

On the horticulture scheme only four of the 20 trainees were young women. Of the two I interviewed, one had yet to be provided with an outside placement and was working on the college's garden project, and the other was doing her work experience in a small nursery run by a woman. The two young men did work experience at a fruit farm and for a landscape gardener.

Although there has been a slow but noticeable trend for women to enter areas of work previously excluded to them, a high price is exacted in doing so and the few that succeed are still very much "pioneers"

(Cockburn, 1985:2). Young women stepping outside traditional occupational areas have to confront directly the boundaries constructed between men and women's work, and the asymmetrical power relations on which these rest. At one level, jobs take on a ranking according to gender and for young women moving into male areas this means an upwards move whilst bearing the cultural baggage of lower female status (Cockburn, 1987:140). To survive, young women have to overcome their previous exclusion from these areas and perform better or at least as well as their male peers. Failure to do so results in being labelled as incompetents or novices.

This sacrifice is illustrated at another level which presents many heterosexual young women with an additional daunting contradiction. Young women tend to anticipate a conventional move into work and family life, and forming teenage sexual relations is crucial in this development (ibid:119). Work can offer the opportunity to meet prospective partners but a move into non-female areas of work risks undermining their feminine identity. Caring about what young men think requires maintaining this identity but, in moving into male dominated areas of work, it can come under severe examination. This may mean having to endure their presence being explained as mavericks, tomboys or lesbians (ibid:145), rather than a genuine desire to experience something different or escape from predetermined feminine roles.

For young men too, stepping outside conventional areas of work can also necessitate considerable sacrifice. Young men who move into non-traditional areas of work take a step downwards and this is explained either in terms of their failure to succeed in 'masculine' occupations or, where nurturing work is involved, as a direct questioning of their sexuality (Lee et al, 1990:73). Here, Colin's choice of a community care scheme had brought its own strains, "people at school thought I was a poof or something" (24), and only his resolute desire to work with children maintained his commitment to the Scheme. Neil too recognized the wider obstacles and pressures faced by young men wanting to work as carers: "a lot of people aren't too sure about men doing it. Society doesn't bring up lads to do this sort of work". "It makes it much more difficult" (25). But both youngsters had contemplated leaving for a Nursery Nursing Education Board course whose higher status would have led to a 'professionalisation' of their position, as men doing 'women's' work.

Yet, as Cockburn (1987) argues, it is precisely in areas of paid employment that challenge orthodox notions of domestic responsibilities, that young men need to be encouraged to enter if the

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24. Colin - Community Care trainee

25. Neil - Community Care trainee

boundaries between male and female spheres of work are to be deconstructed. Through learning those skills that young women acquire as they mature, "domestic specialisation" within both paid work and the family can be challenged (ibid:190).

### **The antagonisms between 'theory and practice'**

Training on YTS does not consist merely of work experience or workshop-based training and all youngsters on YTS are required to take part in a minimum period of off-the-job training. Indeed, the off-the-job provision within YTS was a significant factor in generating and maintaining the consensus around the Scheme and for the TUC, off-the-job training was heralded as an extension of day-release provision that had long been campaigned for (Ainley, 1987:102).

However, the provision of off-the-job training for young people on government training programmes has produced its own antagonisms. With YTS' predecessor YOP, employers' suspicions of the off-the-job element led to only one third of participants being given their entitlement. Young people's own reluctance was illustrated by the fact that less than one quarter of these attended (Finn, 1987:147). These problems were often compounded by the poor conditions many trainees experienced and by its associations with a return to school.

Despite the new emphasis given to off-the-job training within YTS, these problems have remained. Roberts et al found

"some employers disagreed with enforced, irrelevant schooling that disrupted the working week. They rated off-the-job training as another imposition on industry... Some turned a blind eye to absenteeism. They did not believe that the trainees would be taught anything useful, or that the firms would benefit" (1986:58).

Evidence suggests that for trainees too, the acceptance of off-the-job training has been problematic. Trainees tend to evaluate their off-the-job training in direct relation to its immediate relevance to their work experience and to their image of themselves as workers within these placements (Lee et al, 1990:128). This is not surprising given the pervasive instrumentalism with which young people approach the Scheme. For them, YTS is a way of negotiating a labour market with few opportunities and a stepping stone in the much more important longer-term process of securing a 'real job'. For the young people here, the off-the-job training they received was mainly viewed as a waste of time and a distraction from the real point of the programme; the work experience and getting a job.

The antagonisms which this division between work experience and off-the-job training, between "theory and practice" (26), generated was expressed by virtually all the trainees, although particularly acute amongst 24 (57%). Specifically, youngsters from the two clerical schemes, the retail scheme and the construction scheme were singular in their criticism of

the off-the-job training and its relationship to their work experience.

An awareness of this uneasy relationship between the work experience and off-the-job training was also evident amongst the staff. On my first visit to the Chamber of Commerce's own off-the-job training 'college', the Training Supervisor acknowledged that the trainees "hated" (field notes 25/02/88) their schemes and, in particular, the college aspect. This, she explained, was the product of "poor experiences of school and their preoccupation with work (sic) and money". She also felt that they were frustrated by the college's lack of facilities and by what they saw as no direct relation between what they were taught at college and what they did on placement. Indeed, this turned out to be an astute assessment of the situation and many of the trainee's comments supported this view.

In particular, both the Chamber's retail and clerical trainees were required to learn book-keeping and this was very unpopular. I was later informed by one of the tutors that she purposefully taught book-keeping during the morning "when there's a better chance of it sinking in" (field notes 04/03/88), since during the afternoon session she failed to hold their attention. Furthermore, the unpopularity of the off-the-job training had been made evident by the requirement that trainees attend a local further education college one day a week. Consequently there had been high absenteeism rates and, although still



commonplace, the move to providing off-the-job training in-house had done something to alleviate the problem. Partly, as she informed me, because the move had made trainees' non-attendance easier to police and sanction of deductions to the training allowance appeared a greater threat.

**Back at school: 'painfully boring'**

Off-the-job training reminded many of the youngsters of school, something they had already explicitly rejected in favour of work. They spoke with contempt about how they were still treated like school pupils and how little of what they did was genuinely interesting: "I don't do a lot here, it's painfully boring" (27). The off-the-job training was pointless, "sometimes it's a waste of time and we end up doing stupid things" and only that morning they had been involved in an exercise to produce pi charts. For Luke it had been "a stupid exercise", it bore no relationship to the demands of his work experience placement and was more reminiscent of colouring pictures at infant school than of being at work.

For the community care trainees also, the work they had done on health studies, physical growth and the ageing process had been "similar to what you did at school" (28). For another, college's relationship to their placements was often ambiguous and the content "not very demanding" (29). Lucy found

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27. Luke - Retail trainee

28. Colin - Community care trainee

29. Lucy - Community care trainee

the work for her City and Guilds in Community Care too easy, which in relation to her 9 '0' level passes was not too surprising.

Others also made the comparison with school. Despite passing her B-Tec First Certificate in Business Studies and Finance Julia felt they had been "treated like kids" and "it's like being back at school. From the very first day of the induction week they treated us like school kids. Sat us there and lectured us" (30). She had taken the decision to leave school but now, to her regret, she was back in a similar environment. Like Anne's last year at school "we spend a lot of time filling in" (31). That morning had been spent learning computer graphics which for her was pointless: "when do you use computers looking after little old ladies?". "I just think college is shit".

The contrast with the importance they attached to their work placements and with the worker status this conveyed was vivid. Time at college was recalled with little enthusiasm, "college is just a waste of time" (32) and Frances had not worked on the project for her City and Guilds exam for several months. They "preferred to be at work" (33) where the time was more enjoyable, the staff were better fun and where they could "have a laugh".

It was being on placement that was important.

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- 30. Julia - Clerical trainee
  - 31. Anne - Clerical trainee
  - 32. Frances - Retail trainee
  - 33. Tony - Retail trainee

Thomas found the day in the training centre at the City Council's works department boring and for him it was a bad day. More importantly, he felt it had little relevance to the demands of working out on site with a craft worker:

"the college bit isn't very good". He continued, "we are shown one thing in here and then we go out on site with a tradesman where we are shown something different". "Its confusing, sometimes you're not sure which way to turn" (34).

Louis echoed this divide between theory and practice, where college was boring and not his idea of what training for a job should be:

"it gets on your nerves after a while, just sitting and listening and writing". "What we learn in college you don't really need on site. You learn to do it one way and then when you get on site you end up doing it a different way" (35).

It was out 'on site' through working that you learnt to do things properly, where you had to know the job and where any training really counted. For another, the separation between theory and practice was almost complete: "you don't really need it once you get on site", "I don't really see the point of it" (36). It was through working under pressure that you really learnt how to do the job properly.

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34. Thomas - Construction trainee carpenter

35. Louis - Construction trainee carpenter

36. Jim - Construction trainee plumber

### **Lack of provision**

A number of the youngsters also commented on the poor quality of the facilities they had to endure, and the trainees on the Chamber of Commerce's retail and clerical schemes were unanimous in condemning their conditions off-the-job. The Chamber had recently moved from subcontracting its off-the-job training to a local further education college to providing its own training in-house. A move, it was claimed, precipitated by the need to address the high rates of absenteeism at the further education college. However, the move to in-house off-the-job training took place against a background of falling revenue, due to declining demand for training places, and the reorganisation looked more like a cost cutting exercise. Indeed, the Chamber had recently closed two of its schemes due to falling demand for places. Furthermore, the switch to in-house provision meant those youngsters following B-Tec courses still had to attend the further education college. Whether this meant that the Chamber's own in-house provision was not on a par with that of the college is difficult to assess. But it is unlikely that in switching to their own provision they could match in full the colleges overall ability to train off-the-job.

The Chamber's college consisted of four of five converted rooms above a small engineering firm in a working class area of the city, and the noise from the downstairs factory punctuated a number of the interviews. Although the classrooms appeared new and

well equipped, apart from complaints about the typewriters, they were small and there was little evidence of any recreational facilities. On my first visit I arrived at morning break to find "a lot of the trainees hanging around outside the front and on the stairs up to the college" (field notes 25/02/88). The tuck shop had been closed some weeks earlier when large amounts of stock had gone missing and because the college was located in a residential area about 20 minutes walk from the city centre, there was nothing to compensate for this. If a trainee could not bring their own lunch the only other available options were a trip to a chip shop, something I discovered on my first visit, or to a small corner shop.

The community care trainees also felt their training facilities were second-rate. They had been required to do their off-the-job training in an annexe to a comprehensive school, but their continued complaints about the facilities had resulted in them being bussed to the further education college for the afternoon session. The annexe was not purpose built for teaching and provided the school with its youth club during the evening. None of its facilities were available during the day, although the coffee bar opened mid-morning and there were no local amenities to compensate for this. Until the trainees moved to the college, not bringing sandwiches meant a considerable walk to a chip shop or local store.

The trainees clearly resented the poor

facilities and their association with school since it undermined their self-image as serious workers: "the school environment is disgusting. We're supposed to be training, not be back at school" (37). Contact with the pupils was forbidden, further restricting their movement in and around the buildings, and their relationship with them was clearly problematic since they complained that pupils regularly taunted them through the windows and verbally abused them before and after school: "they call us 'thickies', 'morons', that sort of stuff" (38)

The further education college provided the off-the-job training for the City Council's clerical trainees. These trainees felt college was poorly organized, "we spent loads of time just trying to find out where we were supposed to be" (39), and that they were taught in the worst rooms and provided with the worst facilities: "just because we're on YTS they think they can give us any old shitty rooms" (40). Their complaints had led to some improvement but it had been a slow and painful process.

#### **Training for qualifications**

The youngster's training was dominated by the demands of semi- and unskilled work, bearing little relation to high quality 'training for skills'. For most, it was not the promise of training that gave YTS

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- 37. Colin - Community care trainee
  - 38. Lucy - Community care trainee
  - 39. Kath - Clerical trainee
  - 40. Clive - Clerical trainee

its legitimacy, but its role in providing them with an opportunity of securing a 'real job'. Furthermore, this instrumentalism generated deep-seated antagonisms between the work experience and off-the-job provision elements of their schemes. It was the former that was important, since it was this that gave them 'a foot in the door' of work, with the latter relegated, at best, to the position of inconvenience, at worst, to total irrelevance.

The Youth Training Scheme was revitalised in 1986 with a further promise to youngsters to provide up to two years enhanced training. In a 1985 White Paper, 'Education and Training for Young People', recent developments in UK education and training provision were reviewed and it was emphasised that, in terms of a technically qualified work force, the UK lagged far behind most of its competitors. It stated that,

"unless we move further ahead the United Kingdom still has relatively little prospect of creating the highly skilled and innovative work force required to meet the employment needs of the existing and new technologies" (Department of Employment, 1985:para 22)

Vocational training and the supply of better qualified youngsters for a modern economy were crucial in meeting this new challenge and the new two year scheme was to play a central role.

The greater commitment to quality training was encapsulated in the Scheme's new emphasis in providing broad-based foundation training which "gives

all trainees the opportunity to obtain a vocational qualification related to competence in the work place, or to obtain a credit towards such a qualification" (MSC, 1985:2). Each trainee was to receive a training plan which would outline the "competence objectives" they would be expected to achieve, with quality linked to obtaining "recognized vocational qualifications" (ibid:3) which were to be rationalised under the auspices of the newly created National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). The emphasis was now on the outcome of training rather than the content.

**Training for qualifications: 'I won't be around long enough'**

Linking quality to externally recognized certification has not met with the response Government Ministers may well have hoped for. For Great Britain as a whole, between December 1986 and November 1988, 33.8% of youngsters gained qualifications during their stay on YTS. For the West Midlands the corresponding figure was 33.9% and for Coventry 41.7% (TA, May 1989). Clearly, the Scheme has met with only limited success in leading to qualifications for its participants.

Amongst the trainees there was a clear ambiguity towards the value of gaining qualifications. Eleven of the trainees (26%) indicated that they were either not interested or not sure about pursuing a recognized vocational qualification or a credit towards one. Their reasoning for not doing so was simple.

For some the association of qualifications



with school was a powerful repellent as these youngsters had left school to work, not to carry on studying. Frances had started a City and Guilds in retail but could not generate enough enthusiasm to continue and her course work had been neglected for several months. Tony, another retail trainee, had a similar outlook. His training supervisor told me that he had gone to a "special school for those with behavioural problems" and that he was disruptive at his placement and in his class (41). For him, the off-the-job training was the same waste of time his last year at school had been.

Elaine too was just not interested in qualifications, whether at school or as part of her training. She had taken five CSEs at school but had never bothered to find out her results and Sue too had no interest in how she had performed in her school examinations. As for her YTS, she did not even know if she was aiming for any qualifications and felt, "I don't think I'd bother even if I had the chance" (42).

Importantly, a number of the trainees did not see themselves as staying on their schemes long enough to have the opportunity to get a qualification. The problem of early leaving will be dealt with in the next Chapter but, in Great Britain, of the three quarters who leave their scheme's early only 22.5% gain a qualification. For Coventry the picture was slightly

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41. Field notes 25\2\88

42. Sue - Catering trainee

better but still only 27.8% of early leavers left with a qualification (TA, May 1989).

For these youngsters, YTS was a temporary stop-gap between school and a 'real job' and, as such, they did not see themselves training long enough to get a qualification. Clare, a reluctant participant, had left school with one 'O' level and one CSE pass and unlike the other horticulture trainees she was not interested in the City and Guilds Phase I Horticulture they were pursuing. Like many, she had joined YTS out of necessity, rather than choice, and even if she had been interested, she did not see herself on the scheme long enough to get another qualification. Similarly, although Anne had left school with two 'O' levels and three CSEs, she too, did not see herself training long enough to get another qualification. Her reasoning was simple, "I won't be around long enough to get one!" (43).

For Jim and Richard, the two trainee plumbers, it no longer made sense to try for a qualification. They had joined their schemes with the hope of getting apprenticeships and, now that was no longer possible, neither wanted to be around long enough to pursue a qualification. If they felt it was worthwhile staying they might of tried but "there's no point to trying for one now, I'm looking to get out of here". Both youngsters had applied for jobs "on the

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43. Anne - Community care trainee

bins" (44) as refuse collectors.

The remaining thirty one trainees (74%) were either pursuing or had taken a recognized vocational qualification. Twenty one of these were following various City and Guilds courses or collecting units towards one and one had taken a City and Guilds Phase I in General Kitchen Practice but had failed the "theoretical bit" (45). Nine of the others were pursuing other qualifications. Four clerical trainees were preparing for RSA typing exams, two of whom were doing RSA I, and the other two, who had done RSA I at school, were preparing for their RSA II. Four of the other five had taken a B-Tec First Certificate in Business Studies and Finance, one of whom had failed. She was now doing a typing and word processing course but was unsure whether this would lead to a qualification. However, the figures from the leavers' survey suggest that the majority of these youngsters will not realize their efforts.

#### **Training for whose benefit**

The training received by most of the youngsters was constructed around the demands of semi- and unskilled work, bearing little relation to the high quality training for skills that YTS claims. The off-the-job element was viewed as an arbitrary imposition, a throwback to school, which the trainees' experienced as out of step with their desires to find 'real jobs'.

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44. Richard - Construction trainee plumber

45. Jane - Catering trainee

So did they feel their training was benefiting them?

All the youngsters expressed the belief that their training was benefiting them in some way. Only one trainee had any outright hostility towards his scheme which he saw as "useless", "slave labour" and for the benefit of the MSC not himself. However, even he was willing to concede that his work experience placement, at a DIY store, was enjoyable as it had taught him how to "get on at work, meet people and talk to customers" (46).

Four other trainees (10%) felt there was "some, but not a lot" (47) of benefit from their training. Long hours and low money meant little benefit but fear of unemployment, "I'm not a lazy person" (48), meant it was "better than the dole, just about". Clare too felt the positive aspects only just outweighed the negative ones, "I knew nothing about horticulture but needed the money", but she did concede that if she had been interested in horticulture the training might have been beneficial. But for her "it's pretty useless" (49).

Another fourteen (32%) were more enthusiastic about the benefits of their training but still displayed considerable reservations about its quality, the type of work they were training for and the money they were being paid. Many spoke of the mundane and

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46. Tony - Retail trainee  
47. Sarah - Clerical trainee  
48. Frances - Retail trainee  
49. Clare - Horticulture trainee

repetitive nature of their training and the fact that the tasks could be quickly mastered. Although his training was benefiting him "quite a lot", Neil questioned the commitment of the instructors, "it takes time to learn and sometimes people haven't the time to tell you". He saw little prospect of change but was determined to make the best of it; "you have to learn as you're going along. There's nothing else you can do, really" (50).

The benefits for Anne were, "quite a lot, although most of its common sense" since many of the tasks they were required to do were no more than domestic chores. At other times, "you get all the shitty jobs, the jobs that nobody else wants to do" (51). Once the permanent workers knew you were a trainee you could be treated like a skivvy and were given the most unpleasant and mundane tasks; then there was no need for any training. Others told a similar story, "it's benefiting me a bit", but "its easy to pick up". "I feel trained, I know what to do". "After a short while you know what you are doing" but "you get experience of working", "you need experience to get a job these days" (52).

But reservations were not just confined to the community care trainees. Samantha, a clerical trainee, had initially enjoyed her scheme and thought it was benefiting her quite a lot. However, six months

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50. Neil - Community care trainee

51. Anne - Community care trainee

52. Colin - Community care trainee

into her training, the initial enthusiasm was waning, "it's alright sometimes" (53), and the training had become repetitive. Luke too felt his retail scheme had benefited him a lot at first as he was studying for a B-Tec and had enjoyed the work. But the training was easy, he quickly got the hang of things and now there was not much new to try. The benefits of Julia's clerical scheme were "quite a bit, I suppose" but now, "there's not a lot to it really", "the clerical duties they give us don't tax you" (54), and sometimes on placement there was little to keep them busy.

More surprisingly, two of the engineering trainees also expressed reservations. One recalled how, initially, his spell at his work experience placement had involved simple and mundane tasks, and nobody had taken the time to explain his responsibilities. But things had rapidly improved when he had started his off-the-job training. Bob, training to be a laser cutter, felt his training was giving him both the knowledge and experience to do the job. However, he felt the instructors were unable to provide the support and training he required, "there's not enough training and the instructors won't respond to you", "sometimes they treat us rotten" (55). He had tried complaining to the boss at his placement but his complaints had been quickly dismissed.

For the remainder, training on YTS had much

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- 53. Samantha - Clerical trainee
  - 54. Julia - Clerical trainee
  - 55. Bob - Engineering trainee

more tangible benefits. For four of these, YTS' benefit had been directly linked to their securing a 'real job' or in obtaining an apprenticeship. Although Kath had done boring and repetitive jobs as a trainee, her placements had sometimes been interesting, she had learnt a lot from them and felt they had prepared her for full-time employment. Similarly, Clive thought he had learnt a lot from his training and that the "skills" (56) he had been trained in were coming in useful in the temporary administrative post he was currently filling.

Louis, a construction trainee, felt the standard of training he had received had been good and that he had benefited a lot from it. The staff on his scheme had been willing to help if he had a problem and they had been encouraged to try things out for themselves. Indeed, he had been reluctantly forced to move away from the area, "I'm sad about leaving. I'll miss all my mates. We've had a good laugh here and the standard of training has been good" (57). Harinder and Thomas were moving into the second year of their training as apprentices. They both felt the instructors had been good, being prepared to take the time to help with any problems, and they had delivered high quality training, "I've learnt a lot since I've been here. There's a good standard of instruction" (58).

Three of the four horticulture trainees also

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56. Clive - Clerical trainee  
57. Louis - Construction trainee  
58. Thomas - Construction trainee

viewed their training in relation to its instrumental role in securing subsequent employment. Apart from the first six months, which had involved mainly mundane and repetitive tasks, they had learnt "a fair bit" and were hopeful about their chances of "being kept on afterwards" (59). Lorraine was "learning a lot" (60) at her nursery placement and she too hoped to be taken on. It was the opportunity for work experience that was essential, "at least on the YTS you get good experience which is better than being on the dole" (61).

Six of the eight trainees I interviewed at the training centre also thought their training had been of considerable benefit. Finn has suggested that in an attempt to bolster YTS as an employer-led Scheme, the reduction in the number of premium places has had important implications for the quality of training delivered. The emphasis of premium places on "innovative and trainee-centred provision" (1987:173) meant that youngsters could often experience good quality training.

In contrast to school, the youngsters here appreciated the good working relations with the training staff and the often intimate and friendly environment provided by the Centre. Elaine had now been training for ten months, "I'm getting better all the time". She like the friendly atmosphere in the work shop, that you were called by your first name and that

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59. Adam - Horticulture trainee

60. Lorraine - Horticulture trainee

61. John - Horticulture trainee



"the people here treat you like adults and I like that". She had learnt "useful skills" and felt that "getting experience was important". "A lot of people talk about YTS as being no better than the dole but at least on the YTS you are getting experience". "That's why I came on YTS, to get experience" (62).

Two other catering trainees agreed. Carol felt her training had benefited her "a good bit" (63) and that she had learnt a lot of new skills, like how to serve food and deal with the public. Her training had given her new confidence, through working on the cash register handling money, and by showing her that she could do tasks she had previously not thought possible. For Jane too, the fact that "they seem to treat us like adults" had benefited her "quite a bit" (64).

The two trainees on the motor vehicle maintenance scheme run by the centre had similar experiences. They had good relations with the Centre's staff, "they treat you like adults" and "it's not like being at school", the facilities were good and it had given him the opportunity of "learning a trade" (65). For Rajesh, his training had offered him a positive alternative to being unemployed, "I've got something to do now and I'm earning money" (66). For Joe too, "I'm confident to do the stuff on my own without anybody

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62. Elaine - Catering trainee

63. Carol - Catering trainee

64. Jane - Catering trainee

65. Mick - Motor vehicle maintenance trainee

66. Rajesh - Motor vehicle maintenance trainee

watching over me, telling me what to do". "That's what I like about this place" (67).

Most of the trainees felt their training was benefiting them in some way but most also expressed varying degrees of reservation. They appreciated the work opportunities their training provided but training for semi- and unskilled work brought its own antagonisms. Tasks were often repetitive and easily picked up which meant any training content quickly became redundant. Those most appreciative primarily saw it in relation to its perceived success in leading to a 'real job' or apprenticeship, and those who valued the friendly work relationships and conducive working environment their training provided.

#### **The flexible worker**

One of YTS' key concerns was to promote the idea of labour flexibility as both a means to enhance skill transferability and as a way to deal with youth unemployment.

"The key purpose of YTS was the 'ownership' of transferable, rather than occupationally specific skills, so that trainees were equipped to move from employer to employer. The concept of broad 'occupational training families' was suited to a mobile work force adjusted to the open labour market" (Pollert, 1988:306).

Yet, as argued earlier, many employers were hostile to the Scheme's emphasis on broad-based training and wanted their trainees to fit in with their

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67. Joe - Maintenance and construction trainee

own organisational structures and job-specific tasks. Indeed, Pollert has suggested that emphasis on flexibility has "more to do with State legislation and unemployment, than with employers' 'manpower policies'" (ibid:310). However, we have seen that the expansion of a poorly trained and insecure generation of young workers is unlikely to foster an increase in Britain's international competitiveness.

So did the trainees view themselves as an flexible source of labour? Did they think their training would be useful in another job and, if so, what other jobs did they see themselves capable of doing?

If, by adaptable workers, we mean willing to see themselves as capable of employment in different areas, then the trainees clearly saw themselves as such. Forty of the forty two trainees (95%) thought that what they were learning would be useful in another job, the two others were unsure. But the work they saw themselves as capable of doing was similar to the pattern of semi- and unskilled tasks that dominated their present training.

The Chamber of Commerce's clerical trainees were confident that what they had learnt would be useful for work in other clerical jobs, "it would be useful for other sorts of general office work" (68). Samantha too thought her experience of answering the telephone and her knowledge of word processing could

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68. Sarah - Clerical trainee

come in useful in other secretarial or receptionist work. The City Council's clerical trainees agreed, "I think I could do any job doing general clerical duties" (69) and both Clive and Bhovinder thought they too could handle most clerical or office jobs. Only Fiona thought that what she had learnt could be useful outside of the council, possible working in banking or finance work as a cashier.

The motor vehicle trainees and the public service vehicle trainees all thought their training would be useful in mechanical or vehicle related jobs. All four PSV trainees felt they could work with other coach firms or, more generally, as a mechanic with either heavy goods vehicles or motor cars. The two motor vehicle trainees were equally sure that they could secure a variety of jobs related to garages, despite the fact that neither of them had been out on work experience placement.

The horticulture trainees also saw the usefulness of what they had learned in relation to other employment that involved horticulture work. But it was again semi- and unskilled work, "I could work in a florist's or greengrocers" (70), although there were doubts about stepping outside these boundaries, "a florist's but I'm not sure about anything else" (71). For the community care trainees, it was other forms of

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69. Wendy - Clerical trainee

70. Clare - Horticulture trainee

71. Lorraine - Horticulture trainee

"caring work" (72) which would be best suited to their training, although Neil was thinking more specifically about training as a nursery nurse. But that required two years full-time study for a Nursery Nursing Education Board qualification.

All four of the catering trainees thought their training would be useful in other forms of catering work, "canteen work" (73) or "work in a cafe" (74) because Carol had done serving and till work at the centre. And Jane thought her training might come in useful working in a bakery because she had done food preparation and cooking.

The maintenance and construction trainees thought their training would come in useful in building work, although Derrick was not sure where else his training would in useful. The Council's construction trainees also felt that what they had learnt would be useful in other jobs related to carpentry, plumbing or "general building work" (75).

The engineering trainees were also confident that the skills they were developing would be useful in a range of related jobs in the engineering industry, like "engineering or drawing board work" (76). Both Patrick and Robert thought their skills would be useful "across the whole area of engineering work" (77) and

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- 72. Lucy - Community Care trainee
  - 73. Elaine - Catering trainee
  - 74. Carol - Catering trainee
  - 75. Jim - Construction trainee plumber
  - 76. Frank - Engineering trainee
  - 77. Patrick - Engineering trainee

Bob felt the CNC machine work he had recently been doing would always be in demand. It also involved computer programming and he felt that the demand for programmers would only increase.

This latter contrast between the skill specific training of a small number of the youngsters and the training of the majority, highlights what in effect is the preparation of a pool of adaptable, semi- and unskilled workers. The trainees clearly felt that their training would be useful in other jobs and to that extent they constitute an adaptable source of workers for the future. But closer examination of the work they thought their skills useful for illustrated that it was highly structured by their experiences of training in semi- and unskilled work.

### **Conclusion**

Behind the intention that YTS would bring about a 'revolution' in training provision for British school-leavers lies a more complex reality. Attempts to reform and modernize training provision through the Scheme have been driven by the provision of a training structure that focuses on equipping youngsters with a set of general or transferable skills. Moving away from the idea that training would tie a worker to specific tasks for life, the intention was to provide a new flexibility that would allow youngsters to move between different jobs and tasks throughout their working lives.

In reality, such a training philosophy has

resulted in work experienced-based training led by the demands of semi- and unskilled work. Throughout all but one of the schemes researched, the youngsters were involved in mainly low level skills training that involved little opportunity to acquire and develop new qualities. Furthermore, the tasks they were required to perform were essentially mundane and repetitive, and were easily and quickly mastered by the youngsters. Only in the area of apprenticeship training did there appear any real commitment to provide quality skills training.

Here, employer reluctance to encompass YTS' broad-based emphasis, and trade union resistance to the watering down of apprentice training provision, have led to a maintenance of a commitment to quality skills provision through training around job-specific tasks. Paradoxically, existing apprenticeship provision in the engineering industry has influenced the pattern of training available through YTS, rather than YTS' intended reform of apprenticeship training. Indeed, across all sectors of the economy, evidence suggests that many employers have rejected YTS' broad-based emphasis, preferring to train youngsters for their own occupational structures through more job-specific training. It would appear that YTS' broad-based training philosophy has failed to win overall acceptance amongst employers.

Amongst the trainees there were also clear signs of this tension. Although most felt they

benefited from their training, it was not so much an appreciation of the skills they were acquiring but more of the opportunity it allowed them to enter the arena of work. This emphasis on broad-based training also meant that many experienced the tasks they were training for as quickly and easily acquired. After that, it was apparent that many experienced no real training content to their schemes and felt competent to perform the tasks they were allocated with only nominal supervision.

YTS has also served to perpetuate women's' marginalization from access to skills training. Other research has illustrated that the classification of work as skilled has as much to do with the sex of the worker than the actual work they do. Despite its commitment to offering young women equal access, they are still predominantly training in those areas characterized by low-skilled work and, where they do train in the same areas as young men, they tend to train in lower skilled occupations. Those young women who risked entering 'non-traditional' areas of work paid a high price in doing so, as did the small number of young men who entered areas of work more traditionally associated with women.

YTS' commitment to providing youngsters with off-the-job training provision has also brought its own tensions. Many employers have resented losing their trainees for one day a week and have seen it as irrelevant to the demands of their work practices. The



research shows that many trainees share these feelings. Most experienced a clear division between theory and practice, between off-the-job and on-the-job training. What they learnt at college was considered of little direct relevance to the demands of work experience placements and this was compounded by the often poor quality of the off-the-job facilities. Furthermore, its associations with the last year of schooling produced a powerful disincentive and this meant many showed an indifference towards YTS' new emphasis on gaining a recognized vocational qualification. Indeed, with respect to the latter, a number of the youngsters were unsure whether they would be on their scheme's long enough to gain a qualification or a credit towards one.

Finally, while the majority of youngsters felt their training would be useful in other areas, it was jobs dominated by semi- and unskilled work that they saw themselves capable of doing. Indeed, far from providing the revolution in skills training claimed, it would appear that the Scheme is merely serving to perpetuate Britain's chronic lack of skilled workers.

## CHAPTER SIX

### TRAINING FOR JOBS ON THE YOUTH TRAINING SCHEME

#### Introduction

Although presented as a revolutionary solution to Britain's continued inability to train its work force, the YTS clearly failed in its promise to provide the majority of school-leavers with access to quality training. But a second, and equally crucial, function of the Scheme was as the Government's "main response to the socially and politically damaging problem of youth unemployment" (Raffe, 1987:2). As well as providing school-leavers with training, the Scheme would have to operate within the context of a youth labour market that severely limited employment opportunities for the young. It was accepted that this would be a long-term phenomenon, "we must continue to plan on the basis that over the next few years many young people may have difficulty in finding jobs on leaving school" (Department of Employment, 1981:para 22) and, therefore, "priority must be given to the young unemployed" (ibid:para 21). But the Scheme's proponents were equally confident that these ambitions could be realised and in doing so YTS would fulfil its designer's ambitions of providing school-leavers with a permanent bridge between school and work.

It is the Scheme's legacy as a perceived unemployment palliative that has consistently come into conflict with its claims to provide quality training. The research has already illustrated how this has

generated an instrumentalism that permeates young people's attitudes towards training on YTS. Youngsters were not so much interested in the Scheme as an opportunity to acquire quality foundation training, as a basis for the rest of their working lives, but as a way to negotiate a job in a hostile labour market. In developing the two year Scheme, the MSC, itself, recognized YTS' inability to free itself from associations with unemployment, where "the Scheme is still too often seen as a programme for unemployed people or some kind of special employment measure at a time of high unemployment" (MSC, 1985:para 2.6). Subsequent analysis reiterated the continuing potency of this basic antagonism and suggested,

"the main influence on young people's decisions with respect to YTS (and other options) is the perceived probability that it will lead them to desired jobs. The content or quality of the training is of little intrinsic significance; 'training for training's sake' is, after all, a contradiction in terms" (Raffe, 1987:4).

The research set out to explore how this desire for 'real jobs' came into conflict with the Scheme's intention of providing two years training for school-leavers. Using additional data from the TA's 'YTS Leavers 100% Follow-Up Survey'(1), much of it previously unpublished, I wanted to examine the significance of jobs for youngsters whilst training.

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1. A more detailed account of the Training Agency's '100% Follow-Up Survey of YTS Leaver' is contained within Chapter Two.

Were the youngsters willing to complete their training in the hope that it would lead to jobs? In entering YTS, had they given up their shorter-term work aspirations in favour of longer-term considerations of training? As such, were they currently searching for jobs outside of their schemes? What sort of work, if any, would tempt them to leave their schemes? Did they accept the legitimacy of YTS' claims to provide foundation training for subsequent employment? And how did they view their eventual job prospects?

#### **YTS and early leavers**

The Government's public claims for YTS presents a formidable picture of its successes. As a measure of its achievements, it claimed "that 74 per cent of young people leaving YTS go into jobs, or take up further education or training" (Department of Employment, 1988b:para 6.9). But closer inspection of the Government's own data begins to unpack the real meaning of these claims and points towards a more complex and less inspiring history for the Scheme.

From its inception, it was recognized that the YTS had a chronic inability to retain youngsters for the full length of their training programmes. Reviewing the Scheme's first three years, it was found that early leavers accounted for about half of all entrants. For the 12 month programme, average time spent training per entrant was around 40 weeks, with over one third leaving before six months had been completed (Gray & King, 1986:14). Since then,

Government Ministers have consistently failed to point out that the record for the two year Scheme has been even more disappointing.

Figures from the TA's follow up survey reveal that, for Great Britain, between December 1986 and November 1988, early leavers accounted for 73.8% of all trainees, and in the Coventry area the corresponding figure was 70.6% (TA, May 1989). Although more recent figures show an improvement, two thirds of trainees were still leaving their schemes early. Between January 1988 and December 1989, 66.6% of trainees nationally left their schemes, whilst 63.3% left early in Coventry (TA, May 1990). This improvement must, in part, be due to the withdrawal of benefit from 16 to 18 year olds since September 1988, making YTS effectively compulsory. For black youngsters, the discrimination experienced whilst training made the problem even more acute. For Coventry and Warwickshire, 71% of Afro-Caribbean youngsters and 69% of youngsters of Asian decent left their scheme's early, compared to 67% of white trainees (Hansard, 10/01/90, col 672).

Government ministers often drew analogies between YTS and opportunities in further education, but if these figures were representative of levels of performance for further education courses, then the Scheme would have quickly been labelled an unmitigated failure. The TA's data for early leavers show that many young people failed to experience YTS as the "good quality youth training" claimed (Department of

Employment, 1988b:para 6.10). Around 14% of Coventry's early leavers had left because they felt they were not getting the training needed, nearly 17% because they were unhappy with the way their schemes were run and around 7% because they were not getting the advice/help they thought they needed (see Table 5.1). In relation to their experiences of training outlined in Chapter Five, it is not surprising that the poor quality of training provided a powerful dynamic for the youngsters to leave their scheme's early.

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Table 6.1 YTS early leavers \* - reasons for leaving early for Great Britain and Coventry between December 1986 and November 1988

	Great Britain	Coventry
Full-time job	44.6	47.9
Another YTS	9.6	9.2
Illness	4.5	3.7
Not getting training needed	14.4	14.3
Unhappy with way scheme run	16.0	16.8
Not getting advice/help	7.0	6.9
Learned enough to get job	2.8	3.4
Not enough money	20.8	22.7
Dismissed	8.7	7.1
Other reason	16.1	16.1
Not answered	3.4	3.3

\* early leaver replies were (Great Britain) 351,672 and (Coventry) 6026. Some respondents gave more than one reason

Source: TA, May 1989

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But the most important single reason why youngsters left their Schemes early was for 'full-time jobs'. It may be argued that YTS was designed to prepare youngsters for work and in leaving to go into jobs it was fulfilling this role. Yet, in doing so, the

Scheme's proclaimed revolutionary ability to address the problem of Britain's acute lack of skilled workers has been consistently undermined. Once outside the Scheme, the vast majority of youngsters have no exposure to any formal training structure. The Government's own commissioned research, through the Youth Cohort Study, has illustrated that just over half of 17 to 18 year olds in Britain's work force have received either no off-the-job or on-the-job training since they started work (Times Educational Supplement 27/01/89). In leaving YTS for jobs, many youngsters look set to be condemned to a future of blind alley employment.

#### **Completing their training**

The chronic inability of the Scheme to retain youngsters for the full length of their programme was clearly evident from the youngsters who took part in my research. When asked whether they thought they would complete their training schemes, only seventeen (41%) felt they would stay for the two full years. Although higher than the figure for Coventry as a whole, the trainees I interviewed were still completing their first year. It is possible that, as they progress through their schemes, the pressure to leave becomes more acute. Indeed, a number of factors contributing to this will be explored in the next chapter. But considering the low proportion who said they would definitely stay, the tenuous hold of YTS on its trainees is already clearly evident.

For five (12%) of this group, it made little sense to contemplate leaving early. These young men were either apprentices or due to achieve apprentice status in the immediate future. Considering their chances of employment through their scheme as almost guaranteed, it was not surprising that they felt, "why should I leave when I've got a good chance of a job at the end?" (2) and "it would be silly to stop what I'm doing because it'd meant the waste of a year's training" (3).

The sense of having made an investment through their training was also the motivation for some of the non-apprenticed trainees' desire to remain on their schemes. "Its a waste of time leaving your scheme before you've finished, you lose out since you never learn anything properly" (4). But in overall terms of YTS' claims to provide quality foundation training for their subsequent working lives, references to short-term sacrifice for longer-term gains were remarkably absent. In addition, leaving could also mean jeopardising the chances of being kept on by their work experience providers, "it was getting a job in the first place that got me onto the scheme. I should get taken on when I've finished" (5).

But only seven (17%) felt they would definitely leave their training schemes before it was

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2. Harinder - Construction trainee carpenter
  3. Patrick - Engineering trainee
  4. John - Horticulture trainee
  5. Terry - Public Service Vehicle trainee



due to finish. Again, this is a considerably smaller number than those eventually destined to leave, but, as we shall see below, there was a considerable area of ambiguity within which the youngsters considered their position. Included in this group was one youngster who was leaving to start a two year Nursery Nursing Education Board course at college. For another it was the disappointment of not getting an apprenticeship that motivated his desire to leave. It meant another year on a training allowance but being expected to do the same work as the apprentices. In addition, "next year it's all writing and I don't fancy that" (6).

But for the others, the definite belief that they would leave stemmed from their desire for a 'real job' as soon as possible. For some, the desire to leave almost verged on desperation, "I've got to find a job. If I don't get one with the Post Office then I'll carry on looking somewhere else until I find something" (7). Another was equally adamant,

"no way, I won't stay here for two years". "I'll leave and get a job anywhere if I have to, a shop or something, and may be go to night school. Or I could get work in an old people's home, you don't need any qualifications to work in an old people's home" (8).

For the remaining trainees (32%), staying on the programme for two years was open to greater uncertainties. Whether they would stay for the full two

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- 6. Jim - Construction trainee plumber
  - 7. Tony - Retail trainee
  - 8. Anne - Community Care trainee

years would depend on shorter-term opportunities for 'real jobs', "hopefully I'll get a job before then" (9), whether through being taken on by their work experience providers or by finding a job outside of their schemes. Generally, they felt they would complete their schemes because they knew that job opportunities were severely limited, "if I can find a job then I'll take it" (10) but "if nothing else comes up then I'll stay" (11). If there were no jobs, unemployment was the only other alternative, and since the fear of unemployment was a powerful motivating force in their original decision to join YTS, it was not considered a viable option; "I don't want to stay unless I have too. But I'd rather stay here than go on the dole" (12).

**'Real jobs' - 'I'm always looking'**

So were the youngsters taking any active steps to look for 'real jobs' whilst they were still training? Nineteen (46%) of the forty one trainees were looking for work and, for some, its importance was striking, "I've been looking in the paper recently so I'm serious about it" (13) and, for another, "I'm always looking" (14). Anne had applied for a job as a nanny but, when offered the post, found it meant living-in and taking days off only when convenient to her employers. For £70 per week she felt the money was

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- 9. Julia - Clerical trainee
  - 10. Jane - Catering trainee
  - 11. Glen - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 12. Richard - Construction trainee plumber
  - 13. Neil - Community Care trainee
  - 14. Clive - Clerical trainee

not worth the demands but continued, "I'm serious about finding another job but one that gives me a bit of free time" (15).

For others too, a 'real job' had never been far from their thoughts, "I've always been looking for something ever since I started the course". But trips to the Jobcentre and scrutinizing the situations vacant columns in the pages of the local newspapers, merely reinforced the feeling that "young people don't get a look in these days" (16). Indeed, the trainees' comments illustrate that many were familiar with the job-search methods more commonly used by adult workers (Employment Gazette, April 1989a:194); visiting the Jobcentre, answering advertisements, studying situations vacant columns in newspapers, direct applications to employers and asking friends, relatives and colleagues. It was not ignorance that stopped them finding work, just the lack of jobs available in the labour market.

What was also clearly evident was the link between looking for 'real jobs' and the low level of allowance. The contradictions of training on such a low level of allowance are explored in more detail in the next chapter. But here, even where they enjoyed their training, the prospect of more money was a powerful attraction, "I quite like what I'm doing but I wouldn't mind something else with more money". Elaine had looked

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15. Anne - Community Care trainee

16. Jane - Catering trainee

in the local newspaper and at vacancies in shop windows, and had just applied for a job on the checkout at a local supermarket, were "the extra money would come in very handy" (17). Another young woman was giving serious consideration to a part-time job, "a job would be better than this, even a part-time job would be better. You can still earn quite a bit from a part-time job, enough to get by on anyway". But her efforts had only so far confirmed her fears that, "there ain't much going 'round here" (18).

For Joe too, applications to the Post Office for a place on their YTS meant a 'real job'. Trade union negotiated rates of pay and a guaranteed job at the end proved a powerful attraction. He had also applied for jobs with some of the big car manufacturers in the area, but his lack of success was rapidly turning into frustration,

"I've been on this course a long time. Too long. About a year too long. I'm getting more and more pissed off with it as it goes along". "Its important to me to keep looking for a job. I need the money" (19).

Unsurprisingly, a number of the trainees wanted 'real jobs' because of the perceived increase in security it would bring. For Glenn, sweeping up and making the tea underlined the sense of vulnerability experienced by many trainees, "I don't feel secure at my placement. They got me for nothing so they probably

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17. Elaine - Catering trainee

18. Frances - Retail trainee

19. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee

don't really need me when I finish, so I'll carry on looking until I find something" (20). He had recently been looking for an apprenticeship, again searching through the situation vacant and enquiring directly to employers, but his efforts had also been fruitless. For another, it was felt a 'real job' would provide a secure wage. Looking through the local newspaper, preferably for a job as a motor mechanic, had proved difficult but, "I want a full-time job with a proper wage. That's what's important to me". But he too was forced to concede, "there's very few around" (21).

The two trainee plumbers, on the City Council's construction scheme, had both applied for jobs as refuse collectors when it became clear they would not get apprenticeships. "I don't really want to stay, there isn't much point any more. We'll be doing the same work as the apprentices but just getting shit money" (22). The other trainee plumber, Jim, had also looked through the local newspaper and wanted to continue in plumbing. But all the advertisements had meant going back on a training scheme, something he was trying to avoid. "It's all YTS now, there ain't nothing else open to you', "they don't tell you than in the 'ads' because it puts kids off" (23).

In concentrating on those youngsters who were actively seeking work outside of their schemes, we must

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- 20. Glenn - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 21. Mick - Motor Vehicle trainee
  - 22. Richard - Construction trainee plumber
  - 23. Jim - Construction trainee plumber

not forget those were not currently looking. This is not to undermine the importance of 'real jobs' for these youngsters, and the perceived benefits that went with them, but it does bring into clearer focus the significance of work experience placements for trainees.

In all, 20 (49%) indicated that they were not currently looking for work outside of their schemes, although for one, "when I first started I did [look for work] but I couldn't find anything except temporary work, like filling in for somebody while they were having a baby" (24). Consequently, she had postponed the idea until she was closer to finishing her scheme. In addition two others were already leaving their schemes, one to another scheme and one to a Nursery Nursing Education Board course at further education college.

Evidence from the Youth Cohort Study illustrates the importance many trainees place on their work experience providers as a source of jobs. Around one third of their sample had either been offered a job by their placement provider or were expecting to be kept on (Courtenay, 1988:15). But equally, approximately one third were not sure about being taken on and another third did not expect their placement providers to offer them jobs. The TA's follow-up survey shows that these expectations are broadly realistic. For Coventry, during the period of research, 28.9% of

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24. Sarah - Clerical trainee

all leavers went into jobs with the same employer (see Table 5.2), with a slightly lower figure for Great Britain as a whole. For early leavers, however, the corresponding figure was 15.9%, and for both Afro-Caribbean and Asian youngsters it was 23.0%, compared to 29.4% for white youngsters. Only 14.2% of disabled youngsters went into employment with the same employer (TA, May 1989).

This instrumental role for the Scheme was further underlined in a recently concluded study. In assessing the one year Scheme's contribution to finding youngsters jobs, the authors concluded that,

"the main contribution of YTS1 to trainees' later job success, despite the recovering labour market, seemed to be through opportunities in placements, and the value of even established training seemed at best ambiguous or at least not proven" (Lee et al, 1990:136).

As such, fourteen of this group, 34% of the total, were hoping to be "taken on" (25) by their work experience providers. Its importance as the main route into a 'real job' was clear, "I think I'll get taken on where I am" (26) or "I'll stay on until my time runs out and hope I get taken on at the end" (27). Similarly, "I'm on 6 months trial at my placement at the moment, that's what placements are for. To see if the gaffer likes you and to see if you can do the work"

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- 25. Wendy - Clerical trainee
  - 26. Niki - Clerical trainee
  - 27. Luke - Retail trainee

(28).

**The golden age and being 'tempted away' from training**

More worrying for the longer-term skill requirements of the economy, is the type of jobs that youngsters could be attracted into as an alternative to training. The recent economic upturn and, more significantly, changing demographic factors, have led some to herald the 1990s as a new golden age in employment opportunities for young people: "the market for youth labour has swung from slump to boom in a decade" (Independent 17/5/89). Projections by the Department of Employment show a decline in those young people leaving school, to become available for work, of more than one third between 1982-83 and 1992-93 (Employment Gazette, July 1989). By 1995, the number of young people in the 16-17 age group will be the smallest this century and the anticipated "fall will be sharpest among families whose children have traditionally left full-time education at minimum school leaving age" (TA, March 1989: para 5).

What this golden age may mean for youngsters is still unclear but the predicted increase in jobs becoming available for shrinking numbers of school-leavers suggests increasing numbers of youngsters will be denied access to training in the future. It is precisely the increase in this type of 'blind alley' employment that looks set to deepen the contradiction between employers' short-term labour requirements and



the longer-term skill needs of the economy (Frith, 1980:29).

The type of employment that dominated the trainees' job-search, in the previous section, underlines this point. Furthermore, the ease with which the trainees, who took part in my research, could be tempted away from their schemes, and the type of work that could achieve this does, indeed, present a worrying picture for the future. In total, the 41 current trainees gave 54 reasons relating to what type of work would, or would not, tempt them to leave their schemes. The level of the problem was illustrated by only three (7%) trainees saying they were happy with their training scheme and, at present, could not be tempted away. Another three indicated that they were unsure about what sort of work would tempt them to leave, and in two cases they thought they would most probably stay with their training because, at present, it provided them with their best chance of a 'real job'. One of these was an apprentice, "both my dad and my brother say that the main thing to do is get your [apprenticeship] papers". "Once you've got your papers you can go anywhere" (29). More simply, it had direct instrumental considerations, "you're more likely to get a job if you stay on the scheme" (30).

The remaining 35 trainees (85%) all indicated that they could be tempted away from their training

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29. Robert - Engineering trainee

30. Adam - Horticulture trainee

schemes and the type of work, its terms and conditions were all distinctly modest. A job offering a moderate increase in money was often enough, "a job that pays a bit more" (31) or "something that had better hours, better days and better pay" (32). "Something which would give me a bit extra money at the end of the week" (33) or "something in the same sort of work but something a bit better paid" (34). Others were less specific, "something that paid a bit more" (35).

Three trainees mentioned that for them to leave their scheme it would have to be a job that offered greater employment security, "something more secure really" (36). Considering the insecurity that many experienced whilst training, this, again, would suggest only a modest improvement was needed. Indeed, 'real jobs' were often seen as synonymous with increased security, "if it was permanent then I'd take any job" (37). For Neil, "a proper job is much more secure. I need that sort of security". For him, security meant "a job which doesn't finish unless you are made redundant" (38).

Another 12 (29%) youngsters had general ideas about what 'real jobs' would tempt them away, but even here they were often prepared to consider anything, "I

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- 31. Colin - Community Care trainee
  - 32. Derrick - Community Care trainee
  - 33. Jane - Catering trainee
  - 34. Niki - Clerical trainee
  - 35. Keith - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 36. Glenn - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 37. Rajesh - Motor Vehicle trainee
  - 38. Neil - Community Care trainee

think about being a postman all the time", "but I'd probably take anything" (39). Clare's only requirement was that a job meant she could move outside of horticulture, her training had convinced her it was the last thing she wanted to do. Others would consider, "any job so long as they train you and you get a bit more money" (40). But two others were not even that specific, "if I could walk straight into a job with no training" (41) or merely, "something that I would enjoy and something where the money wasn't too bad" (42).

#### **Training for jobs**

But the Scheme's actual ability to lead to jobs for youngsters has been the subject of some controversy. After its first year, Ministers were quick to extol the virtues of YTS in leading youngsters into jobs, claiming that over 70% were either going into work or further training. Independent estimates were not so optimistic, putting the figure closer to 55% - 60%, and showing the Scheme's manifest inability to tackle the discrimination many black youngsters face in the labour market (Finn, 1987:186). The record of the two year Scheme, together with recent demographic changes, suggests some improvement in leavers' employment prospects, with latest figures showing that, by the end of March 1990, 66.7% of all YTS leavers had entered jobs three months after they had left their

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39. Tony - Retail trainee

40. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee

41. Louis - Construction trainee carpenter

42. Carol - Catering trainee

schemes (Hansard 3/07/90, col 529).

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**Table 6.2 Destination of YTS leavers for Great Britain and Coventry, between December 1986 and November 1988**

	Great Britain	Coventry
Total Leavers	637,344	12307
Early leavers	351,593	7785
% Early Leavers	73.8%	63.3%
<b>In work</b>		
Same employer	27.3%	28.9%
Different employer	31.0%	32.3%
Self-employed	1.3%	1.1%
Part-time	3.4%	3.7%
Total	62.9%	66.1%
<b>Not in work</b>		
Unemployed	18.0%	15.6%
Another YTS	11.9%	10.6%
Full-time course	3.4%	3.9%
Something else	3.2%	3.5%

Source: TA, May 1989

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For the period of research, around 63% of leavers nationally were going into jobs, with unemployment running at around 18%. However, the TA's method of presenting the figures tends to skew the overall picture. By including those youngsters who merely move from one scheme to another, the real outcome of YTS is obscured. Recalculating the figures, as done by the Unemployment Unit/Youthaid (June 1989), excludes those who merely stay within the Scheme, thereby giving a more accurate picture of YTS' actual success as a route into the labour market.

If the figures are recalculated in this way, the number going into jobs rises to 71.3% and the

number going into unemployment increases to 20.4%. When compared against a national unemployment rate of 7.7% for July 1988 (Employment Gazette, April 1989a), the problem faced by YTS leavers is clearly evident. For some groups of youngsters, it is more of a problem than for others. In Coventry, unemployment amongst white leavers, over the same period, was 17.5%, but for black Afro-Caribbean youngsters it was 28.6%, for youngsters of Asian descent 26.5% and for disabled youngsters 42.9% (TA, May 1989).

More recent figures show that leavers' employment prospects are also subject to the buoyancy of local labour markets. Between January 1988 and December 1989, unemployment for leavers in Great Britain was running at 14.2%. However, youngsters in the north experienced significantly higher rates than comparative groups for the south. In the north, unemployment ranged from 19.4% in Scotland, to 20.3% in the Northern region, 15.7% in the North West region, to 16.7% in Wales and 12.1% in the West Midlands. For the south, unemployment amongst leavers ranged from 7.5% in the South East region, to 8.6% in the South West, to 10.6% in the East Midlands and 14.3% for Greater London (TA, May 1990).

So how did the trainees view the usefulness of their schemes in preparing them for future employment? After all, the Scheme was designed to give youngsters a period of foundation training that would prepare them their working lives.

Amongst the youngsters who took part in my research, there was a considerable degree of uncertainty about their scheme's usefulness. In all, only 14 (34%) felt their scheme would make a useful contribution to them finding work. For these youngsters, it was felt their training would give them the experience, training and knowledge of work that employers were looking for, "all round training" (43) and "a range of skills" (44). Considering the previous emphasis they gave to finding jobs through their work experience providers, this is a surprisingly low number and again suggests that many trainees are extremely anxious about the relevance of their schemes for finding 'real jobs'.

The uncertainty about their scheme's usefulness was illustrated by the remaining trainees. Another group of 10 (24%) were not so emphatic about its usefulness. They too saw its utility in relation to the training and experience it would give them, "YTS will contribute quite a bit because at least I'll have some qualifications and experience" (45). It was "experience of working" (46) that employers wanted because "you need experience before you can get jobs now". "But I suppose there's lots of other kids coming off YTS and they'll all have experience too" (47).

A further group of nine (22%) were even less

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- 43. Lucy - Community care trainee
  - 44. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee
  - 45. Wendy - Clerical trainee
  - 46. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee
  - 47. Colin - Community Care trainee

sure about their scheme's usefulness. They too appreciated the training and experience they got from their training, but when it came to getting a job, they felt it was only "a bit useful" (48). They saw their job chances as no more than 50:50 but "it will definitely give me more of a chance than if I hadn't been on YTS" (49) and "I'll have more chance than if I'd have gone on the dole". "At least on YTS you're working with other people" (50).

Four (10%) were unsure about its role in leading them into work, "I don't know. I suppose the training will give me an advantage over somebody who hasn't got any" (51), and another four felt their training was going to be of little use in contributing to them finding jobs. For these youngsters the Scheme was about giving employers cheap labour and was only tentatively related to preparing them for jobs. YTS gave employers two years free labour, so there was little motivation for them to take you on when they could easily get another trainee when your training had finished. Employers needed to make a greater commitment to the youngsters they were training,

"if your placement were made to pay more for your training, to contribute or make some form of investment in you, then I think they would have more incentive to keep you on". "At the moment, its just the Government paying for it so there's a good chance that

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- 48. Tony - Retail trainee
  - 49. Lorraine - Horticulture trainee
  - 50. Elaine - Catering trainee
  - 51. Sarah - Clerical trainee

you'll be taken on and then shoved off at the end of two years" (52).

Experience of training in undemanding and repetitive tasks was clearly no real contribution to their perceived employment needs, "it's not really helping that much. I meet new people and that may lead to a job" (53). For Jim, training as a plumber and now trying for a job 'on the bins' as a refuse collector had negated any usefulness in his training, "nothing here if I get this job on the bins" (54).

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Table 6.3 Responses by YTS leavers in Coventry, between December 1986 and November 1988, to questions about their schemes usefulness/helpfulness (as a percentage)

	Very	Fairly	Not very	Not at all
The scheme as a whole	37.1	43.1	13.0	6.8
Since leaving YTS	25.5	37.9	18.0	18.6
As preparation for current job	38.3	27.2	11.8	22.7

Source: TA, May 1989

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This ambiguity is reflected in data from the leavers survey. Three months after leaving, a high proportion, approximately 78%, felt their scheme as a whole had been very or fairly useful. But, looking back on their scheme's usefulness, this had been reduced to under two thirds. It is possible that as the realities of a slack labour market became further apparent, YTS' usefulness as a period of foundation training for work

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- 52. Glenn - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 53. Frances - Retail trainee
  - 54. Jim - Construction trainee plumber



begins to decline. Indeed, only around two thirds of those who had secured a job felt their scheme has been very or fairly useful preparation for their work.

### **The chances of a job**

The cautious optimism over their training's usefulness was clearly evident but the research shows that the future of youth training is intimately intertwined with its viability as a route into employment. The leavers' survey illustrates its limited success in this area and comparisons across the age group point to its further limitations as a route into work. Two studies utilising data from the Youth Cohort Study found trainees "were just as likely to be unemployed as those who had not been on the Scheme" (quoted in Times Educational Supplement 27/01/89).

Another was slightly more optimistic concluding

"that the employment probabilities of those undertaking YTS were substantially higher than those of persons who experience unemployment but who chose not to participate and were slightly higher than those of all school-leavers who chose not to participate...

It is clear that a persons' employment chances depend crucially on demand conditions in his or her local labour market. Participation on YTS and the obtaining of qualifications can mitigate but not totally offset this" (Whitfield & Bourlakis, 1989:10-11).

So how did they rate their chances of a 'real job' on leaving their schemes?

Again, the youngster's responses illustrated a cautious optimism about their future prospects. Only

4 (10%) rated their employment chances as very good and even here there were reservations. Again, in relation to the reliance they placed on their work experience providers as a source of employment, the insecurity many youngsters felt was clearly evident, "if they don't take me on then I know that I'll get a good reference from them" (55). Louis' emphasis on getting taken on by the carpenter he was to do his work experience with was circumvented by a wider uncertainty, "if I don't get taken on with this carpenter then quite low" (56). Clive was placing his hopes of a job on an expansion of his present job, working in the debt collecting section of the Council. With the introduction of the Poll Tax he perceptively felt this was bound to be a growth area.

Eighteen (44%) felt they had "a pretty good chance" (57), "a pretty good chance in my trade [public vehicles]" (58) or at least "better than when I started" (59). The importance of work experience providers was once again evident, one youngster commenting optimistically about his newly found placement provider, "I think I'll get taken on by the boss 'though its too early to tell at the moment because I've only been here three weeks" (60).

But there were also serious reservations

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- 55. Samantha - Clerical trainee
  - 56. Louis - Construction trainee carpenter
  - 57. Chris - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 58. Glenn - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 59. Wendy - Clerical trainee
  - 60. Adam - Horticulture trainee

about their job chances. A further seven (17%) were more circumspect, "it could go either way" (61). These youngsters felt there was a thin line between employment and unemployment for leavers, "in the middle at the moment" (62). But this was an improvement on their prospects as school-leavers, "my job chances are about 50:50 at the moment, but they're better with the YTS than without" (63).

Another six (15%) were not so optimistic, "not very good. Probably better than when I left school but still not very good". "But whatever happens I'll make sure I don't go on the dole. I'll start a little business rather than go on the dole" (64). Jane was placing her main hope with a placement provider but she too was not very optimistic. Although she had been out on placement for a short period she still had no job and "if I don't get a job at a placement then my job chances won't be very good, then maybe I'll have a hard time". But "I'll have a better chance than somebody who's been on the dole" (65). One young man was not so sure,

"everyone says you've a better chance of finding work when you leave YTS than if you had not been on one in the first place. But I don't think so". "You're seen as not as good as the other person if you've been on a YTS and they haven't. In a way it's work experience, but that's all it is"

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- 61. Bob - Engineering trainee
  - 62. Richard - Construction trainee plumber
  - 63. Rajesh - Motor Vehicle trainee
  - 64. Tony - Retail trainee
  - 65. Jane - Catering trainee

(66).

Finally, there were a group of six (15%) who did not know what their job chances would be. Hope was placed in work experience providers but an appreciation of their vulnerability was clear, "they could quite easily kick me off at the end of my training course and then get another trainee to do my job" (67). For another, getting a job was like taking part in a lottery, "getting jobs is all about knowing people and some people are lucky that way. I'm not" (68). Another just felt, "I think things are beginning to pick up in Coventry again" (69).

#### **Conclusion**

The Youth Training Scheme's failure to convince youngsters that it can offer a period of quality training and its continued inability to distance itself from associations with the unemployment palliatives of the 1970s and early 1980s, have led to its chronic inability to retain trainees for the full length of their training programmes. During the period of research, around three quarters of trainees were leaving their schemes early, the majority of whom gave movement into full-time jobs as the main reason why they left. Whilst this is an encouraging trend, evidence suggests that many of these youngsters leave YTS for jobs that offer little or no formal opportunities for training.

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- 66. Tony - Retail trainee
  - 67. Helen - Retail trainee
  - 68. Carol - Catering trainee
  - 69. Mick - Motor Vehicle trainee

Amongst the trainees who took part in the research, the desire for 'real jobs' proved a powerful incentive to leave their schemes. Only a small number felt they would definitely complete their training and this was largely due to the perceived possibilities that it would lead to a 'real job' or apprenticeship. There was virtually no belief that training on the Scheme represented an opportunity for shorter-term investment that could pay dividends in the longer-run. Although only a small number felt they would definitely leave their schemes early, there was a considerable area of ambiguity which indicated that many would be willing to leave their schemes if and when a job became available.

The importance of 'real jobs' was evident from almost half the youngsters who were actively seeking work outside of their training schemes. For the remainder, greater emphasis was given to finding jobs through their work experience placements. For the former group, the type of employment they would consider represented only a modest improvement on their training schemes. It was the prospect of more money and increased employment security that was perceived to go with a 'real job' that was attractive. Indeed, only a very small number of the youngsters indicated that they could not be tempted away from their training schemes and, of the majority who indicated they could be, the type of jobs they had in mind represented a move back into traditional areas of 'blind alley' work for

school-leavers. With falling numbers of school-leavers coming into the labour market, and a predicted increase in the availability of low skilled work for them, this suggests that increasing numbers of youngsters will opt for employment opportunities outside of YTS' training framework.

The success of the Scheme in leading youngsters into jobs is itself the subject of some controversy. The Government's own figures suggest that unemployment rates amongst YTS leavers are still running at over three times the national average. For black and disabled youngsters, and for school-leavers who live in the north, the picture is even bleaker.

But this did not stop many of the youngsters viewing the future with a cautious optimism. They clearly appreciated the difficulties that lay ahead but felt their schemes would give them some advantage in the labour market, especially when competing against unemployed youngsters. Again, many looked to their work experience placements as a source of employment. The cautious optimism over the usefulness of their training was further underlined by their perceived future employment chances. Other research has suggested that YTS has only minimal impact on a school-leaver's chances of securing employment but, here, the majority rated their job chances as relatively good. It was the experience of working and the direct contact with employers their schemes allowed that justified their optimism. However, as the statistics from both the

Youth Cohort and the leavers' survey illustrate, a large number of these aspirations were destined to be unfulfilled.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE HIDDEN SIDE TO TRAINING ON

#### THE YOUTH TRAINING SCHEME

##### Introduction

Poor quality training and the desire for 'real jobs' has led many youngsters to abandon their training schemes early. The implications of this for the future of youth training in Britain has been clearly recognized by the Government and recent changes to the Scheme have been designed to increase its attractiveness to youngsters in the context of an increasingly buoyant labour market.

Signs of unease about the Scheme's future were reflected in a number of Government and Training Agency statements. The December 1988 White Paper, *Employment for the 1990s*, underlined the necessity of keeping "the scope and role of YTS ... under review" in the context of a rapidly changing labour market (Department of Employment, 1988a:para 6.12). Internal TA documents underlined this concern, highlighting increasing significance over "the tightening labour market and demographic change [which] signal a shift in the economy as a whole to an employment-dominated youth labour market" (Training Agency, March 1989:para 1). It was felt that these factors would have profound implications for a Scheme which, it privately accepted, suffered from "widespread ignorance about what YTS can achieve for young people and employers" (ibid:para 2, viii).



But the role of the allowance in persuading youngsters to continue to train on the Scheme provides another important dynamic that relates to its success as a credible training alternative on leaving school. Data from the leavers survey (see Table 5.1) showed that nearly 23% of early leavers in Coventry left their schemes because they did not pay enough money. Whilst research has consistently indicated young people's discontent over the level of allowance, it has failed to explore the wider implications for young people and how this relates to their continued participation on the Scheme.

I therefore wanted to examine this 'hidden side' to training on YTS. In particular, I wanted to explore whether youngsters were benefiting from demographic pressures through forcing employers to pay trainees higher rates or through increases in employee status. Furthermore, how did the young people feel about the current level of allowance and was it fair? Outside of this, did they feel their allowance was sufficient to make ends meet each week? What impact did this have on their relationships with their families? What level of allowance did they think was fair reward for a trainee? And were they undertaking any other forms of paid employment in an attempt to generate additional sources of income?

### **The level of allowance**

Amongst school pupils, perceptions of YTS as a 'cheap or slave' labour scheme have persisted despite consistent attempts to sell it to young people as an opportunity for quality foundation training (see Chapter Four). But the evidence from the TA's leavers survey suggests that these perceptions of YTS as cheap labour derive considerable material strength from the everyday experiences of the trainees themselves. Through exploring the difficulties involved in living on a YTS training allowance, it became apparent that for the young people who took part in my research, the pressure to look for a 'real job' outside of the Scheme, produced a powerful dynamic for them to leave their schemes early.

Recent demographic changes have led many to conclude that the 1990s will herald a new golden age for young people in the labour market. As a consequence of falling numbers of school-leavers coming into the labour market, competition for available youngsters looks set to increase in a number of regions and occupational areas. The pressure of these demographic changes has already been felt by YTS and the number of young people gaining employee status has increased dramatically over the past four years. In September 1985, only 8% of trainees had employee status, rising to 11% by 1987. But by May 1989, this had surged to 24% of all trainees (Hansard, 3/07/89, col 74). In 1989, a local newspaper article reported that 30% of Coventry's

trainees had been given employee status. According to the TA Area Manager, "it means they have been offered a job, are being paid the going rate but are still receiving training through YTS" (Coventry Evening Telegraph 14/03/89).

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Table 7.1 How much is your training allowance/weekly wage?

	Females	Males	Total
Basic training allowance (1)	15	21	36
Basic training allowance plus 'top up'	2	0	2
Apprenticeship rate/employee wage	1	3	4
Total	18	24	42

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However, what this increase in employee status actually means for trainees needs to be treated with some caution. Only two (5%) of the youngsters I interviewed were employees. Kath had been taken on full-time by the Council, and was no longer training within the Scheme, and Clive was filling a temporary vacancy after which he would return to trainee status. In addition, another two young men on the engineering scheme were being paid apprentice rates. Although the youngsters interviewed did not form a statistically representative cohort, with which to compare wider

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1. The basic allowance rose from £28.50 to £29.50 in July 1988, during the period of research, and the change affected a small number of the trainees. This figure also includes two young men who had just started their second years training and who were on the second year allowance of £35.

claims for the Coventry area, the large discrepancy would seem to indicate that many youngsters have still to derive real benefits from increases in employee status. Furthermore, disabled people, black youngsters and young women are all considerably less likely to have employee status than their peers (Ball, 1989b:6).

For the vast majority, training meant existing on the basic allowance. In all, thirty six (86%) of the youngsters were receiving the basic training allowance and only two were benefiting from their work experience provider's willingness to 'top up' their money. Both were clerical trainees with the Chamber of Commerce, where Samantha received an extra £10 per week, and Wendy's training allowance was topped up to the second year allowance of £35.

#### **A growing independence**

The apparent increase in employee status, and the ability of employers to 'top up' the training allowance had little impact on most of the youngsters earnings. As we shall explore in greater detail below, the strains of living on a low income produce a powerful dynamic which compels many youngsters to leave their schemes. With more jobs in semi- and unskilled areas becoming available for school-leavers many youngsters look set to be tempted away from the formal training structure of YTS, into dead-end jobs that offer relatively higher wages. The longer-term implications for Britain's future economic performance are patently obvious.

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Table 7.2 Do you think the current level of allowance is fair (as a percentage n=147)?

	Total	Stayers	Leavers	Females	Males
Yes	13	5	8	5	8
No	86	31	55	34	52
Other	1	0	1	1	0
Total	100	36	64	40	60

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Although the level of the first year allowance on YTS was raised to £29.50 in July 1988, an increase of £1 per week, the second year remained static at £35. In a letter to the MSC, Ministers feared that further uprating the second year level of allowance would bring rates too close to those received by the under 25s on adult training schemes (Times Educational Supplement, 13/5/89). Since then there have been no increases in the allowance and there are currently no further plans to uprate it. The failure of levels of training allowance, paid to youngsters on government schemes, to keep pace with changes in overall levels of earnings and prices have been revealed in recent figures. In April 1978, YOP trainees were paid an allowance of £19.50. If this level had kept pace with changes in the retail price index its current level would be equivalent to £49.95 per week. If it had been adjusted for changes in the index for average earnings, the weekly equivalent would now be £63.48 (Hansard 24/05/90, col 317).

It is this failure to convince young people

that the allowance represents a 'fair' level of remuneration for training that has dominated many youngsters' criticisms of the scheme (Horton, 1985; Gray & King, 1986; Raffe & Smith, 1987). Here too, the level of allowance continued to be a source of considerable discontent and, amongst the pupils, a staggering 86% felt that the level of allowance was not "fair". This was the single most emphatic response to any of the survey questions.

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Table 7.3 Reasons why they thought the level of allowance was or was not fair

	Stayers (n=78)			Leavers (n=132)		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
<b>Positive reasons</b>						
Right for training	1	0	1	2	2	4
Right for s-leavers	1	4	5	1	2	3
Learn about money	1	0	1	0	2	2
<b>Negative reasons</b>						
Cheap/slave labour	10	13	23	16	13	29
Money to live	36	28	64	38	24	62
Same as benefit	3	2	5	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>101</b>

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Their reasons for its unfairness tended to focus on comparisons with the work done by workers in 'real jobs', working next to others who got a "proper rate of pay" or "working with other employees so you should be paid like them". As a result YTS meant "the employers get free of cheap labour" or that "it isn't worth working for 50p per hour".

Research has shown that "it is precisely around jobs and educational options that many ...

youngster saw their transition out of the family of origin" (Finn, 1984:32). More recent evidence has shown that, although very few youngsters expect to leave home before they reach 18, the vast majority expected to leave between 18 and 24 (Leaving Home Project, 1990:1), and that the availability of work is a major factor in this decision. These developing ideas of physical separation from the family were clearly illustrated here, with around two thirds of both the stayers' and leavers' responses focusing on the impact of low income on their ability to achieve independent status. The idea that YTS should provide "more money for independence if a person wants to leave home" was strong. This meant an income which allowed "money to pay the rent", "board money", "money to pay the bills" and "enough just to get through the week".

**'I work as hard as anybody at that place'**

Like the school pupils, an overwhelming majority of the trainees felt that the money they were receiving was not a 'fair' reward for the demands of their training. In all, thirty four (81%) felt it was not fair, another seven (17%) felt that it was fair and one did not know.

Those that did think it fair, tended to see it in relation to their current level of earnings. Four of this group of seven were earning, or set to earn, well above the basic training allowance. For the two receiving apprentice rates, it was fair whilst they were at college but once they finished their off-the-

job training, increases in their productivity were felt to merit an additional income, "after all, we're expected to work like any other worker" (2). Another young man was waiting to move onto apprenticeship rates of pay when he too finished his block release at training school but, at the moment, being in the workshop all day it was fair enough. The fourth was a clerical trainee who received 'top up' and she was well aware of the relative privilege of her position.

The three other trainees in this group were all receiving the basic training allowance and, as trainees, felt they could not expect more money. The idea that training should involve short-term financial sacrifice, for longer-term returns, was used to justify the Scheme's original low allowance. "The new scheme is, first and last, a training scheme ... As trainees it seems right that they should receive allowances that reflect their learning role. That is how they will make their contribution to the cost of a foundation training which improves their prospects of employment"

(Department of Employment, 1981:para 34). The proposed level of allowance was even compared favourably to other non-work options available to 16 year olds. In evidence to the 1982 Select Committee on Employment, Norman Tebbit, then Secretary of State for Industry, told young people "we are giving you an allowance; this is better than those of your colleagues who are still at school or in colleges of education are receiving,

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2. Patrick - Engineering trainee



and I would have hoped that everybody concerned would look at it in that light" (Hansard 221, May 1982:para 42).

However, the majority of youngsters have consistently failed to see the allowance in the 'light' suggested by Norman Tebbit. In a situation where they are expected to work like workers, yet are paid like trainees, levels of discontent have remained high. It is the experience of this contradiction that gives the notion of YTS as 'slave or cheap labour' such a high degree of resonance amongst young people. Whilst many youngsters accept that, as trainees, they should make some sacrifice, the demands they experience when training on the Scheme clearly outweigh any notions of longer-term investment.

Twenty six (62%) felt that for the work they did and the effort this involved the level of allowance was not fair. Earnings were worked out as equivalent to 60p or 70p per hour, effectively "being used as a dogsbody" (3). Indeed, the youngsters' considerable experiences of child labour had meant that most had taken an actual drop in hourly rates to train on the Scheme, "they [her part-time jobs] were better than the YTS. You get less than 80p per hour on the YTS, it's ridiculous" (4). For others, "we are doing the same jobs as other people but it's slave labour". "I have to work as hard as anybody at that place" (5).

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3. Helen - Retail trainee
  4. Anne - Community Care trainee
  5. Niki - Clerical trainee

The desire for a 'real job' meant some felt under pressure to prove themselves to their employers by working harder than other colleagues. For these employers, YTS provides a keen and willing source of labour. For the youngsters, impressing an employer could mean the difference between a job and unemployment at the end of their scheme:

"I want to make an impression so I end up working twice as hard as those I work with". "Status comes into it. You obviously can't expect to start on that sort of wage [a permanent employee's wage] but I work harder than anybody and get paid a lot less for it" (6).

Where the trainees were on outside work experience placements, the distinction between training and work became blurred. Their self-image was predominantly one of being workers, not trainees, and they therefore accepted that their 'bosses' expected them to perform as such. The tensions that this produced around the training allowance was most acutely experienced by the workshop-based trainees, since their short spells on placement provided a clear point of contrast:

"When you are down here [the training centre] it's not so bad, but when you get to the placement they make you work hard for your money". "You can't expect a lot as you're training, they ain't gaining from you. But when you're on placement they should have to pay something towards your wages" (7).

Similarly, "I know we're learning at the same time but

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6. Clive - Clerical trainee

7. Rajesh - Motor Vehicle trainee

when we're on placement we do the same work as anybody else" (8). "I work very hard". "It was more boring at [the training centre] and the work was not so hard, but where I work now I am expected to pull my weight with the gaffer" (9).

It has been suggested that "in judging a fair return for their labour, few young people appeared to take the productivity of juvenile labour or the market value (if any) of a trainee's output into consideration" (Raffe & Smith, 1987:257). But earlier research shows that trainees are, indeed, expected to 'pull their weight' with employers. In assessing the productive contribution of trainees, it was found that in service industries, particularly the repair of consumer goods and vehicles, retail distribution and personal services, that trainee output clearly exceeded the level of the allowance. Only in some manufacturing industries did the output of trainees fail to match the allowance, reflecting "the low productivity of trainees in their first year of training for skilled work" (Deakin & Pratten, 1987:493). Whilst not thinking specifically in terms of their individual levels of productivity, many youngsters training on YTS are well aware that they are expected to make a substantial contribution to production. It is therefore not surprising that they fail to accept totally the Government's logic that merely because they are

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8. Sue - Catering trainee

9. Adam - Horticulture trainee

training they should be a source of cheap labour.

**'Making ends meet' on a training allowance**

Despite provision for 'top up' and the growing trend towards employee status, for most youngsters, training on YTS meant the basic allowance. This was not experienced as 'fair reward' for the work they were expected to do and the effort this involved, particularly where they worked next to other, full-time, workers. But, in addition, the research revealed the way in which the low allowance put severe strains on their ability to get through the week without relying on other forms of material support. It is not only notions of 'fairness' of the allowance that undermine YTS' credibility amongst the young, but the contradiction this produces in relation to growing ideas of independence and adulthood.

Only four (10%) of the trainees indicated that they could make ends meet on their income and, even then, it was often only with considerable difficulty. These youngsters could "cope quite well on the money" (10) but only with additional help: "at the moment I can get by on it because I get help from my mum and dad" (11). As we shall see, YTS has gone some way to redefining the relationship of young workers to their families, through extending the role of the family in their daily support.

Eight of the trainees (19%) indicated that it

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10. Martin - Engineering trainee

11, Carol - Catering trainee

was 'a tight squeeze' to 'make ends meet'. For Wendy, after paying board money and buying a travel pass, there was little left over. For others too, "it's a tight squeeze at the moment, but I manage" (12).

'Managing' involved developing budgeting strategies to get through the week. Lorraine had "just enough" money (13) to last the week but this was done by paying her training allowance straight into her bank account each week, effectively making it inaccessible: "I don't get the time to go to the bank so I have to get my mum to lend me some from time to time". John paid his parents £20 each week, which included £8.50 for the weekly payments on his mountain bike. After he had bought his bus pass he was left £4 in his pocket to spend but he too had the cushion of parental support, "my parents will help me out if I get into trouble with debts, but so far I've managed to avoid it" (14).

But wanting commodities like mountain bikes illustrated the additional strains training on a low allowance produced. Fourteen (33%) felt they had just enough to make ends meet, providing they were careful with their money, "it's just enough to get by on, no more" (15). But just 'getting by' has intensified the contradiction experienced by young people who are wooed as consumers, yet denied the ability to consume those commodities they are encouraged to buy.

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12. Patrick - Engineering trainee
  13. Lorraine - Horticulture trainee
  14. John - Horticulture trainee
  15. Sarah - Clerical trainee

"In the case of youth, the problem for capital was that it manufactured a quasi-culture of hedonism in the realm of consumption in order to sell the 'teenage market', whilst it needed to maintain a 'privatized', non-collective role of subordination in the realm of production" (Cole & Skelton, 1980:14).

Further subordinating young labour, by driving down the level of their real income, has meant that young workers have increasingly been denied the right to transition into adulthood traditionally associated with the wage. A fundamental aspect of this transition has been its role in opening up the world of consumption and its cultural associations with independence and adult status (Willis, 1984:19). For these young people, "I've got to get by. Getting by isn't difficult but there's nothing left over to spend on yourself" (16). "You can manage on the money but you have to go without and what you do buy you have to be careful with" (17). If they wanted something that involved a relatively large outlay, planning ahead was necessary, like saving over a number of weeks for clothes, a record, or making a choice between a purchase or leisure.

But getting by was also the product of necessity. It was something they had no choice in and, simply put, it meant "you have to make the money last or you don't survive" (18). "You have to get by,

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- 16. Thomas - Construction trainee
  - 17. Helen - Retail trainee
  - 18. Richard - Construction trainee

there's nothing you can do about it" (19). Getting by often meant going into debt or borrowing money from parents, further negating growing notions of adulthood and increasing their dependence on their families. "It's hard if you get into debt, but it's even harder not to get into debt" (20). We will explore this relationship in greater detail below.

Sixteen of the trainees (38%) felt they could not make ends meet on the money they were receiving. But these too experienced many of the antagonisms voiced by the other youngsters; relying on their families for support or having to make important choices about the disposal of their limited income. For them too, just getting by proved a major drain on their weekly income, like paying 'board' or 'keep' money, or finding money for a bus pass or for clothes, "after you've given your mum some money for board, you haven't got much left" (21). "I have to give my mum some money for my board each week, then I have to pay for my travel and my clothes and I have to spend some money on leisure" (22). "If I want to go out at the weekend, which I usually do, then I'm skint the rest of the week. It's a choice I have to make" (23). After Colin had given his mum some board money and had paid his weekly club money, buying clothes through a mail order catalogue to spread the payments, he had no money for

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19. Clive - Clerical trainee

20. Chris - Public Service Vehicle trainee

21. Elaine - Catering trainee

22. Luke - Retail trainee

23. Frances - Retail trainee

leisure. "If I go out my dad has to give me money so I can afford things like clubs, pubs and fags" (24). For others it meant, "I'm always skint by Tuesday" (25).

#### **Living at home and indirect family support**

The difficulties, for the trainees, in making ends meet each week were clearly evident and, in many cases, only possible through the effective family subsidies they received. Indeed, one of the stated aims of the NTI was to restructure young workers' relation to the family through shifting the burden of the daily reproduction of young labour back onto it. Under the new scheme "parents would be expected to provide any necessary financial support to these trainees"

(Department of Employment, 1981:para 36) above and beyond the level of allowance. In a speech to the House of Commons, two months prior to the launch of YTS, Norman Tebbit outlined the Government's "belief that it would be right for young people, whether in education, the new training scheme or unemployed, to be regarded as dependent on their parents for the first year after reaching the minimum school-leaving age" (Hansard, 21 June 1983, col 22-23). The introduction of the two year scheme further entrenched this position.

The family has traditionally played an important part in subsidising young people as they move from full-time education into the labour market.

"Materially, young adults were dependent upon parents

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24. Colin - Community Care trainee

25. Jim - Construction trainee



for their daily physical reproduction whilst at school, but moving to a position where they were partially responsible for their own costs of reproduction" (Wallace, 1987a:19). Yet the self-stated aim of the scheme was to redefine this relationship, through driving down the price of 'youth' labour, thereby redistributing the burden of physical reproduction back onto the family. For many youngsters, YTS has effectively extended their period of reliance on their parents and, in doing so, has produced a new set of lived contradictions for working class youngsters.

Historically, on receiving a wage, young people have contributed to their own physical reproduction through paying keep to the household. This payment was not strictly an economic relationship, as it was set at nominal levels, and failed to cover fully the entire cost of their daily reproduction. But the relationship this entailed also provided a means of "indirect support" (ibid:20) to youngsters. In return for their keep, not only did they enjoy protection from paying the full market value of their reproduction, it allowed a number of subsidies from the household, including food and clothing, and money for cigarettes and drink, that often involved no repayment. Although the level of indirect support was itself dependent on the economic status of the family, the cushion this provided was particularly important when the young person was on a low income or unemployed. For the latter group, the family played a pivotal role in

financing any leisure activities.

This process of indirect support has taken on a greater significance for youngsters training on YTS. All forty two trainees were living with one or more parents on leaving school and none had moved away by the time of interview. Thirty eight (90%) indicated that they gave their parents some money for board and lodgings each week, although this included one young woman who had given her parents money for keep, but had found it impossible to manage on what was left. Since both her parents were currently working they had allowed her to forgo any payment until she had finished her training and had secured a job.

The research suggests that YTS is, indeed, further strengthening young workers' continued reliance on their families during their first years in the 'adult' labour market. Wallace's (1987) study covered youngsters who followed a variety of post-school routes into the labour market. Whilst the level of their keep was sometimes re-adjusted downwards, for example if they were unemployed, only one of the 44 youngsters in her study was totally exempt from contributions. My research found that, in addition to the one young woman who had stopped paying, for four others, it was accepted that they were still unable to contribute to their keep. The achievement of a wage was crucial in this, "she said I could wait until I started work" (26). Three lived with their mother and father, all of

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26. Kath - Clerical trainee

whom worked, with the fourth living with her mother who worked as a secretary. However, these youngsters were still the exception rather than the rule, and this was readily acknowledged, "I'm lucky. Most of my friends have to pay board but my mum says I don't have to until I get a job" (27).

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Table 7.4 Levels of board money paid to the family (£)

	Male	Female	Total
None	2	2	4
5 - 6	2	2	4
7 - 8	2	3	5
9 - 10	11	10	21
11 - 15	5	1	6
16 +	2	0	2
Total	24	18	42

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Like Wallace's (1987) youngsters, the majority of the trainees were paying between £9 and £10 each week, again suggesting the nominal value attached to the payment. Eight youngsters contributed over this amount, including two young men who contributed £20 per week for their board. However, for one young man this included an £8.50 weekly payment for his mountain bike. For the other, the money covered keep for both himself and his wife, who did not work, and his parents helped him out by not charging any additional costs for heating or telephone calls.

However, considering the vast majority were only receiving the basic training allowance, the level

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27. Louis - Construction trainee

of keep represented approximately one third of their regular weekly income, producing a considerable drain on their finances. Whilst they gave the money willingly, and often wished that they could contribute more, it too produced important antagonisms that compelled them to look for work outside of their schemes.

But like Wallace's (1987) youngsters, the majority indicated that their parents 'helped them out' each week and their comments suggest that parental support plays a crucial role in surviving on a training allowance. Thirty two (76%) received some form of indirect support, either through money payments to subsidise their leisure activities, or through the purchase of clothes or other consumer goods. There was often an implicit agreement that these 'subs' did not have to be repaid, "if I'm hard up my mum gives me a sub and it doesn't really matter if I can't pay her back" (28). Looking to their parents in this way was common, "if I want to go out my dad has to give me money" (29) and "there hasn't been a week gone passed without me borrowing another £15 off my mum and dad" (30).

As well as providing indirect economic support to the youngsters, this practice of 'subbing' money also involved a "moral dimension". "It was thought to keep a young person straight" through

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- 28. Elaine - Catering trainee
  - 29. Colin - Community Care trainee
  - 30. Anne - Community Care trainee

exercising a degree of control over their spending power and regulating the way their incomes were disposed of (Wallace, 1987:20). But this moral regulation, too, generated its own tensions which produced incentives to leave their schemes.

Six of the youngsters (14%) identified several ways in which these antagonisms manifested themselves. It made some feel that they were not fulfilling their responsibility as young adults, "I give them £10 a week for my keep. I'd like to give them more but I just can't afford it. If I get a little short during the week then they have to help me out" (31). Others realised the burden it meant for their parents, "they can't afford it, really" (32) and "I wouldn't ask them directly, they haven't got much money themselves. But my dad is good that way" (33). Indeed, asking for additional money conflicted with developing ideas of independence, "my folks help me out occasionally but I don't like asking them for the money. I should be standing on my own two feet by now" (34).

The low level of the allowance effectively prohibited any moved to 'stand on their own two feet' and only two youngsters spoke of their desire to leave home. Growing difficulties in their relationship with their families had made moving out an increasingly

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31. Terry - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  32. Richard - Construction trainee plumber
  33. Carol - Catering trainee
  34. Clive - Clerical trainee

attractive option but lack of money proved a considerable barrier. "I'd really like to move out but I can't afford to. I argue with my mum a lot and I'd seriously like to get a place on my own but I haven't got the money" (35). Another summed up the position for most of the youngsters, "I couldn't afford to move away even if I wanted to on that sort of money" (36).

#### **A 'fair' level of allowance**

The New Training Initiative also contained an explicit commitment to "bring about a change in the attitudes of young people to the value of training and acceptance of relatively lower wages for trainees" (Department of Employment, 1981:para 58). We saw in Chapter Four that its success with the former has been limited but evidence suggests that the impact of the latter is beginning to be felt. The young were to be redefined as a source of cheap labour because "the wages of young people are often too high in relation to those of experienced adults. Employers cannot afford to take them on" (Margaret Thatcher, Hansard, July 1981). Indeed, "the young should be a source of cheap labour because they can be trained on the job" (Lord Young, The Director, April 1983). To this end, the new scheme proposed by the NTI advocated a training allowance of only £15 per week. It was only after considerable criticism from trade unions, employers and the MSC, that the Government accepted proposals to pay trainees

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35. Elaine - Catering trainee

36. Mick - Motor Vehicle trainee

rates comparable with that of YOP; £25 per week. Since then, its 'real' value has rapidly diminished.

YTS has remained at the heart of the Government's strategy to drive down the price of 'youth labour'. Its centrality as a tool of reform has been plainly outlined in a Low Pay Unit report,

"Clearly, it is necessary to create a climate of belief in the 'pricing out' concept if young people are to be convinced that there is no alternative to low pay. It is, however, possible for government to take direct action to suppress wage levels in those areas where it has ultimate control and in this respect the importance of holding YTS pay only marginally above unemployment benefit rates is obvious. After two years on such low levels of pay, almost any increase will seem luxurious even if in reality it represents working for poverty wages" ( Low Pay Unit, 1988:3).

The report concluded that, historically, there is a "clear acceptance" (ibid:6) amongst youngsters that they should be paid a lower rate than adult workers. Yet low pay expectations for themselves fed through into their anticipation of what adult workers should be paid. As such, "the tiny minority who advocated wages in excess of £150 per week is depressing when average wages are currently in excess of £200 per week" (ibid:5).

Overall, it appears that Government policy has been successful in lowering young workers' wages relative to that of adults. Data from the New Earnings Survey shows that the gap between wages for 16 and 17

year olds and those of 'adults' declined from 57.7% to 61.3% between 1979 and 1987 (Potter, 1989:14).

Independent estimates suggest that increased differentials between 'youth' and 'adult' wages are even more significant than the New Earnings Survey allow and that, in particular, women and black youngsters suffer even greater wage discrimination than their white male peers (ibid:15-16).

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Table 7.5 A fair level of allowance for YTS, by trainees (n=40\*) and pupils (n=127), in pounds and as a percentage

	Trainees	Pupils
33.50 - 40	48	20
41 - 50	33	48
51 - 60	5	18
61 - 80	7	4
81 +	3	7
Don't know	4	3
Total	100	100

\* Two young men did not think their allowance was unfair

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The low wage expectations of young people were confirmed by what the youngsters' felt was a 'fair' level of training allowance. Even though the current level of training allowance was near universally condemned, large majorities of both the pupils and the trainees thought a 'fair' allowance would be between £33.50 and £50 per week. What is also noticeable is the contrast between the pupils and the trainees' notions of fairness. Whilst still modest, what the pupils saw as a fair allowance was



significantly higher than the trainees, and this would suggest that YTS is, indeed, dampening the wage expectations of trainees as they progress through the Scheme. Evidence from the Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales (Whitfield & Bourlakis, 1989) supports YTS' overall effect in depressing 'youth' wages. "Analyses suggest that participants earn approximately 5 pence per hour less than non-participants and that those in jobs with YTS employers earn 9 pence per hour less than those with non-scheme employers" (ibid:13). From the Government's point of view, YTS has the overall desired effect of making young people relatively cheaper to employ.

Forty of the 42 trainees had an idea of what they thought a 'fair' level of allowance should be, despite four answering that they thought the allowance fair. Again, this may indicate a deeper seated discontent about the level of allowance. The lowest level of allowance thought fair was £33.50, less than the current second year level, and overall their expectations of what a fair rate should be were not significantly higher than the present levels. Nineteen of the trainees (38%) thought an allowance of £40 or under fair, and 32 (76%) felt £50 or under fair. In relation to what the level of allowance would be, had the original YOP rate kept pace with changes in earnings and prices, these were clearly realistic expectations.

Their expectations also tended to reflect

earnings differentials within their schemes. Three of the young men, who thought in terms of a level of allowance of over £50, were on the engineering scheme. Two were already apprentices and the third was expecting to move onto apprentice rates in the immediate future. Another youngster was working in a temporary post with the Council and earning around £65 per week. He felt he should be receiving £115 a week because that was the going rate for the job he was doing. The other three trainees in this group of six were all receiving the basic training allowance. But Niki's cousin was training on YTS and receiving £60 a week, "I think that would be fair pay for what I do then I could spend a bit of money on myself and possibly go out more" (37). For Mick, £70 - £80 a week seemed right for the work that he was supposed to do, especially out on placement, where working in a garage, as a mechanic, over £200 per week could be earned.

Twelve of the trainees (29%) justified a higher allowance in terms of the productive contribution they were making at their work place. "I work hard. I want a good report so I have to work hard" (38) and "we work hard and ought to get something decent in return" (39). A further 24 (57%) felt a higher allowance would allow them to survive better, "it would give me a little bit extra to do what I like

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37. Niki - Clerical trainee

38. Derrick - Construction trainee

39. Lorraine - Horticulture trainee

with" (40). Indeed, despite the time and the effort demanded by their training, many accepted that as trainees this should involve some financial sacrifice, "it's not a proper job and I am being trained but I think we should get £50 a week. Then I'd have a bit left for myself" (41).

Again the idea of what a fair training allowance should be was linked to growing ideas of independence. A higher training allowance meant, "I could live on that sort of money" (42) and, by putting it up by £5, "it would make a big difference" (43). This 'big difference' would allow youngsters a greater freedom as consumers, "I'd be able to buy clothes and things like that, and would have something to show for it" (44). "I know you are training but if they gave us that [£50pw] we would get something out of it. We would be able to spend something on ourselves" (45). It would "make it possible to spread it out a bit more and possibly save some for the end of the week" (46). It was felt that, "I'm working now and should be independent" (47). "Putting the money up a bit [£45 pw] would allow us to be a bit more independent" (48), buying their own clothes and even the possibility to living independently. At present, "there is no way I

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40. Helen - Retail trainee
  41. Keith - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  42. Luke - Retail trainee
  43. Lucy - Community Care trainee
  44. Samantha - Clerical trainee
  45. Carol - Catering trainee
  46. Carol - Catering trainee
  47. Thomas - Construction trainee
  48. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee

could ever move out on that sort of money" (49).

#### **Additional sources of income**

For the majority of the youngsters, a basic training allowance was their main regular source of income but it meant 'getting by' each week became a considerable strain. Without redistributing the day-to-day burden of reproducing young workers back onto the family, many of the youngsters would have been unable to survive. However, in relation to their extensive participation in child labour, I wanted to explore whether any of their part-time sources of income had survived into the adult labour market.

Since they started their training, 21 of the youngsters (50%), nine women and twelve men, had ways of bringing in additional income. Furthermore, two young women, both catering trainees, were in the process of trying to find additional part-time jobs but there appeared to be strong competition for the limited opportunities:

"I'd like one but they are difficult to find, there's quite a demand for them". "Quite a few of the girls have them but they're difficult to find. Most find them through their placements, but some had them before they came on the course" (50).

As Jane comments, eleven of the youngsters (24%), four women and seven men, continued in the part-time jobs they had held whilst at school. This meant

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49. Fiona - Clerical trainee

50. Jane - Catering trainee

"an extra few quid here or there" (51), or a more regular income, such as working in a shop on Saturdays, to supplement the training allowance. But this extra income was only gained at the cost of considerable sacrifice, "until recently I was working in [the shop] but I had to give it up because with that and doing a full week it was getting too much" (52).

Four (10%) of the youngsters earned extra money through jobs they had secured after they had started their training schemes. Much of the work was sporadic, selling pictures for a brother-in-law on a commission-only basis, or "doing some plastering for a builder who lives across the road from us. When there's work and he needs me to help them I give him a hand". At £2 per hour it meant an important supplement to his training allowance, "sometimes taking the week off, telling them here [the training centre] I'm ill, or doing a Saturday or a Sunday for him" (53). Another young woman occasionally worked as a cashier at an exhibition ground, again taking time off sick if necessary, for the possibility of earning up to £100 a week.

More interestingly, work experience providers also utilised this source of keen and willing labour. These youngsters earned extra money, not through 'top up', but by doing what they described as "overtime"

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51. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee  
52. Fiona - Clerical trainee  
53. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee

(54), outside of the requirements of their schemes. In this way six of the trainees (14%) constituted a flexible source of labour for employers, "when the boss wants me and when the work is available" (55), being paid "depending on how hard I work" (56). This usually took the form of a six day week with the extra day, for Luke, bringing in an additional £12. Chris worked Saturday mornings at the garage where he did his placement, earning an extra £7 - £10. Lorraine did "the odd day, like a Sunday or Bank Holiday" (57) and in this way could supplement her allowance by around £12. For Adam, another horticulture trainee, 'overtime' was available every night if he wanted it and working Saturdays meant up to an extra £20 per week.

But working in this way was not always easy. For the ten trainees who worked regularly, this meant an average extra eight and a half hours per week on top of their 40 hours training. What this meant in additional income was also important, ranging from an extra £8.50 for five hours work on a Saturday morning to £16 for a days work in a fashion chain store. On average these youngsters were supplementing their training allowance by approximately £14 per week. But, "it means the difference between going out and staying in on Saturday night" (58).

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54. Sue - Catering trainee

55. Luke - Retail trainee

56. Elaine - Catering trainee

57. Lorraine - Horticulture trainee

58. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee

## Conclusion

Previous research has highlighted young people's consistent criticisms of the level of allowance paid to trainees on the YTS. Amongst the Scheme's participants, the Training Agency's own data shows that one in five of the reasons given by early leavers related to dissatisfaction over the money paid to them. With the predicted up-turn in employment prospects for school-leavers, the low level of allowance has produced another dynamic which looks set to encourage further youngsters to remain outside of the Scheme's formal training structure.

Although, generally, demographic pressures have begun to work their way through the Scheme, via increased employee-status amongst YTS participants, the majority of trainees who took part in the research had still yet to benefit from this. Discontent over the low level of allowance remained high and it was seen by many as restricting their desires for increased independence; whether through the perceived command a wage offered over consumer goods or through their growing ideas of physical separation from the family.

The idea that, as trainees, they should make a short-term financial sacrifice for longer-term gains held little sway. Many of the youngsters felt the allowance was not a 'fair' reward for the considerable contribution they were expected to make to production at work experience placements. This tension was clearly heightened by the fact that many found themselves

working next to full-time employees, doing the same work, but being paid vastly inferior rates. Indeed, the desire to be 'taken on' often meant that they felt they worked harder than work colleagues precisely to impress any prospective employers.

This dissatisfaction with the allowance was further strengthened by the often considerable difficulties they had in making ends meet each week. This hidden side to training on YTS meant their access to the consumption of leisure and consumer goods was severely restricted, bringing increased tensions to training. Furthermore, the Scheme was premised on extending the family's role in bearing the costs of reproducing young workers and the research illustrated the often substantial part the family played in this. Although almost all the youngsters paid their parents 'keep' each week, it clearly failed to cover the 'market' costs of their physical reproduction and thus provided youngsters' with an indirect means of support. Moreover, the family often directly funded the youngsters through 'subs', many of which were not repaid, which facilitated greater access to leisure or consumer durables.

But a number of the youngsters were clearly uncomfortable with this situation. They felt that they should be able to contribute more to their families and that, as working adults, they should no longer have to rely on family handouts. It is again this pressure that compels trainees to look beyond the confines of their



training schemes in the hope of greater financial gains.

But, overall, their ideas of a fair level of allowance were not unrealistic. If the training allowance paid to youngsters on the Youth Opportunities Programme had kept pace with changes in the levels of prices and average earnings, then their allowance aspirations would have been broadly realistic. But, at its present level, they felt it was clearly insufficient and half of the youngsters had held some additional way of generating income, whether through continuing in part-time jobs held whilst at school or by doing 'overtime' for their work experience providers. Yet the strains of working what usually constituted an extra day were clearly visible and many youngsters felt the added pressure of holding what effectively constituted two jobs. Again, the likely impact was to compel trainees to look beyond their scheme's for other sources of employment.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### COMPULSION BY THE BACKDOOR: RECENT SOCIAL SECURITY CHANGES AND THE YOUTH TRAINING SCHEME

#### Introduction

Together with changes in the social security system, the original proposals for the Youth Training Scheme were intended to make it the only way for school-leavers without a job to obtain a regular income. However, early fears about the new Scheme's credibility, from both employers and youngsters, led to the Government reluctantly climbing down. But the idea of excluding the vast majority of school-leavers from the social security network was only temporarily shelved.

In 1987 the Government confirmed continuing speculation that the right of unemployed school-leavers to benefit would be removed, thus marking a new phase in the development of youth training in Britain. In the context of an expanded scheme, one that now guaranteed a place to all school-leavers within a specific period, the vast majority of young people were no longer to be given the 'choice' of unemployment. With the availability of quality training guaranteed, it was argued that unemployment ceased to be an acceptable alternative as a start to working life.

The Government and the MSC maintained, however, that, in the light of the changes, YTS retain its original commitment to voluntary participation and youngsters could still choose not to join the Scheme.

However, in excluding almost all 16 and 17 year olds from benefit, the Government circumvented forcing youngsters directly onto the Scheme and introduced compulsion for YTS via the backdoor.

Although the research took place before the changes became law, the proposals had received considerable debate at all public levels. With effective compulsion now a reality, I wanted to explore some of the possible implications of the changes, for the future of youth training in Britain, as perceived by young people themselves. I wanted to assess levels of awareness amongst the youngsters. Did they know about the changes? Why did they think they were taking place? Did they think withdrawing the right of unemployed school-leavers to benefit was a good idea? And, should unemployed youngsters be made to train on YTS whether or not they wanted to?

#### **From voluntarism to effective compulsion**

When the Youth Training Scheme was proposed in the New Training Initiative, the intention was that school-leavers who did not find a job should be guaranteed a place on the new Scheme. A corollary of this was that young people leaving school at 16 would not be entitled to supplementary benefit for a full year after leaving (Department of Employment, 1981:para 35), making the scheme effectively compulsory for a new generation of unemployed school-leavers.

The proposals met with considerable opposition from employers, educationalists and trade

unionists. It was argued that an effectively compulsory scheme would lack credibility amongst both school-leavers and employers. This position was accepted by the MSC, who endorsed a Youth Task Group Report which "agreed that voluntary participation by sponsors and young people is essential for the scheme's success" (MSC, 1982:para 7.14). In evidence to the Employment Select Committee on 'Youth Unemployment and Training', both the CBI and the TUC supported a voluntary approach (Hansard 221, 19 May 1982). Although the Select Committee itself was divided over whether supplementary benefit should be withheld from 16 and 17 year olds, it felt that, at least, to begin with, "abolition of supplementary benefit ... would put the credibility and effectiveness of the programme at risk" (Hansard 221, 1981/2:para 18-19).

In the face of concerted opposition to a compulsory scheme, the government watered down the proposals contained within the NTI, although the idea was never abandoned. In a statement to the House of Commons, Norman Tebbit, then Secretary of State for Employment, conceded the MSC's proposals but repeated the Government's underlying conviction that, "we still believe that these young people should not be entitled to supplementary benefit in their own right" (HC Deb, 21 June 1982, col 23). In place of the denial of benefit to unemployed school-leavers, youngsters who now refused a suitable place on the scheme would be subjected to the same benefit penalties as the adult

unemployed. Refusing a suitable YTS place meant a 40% reduction in benefits for up to 6 weeks. In October 1986, changes to social security legislation increased this to up to 13 weeks and, again, up to six months in April 1988.

However, as the Scheme developed, the constraints placed upon school-leavers' scope for independent choice within the labour market were further eroded. The government's original intention to introduce a scheme that was effectively compulsory for the unemployed never left their political agenda. Whilst the MSC reiterated its commitment to an expanded two year scheme based on voluntarism, one of its "five cardinal principles" was that "there should be no coercion on a young person to take part in the Scheme; once again the principle should be one of choice" (MSC, 1985:para 3.3-3.4), senior government figures were giving very different soundings.

In a speech to the Building Employers' Federation, on 4 December 1984, Lord Young, then Minister Without Portfolio, outlined government thought on the matter. He argued that a guaranteed income for unemployed school-leavers, through benefit provision, actively discouraged them looking for, and taking, available jobs. "There has been research to confirm most people's intuitive feeling, that is that the level of out-of-work benefit for young people can act as a disincentive ... Living off the state does not after all represent an ideal start in life".

These views were reiterated at the highest level. Again, appealing to popular 'intuitive feeling', the Prime Minister stated explicitly that unemployment should no longer be an option for school-leavers.

"I think most parents would join me in saying that unemployment ought not to be a choice up to the age of 18. It certainly ought not to be a choice. Young people ought not to be idle. It is very bad for them. It starts them off wrong ... We can give training for every young person up to the age of 18 and when we are absolutely sure we can do that they should not have the option of being unemployed. It is bad for them, bad for the country, bad for future skills, and I believe most parents would be absolutely with me on that" (Prime Minister's interview with John Cole of BBC-TV, 17 December 1984).

Despite, in evidence to the Employment Select Committee, Lord Young backtracking slightly, "there was no intention of myself at that time or any of my colleagues, recommending forthwith that benefit be withdrawn from 16 and 17 year olds" (Employment Select Committee, 1984-85), the government felt confident enough to announce the ending of benefit provision for unemployed school-leavers in 1988. Persistent rumours in the press about the impending withdrawal (for example, see Sunday Times 17/04/85 and Guardian 18/04/85) were confirmed in the Conservative Party's 1987 election manifesto. They went to the polls promising to,

"guarantee a place on the Youth Training Scheme to every school leaver under 18 who is not going directly into a job. We will take

steps to ensure that those under 18 who deliberately choose to remain unemployed are not eligible for benefit" (Conservative Central Office, 1987:16).

Their subsequent re-election heralded the next step in the government's long-term project of transforming the relationship between working class youngsters and the labour market.

#### **A guarantee of training**

The Conservative's election promise manifested itself in the 1988 Employment and Social Security Acts. But instead of withdrawing the right to benefit from those youngsters who deliberately chose to remain unemployed, the Acts went further and denied benefit to all 16 and 17 year olds unless they were in "severe hardship" (Department of Employment, 1988:para 4.2). This blanket denial, which was to come into operation in September 1988, effectively made YTS the only source of regular income for unemployed school-leavers.

The punitive impact of these measures was underlined by figures which showed that, of those youngsters who declined a place on YTS or left early, most did not deliberately become unemployed. In the last year before the Scheme's effective compulsion, of the estimated 20,000 to 30,000 who declined a place on YTS, less than 700 had the voluntarily unemployed deduction made to their benefit. Between December 1983 and May 1987, only 2,244 benefit reductions were made for voluntary unemployment and, for May of that year

alone, of the 17,536 youngsters who entered YTS, only 9 suffered benefit penalties (Hansard, 14/05/87, col 358).

Early leavers were also subject to benefit penalties if they failed to satisfy the availability for work test and were judged to be voluntarily unemployed. But here too only a minority of early leavers were failing to satisfy eligibility rules and incurring benefit penalties. Before its effective compulsion, approximately 6,700 youngsters each year were losing benefit and, between December 1983 and May 1987, of over one million entrants to YTS, only 23,453 early leavers had their benefit suspended (ibid).

Despite the legislative changes, the MSC maintained that, under the new social security regulations, "YTS will remain a voluntary scheme. Young people will be able to choose whether to join the scheme and the freedom of Managing Agents to recruit and ... 'dismiss' trainees will continue unaffected" (MSC, 1987:para 7.b.ii). But, in making 18 the normal age to receive unemployment benefits, the situation for school-leavers underwent radical change.

Income Support (formerly Supplementary Benefit) was now only payable to small groups of young people who satisfied narrow criteria, including those in severe hardship, expectant mothers and disabled youngsters (for full list see Resource Information Service, 1990:12-14). The 1988 Acts also created two new categories of benefit. Instead of Income Support



for unemployed school-leavers, parents were now to receive extended Child Benefit to cover the immediate period after leaving school. For summer leavers, Child Benefit was extended for four months, and, for Easter and Christmas leavers, three months. To be eligible for the extended Child Benefit, youngsters had to register for a job or YTS at a Careers Office or Jobcentre. Payments ceased when a youngster found a job or suitable scheme but was repayable, within the extended period, if the youngster chose to leave.

The second category of benefit was a £15 Bridging Allowance, payable for up to 40 days in any 52 weeks, as long as the youngster was registered at a Careers Office or Jobcentre for a training scheme or job. The allowance was not normally to be paid consecutive to the extended period of Child Benefit but was to provide minimal support for youngsters moving from one scheme to another, or who experienced a gap between leaving a YTS and starting a job. But refusal of a suitable training place, the discretion of which was left to staff at Careers Offices or Jobcentres, meant young people could be disqualified from the allowance from between one week and the entire Bridging Allowance period.

At the same time as the benefit changes were announced, Ministers issued a new guarantee of YTS places for all unemployed school-leavers up until their eighteenth birthdays. "Every 16 and 17 year old who wants to join YTS should be able to start in a suitable

YTS place before his/her Child Benefit or Bridging Allowance runs out" (MSC, 1988:para 14). Ministers were confident that after leaving a scheme, a youngster could be placed on a new YTS within 3 to 4 weeks. The change in the guarantee from the simple offer of a place to one that started before a specific date was a fundamental feature of the changes.

**'A kick up the arse'**

The research took place in the first six months of 1988 and although the changes had been proposed over 12 months earlier, they were not due to take effect until September of that year. Previous research has suggested that young people show "high levels of political alienation and disillusionment" and that they "have little interest in and knew nothing about politics" (McGurk, 1989:49-50). So, firstly, I wanted to know the extent to which the youngsters were aware of the Government's proposals.

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Table 8.1 Did you know the Government intends to withdraw the right to benefit for those school-leavers who cannot find work (as a percentage n=143)?

	Total	Stayers	Leavers	Male	Female
Yes	67	20	47	42	25
No	33	17	16	16	17
Total	100	37	63	58	42

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Contrary to an expectation that the youngsters would be unaware to the wider political debate taking place about the changes, clear majorities

of both the pupils and the trainees had an appreciation of the impending shift towards compulsion. Two thirds of the pupils claimed to know about the changes and thirty two (73%) of the trainees said they knew. The higher level of awareness amongst the trainees most probably reflected their greater intimacy with YTS. In addition, although approximately one quarter of the trainees were unaware of the changes, only three (7%) could not offer an explanation as to why they were taking place.

Three saw it as a benevolent move by the Government to help young people into work or training, "I suppose it's to help encourage them to find a job" (1). By removing benefit provision from the under 18s, YTS would become a more attractive option to unemployed school-leavers and because "you need experience to get a job these days" (2). As it stood, the similarity between benefit levels and the training allowance acted as a disincentive for the unemployed to train. By taking away their dole money alternative sources of income would have to be sought.

In its early years, YTS inherited young peoples' perceptions of YOP as a way for government to manipulate school-leavers off the unemployment statistics (Raffe & Smith, 1987:246-9). Here, more than five years into the Scheme, the failure of YTS to

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1. Richard - Construction trainee
  2. Chris - Public Service Vehicle trainee

distance itself from these ideas were again fuelled by its impending move towards effective compulsion. In all, nine of the trainees (24%) saw the changes as a further coercive move by a government trying to force youngsters onto a manifestly unpopular scheme. As a result, the government had been reduced to "hassling" (3) youngsters onto the scheme or, more simply, "to force kids onto the YTS" (4). "There aren't many kids on YTS because they think it's slave labour". "It's not fair, it's not right to take away their money" (5).

Others saw the changes as a way for government to get school-leavers to work for lower wages, "they want more people for slave labour" (6). "Margaret Thatcher wants everyone to look for jobs but with low pay. It's not easy to find work now" (7). The changes were motivated by political expediency, "the Government are doing it to reduce the dole queues they created. It's just to get people off the dole" (8). "They just want to get the unemployment figures down" (9).

The remainder of the trainees (62%) gave a more sympathetic explanation to the Government's impending decision to introduce effective compulsion. However, what is particularly noticeable is the lack of reference to Mrs Thatcher's assertion that the changes

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3. Rajesh - Motor Vehicle trainee
  4. Bob - Engineering trainee
  5. Frances - Retail trainee
  6. Julia - Clerical trainee
  7. Clare - Horticulture trainee
  8. Glenn - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  9. Tony - Retail trainee

would be beneficial to Britain's future skill requirements. The youngsters were more likely to view the changes in the context of Government attempts to redefine the unemployed as responsible for their own fate. The Conservatives came to power seeking to undermine the post-war consensus of collective responsibility and replace it with an increasingly market orientated individualism. At the very heart of this project was "the emotive image of the 'scrounger': the new folk-devil" (Hall, 1983:29). With the move away from welfarism, the unemployed were increasingly blamed for their own predicament, cushioned by a welfare system that guaranteed them an income (Seabrook, 1983:4). It was these notions that dominated their explanations.

Appealing to working class intuitive feeling, the populist language of the Conservatives had clearly bitten deeply into the perceptions of many of the youngsters. The changes would force "these lazy people to do things. A lot of people just get money for doing nothing and it's not right" (10). 'Lazy people' were those who were content to stay unemployed and receive benefits, "they just can't be bothered to get a job" (11), "they're just dossers" (12), whilst there were many others willing to go out and look for jobs. "Making them go on YTS would mean they'd get some

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10. Luke - Retail trainee  
11. Sarah - Clerical trainee  
12. Wendy - Clerical trainee

training and it'd keep them out of trouble" (13).

Unemployed school-leavers were often responsible for their own failure to secure jobs, "too many kids are just content to leave school and do nothing. Sit around all day and do nothing" (14). Life on the dole could be fun, 'sitting around all day', drinking or causing trouble, sometimes to the point of presenting an almost hedonistic picture of unemployment. This was often an intuitive feeling, Derrick did not know anybody personally in this situation but felt that many unemployed youngsters "sign on, wait for their Giro, then go down the pub to spend it and then just sleep around at home". "It happens a lot" (15). It was unjust, "people are allowed to stay home and do nothing for nearly as much as I'm getting". "It would be better for them to do some training. It would be better than them stopping at home" (16).

The unemployed were seen to lack motivation and therefore youngsters needed the additional motivation, to train or look for jobs, that the changes would bring, "there are too many people on the dole, they need a good kick up the arse" (17). Examples were drawn from their own personal experiences. Jim's brother had been content to remain on the dole. For him, and for many others like him, "maybe it'll get him

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13. Sarah - Clerical trainee

14. Keith - Public Service Vehicle trainee

15. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee

16. Lucy - Community Care trainee

17. Jane - Catering trainee

off his arse and make him do something" (18), or it was "a good way to get people moving" (19) who lacked sufficient self-motivation. There was sympathy for the unemployed but, "it's hard to find a job and it's hard to go on a YTS but they ought to go out and try. May be now they will" (20).

The popular idea of the scrounger, and the unemployed as responsible for their own situation, was also articulated through the belief that there were jobs available for young people, if only they would make the effort and were not fussy about the jobs they would take. Research has also noted the lack of structural factors in YTS leavers' explanations of unemployment.

"Although most ex-trainees had gone on YTS after failing to find jobs and the majority recognized an unemployment problem, they still held the view that unemployed individuals were lazy, not looking for work or too choosy" (Lee et al, 1990:159).

Clive knew there were jobs available for school-leavers, a friend of his had left school and was now on his eighth or ninth one. He had left his last job, despite earning around £100 per week, because he wanted more money. Others agreed, "some people just don't want to work. There are jobs around and it's just a matter of keeping looking". Contrary to their own experiences, many unemployed youngsters had both

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18. Jim - Construction trainee
  19. Louis - construction trainee
  20. Fiona - Clerical trainee

unrealistic job aspirations and wage expectations, "you have to start at the bottom and work your way up" (21). Wider constraints were appreciated, "you can get a job if you want, 'though possibly the wages aren't too good. But the opportunities are there if you are willing to take them, if you're not too choosy" (22).

#### **Sitting back and living off others**

There was a high degree of awareness amongst both the pupils and the trainees regarding the introduction of the benefit changes for 16 and 17 year olds. But far from seeing them as a way of bringing greater numbers of youngsters within YTS' training framework, most saw them as a way of policing unemployed school-leavers. Although a significant minority accounted for the changes in terms of Government attempts to manipulate the unemployed, the majority felt they would provide additional motivation for school-leavers grown complacent through a guaranteed income. So did the youngsters feel the changes were a good idea?

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Table 8.2 Do you think these changes are a good idea (as a percentage (n=142)?

	Stayers	Leavers	Total	Male	Female
Yes	16	25	41	24	17
No	20	37	57	34	23
Don't know	1	1	2	0	2
Total	37	63	100	58	42

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21. Patrick - Engineering trainee

22. Terry - Public Service Vehicle trainee



Amongst the school pupils, almost 60 per cent thought the changes were not a good idea. However, their reasons why the changes were, or were not, a good idea, indicate a deeper ambiguity. Amongst both the stayers and the leavers, the majority of the responses focused on positive reasons why benefit should be withdrawn. Again, they focused on the unemployed as folk-devil, making "kids get off their backsides instead of lazing around" and to consequently "change people's attitudes". Others felt "kids just want the dole and don't care about training", "that people want the dole instead of working" and that it would "get people working for their money instead of just lazing around".

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Table 8.3 Reasons why they thought withdrawing the right of benefit to school-leavers was or was not a good idea

	Total	Stayers	leavers
Kids want dole	36	33	41
Encourage them to train	18	23	10
Keep them off streets	4	4	2
Force kids onto YTS	14	10	21
Govt. fiddle figures	20	21	20
Don't know	8	9	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

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But there was also considerable resistance to merely blaming the unemployed for their own plight. Over one third of both the stayers and leavers saw the changes in more sinister terms, "the Government is trying to force kids onto YTS" because "there are no

jobs for school-leavers anyway". The Government's motives came under suspicion and, in taking away benefit, they were seen as "tight", and "trying to squeeze money in anyway they can". It was a way "to lower the unemployment figures by not counting people on YTS", "so that the Government can cheat the dole figures". Clearly, attempts to blame the unemployed for their own fate have met with considerable resistance from many working class youngsters.

However, there was a noticeable difference in the opinions of the trainees. Two (5%) did not know whether the changes were a good idea, although one had strong reservations. Making youngsters do something against their will would only produce trouble makers who would spoil it for the rest. As we shall see, this reflected a deeper anxiety about the impact of compulsory training on school-leavers' participation in YTS.

In contrast to the pupils, the single biggest group of trainees, 21 (50%), felt the changes were a good idea. Again, they mainly justified their opinions by blaming unemployment on the unemployed themselves. Getting them to go on YTS would make them earn their money, "it's not good to get paid for sitting on your arse" (23). Terry had friends who had left school without bothering to look for work and who were happy to remain unemployed. These youngsters were lazy, "they

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23. Luke - Retail trainee

just can't be bothered to do anything" (24). "At least now it'll stop them lazing around on the dole" (25).

Here too, unemployed youngsters needed "an incentive to do something" because "a lot of kids leave school and go on the dole. That's not the right attitude". Jane's friends needed something to instil the 'right attitude', "they just couldn't be bothered to look for work" (26). These youngsters were willing "to just flop on the dole". "They need getting off their arses and looking for a job" (27). One young woman encapsulated the general feeling. "I think unemployed people should have to do something. It's not fair that they can sit back and live off other people". "If they [the Government] can succeed in doing that, it would be a good thing" (28).

A small number did see a direct link between the changes and increasing the numbers of school-leavers training or doing work experience. But they were in a minority. Making youngsters train on YTS would "get them out of their homes and get them to mix with other kids" (29) and, as there were plenty of different training schemes available, "it would be better than just sitting doing nothing" (30). Indeed, the changes might help those unemployed youngsters who were not prepared to help themselves, "kids out of

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24. John - Horticulture trainee
  25. Lorraine - Horticulture trainee
  26. Jane - Clerical trainee
  27. Louis - Construction trainee carpenter
  28. Kath - Clerical trainee
  29. Elaine - Catering trainee
  30. Adam - Horticulture trainee

school need to get some experience". "Getting them to train would be something to set themselves up for the future. At least they get that on YTS" (31).

Reviewing political responses to unemployment at the beginning of the 1980s, a clear dichotomy in opinion was revealed. "It appears the public is very ready to blame both the unemployed for lack of effort and the government for doing too little about unemployment" (Fraser et al, 1985:356). Whilst the youngsters' responses were dominated by the former, there was a clear and distinct minority who were less ready to blame the victims themselves. Amongst the trainees, there was a significant minority, 15 (36%), who felt the changes were not a good idea. Unlike the youngsters in Lee et al's (1990) research, these youngsters were more willing to invoke structural limitations as a cause of unemployment, "some people think that if you're on the dole then you just doss about. But there are a lot of people on the dole who want jobs but can't get them" (32). "There are a few kids who leave school and don't try to look for work but most kids can't find work because there isn't any". "For most kids there's only YTS" (33). They too drew on their personal experiences, "most people want jobs but just can't find one. I know I did. It's not always their own fault they're on the dole" (34). Patrick felt

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31. Harinder - Construction trainee carpenter
  32. Anne - Community Care trainee
  33. Richard - Construction trainee plumber
  34. Bhovinder - Clerical trainee

school-leavers should, at least, have a period of respite before being forced onto something they might not want, and Glenn felt that if school-leavers wanted jobs, and most did, "why should they be forced to train on YTS against their will". "They treat us like dirt anyway" (35).

The idea of choice was a deeply rooted one. I shall explore its implications more fully in the next section. But here, further restricting choices for school-leavers was unacceptable, "you should be able to make up your own mind". "You haven't got much choice as it is but you should have more choice than just two: YTS or full-time education" (36). Furthermore, "it's not right. You should be able to go where you want to" (37) and "it should be up to them to decide what they want to do" (38). "It's stupid" that youngsters' wanting to enter the labour market were limited to the dole or YTS. Frank personally felt unemployed people should go on a training scheme because "it gives you some sort of benefit you don't get on the dole" (39). But school-leavers should be able to make that choice themselves.

What was needed was more real jobs for school-leavers and, if that was impossible, a greater range of training schemes that were responsive to young people's needs. Forcing youngsters onto schemes would

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- 35. Glenn - Public Service Vehicle trainee
  - 36. Wendy - Clerical trainee
  - 37. Bob - Engineering trainee
  - 38. Sue - Catering trainee
  - 39. Frank - Engineering trainee

only cause trouble, what they needed was greater choice:

"people should have the choice about what they want to do. You shouldn't tell people what they want. You should leave it up to the individual". "I'd get a job myself but that's my choice". "In a way, if you choose to go on the dole then you're making an individual choice" (40).

Unlike Mrs Thatcher and Lord Young, others agreed that choice was important and that this choice should include unemployment. Choice meant greater control over your future, "choice is important so going on the dole is up to you". "If I was forced onto something I would be really annoyed" (41). Rajesh agreed,

"but there should be a choice if people need the dole, if they can't get onto a YTS straight away or if they can't find a YTS they like". "But the YTS is the next best thing to a job. You are earning and you have a chance of a job later on" (42).

The evident tension between the feeling that youngsters should not be allowed to remain unemployed, yet should not be forced into something was further illustrated by a number of the trainees. For these youngsters, the changes were "good in a way because there are a lot of lazy people around". But this came into conflict with the feeling that "it's up to the individual to decide what they want to do" (43). Neil

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40. Mick - Motor Vehicle trainee

41. Derrick - Maintenance and Construction trainee

42. Rajesh - Motor Vehicle trainee

43. Julia - Clerical trainee

agreed that some people were not prepared to look for work or to train, and any changes that increased these youngster's motivation had to be encouraged. But, for him too, the proposals further restricted an already limited choice for school-leavers, "in some ways its a good idea and in others not a good idea". "It's a good idea to get people to bother to do something. Some bother whilst others don't. But you have to have some choice in the matter" (44). "It's right in one way and wrong in another". "They ought to provide kids with something they want to do, give them a greater choice" (45).

Colin too had known people who had left school, who had not looked for work and who were content to live off the dole. He felt this was not the right attitude and moves to address this problem were necessary. Yet any moves that further restricted the choice open to school-leavers was undesirable:

"in a way its good because a lot of young people leave school and think 'sod it. I'll stay at home'. But on the other hand it's not good because of lot of people can't get jobs or even a course". "Its bad that more people can't get jobs but a lot want to doss". But "choice is important, the loss of choice would be disgusting. Everybody should have a choice" (46).

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44. Neil - Community Care trainee

45. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee

46. Colin - Community Care trainee

**Compulsory training: trouble and choice**

Although by no means exclusive, the majority feeling was that making unemployed youngsters train on YTS would help solve the problem of unemployment among school-leavers. The unwillingness of youngsters to look for work or train, their abuse of the benefits system and the apathy caused by unemployment could all be dealt with by withdrawing benefits for 16 and 17 year olds. Its effective compulsion was generally welcomed, but what did the youngsters feel about its formal compulsion? Did they think unemployed school-leavers should be made to train on YTS whether they wanted to or not?

Only six (14%) felt that unemployed school-leavers should have to train on the Scheme whether they wanted to or not. Clearly the youngsters made a strong distinction between the acceptability of YTS' effective compulsion, through benefit sanctions, and a direct relationship between unemployment and training schemes for school-leavers. The Government's decision to introduce compulsion by the backdoor would seem a shrewd political move. But, for this small minority, once again, the idea that there were jobs available meant unemployment should not be an option, "if there are jobs going and people can get jobs they just shouldn't be allowed to just claim the dole" (47). For others, "some people, they need something to get them out of their lazy attitude". Making them train would do

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47. Luke - Retail trainee



that (48).

Others accepted the government's argument that the guarantee of a training place meant unemployment was now a redundant option for school-leavers, "people on the dole ought to work for their money" (49). Training meant the opportunity to learn and better long-term prospects, "going on YTS is better than going on the dole 'cos you get training and the chance of a job at the end" (50), it would also keep them off the streets and thus out of trouble. But some were more cautious, "yes, as long as you have a choice of schemes. You can't make kids do something they're dead set against. It would be a waste of time and they would just cause trouble" (51).

The remaining 36 (86%) all thought that making youngsters train on YTS, whether they wanted to or not, was not a good idea. Like Louis above, this included a number who felt it would result in reluctant participants causing trouble and disrupting training for those who wanted it. The possibility of disruption by reluctant participants was acknowledged by the MSC. "There may too be concern about occasional cases of disruption and difficulties caused for individual schemes by the presence of a young person joining YTS who would otherwise have stayed on benefit" (MSC, 1987:para 7b). Similar concerns were expressed by staff

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48. Lorraine - Horticulture trainee

49. Adam - Horticulture trainee

50. Samantha - Clerical trainee

51. Louis - Construction trainee carpenter

at the Chamber of Commerce's Training Centre (field notes 25/02/88).

With the raising of the school leaving age to 16 (RSLA), in 1973, similar concerns were expressed about its impact on reluctant stayers. "School is school ... and it is the structure of perceived compulsion that makes it such an oppressive experience" (Corrigan, 1979:15). Extending this 'oppressive experience' by an extra year precipitated fears about the growth in "corridor cowboys" (quoted in Finn, 1987:60) and an increase in disruptive behaviour amongst pupils. However, fears over a deterioration in behaviour were quickly relegated behind concerns about school-leavers' rapidly worsening grip on the labour market.

As well as a significant drop in the number of early leavers, "it is estimated that around 20-25,000 young people may join YTS in a full year who would otherwise not have done so" (MSC, 1987:para 7a). Estimates by the British Youth Council put the cumulative impact of the changes at up to 100,000 additional youngsters coming within the Scheme (Times Educational Supplement 18/12/87). Although it was estimated that, in January 1990, there were 45,000 unemployed 16 and 17 year olds without jobs, YTS schemes or claiming benefit (Unemployment Unit/Youthaid, April 1990), clearly the number of reluctant participants coming onto the Scheme posed a serious problem in delivering quality training.

This fact was noted with concern by a number of youngsters already training on the scheme. It was a real worry, "they shouldn't force people to go onto something which they're just likely to mess about on instead of working" (52) and "no, a lot would just piss about the whole time" (53). Those that took seriously the opportunity YTS provided them did not welcome the prospect. Some had already experienced disruption caused by reluctant participants. Forcing others to train on YTS would only aggravate an already delicate situation, "no, people would just mess around. More than they do at the moment". "What would be the point of having people here who didn't want to be here?" (54). "Young people shouldn't have to do what they don't want to. That'll only cause trouble" (55).

"If you made it compulsory then you'd get a lot of yobbos on YTS and they would spoil it for the rest of us". "You should have a choice though, you should have a say in whether you want to work or not. I don't know, but you should have a choice" (56).

The idea of 'choice' was once again very strongly rooted. Just like getting a 'real job' and earning a wage, choice on leaving school was closely associated with a growing independence and maturity, "its not right to make people go on the YTS. Choice is important". "If it happened to me I'd be pretty mad"

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- 52. Helen - Retail trainee
  - 53. Joe - Maintenance and Construction trainee
  - 54. Bhovinder - Clerical trainee
  - 55. Harinder - Construction trainee carpenter
  - 56. Elaine - Catering trainee

(57). Leaving school marked a new phase in their life, something which they should have control over, "it's wrong, very wrong. Somebody who leaves school should have a choice in what they want to do" (58), "it should be left to the individual" (59). This choice extended to becoming unemployed, "everybody should have the choice to go on the dole or not". "We're supposed to live in a free country but there's not much freedom when you get cuts in benefit. Then you don't get much choice" (60).

But choice did have definite boundaries. Whilst they rejected the idea of making youngsters train on the scheme whether they wanted to or not, this did not necessarily mean unemployment should be an open-ended option. It was felt the unemployed's lack of motivation needed to be addressed. These young people needed encouragement in their search for work, "no not forced, but talked into training or looking for a job". "It's a bit much for kids to go on a scheme for the sort of money we are getting. If they put up the money it would attract a lot more kids" (61). Other agreed, "you should have the choice to go on the dole or not, but it might still be too easy for some people". "Maybe they ought to force the [dole] money down a bit or something but there ought to be enough money for them

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- 57. Anne - Community Care trainee
  - 58. Bob - Engineering trainee
  - 59. Mick - Motor Vehicle trainee
  - 60. Colin - Community Care trainee
  - 61. John - Horticulture trainee

to survive on" (62).

This feeling of choice was further delineated by a belief that unemployed youngsters did need some motivation in their search for work or training. Whilst she felt she had little choice about going onto a scheme, Carol felt compelling youngsters to train on the Scheme was wrong, "it's unfair to make somebody do something they don't want to do". So youngsters should "not be made but, like, encouraged" (63). Maybe youngsters did need some encouragement as it was easy to become disillusioned,

"they need some form of incentive, something to make them keep trying". "You shouldn't be forced onto YTS you should be asked to do some work experience. Something like work tasters, not compulsory but talked into doing something positive" (64).

We have already seen that unemployment was usually seen as a dead end option. Although youngsters should not be forced onto training schemes, "you've got to do something about getting a job because it's not helpful being on the dole" (65). For Patrick, YTS had been the best way into work, but for others this was not necessarily the case. The two major options now open to school-leavers, unemployment or a YTS, made the decision difficult but "people should be on YTS because at least you'll get some benefit, but you should have a

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62. Richard - Construction trainee plumber  
63. Carol - Catering trainee  
64. Neil - Community Care trainee  
65. Patrick - Engineering trainee

choice" (66).

Others recognized that unemployment was not a personal choice. Terry's uncle, who had no qualifications and was considered too old to be employable, had repeatedly tried to find a variety of jobs. Unemployed people therefore needed some say in what happened to them, "it depends on whether you're going to get more out of training or being on the dole" (67). Chris suggested giving youngsters a time limit of six to 12 months during which school-leavers should be able to register as unemployed and look for work or training. It would give them sufficient time in which to make up their minds and although there were not too many jobs about, there were plenty of training schemes to choose from. "If you stay at home all day with nothing to do then you get in trouble. With being on a scheme at least you will be out of trouble" (68).

### **Conclusion**

Changes to social security legislation in 1988, marked the achievement of long-term Government plans to make YTS effectively compulsory for all unemployed school-leavers. By withdrawing the right of benefit for all 16 and 17 year olds, YTS thus became the only source of regular income for a new generation of unemployed young people.

The research suggests that the movement towards making YTS effectively compulsory commands the

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66. Frank - Engineering trainee

67. Terry - Public Service Vehicle trainee

68. Chris - Public Service Vehicle trainee

support of a majority of young people, especially amongst trainees themselves. The young unemployed are predominantly blamed for their own failure to get jobs, lacking the motivation and desire for work displayed by those in work. In tapping popular working class sentiment over images of the young unemployed as 'idle', 'scroungers' and squandering easily available benefits, the Government would seem to have secured the necessary consent from young people themselves. Making YTS effectively compulsory would stimulate those too lazy or unwilling to make the effort to train or get work experience. In doing so, the changes could only be a good thing.

However, there was a significant degree of reservation about the changes, suggesting the basis for continued support for such measures, amongst young people, has a delicate foundation. A number of the young people were likely to see the shift towards compulsory training as part of an agenda from a government that was trying to manipulate the young off the unemployment figures and onto unpopular training schemes. For these youngsters, the unemployed were not necessarily to blame for their predicament, the root of the problem lay in the lack of jobs available in the wider labour market. Making YTS compulsory would fail to remedy the basic problem over the lack of job opportunities now available to school-leavers.

As such, the vast majority of the trainees did not support YTS' formal compulsion. Compulsion

would result in increased trouble on schemes from reluctant participants and many feared the likely impact of this on their own training. Furthermore, young people needed a choice on leaving school and making youngsters train on the Scheme would only further confine that choice. Indeed, the idea of some clear choice for school-leavers was a feeling deeply held by many of the trainees. Making training formally compulsory for the young unemployed would further circumscribe a set of choices that were already perceived as too narrow.

However, this did not necessarily mean school-leavers should be free to remain unemployed and receive benefit indefinitely. Some expressed their own ideas about giving young people a fixed period entitlement to benefits after which they would have to train or risk their loss. It was felt that a greater variety and choice in schemes would also make youngsters more favourable to the idea of training and would also increase the real choice that youngsters could exercise on leaving school. The present limitations faced by many school-leavers entering the labour market needed to be expanded so that they were offered something genuinely felt to be constructive if no jobs were available. YTS had clearly failed to convince school-leavers that it could fulfil that role. What was needed was something in its place that would succeed.



## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSION: YOUTH TRAINING FOR THE FUTURE

#### Introduction: YTS the fallen bridge to work

In researching the area of youth training, the task is made all the more difficult when the goal posts are constantly being moved and rapid shifts in policy priorities continually reshape the existing training terrain. This project proved no exception. Over its duration YTS underwent the change from a one year to a two year programme, its effective compulsion was introduced, its rigid training structure was abandoned and the emphasis moved from a focus on inputs to one on outcomes. On 29 May 1990, the YTS finally ceased to exist. The proud boast that for a new generation of school-leavers the Scheme would constitute a permanent bridge between school and work proved empty and YTS was replaced by a new programme innovatively called Youth Training (YT).

The research set out to explore the ways in which young people experience leaving school and enter YTS. In doing so, it goes some way to explaining why the Scheme has failed to become a permanent bridge and thus bring about the 'revolution' in young people's attitudes towards training and the labour market that successive Conservative Governments have hoped would take place. The research took some of the key assumptions and assertions on which YTS' claimed successes have been built and examined them in relation to the actual ways in which young people make sense of,

and cope with, the transition from school to a training scheme. Without an adequate understanding of the way in which young people interpret the 'choices' available to them at 16, the ambiguity surrounding existing training provision will remain. Young people have demonstrated a deep-seated ambivalence towards YTS but unless this can be resolved, the twin aims of increased social justice and the need for a well educated and highly skilled workforce will remain beyond reach.

### **Training 'deficient' workers**

The research set out to explore the 'deficiency model' of young workers which lies at the heart of YTS provision. The notion of young people as 'deficient' workers took shape against a background of collapsing employment opportunities for school-leavers during the 1970s, whereby young peoples' inability to progress smoothly into the occupational structure became associated with their individual failings. School-leavers were portrayed as deficient in the qualities that employers now needed and, as such, YTS was to provide them with a period of work experience-based training which would instil in them the 'relevant' abilities, skills, motivations and attitudes needed for working life.

Such assumptions seriously misrepresent the experiences of many working class youngsters and in doing so expose the foundations of sand on which training provision for school-leavers rests. Drawing on Bernstein's ideas on compensatory education, Atkinson

et al have already pointed out that such indemnificatory notions of education/training are ill-defined because they contain "no sense here of what cultural competence the young people themselves might actually possess" (1982:121). Young people are not empty vessels ready and willing to be instilled with the necessary qualities on leaving school but bring with them into the labour market a "highly developed and proficient" (ibid) culture of their own. Failure to recognise this means paying a high cost and any attempts at "education [or training] which takes no account of working class culture will not reap many rewards" (ibid:122). It is a warning echoed by this research.

Endemic to the experience of growing up working class is a rich and multi-faceted culture which situates young people in, and prepares them for, adult life. Central to this is the experience of waged labour. Young people are brought up to work, are surrounded by friends and relatives who work and who themselves gain knowledge of work through their own endeavours. At its most immediate level, the young working class begin to generate an intimate relationship with the world of work through their own experiences of part-time working whilst at school. It is through child working that they gain first-hand knowledge of the rigours of working life and of the burdens and skills that will be demanded of them as future workers.

Through part-time working whilst at school youngsters begin to gain a direct understanding of the workings of the labour market. Widespread part-time working allows a familiarity with employers' recruitment practices, the gaining of competences and skills needed to find and negotiate access to work, and knowledge of the processes involved in successfully holding down and handling a job. Through part-time work working class youngsters gain direct knowledge of the demands of waged labour, how to earn and spend their own independent incomes, and begin to experience employment relationships and the constraints and disciplines these impose. It is precisely this type of experience that underscores working class youngsters' realistic assessment of the opportunities available to them on leaving full-time education and which structures the way in which they attempt to negotiate a path through the wider labour market.

The importance of part-time working takes on further significance when viewed in this context. Taking the ideas of Bourdieu and Passeron, Willis argues "that the importance of institutionalised knowledge and qualifications lies in social exclusion rather than in technical or humanistic advance. They legitimate and reproduce a class society" (Willis, 1977:128). As such, the young working class', or at least his 'lads', rejection of school in favour of work is, in this way, a radical act. Through their ability to see through the fetishised social relations of schooling (ibid:126),

the young working class refuse to legitimate their own educational subordination by rejecting the opportunity to acquire this form of 'cultural capital'. It is in other ways that they seek to develop their potentiality and facilitate a smooth transition into the wider occupational structure.

Part-time working whilst at school allows the young working class to avail themselves of some of the specific cultural competencies that can assist with a smooth transition into work. If the requirements and inherent selectivity of institutionalised education exclude most youngsters from those jobs further up the labour market hierarchy, then part-time working whilst at school offers a direct link with those jobs that are open to them. This is in terms of the possibility of part-time working leading directly into full-time work and, more generally, by allowing the young working class to acquire those qualities and skills needed at work. Importantly, experiences of child labour are almost exclusively dominated by work at its most mundane and intrinsically unrewarding. Child labour is characterised by low skilled, low paid jobs, that involve mainly manual and repetitive tasks. Yet the vast majority of child workers are happy or satisfied with this type of work and the often strenuous employment relationships they entail. But in the context of a labour market that excludes many young people and which can only offer insipid work opportunities for most of the rest, it is an attitude

that takes on a much more greater logic.

This distinct cultural competence does indeed have profound implications for the efficacy of training provision on offer to the young working class. At one level this is visible through the type and organisation of training young people experience. In the main, their scheme's are organized around work experience-based tasks involving low skilled and repetitive tasks; precisely the type of work that dominate working class experiences of child labour. It is therefore unsurprising that the young working class have remained deeply ambivalent about what YTS has to offer since it merely reproduces those skills and qualities that have already been acquired as child workers. Training, in this sense, becomes meaningless. At a wider level the provision of this type of compensatory training questions the whole validity of YTS as an effective way to raise skill levels. On the contrary, it points towards YTS' wider function of providing little more than a period of institutionalised work socialisation, by instilling working class youngsters with the appropriate work ethic no longer facilitated by the bankrupt mechanisms of the market.

What this means for Britain's already inadequate training culture is difficult to gauge but what pointers do exist paint a bleak picture. Young people bring with them into the labour market a considerable reservoir of knowledge and experience of work. In failing to acknowledge this, they are required

to train on schemes that, in the main, reproduce these experiences and which, in doing so, devalue the whole meaning of training. Indeed, this is clearly evident from the way in which young people have actively reconstructed the whole notion of training, downgrading it from an opportunity to acquire skill-specific and technical qualities, to a means to negotiate a hostile labour market. YTS may well have brought about a fundamental change in attitudes towards training but it would this has taken place in the opposite direction to which it was intended.

#### **Reproducing inequality**

At its inception, it was hoped that YTS would begin to challenge the way in which young women and black school-leavers were confined to specific segments of the labour market. The Scheme began with an overt commitment to equal opportunities and boasted its availability at all levels to young people regardless of their race or sex. But these early boasts have proved empty and YTS provision has merely mirrored much of the inequalities already entrenched in a labour market clearly segmented by race and gender.

Black people still suffer higher rates of unemployment than white people and where employers do recruit black workers they tend to occupy lower paid and lower status jobs. Generally, YTS has failed to break this cycle of discrimination and challenge the labour market mechanisms and practices whereby black youngsters are confined to these lower segments. The

Scheme has failed to address the discriminatory practices that structure employer's selection criteria when recruiting youngsters, and the more prestigious schemes, those which pay the 'going rate' and which offer good employment prospects at the end, have failed to take on and train black youngsters. As a consequence, young black people tend to be concentrated in schemes run by voluntary organisations and private training agencies, where quality training is only more sporadically available and which offer fewer opportunities for qualifications and jobs. The Careers Service has also attracted criticism for its willingness to accommodate employer's and Managing Agent's discriminatory practices and for stereotyping the needs and abilities of black youngsters. It is therefore unsurprising that many black youngsters have remained deeply suspicious of YTS' claims to offer a period of quality training and have sought to negotiate their way into the occupational structure through different routes.

In this way, the Scheme has ignored some of the more subtle ways in which labour market mechanisms serve to exclude black youngsters from access to higher status training opportunities and jobs. For Asian child workers, family and friends have remained an important way into work, more so as job opportunities have declined, and in Coventry's sweated 'rag trade' recruitment of young Asian women has been dominated by these networks. Young people have therefore utilised



these routes so as to avoid the Scheme but, in doing so, are further confined to lower status and lower skilled segments which offer no longer-term prospects and little chance of any systematic training. State interventions have, once again, failed to break the low status and low paid cycle into which many black youngsters become locked.

These discriminatory mechanisms are also illustrated by some Managing Agents and employers who claim that black youngsters do not apply for their vacancies in the first place, and cite 'cultural' factors as the major cause. But this ignores the fact that some employers and Managing Agents have been successful in recruiting and training a more balanced workforce and research show that black youngsters are just as keen as their white peers to enter jobs with good prospects and training opportunities. It is to their recruitment practices and commitment to equal opportunities that these training providers must look.

Within the West Midlands, a small number of firms have reacted to changing demographic pressures by increasing the emphasis on monitoring their workforce in a serious attempt at increasing the number of black youngsters they take on and train (see Financial Times 08/11/89; 23/11/89). Of the so-called 'Group of Ten' companies involved in this initiative, including Sainsburys, Bromwich Catering, TSB Bank and Lucas Industries, the Rover Group has been one of the major initiators of change introducing extensive monitoring

of the racial and sexual composition of its workforce and the way in which it recruits. In response, selection procedures have been made more informal, the application forms less daunting and the insistence of specific qualifications for apprenticeships dropped. In addition, links with the local black community have been strengthened and vacancies advertised in black publications and newspapers, as well as in traditional ways. Recent evidence suggests that this policy is beginning to pay off and their workforce is now more broadly representative of the ethnic minority population as a whole.

For young women too YTS has failed to deliver its promise of equal opportunities and, in particular, has paid only scant attention to the way in which young women have come to focus on stereotyped occupational choices during their last years at school. The myth of occupational choice was laid bare as unemployment curtailed the opportunities available to most youngsters and many reluctantly looked to training schemes as a shelter from the dole. But for young women the constraints governing occupational choice have been further compounded by the way in which choice has been socially constructed around notions of gender appropriate work. Young women therefore tend to enter a much narrower range of training schemes, more traditionally associated with 'womens' work, and where they do enter the same occupational areas as boys they are usually clustered in lower grades and work

experience placements.

Research has been undertaken into the processes which structure young women's occupational choices (Chisholm & Holland, 1986) and here too we can begin to unpack a number of factors which impact on these. On entering the 'adult' labour market young women already possess considerable direct experience of a labour market highly segmented by gender. From an early age, girl's perceptions of the type and quality of work available in the 'adult' labour market are heavily structured by their direct experience of waged labour as child workers. Patterns of participation in child labour reveal a pervasive sexual division of labour and through this young women gain immediate familiarity with employer's demands for differentiated labour power, and ideas of gender appropriate work. It is through these direct experiences of waged labour that later occupational 'choices' are formed.

Furthermore, this relationship with the labour market is mediated through assumptions about their responsibilities within the family and their future role as domestic labourers. As we saw in Chapter Four, part of the maturing process for girls requires them to take on increasing responsibility for the maintenance and reproduction of the family; a role in which their brothers participate to a much lesser degree. As well as reinforcing their subordinate role within the family, this also structures schoolgirls relationships to waged labour through further

constraining perceptions of the types of work open to them in the wider labour market. Indeed, the primacy of domestic labour for girls also subjects them to different forms of parental control which regulates the type of work they can do and the hours they can work in a way not experienced by boys. It is this constraining function of the family that further entrenches gender appropriate notions of work and limits the opportunity structures that many young women perceive open to them as adults.

Having made this 'gender appropriate' choice the actual training experience of YTS maintains this emphasis on exclusivity. The recruitment of trainees to gender specific work placements, 'masculine' curriculum development and the attitudes of training staff all serve to perpetuate the patriarchal pedagogy that underlies so much of the training provision on offer to school-leavers (Brelsford et al, 1982; Cockburn, 1987). Where young people do choose 'gender inappropriate' schemes or work placements a high price is often exacted from both peers and staff. For young women this may mean confronting head on male cultural supremacy in the workplace, with the concomitant hostility from staff and male trainees this may generate, and a questioning of their femininity rather than an appreciation of any genuine desire to participate in, and experience, different forms of training and work.

For young men who want to train as carers, particularly where nurturing work is involved, few are

able to overcome permanently the cultural barriers that equate this type of work with a denial of their masculinity and a step down the status hierarchy of jobs. Yet it is precisely this area of training that young men need to be encouraged to enter, if orthodox notions of domestic responsibility and gendered notions of work are to be challenged. Breaking down domestic specialisation in this way can allow divisions between gender appropriate notions of work to be questioned. For young women, a broader range of training and work experience placements, single sex schemes, together with opportunities for girls to taste different types and areas of work, may go some way to expanding young women's perceptions of the type of work available to them.

In the light of their experiences of part-time work and its relationship to family ideology, it is also important that schoolgirls are given the opportunity to expand their knowledge of opportunities available to them from an early age. "Since young people's occupational choices are constrained by their knowledge, the expansion of knowledge itself contributes to combating sex stereotyping in occupational choice" (Pilcher et al, 1988:63). It is here that action research initiatives such as the Women's Training Roadshow and the Girls and Occupational Choice project (Chisholm & Holland, 1986) provide an important base from which further initiatives can be built.

### **Trainees in the labour market**

We have seen that the YTS was an ambitious project, attempting to turn high levels of youth unemployment into an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the pattern of work entry for all 16 and 17 year old school-leavers. By providing a training structure that offers up to two years quality training youngsters would be helped back into work whilst simultaneously addressing Britain's chronic lack of skilled workers. It is logical to argue that if these measures were based on a sound understanding of the way in which young people made sense of the movement into the labour market, then YTS' integrity as a post-school system of training would be established. Falling numbers of school-leavers coupled with improved economic conditions could only serve to consolidate its structure but evidence of the Scheme's inability to reform the labour market points in the opposite direction.

The Scheme has had only limited success in reforming the way in which employers recruit and select new workers and the resulting segmentation of the labour market this produces. Factors of skill, sex and age combine to create heavily segmented local labour markets with each segment having its own entry requirement and its own pattern of subsequent job mobility (Ashton et al, 1987:168). The power of these factors are such that YTS has had only moderate success at expanding the opportunities open to the young, and

where it has had an impact this had been limited to the margins. The traditional recruitment of young people into labour intensive industries has been reproduced and attempts at opening up other opportunities in capital intensive industries have been less successful.

The limits of reform are clearly illustrated within industries. In areas of low unemployment, many engineering employers have chosen to remain outside of the Scheme fearing better qualified youngsters would be deterred from applying for places because of the association of YTS with second-rate opportunities. Even in Coventry, where levels of youth unemployment have remained high, there has been only a slow drift towards engineering employers becoming involved with YTS. Where they have been drawn into the Scheme some have participated more out of a sense of social obligation than out of any commitment. For others it has been used to support the first year or two of their existing apprenticeship provision and, paradoxically, the structure of the Scheme has actually been tailored to fit their own requirements.

This inability to modify the underlying mechanisms which structure young people's entry into work has resulted in the creation of what has been termed a "surrogate labour market" (Lee et al, 1987:138), mutually dependent and parallel with the wider labour market. As such YTS has come to replicate and not reform its structure and in doing so it has

"reproduced the segmentation of the

actual labour market in the sense that there were non-competing groups of young people recruited to YTS and a clear if complex hierarchy of schemes, occupations and placements" (ibid:144).

Young people's chances for quality training are therefore subject to a highly unequal range of opportunities which are reflected in the work experience placements, quality of training and chances of 'real jobs' offered by different schemes.

Roberts and Parsell (1989:5-6) have identified three main sets of processes which characterise this hierarchy of provision. The first is the use of the Scheme by a small number of employers to 'cream off' better qualified school-leavers through the prospect of a guaranteed job and attractive career prospects. Below this is a larger middle stratum of employers which creates a "contest sector" (ibid:6) in which school-leavers compete for the better quality opportunities on offer. Securing these places increases their prospects of being 'kept on' by their training or work experience providers, or more rarely of being taken on by employers outside of their schemes. And thirdly, composed mainly of community projects or training workshops, is the lowest stratum which serves a warehousing function and which provides "a casualised reserve of cheap labour" (ibid).

There are those youngsters who respond positively to the prospect of a Scheme which offers quality training, the rate for the job and good employment prospects. But it is unsurprising that the



majority have responded with considerable ambiguity. Although these young people 'choose' to train on the Scheme it is a choice firmly constrained by limited opportunities for 'real jobs', the fear of unemployment and pressure from anxious parents. Furthermore, for these youngsters the negative experience of schooling and the need for a regular income make further education an unrealistic option. It is to YTS and its chances of leading to subsequent jobs that these school-leavers are therefore compelled to look.

But whilst training the pull of the labour market means many trainees feel the urgent need to look for 'real jobs'. The result is chronic rates of early leaving where the vast majority are destined to enter jobs that offer little opportunity to continue training. This urgency to leave is further compounded by pressure from a training allowance well below comparable market rates, undermining youngster's self-perception as adult workers and generating considerable antagonisms within the family. When these factors are taken into consideration calls to invest in their own future through training have only a limited currency.

But we need to ask ourselves what dividends young people can reap from such an investment in the first place. School-leavers in the 1980s entered the labour market by five main routes: those who remain in full-time education for two years; those who spend an additional year in full-time education and then enter the labour market; those who go straight into the

labour market; those who experience both full-time education and the YTS; and those who enter the labour market directly via YTS (Roberts & Parsell, 1990). By far the best way of holding a job at 18 is to get one at 16 and the best way to achieve a job on leaving school is by having good qualifications. For those on YTS the prospects are much less sure.

Youngsters who enter YTS as an alternative to unemployment show an astute grasp of the labour market since unemployment at 16 tends to make subsequent job prospects even more problematic. Entry into YTS, however, has failed to challenge full-time education as a reliable route into work and trainees still suffer lower rates of employment and higher rates of unemployment than those who entered employment outside the Scheme (Roberts et al, 1989:20). Once on YTS youngsters face up to two years insecurity as employers or work experience providers decide whether to take them on, and 'graduates' of the Scheme continue to experience higher rates of unemployment than the rest of the workforce as a whole. For many YTS merely postpones the strong likelihood of unemployment and those that do enter jobs have to shoulder the additional burden of entering lower paid work than those making a more traditional transition. In this context young people's appraisal of the 'investment opportunity' appears a sober calculation.

### Youth training for the future

So can the current initiatives emerging from the Training Agency capture the imagination and enthusiasm of Britain's school-leavers? The research offers some tentative suggestions but the initial signs are not encouraging.

Youth Training does provide some significant points of contrast with its predecessor. According to the Government, "the youth training arrangements build upon the successes of YTS and incorporate major new flexibilities to meet a wide range of local needs both economic and individual (Hansard, 20/02/90, col. 639). The Government has identified the major differences as: the new emphasis on outputs; the new flexible design of individual schemes instead of a fixed national structure; schemes will no longer have to run for a fixed time period; all new entrants should have a course satisfying at least level 2 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) standard; allowance levels would now be based on age rather than cumulative time training; improved procedures for special training needs; additional help for youngsters to secure jobs after their training; extension of the guarantee to include youngsters whose entry into the labour market has been delayed; and greater financial discretion to use YT funds to respond to local needs.

But despite its flexible emphasis and the focus on "outputs and performance, much less on inputs and process" (Norman Fowler, then Secretary of State

for Employment, speech to Confederation of British Industry Conference, Harrogate, 21/11/89) there are important continuities that suggest YT will be unable to escape the 'vicious circle of low status' that dogged YTS. Youth Training is still to be organized by Managing Agents or other training providers, like employers, local authorities and voluntary organisations, and, as such, the provision of training places looks set to continue the pattern established by YTS. For the few there will be the opportunity to acquire quality training linked to enhanced job prospects but for the majority, a repetition of training dominated by low skilled work experience. Trainees are still to receive the current levels of first and second year training allowances, this time linked to age rather than the year of training, but publicly the Government is keen for employers to pay more towards the maintenance of trainees. Privately, they admit that contributions from employers are becoming increasingly harder to obtain (Guardian 23/05/90).

These problems look set to be compounded by changes to the funding arrangements for YT. Instead of paying training providers a direct fixed grant, YT is to be funded through individually negotiated contracts between the newly created Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) or the TA, and individual providers. In early 1990, the abrupt announcement of the termination of existing YTS training contracts, and their

replacement with newly negotiated ones, met with a storm of protests from many training providers (see Financial Times 17/04/90; 09/05/90; 30/07/90; Guardian 04/04/90). The concern caused by an announced 22% cut in grants from the TA (Financial Times 27/03/90) was further strengthened by reports from a leaked document from senior TA officials accepting that the real level of cuts would be between 30% and 50% (Guardian 23/05/90). As a result, the existence of many schemes, especially those catering for youngsters with special needs, are now under serious threat.

The Government has justified the cuts by pointing towards falling unemployment whilst urging employers to invest more of their own resources in training. However, the past training record of British employers accounts for the predicament the economy now faces and giving school-leavers access to quality training they need and want cannot be done on the cheap. It would make greater longer-term sense if the Government seized on the opportunity of falling numbers of school-leavers entering the labour market, by maintaining or adding to current levels of spending in a much needed effort to improve the quality and range of training experienced by the young.

Initiatives like the move towards "Training Credits" (Training Agency, March 1990b) for school-leavers appears unlikely to convince the majority of youngsters of the merits of training, despite the Government's optimism. Announced by Michael Howard,

Secretary of State for Employment, in a now familiar refrain, 'Training Credits' are heralded as,

"an important new departure in our policies for training young people. Its aim is to excite young people about the benefits of continuing in training and further education after they have left school and to raise the amount and quality of training provided by employers. The initiative has the potential to revolutionise attitudes to training in this country" (Hansard 27/03/90, col. 209-210)

Under this new initiative, to begin its pilot stage in April 1991, young people are to be issued with Training Credits, worth between £1500 and £2500, which can be exchanged for approved training with an employer or specialist training provider. Currently, 11 pilot schemes have been agreed, covering some 45,000 young people, which the Government hopes will offer a variety of projects so that different methods of providing Training Credits can be assessed (Training Agency, *ibid*).

Some of the pilots will offer credits to all 16 and 17 year old school-leavers in the areas and others will offer them on a selective basis. For example, apprentice or technician level training only, credits limited to small companies or sectors with skill shortages, or to support other areas of training provision. Employed youngsters will be able to use their credit to pay for training provided by their employers or can arrange appropriate training with a specialist provider. If the employer is reluctant to

release a young worker during the working day, the trainee can use the credit to buy training in their own time. Whether this in itself can 'excite young people' to train would appear open to some debate.

For the unemployed school-leaver, 'potential to revolutionize attitudes towards training' would appear overly optimistic. For those who choose to go back into further education, the college will receive the training credit instead of the normal subsidy from the LEA. However, without additional resources to aid those youngsters who would like to continue in further education, but who are prohibited by financial constraints, Britain's dismal record on encouraging youngsters to stay on in full-time education beyond 16 looks set to continue. For the many youngsters still eager to enter the labour market, the Training Credit can be used to realise the guarantee of a place on YT, still paying the minimum weekly allowance. For the vast majority of school-leavers, Training Credits would seem to represent merely a continuation with the training provision of the recent past.

There are modest signs that providing youngsters with an entitlement to quality training is creeping up the political agenda. The Labour Party has identified training as one of the "'commanding heights' of a modern economy" (Labour Party, 1990:11) and have incorporated the establishment of a National Training Fund into their future governmental commitments. The fund will be financed by central government and a

minimum 0.5% pay roll tax on those companies who refuse to train. What this could mean for Britain's minimum age school-leavers is still unclear but they have suggested replacing the YTS with a four year traineeship which would stretch over a young person's initial years in the labour market. For those in employment, this could be enforced by a legal requirement on employers to train their young workers to minimum standards. But the majority of youngsters still fail to find jobs on leaving school and without a clear commitment to providing them with quality training, linked to a clearly recognisable system of accreditation and the real prospect of getting a job, the signs are that youngsters will continue to remain deeply suspicious of attempts to encourage them to train.



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This thesis has been compiled and presented according to the 'Requirements for the Presentation of Research Theses', University of Warwick, 1990.

## APPENDIX A

FIFTH FORM QUESTIONNAIRE  
 PHIL MIZEN  
 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
 UNIVERISTY OF WARWICK

I am a research student at the Unviversity of Warwick, Department of Sociology, trying to collect information on what young people think about the Youth Training Scheme, trade unions and other related issues.

Below are a number of short questions about these issues which I would like you to answer in the spaces provided. If you need more space to write in fell free to attach another piece of paper but please remember to number the question you are answering!

This is not an exam to test your knowledge I wish merely to obtain your opinions on certain topics. **SO PLEASE WRITE IN AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE WHEN EXPRESSING YOUR THOUGHTS.** The results will be used to show what young people think about YTS and other issues but your individual reply will be treated as completely **CONFIDENTIAL.**

MANY THANKS!

1. Sex (tick one) Male \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 Female \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(1)

2. Which of the following ethnic groups would you say you belong to?

European \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 Afro/Carribbean \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
 Asian \_\_\_\_\_ | 3 |  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ | 4 |  
(2)

3. At the present time, do you have any part-time job(s) or anyway of earning a little extra money?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ MOVE ON TO Q4(a) | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ MOVE ON TO Q5 | 2 |  
(3)

4(a). In as much detail as possible could you tell me:  
 - tasks involved  
 - hours you normally worked  
 - how much you are paid

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4(b). Everything considered, do you think you are treated fairly by your employer(s)? (Please give examples of what you mean)

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4(c). Do you think you will continue to work for your employer after you have left school?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 No \_\_\_\_\_

1  
2  
 (4)

**NO MOVE ON TO Q6**

5. Have you ever had a part-time job?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 No \_\_\_\_\_

1  
2  
 (5)

6. What do you hope to be doing in one year from now?

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7. In detail what do you hope to be doing in 10 years time?

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8(a) Would you be willing to go onto a Youth Training Scheme?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 No \_\_\_\_\_

1  
2  
 (6)

8(b) What makes you say that?

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9(a). Do you think the Youth Training Scheme provides young people with a good training opportunity?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(7)

10(a). Do you think training on YTS would improve a 16 or 17 year olds chances of getting a job?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(8)

10(b). What makes you say that?

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11(a). Do you think that the level of allowance, currently \$28.50 per week, is a fair amount for a young person on a trainig scheme?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(9)

11(b). Why do you say that?

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11(c). If you do not think the current level of allowance is fair, could you please indicate what you think a fair amoung would be each week.

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12. It has been argued by some that young people are



pricing themselves out of jobs so employers can no longer afford to employ them. Do you think this is true?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(10)

13(a). Do you think the extension of the YTS to two years was a good idea?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(11)

13(b). Why do you think it was extended to two years?

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13. What do you think are the main advantages, if any, for a young person going onto the YTS?

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14. What do you see as the main disadvantages, if any?

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15(a). Did you know that the present government plans to withdraw the right to supplementary benefit for unemployed school-leavers, thus making the YTS the only other available option?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(12)

15(b). Do you think its a good idea?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_

1  
2  
(13)

15(c). In detail, why do you think this is happening?

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16. What political party, if any, would you have voted for at the June 1987 general election?

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17. Are you a member, or do you side with, any environmental or pressure groups?

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18(a). After leaving school do you think you would join a trade union given the opportunity?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ MOVE ON TO Q18(b)  
No \_\_\_\_\_ MOVE ON TO Q19(a)

1  
2  
(14)

18(b). In detail, why do you think you would join a trade union?

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**NO MOVE TO Q20**

19(a). Could you ever see yourself joining a trade union at some point in your career?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_

1  
2  
(15)

19(b). Why do you say that?

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20. Do you think that you are adequately informed about trade unions and the way they work?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  $\frac{|1|}{|2|}$   
 No \_\_\_\_\_ (16)

21. Some people argue that trade unions are too quick to go on strike. Would you agree with this?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  $\frac{|1|}{|2|}$   
 No \_\_\_\_\_ (17)

22. They also say that trade unions are too political and that this is a bad thing. Would you agree with this?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  $\frac{|1|}{|2|}$   
 No \_\_\_\_\_ (18)

23. It has been said that trade unions are in part responsible for the high levels of unemployment since they are pricing workers out of jobs with excessive pay demands. Do you think this is true?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  $\frac{|1|}{|2|}$   
 No \_\_\_\_\_ (19)

24. So during periods of high unemployment should trade unions moderate their pay claims?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  $\frac{|1|}{|2|}$   
 No \_\_\_\_\_ (20)

25. Another criticism is that they do not listen to the views of their membership. Do you think this is true?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  $\frac{|1|}{|2|}$   
 No \_\_\_\_\_ (21)

26(a). What do you see as the main problems facing young people as they enter the world of work?

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26(b). Do you think the that trade union concern themselves enough with the problems that young people face when entering the world of work?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(22)

26(c). Of the problems you have identified do you think that trade unions could play a role in helping overcome them?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(23)

26(d). How do you think they could do this?

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27. Do you think trade unions play an important role in protecting their members jobs?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(24)

28. Do you think trade unions play an important role in securing better pay and working conditions for their members?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(25)

29. Do you think that trade unions have a role to play in negotiations over pay and working conditions for workers or do you think it should be left to the individual worker to negotiate on their own?

Role for trade unions \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 Role for the individual \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |  
(26)

30. Do you think trade unions should play a part in the running of the organisation where their members work?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ | 1 |  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ | 2 |

(27)

31. Do you think trade unions should play a part in the running of the country?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

| 1 |

No \_\_\_\_\_

| 2 |

(28)

32. Do you think trade unions are more powerful or less powerful than management?

More powerful \_\_\_\_\_

| 1 |

Less powerful \_\_\_\_\_

| 2 |

(29)

AND FINALLY,

33. Could you name me as many trade unions as you can remember?

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Once again, MANY THANKS!

Phil Mizen, University of Warwick.

**APPENDIX B****INTERVIEW SCHEDULE****PRELIMINARIES**

- explain who I am
- explain project
- STRESS CONFIDENTIALITY

**TIME START****A. I'D LIKE TO BEGIN WITH A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR LAST YEARS AT SCHOOL**

- A1. When did you leave school?
- A2. Was that with any qualifications or exam passes? If yes, which and how many?
- A3. Whilst you were at school did you have any part-time job(s) or anyway of earning a little money?  
If yes: could you tell me about them?
- number
  - tasks involved
  - hours
  - pay
- A4. Everything considered do you think your employer(s) treated you fairly?

**B. SCHOOL TO WORK**

- B1. What did you want to do on leaving school?
- B2. What attracted you to that?
- B3. IF IN PART-TIME WORK - Do you think your experience of part-time jobs had any influence on what you wanted to do on leaving school?

**C. MOVING ON TO YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE YOUTH TRAINING SCHEME**

- C1. How much did you know about the YTS before you left school?
- C2. What were your opinions of it?
- C3. Why did you join a training scheme?
- C4. Was your present scheme the first one offered to you?  
If no: did you ever reject or decide not to take a scheme offered to you? - for what reasons?
- C5. Have you ever left a training scheme you started or asked for a transfer to another placement or scheme?

**D. MOVING TO YOUR PRESENT SCHEME**

- D1. Are you an employee or a trainee?
- D2. Could you tell me, in a little detail, just what your training scheme involves?
- work experience, tasks involved etc.
  - off-the-job training
  - technical skills

- social skills
- qualifications apart from the YTS certificate

D3. How much do you think your training is benefitting you?

D4. Do you think what you are learning would be useful in another job?

If yes: what sort of jobs?

D5. If trainee - How much is your allowance?

- top up
- travel, clothing expenses

If employee - how much is your weekly take home pay?

D6. Do you have any other source of income?

#### FOR TRAINEES ONLY

D7. Do you think it is fair reward for the work that you do?

D8. Is it enough for you to make ends meet?

D9. If you were asked how much you thought the allowance should be what would you say?

D10. Why that figure?

#### ALL

D11. Have you been told about health and safety regulations and what to do if there are any accidents?

D12. Have there been any accidents while you have been on your scheme; ones that you have been involved in or heard about?

D13. If you were unhappy about something on your scheme do you think you would complain about it?

D14. Are there any ways that you know of whereby trainees on your scheme can make their point of view known about how your scheme is going?

D15. Do you think trainees should have a way of making their views known? If yes: have you any ideas about how this should be organized?

D16. Are you looking for jobs outside your scheme at the moment? If yes: How?

D17. What sort of job would tempt you to leave YTS?

D18. Are you thinking of changing schemes at the moment? If yes: Why?

D19. Do you see yourself as staying on your training scheme for two years?

#### E. COMPULSORY TRAINING

E1. Did you know that the present government is introducing laws that take away the right to supplementary benefit from all under 18s thus making the YTS effectively compulsory for unemployed school-leavers?

E2. Why do you think this is happening?

E3. Do you think its a good idea?

E4. Should unemployed school-leavers have to go onto a training scheme whether they want to or not? Why do you

say that?

#### F. LEAVING YOUR TRAINING SCHEME

F1. What do you see as the main alternatives open to you when you leave your scheme?

F2. How useful do you think your training scheme will be in getting you a job?

F3. What do you think your jobs chances will be like after to have left your scheme?

#### G. LIVING AT HOME

G1. When you left school were you living at home? If yes: With whom?

G2. Do you still live at home? If yes: With whom?

G3. Do you give your parents any money for keep? If yes: How much?

G4. Are your parents interested in politics? - voting intentions, party membership, allegiances etc.

G5. Are they members of any trade unions? If no: have they ever been trade union members?

G6. Are they favourable towards trade unions?

#### H. YOUR THOUGHTS ON POLITICS

H1. Are you a member, or have you ever been a member, of any political party or pressure group, such as the Young Liberals, the National Front, Greenpeace or CND?

H2. Have you ever been to a meeting, demonstration or rally at which political or environmental issues have been the major topic?

#### NOW I'D LIKE TO FINISH WITH A FEW QUESTIONS OF THE TOPIC OF TRADE UNIONS

H3. On your training scheme have you had any contact with anybody to do with trade unions. Either to talk to you or to get you to join?

H4. Are you entitled to join a trade union?

H5. Are you currently a member of a trade union?

H6. If no: Could you ever see yourself joining a trade union?

H7. Are any of your friends members of trade unions?

H8. Do you think being in a trade union would be a good idea for a trainee?

H9. What do you think trade unions do for trainees?

H10. What do you think trade unions could do for trainees?

H11. Do you think you know enough about trade unions and the way they work?

H12. Have you ever been taught or have you ever learnt anything about trade unions and the way they work?

H13. It has been said that trade unions are in part responsible for the high levels of unemployment. Do you



think this is true?

H14. Now some people say that trade unions are too quick to strike. What do you think?

H15. So do you think that during periods of high unemployment trade unions should moderate their pay claims?

H16. Do you think that trade unions should be involved in politics?

H17. Another criticism of trade unions is that they do not listen to the views of their members. What do you think?

H18. Do you think being in a trade union would damage a workers' career prospects?

H19. Do you think being in a trade union would help safeguard a worker against future problems at work?

H20. Do you think trade unions play an important role in protecting their members jobs?

H21. Do you think trade unions have a role to play in the negotiations over pay and conditions for workers or do you think it should be left to the individual workers to negotiate on their own? Why do you say that?

H22. Do you think trade unions should have a say in the running of the organisation where their members work?

H23. Do you think trade unions should have a say in the running of the country?

H24. Do you think trade unions contribute to a more equal society?

**AND FINALLY**

H25. Do you think that trade unions are more powerful or less powerful than employers?

WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT QUITE A FEW ISSUES. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU FEEL YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION BEFORE WE FINISH?

ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK ME?

FINALLY, IF, AT A LATER DATE, I WANTED TO DO SOME FOLLOW UP WORK TO SEE HOW YOU HAVE GOT ON, WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TALK TO ME AGAIN?

IN THAT CASE WOULD YOU MING GIVING ME YOUR HOME ADDRESS AND, IF YOU HAVE ONE, YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER?

ONCE AGAIN, THANKS

TIME END	LENGTH
INTERVIEW NUMBER	DATE
PLACE OF INTERVIEW	NAME OF TRAINEE
SCHEME TITLE	
AGE	SEX
ETHNIC ORIGIN	ACCENT