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Wilson, Paul; Lincoln, RA

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CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1994 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNEMPLOYMENT

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QUT, BEAMS ROAD, CARSELDINE Q. 4034

EDITORS:

RICHARD HICKS

PETER CREED

DONNA KEOGH

JOHN TOMLINSON

Crime Impacts of Unemployment in the 1990s

PAUL WILSON
Professor and Dean
Humanities and Social Sciences
Bond University

ROBYN LINCOLN
Doctoral Student
Queensland University of Technology

There is a wealth of research and criminological enterprise that focus on the link between unemployment and crime. In this paper we will examine the relationship of crime and unemployment (especially as a bi-directional relationship) from time-series data, micro and macro-level analysis, and ecological studies and canvass some explanations posited for this relationship (with reference to social embeddedness and underclass arguments). We then discuss some current strategies and their consequences, and detail the crime impacts of unemployment in the 1990s.

Much of the discussion by politicians and policy-makers fails to address the social costs of unemployment in terms of its impact on crime. The approach to unemployment is generally to keep young people in schools, to provide training programs or to create jobs because being without work has such high psychological, health, social and economic costs. Underlying the rhetoric of this approach is clearly the fear of crime and the spectre of hordes of unemployed people roaming the streets, threatening our families, entering our houses and stealing our goods. Yet, the specifics of crime as they relate to unemployment are rarely addressed in the public and political arena. Most political posturing 'neglects crime as a consequence of long term unemployment' (Braithwaite & Chappell, 1994: 1). However, crime continues to cost Australia between $17 and $27 billion per year (Walker & Henderson, 1992). This figure, estimated by the Australian Institute of Criminology is a conservative one that does not take into account the black economy, and includes only direct costs (that is, it excludes court and legal fees and the social and personal costs of the results of violence and death).

In the field of criminology, there is no such neglect of unemployment as a criminogenic variable. There is a wealth of research literature that focuses on the link between unemployment and crime. The relationship has been established quite conclusively. Whether that relationship is a direct causal one, however, is less conclusive. To wade through this mass of empirical data, we will sample briefly the findings from time-series analyses that look at specific historical periods and their attendant crime and unemployment rates; note the results of micro-level studies that examine individual relationships between unemployment and offending behaviour; survey macro-level studies using aggregate prison or police data and the unemployment status of offenders; and summarise what ecological studies of particular locations conclude. Even then, we must note several caveats to the overall findings before concluding that there is a clear relationship between unemployment and crime. We then canvass two explanations for this relationship, in particular social embeddedness and underclass arguments. This bring us to the view that while we cannot say that unemployment causes crime we also cannot say that crime causes unemployment, but that there is a clear bi-directional relationship between the two. In conclusion, we discuss problems with current strategies and their consequences and present our rather pessimistic view of the crime impacts of unemployment in the 1990s.

DOES UNEMPLOYMENT CAUSE CRIME?

TIME-SERIES ANALYSIS

Historical examinations looking for coterminous periods where both high unemployment rates and high crime rates occur together have generally not been successful. There is considerable uncertainty from such analyses as to whether there is indeed a link between historical periods of high unemployment and increased crime trends (Mukherjee, 1981; Belknap, 1989; Crow et al, 1989). However, it is suggested that the explosion of violence in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s for example, that was not experienced in most other industrialised nations, was largely because of the 'sustained chronically higher unemployment rates' experienced in America (Braithwaite & Chappell, 1994: 2).

The most stable index of crime — homicide — decreased marginally in Australia this century up until World War II and now is slowly rising again (Braithwaite, 1990). Grabosky's (1977) study of crime in Sydney shows that serious offences declined from 1830 to 1860 and that there has been no massive increase in serious crime for the period 1920 to 1970. Most of the increasing trends overall relate to petty offences (usually traffic) and certainly to property offences rather than serious crimes of violence (Grabosky, 1977). So while crime rates do vary from time to time, there is often little that links them specifically to episodes of relatively higher unemployment rates.

It is exceptionally difficult to tease out the co-existence of unemployment and crime because of the different laws, and especially the different policing strategies, that operate at different time periods. As Braithwaite (1990: 384) reminds us, crime trends are directly related to 'enforcement activity' rather than to any underlying increase or decrease in offending rates. It is argued too, that during times of economic crisis there may be a tendency towards an increase in the punitiveness of criminal justice agencies (Braithwaite, 1990). While some commentators would predict an upsurge in crime figures during, or lagging behind, periods of economic crises, others acknowledge that enforcement activity and other social variables cut across this prediction.

The analyses of aggregate crime data, especially for juvenile offending, also need to take into account the proportion of young people in the population. The numbers of the Australian population in the 15–16 year age group peaked in 1987 — an increase of 25 per cent since 1971 and the numbers are now declining (Walker & Henderson, 1992). This 'echo' of the baby boomers has a direct relationship to the amount of property and other crime presently reflected in our crime figures and the proportion of young people in our population at any one time will influence both the unemployment figures and the crime statistics.

Unravelling the reasons for the inconclusive findings of time-series analyses is difficult. One explanation is that during economic depression where all economic indicators are poor, crime rates remain low. During economic recession, where only some economic indicators are depressed, then crime will continue at a higher level. We suggest that aspects of relative deprivation come into play. If most people are badly off and there are less goods and money, as in a depression, then alienation and aggression will be minimised. During a recession however, when some individuals are relatively better off and there is some property and cash, alienation and aggression will be experienced by those not sharing in the wealth (Wilson & Lincoln, 1993). Essentially, this is a Durkheimian view of anomie and rapid social change but serves as an explanation for why time-series analyses do not show a clear-cut relationship between unemployment and crime. Or one can take an opportunity-rational choice approach and show that offenders make deliberate choices about the availability of goods and the ease with which they can 'redistribute' them.

Even though time-series data are inconclusive about any causal link between unemployment and crime, more recent studies that use 'lagged unemployment' measures to account for rising crime rates, especially property crimes, have met with success (see Hagan, 1993). In addition, more recent and thorough reviews of the time-series literature linking unemployment and crime have demonstrated that the link does exist but that it requires sophisticated data to support it (see Braithwaite & Chappell, 1994; Chiricos, 1987).

MICRO-LEVEL STUDIES

When we move from historical examinations of unemployment to individual cases, then the relationship between unemployment and crime remains unclear as a causal one. There are two main streams in the individual-level studies. One that examines motivational aspects to crime and states that material deprivation motivates individuals to commit crimes, especially property crime (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). The other focuses on 'personality' type explanations that relate levels of self-control, for example, with the propensity to commit criminal acts (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), where lack of self-control leads to frustration and aggression, that in turn results in drug use or personal and property crime.

Many of these individual-level studies are based on self-report survey material and tend to focus on juvenile delinquency rather than adult crime. Yet, from survey data at one point in time, or even panel data over lengthy periods, it is not always possible to judge whether an individual was in or out of work at the precise time of offending (Hagan, 1993). What confounds most of these studies is the fact that the onset of delinquency and unemployment do not occur at the same time. Researchers would be hard pressed to find in their samples, many thirteen year-olds who are unemployed, but they will find plenty of young people of that age who have been delinquent. So the onset of delinquency pre-dates the experience of unemployment.

Consistent criminological findings are that crime is largely committed by young males with a peak in early adulthood and a decline after the age of 21 years to the point of cessation by the age of 25 years. Criminal career profiles usually show a peak around age 15 for property offences, another at approximately 18 years for traffic offences, while more serious and violent crimes, white-collar and drug-related offences peak at 20 years. Thereafter offending, even for traffic violations, decreases and usually ceases by 25 years (Walker, 1992; Youth Justice Coalition, 1990). At the individual level then, the span of the criminal career may not be influenced by episodic nor even entrenched periods of unemployment.

And when we do address juvenile offending specifically, the links between unemployment and

offending become a little less certain. Despite the fact that social class is highly correlated with official offending behaviour, for juvenile offending the relationship is not as strong and often the converse is found. This can have a lot to do with the measures criminologists and other social scientists use. Farnworth and her colleagues (1994) demonstrate that a status attainment model is useless in looking at social class for young people and measures of offence rates need to be disaggregated before a relationship can be discerned. They demonstrate that measures of class using employment, income and education combined with omnibus measures of delinquency (including non-serious minor offences) are inadequate. What we should be examining is the unchanging condition of the underclass to predict serious street crimes (Farnworth et al, 1994). We have to be talking about entrenched long-term unemployment and sustained serious street crime before the correlations will hold.

So, while at the individual level we can state that young people will generally 'grow out of crime' it is no longer clear that they will 'grow out of unemployment'. Future offender profiles may show the extension of the age at which offending remains high. However, there is no doubt that a link between unemployment and crime exists in the lives of individuals but, once again, we cannot conclude from the micro-level studies that unemployment causes crime.

MACRO-LEVEL RESEARCH

At the macro-level, using aggregate data, the relationship between unemployment and crime becomes much clearer. Reviews of prison statistics consistently find that unemployment is the second most striking characteristic of offenders for both juveniles and adults in Australia (Braithwaite, 1990). In our gaols, only about 25 per cent are employed at the time of their incarceration (Walker & Salloom, 1993). Unemployment and poverty clearly influence homicide rates in North America (Belknap, 1989; Duster, 1987); they have done so with murder rates generally in Australia (Najman, 1980); and with rates of serious assault and murder in Aboriginal communities (Wilson, 1987). Cross-national studies too, conclude that income inequality is strongly linked to homicide figures (Braithwaite, 1979; Braithwaite & Braithwaite, 1980; Messner, 1986).

A recent study by the Criminal Justice Commission in Queensland (*The Bulletin*, 4 March 1994: 1) found that more than 40 per cent of all suspects were unemployed when they committed their offence and that the 'unemployment rate for suspects was around six times that for the Queensland population' as a whole. While the report shows that the murder rate in Queensland had not increased overall in the past decade, it did demonstrate clearly the link between economic hardship and violent crimes.

However, macro-level studies that rely on police or prison figures also contain deficiencies. They can never be described as accurate because of the lack of uniformity in the collection processes and because often these figures identify crimes rather than individual offenders. Such 'official statistics are notoriously inadequate' (Mukherjee & Dagger, 1990). Yet at the aggregate level, we can unequivocally state that unemployment does play a significant role in crime statistics.

ECOLOGICAL STUDIES

There is also fairly consistent evidence from cross-sectional ecological studies to show that urban areas that have high levels of unemployment or concentrations of people with lower socio-economic status experience higher crime rates than do more affluent suburbs (Braithwaite, 1990). A major ecological analysis was recently undertaken in New South Wales to examine the relationship between offending rates and social characteristics of local government areas. Strong correlations between offence statistics and indicators like unemployment, proportion of single-parent families and the general level of poverty were consistently found (Devery, 1991). These findings replicate numerous studies, especially those from the United States, that show that for urban centres where crime is high then unemployment is also high (Shaw & McKay, 1969; Chiricos, 1987).

Further, the effect of living in such economically depressed and unemployment-ridden neighbourhoods has an impact that increases the likelihood of crime 'over and above the summed effects of the individual disadvantages of the people living in those neighbourhoods' (Braithwaite & Chappell, 1994: 3). Hagan (1993: 466) takes this one step further to suggest that 'concentrations of poverty and joblessness are criminogenic'. So, from the ecological studies we are finally reaching a point where we can state that unemployment causes crime, but this still needs to be tempered by the fact that other social characteristics are involved (for example, poverty, race and class distributions).

From the time-series data, the micro- and macro-level studies and the ecological approach, we can reach the conclusion that unemployment and crime are linked, and some commentators would be bold enough to suggest a direct causal relationship. As a generalisation then, we would agree with the majority of researchers that there is a relationship between unemployment and crime generally, and unemployment and crime specifically. But a great deal more conceptual clarification is needed before we can move much beyond this gross relationship (Wilson & Lincoln, 1992). We also need to consider some other factors that influence this relationship, especially when dealing with juvenile offending.

It is evident that the unemployment-crime link is predicated on social and cultural assumptions that arise from research that focuses almost exclusively on young males. Young males are seven times more likely to be charged than girls (Youth Justice Coalition, 1990), or they account for somewhere between 80 and 90 per cent of all juvenile offending. When Naffine and Gale (1989) examined the Australian data they found that high unemployment

among females was at no stage mirrored in the female crime figures. Clearly, it is from male offending studies that criminologists have developed their theories about the anti-social inclinations of juveniles who have been excluded from the workforce.

The effects of high unemployment rates on young females are complex and little understood. Young unemployed females, do not appear to channel their marginal status into crime. They tend to be more philosophical about their unemployment status for when young unemployed females were interviewed, 'fatalistic expressions were a striking feature' (Alder, 1986: 217). Box and Hale (1985: 215) argue that unemployed women may 'slip back and take up the wife/mother social role'. This is supported by data from a recent study in New South Wales showing that low job expectations and long-term unemployment are linked to high teenage pregnancy rates (Wiseman, 1992). This scenario may lead to an increase in petty social security frauds — either because of increased vigilance and targeting by public servants or through an actual increase in the underlying rate (Easteal, 1989). It may also lead to higher rates of alcohol and drug consumption, mental illness and suicide by young women that reveal different patterns to those of young unemployed males.

The influence of unemployment on crime is most clearly seen when examining youthful offending for males. The Youth Justice Coalition in New South Wales (1990) carefully examined the social indicators correlating with high juvenile offending. Of all the social indicators studied, the most significant were those relating to the activities and future prospects of young people. For example, a high correlation was found to exist between juvenile offending, youth unemployment and non-participation in education. The Coalition noted the pernicious effect of the combination of lack of education and lack of employment opportunities.

DOES CRIME CAUSES UNEMPLOYMENT?

If we are unable to reach a firm conclusion that unemployment causes crime, then what of the corollary? Even if we cannot establish cause at the macro-level, we are certainly implying that a sequence exists — the condition of unemployment is present before the condition of criminal activity. Yet, the problems at the individual-level of analysis in locating juveniles who have had no experience of delinquency before they enter a state of unemployment leads us to look at the converse relationship. Further, ethnographic studies looking at gangs and drug cultures suggest that 'experience with crime precedes and sometimes entirely replaces conventional experiences with work, especially in contexts of concentrated poverty that provide limited employment opportunities for minority youths' (Hagan, 1993: 470).

Hagan (1993) certainly believes that this converse is true. 'There are good reasons to believe that delinquency may precede unemployment in the lives of individuals' (Hagan, 1993: 467). He draws on the work of Granovetter (1992) to take a social embeddedness approach. Generally, the approach states that for some individuals and groups there is a lack of informal networks to gain access to legitimate labour markets. In this scenario, no amount of short-term interview skill training, nor resume preparation will change the nature of the outcome. This assumption is based on a wealth of research that links parental criminal activity to that of the next generation, or parental status attainment to that of their offspring. Young people whose families have been involved in criminal activity are embedded in social networks that provide contacts with crime, not with the traditional labour market.

Hagan (1993) thereby establishes that crime causes unemployment and that it is a temporal sequence. This approach helps to explain why the time-series data do not show a direct relationship because the effect will be lagged. It also does not obviate the findings of the ecological studies because concentrations of poverty and unemployment enhance the social embeddedness argument. What it does do is discount the need for the micro-level approach that says that crime results from motivational factors or personality deficits within the individual.

This approach helps us to explain a paradox that we have pondered for some time. In the United States some studies in urban centres suggest that juvenile drug dealers do not earn any more than those employed in fast-food industries (Wilson, 1990). Yet, despite a surplus of jobs in fast-food outlets and the apparent relative ease of obtaining them, thousands of young people deliberately turn to crime. The Youth Justice Coalition (1990) subscribe to this process of exclusion from home, school and work that keeps young people often without alternatives to crime.

This is not to deny the social conditions within which young people have to make such choices. The Youth Justice Coalition (1990) found that young people in Bourke, for example, had far fewer options that those in Willoughby, where large numbers of youth are both employed and attend educational institutions. Nor should a social or criminal embeddedness argument be used to deny any action. As Braithwaite and Chappell (1994) note, a Job Compact may be one positive way for employers to take on those who have become embedded in criminal activities.

DOES UNEMPLOYMENT CREATE AN UNDERCLASS?

As noted above, the crime-causes-unemployment argument does not detract from ecological and macro-level studies that relate socio-economic conditions to criminal activity. The ecological research has been extended to examine more closely the relationship between a cluster of factors like poverty, minority race and lower SES and the presence of unemployment. This is the 'underclass' argument (Wilson, 1987).

In the United States, William Julius Wilson has argued forcefully that the number of poverty areas increased sharply during the 1970s with the proportion of poor within them rising also (Wilson, 1987). Wilson links these changes to the structural transformation of central cities from manufacturing to service centres and from the demographic transformation of cities from majority to minority populations. The growing concentration of the poor in inner city areas creates a social environment lacking the institutions, roles and values conducive to success in the larger society. Crime, drug-taking and a culture of violence are the results of these demographic and social moves. In turn, this further 'criminogenises' those areas into a concentration of the urban underclass.

American studies, more or less, confirm an increase in the distribution and population of underclass areas (Ricketts & Sawhill, 1988; Massey & Eggers, 1990). Though no similar studies have been conducted in this country, the work of Polk and Alder (1986) suggests that there has been a growth in marginal underclass in Australia. Certainly, we have seen similar structural changes to those in the United States, such as the relocation of industries to outlying industrial estates and the largest single decline in the youth labour market in the last 25 years (Sweet, 1991).

In addition, a massive recession in rural areas is daily adding more Aborigines to an underclass already heavily populated by Aboriginal youth. Conservative estimates place the Aboriginal youth unemployment figure at over half of the Aboriginal labour force (Miller, 1991). And despite limitations on the reliability of census data regarding Aboriginal work status and the seasonal nature of rural employment, this position reflects a decline in employment for Aboriginal youth in the intercensal period 1981–86 of almost 15 per cent (Miller, 1991). Heavy drinking, gambling, assault and drug-taking marked this underclass in the past (Wilson, 1987) and it is not unreasonable to suggest that as this underclass grows, so will these activities.

According to a recent report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (*The West Australian,* 4 February 1994) there are two million Australians 'caught in a poverty trap'. After housing costs were deducted from income there were one in ten of the population living below 'the breadline' in 1990 and that this number was a 20 per cent increase over the past decade. The AIHW (1993) reports an increase in the numbers of homeless people, a decrease in the income of single-parent families and an increase in the waiting lists for public housing. They note that levels of child abuse and the number of young people under care and protection orders had also risen as a result of this poverty trap.

The Australian Government recognises the place of the underclass in its white paper on employment and growth. The paper deals with 'how in the last years of the century those who through recession and restructuring have been left on the margins can return to the mainstream of our national life' (Australian Government, 1994: 1). In particular, it singles out the long-term unemployed and the 'truly disadvantaged' (Australian Government, 1994: 3). With conservative estimates of 350,000 being unemployed for more than one year (Australian Government, 1994), the underclass arguments have more cogency than ever before. The government's white paper does recognise that significant structural changes in the labour market have had a profound and irreversible effect on the employment prospects of unskilled young people in particular.

There are many opponents to this underclass view who argue that it places disadvantaged groups in a position of inevitability, a never-ending cycle, a label from which escape is not possible. We would agree with others however, who suggest that this is indeed the case — it is long-term and entrenched — and why it is important to examine the consequences for the underclass. One caveat to this though, is that the term 'underclass' is often used synonymously with high crime rates so the underclass implies criminality. We eschew this approach for it adds little to our search for causes. Overall, what is most clear from the research evidence is that single-factor explanations for crime are inadequate or at the very least, suffer from limitations. Crime itself is a multifaceted category of offending and needs to be disaggregated before any uni-dimensional factor like unemployment can be said to explain much of the statistical variance.

DOES UNEMPLOYMENT LEAD TO VICTIMISATION?

UNEMPLOYED AS VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Not only are offenders likely to be unemployed but victims of crime tend to be unemployed as well. 'In Australia the evidence suggests that the poor, and particularly the unemployed, are the most likely victims' of crimes such as murder, rape, assault and theft (Braithwaite, 1990: 379). There is considerable evidence to suggest that homeless and unemployed youth are increasingly likely to be victims of violence (National Committee on Violence, 1990). This confirms earlier research demonstrating that the unemployed experience a level of victimisation far in excess of that experienced by other groups (Braithwaite and Biles, 1979). As Halstead (1992: 3) confirms: 'the combination of family upheaval, loss of employment options and lack of income support contributes to stresses which place young people at risk of exposure to physical violence both within and outside the home, with limited opportunities to make choices which could remove them from the threat of victimisation.'

UNEMPLOYED AS VICTIMS OF HARASSMENT

The consequences of being young and unemployed or not in full-time schooling includes greater contact with the criminal justice system, not only as offenders and victims, but in terms of interaction with the

police. The National Youth Affairs Research Scheme report on juveniles in the justice system (Alder et al, 1992) comprised a sample where almost one-third were unemployed. Indeed, only one per cent of the entire youth sample were in full-time paid work. The study found that for marginal youth — those not in employment or education — there was a much greater likelihood of being stopped by police (96 per cent), taken to police stations and being locked up. Of the marginal youth in this study, 56 per cent reported being handled roughly by the police (including verbal and physical assaults). In tum, the police section of the NYARS survey confirmed that almost half the police found that street kids were difficult to deal with. The police felt generally that marginal youth had little respect for the police and that the amount of respect shown towards the police appeared to have an effect on the outcome of the interaction. Over 80 per cent of the police reported using force on young people at times, and to be fair, 98 per cent of police reported being abused verbally or physically by young people. It follows that young people in marginal positions had less positive attitudes towards the police.

The marginal youth in the NYARS study were separated out from those of Aboriginal or Islander background, but similar results were found for Aboriginal youth. Many studies have detailed the harassment, discrimination and abuse experienced by young Aborigines (Gale et al, 1990; Cunneen & Robb, 1987; Cunneen, 1991). Other problems arise for marginal youth like access to legal resources and being unsuccessful in obtaining bail and other conditions. The consequences of being unemployed and being taken into the criminal justice system exacerbate the processing. Alder and her colleagues (1992) found that marginal youth are targeted and harassed by the police. Like the findings for Aboriginal youth (Wundersitz et al, 1992) they are more likely to be arrested rather than cautioned; more likely to be processed by a court rather than given a softer option; and more likely to be incarcerated rather than fined or given a community service order.

Further to examining the direct link between unemployment and crime, there is a wealth of criminological literature that takes unemployment as one of many variables under investigation. Larry Sherman's (1992) work for example — a series of studies on domestic violence in USA — shows that using arrest for detaining a domestic violence offender was the best option for reducing repeat assaults. However, further refinement of the research model showed that arrest of a domestic violence offender only had an impact where the offender was employed. For the unemployed offender, arrest led to greater recidivism and greater violence in individual episodes. Clearly, greater collateral damage or shaming occurs for those in the working group but there is less to lose and more opportunity for reprisals among those who are not in paid work. If we are to take the pessimistic view that the class divisions in Australian society are to be between the working and the non-working then policing policies and practices need to take account of the different outcomes of measures such as arrest in specific circumstances like domestic assault. We also need to examine the policies and practices that lead to discrimination and harassment of unemployed youth.

ARE PROGRAMS CRIME-EFFECTIVE?

It is not our task here to review the various programs and schemes that have been instituted to reduce youth unemployment. Under Whitlam we had the National Employment and Training Scheme (NEAT). Then we had the Regional Employment and Development Scheme (RED). Finally, we saw the abolition of the under 18-year-olds unemployment benefit by the Hawke Government, and of course, 'Priority One'. Somewhere in there were Newstart and Wage Pause and we still have SYETP, CDEP and several other mnemonics. There is no lack of innovation. It is certain that those of you who work at the coal-face and have to deal with and implement this constantly changing array of programs and schemes are exhausted by these ever-changing scripts. As ACOSS (*The Australian,* 5 May 1994) points out, we have had many initiatives in the past but have been let down by their implementation. The key point though is one raised by Rob White (1991), that the ideas of equality and redistribution of wealth that flourished under Whitlam have been replaced by the negative philosophical concept of the 'deserving poor'.

What this has meant for young people is abundantly clear from the available statistics. The amount of spending on job training for unemployed young people has plunged by more than two-thirds over the last eight years (ACOSS, 1991). Young unemployed people now wait twice as long for income support which, according to ACOSS, has fallen by up to 60 per cent for some (ACOSS, 1991). And, there has been a significant decline in the number of unemployed people who are receiving income support (ACOSS, 1991). So less young people are receiving benefits, when they do they are receiving less money and they have to wait longer to receive it. Do we really believe that, given these circumstances, some young people will not rob and bash and even kill in order to survive?

The white paper promises that the job search allowance will be replaced by a youth training allowance as part of the youth training initiative (YTI). There will be an increase in income support while young people are in training or education (Australian Government, 1994). Largely the $6.5 billion worth of remedies in Keating's announcement are those that we have heard before or variations on old themes: job compacts for long-term unemployed, work placements, case management, job search assistance and more training and education. The white paper is about more jobs, more education and training, less social security as a disincentive, more international trade, less union restrictions, and micro-economic and industry reforms. Despite these sug-

gested changes, it is highly unlikely that there will be an increase in full-time employment for 15 to 19 years olds that compensates for the magnitude of job losses in the past (Sweet, 1991). While the strategy offers to broaden the social safety net it does little to make those structural changes needed to secure jobs for the future.

In terms of crime reduction, programs that provide short-term work and little or no training have a very low impact (Potas et al, 1990). Most programs have not undergone very much systematic evaluation in Australia making it difficult to judge their effectiveness. Windschuttle (1986) reports that intensive schemes that provide basic skills plus some specialised skills are the most successful. In reviewing programs both here and overseas, Potas, Vining and Wilson (1990) found that the 1970s Job Corp program in the USA was one of the few that had been rigorously evaluated. It comprised six to twelve months of residency with basic and vocational skills training aimed at disadvantaged youth. The evaluation showed a reduction in recidivism and ancillary social benefits (Potas et al, 1990). However, the scheme no longer operates.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF CRIME IN THE 1990S?

Pessimistic views of a rise in unemployment and its attendant problems are not recent. Theobold (1965, cited in Windschuttle, 1979) predicted a rise in unemployment in industrialised nations in the post-war era. He saw the emergence of three distinct groups:

- a large number of people totally unemployed and subsisting on government schemes designed merely to ensure their survival;
- a majority working shorter hours, earning sufficient income for an adequate living; and
- a small group earning high incomes and working long hours.

It would seem that this scenario has indeed come to pass. We concur with this bleak outlook, that there will be greater inequality and a small group of the very well-off in Australia; a majority working part-time and barely surviving or in other words, those who are underemployed and underpaid; and a large band of the underclass who are restricted from access to the legitimate labour market. If this is the case, then no matter how sophisticated our programs and schemes are they will never alleviate the situation for those 'truly disadvantaged'.

The white paper on employment and economic growth aims for an unemployment rate of five per cent by the end of the year 2000 (Australian Government, 1994). Labour market programs are not easy to design and to implement, but we strongly urge the Federal Government to be committed to developing programs, to evaluating them rigorously and to be determined to see them through. We are apparently prepared to spend $6.5 billion on the white paper strategies while crime continues to cost between $17 and $27 billion per year (Walker, 1992). Despite the millions of dollars allocated to such programs, governments don't appear keen to want to know 'what works' and in preference, keep changing our focus of attention. We have previously described this as 'a cyclical rush of good intentions' (Potas, Vining and Wilson, 1990: 69). So one of our key concluding recommendations is that no matter what is proposed and what is implemented, these programs must be rigorously evaluated and part of such analysis should address the impact of the programs on crime reduction or recidivism rates.

However, it is also clear that we cannot rely solely on market-driven growth to create jobs for those most in need (Braithwaite and Chappell, 1994). It will not address the long-term unemployed, those recently released from prisons, those in disadvantaged or underclass communities, nor those currently working in criminal careers. Such policies will leave many without access to work and will only result in rising crime trends.

Braithwaite (1979, 1991) provides a compelling argument that crime in the suites arises because certain people have great wealth and power; crime in the streets, on the other hand, arises when others have little wealth or power. Despite the decreasing unemployment rate in recent months, it is clear that government policies and structural change have resulted in an increasing redistribution of the wealth of the nation to the rich and powerful. Now, borrowing from Braithwaite (1979, 1991), anyone who believes that young unemployed males will sit passively back and accept their position in Australian society will be sadly disappointed. Lacking both political and economic power, unemployed young people will become increasingly involved in a whole range of what sociologists often refer to as 'marginal activities' — heavy alcohol and drug consumption, prostitution, petty offending, and we believe, more serious crimes of violence. The criminogenic forces driving them towards these activities will be hastened by the very same regulatory or control mechanisms that society implements in order to attempt to contain their deviancy.

However, where young people are concerned we wish to urge caution about the link between unemployment and crime so as not to create 'moral panics' (Cohen, 1973) about hordes of unemployed youth roaming the streets. An average criminal is most likely to be a white-collared business executive who has breached a regulatory law such as fraud, or who has caused occupational deaths or environmental damage. Yet, those who sit in our gaols are 'likely to be poor, unemployed and black' (Braithwaite, 1990: 389). One corollary of the increasing rates of juvenile offending in relation to unemployment is that we should also expect more crimes by the powerful. When social inequality is at its peak then both suite crimes and street crimes will increase (Braithwaite, 1991). Yet, once again, those who are arrested or imprisoned are likely to be young, male and unemployed. The present focus on 'law and

order' will exacerbate the attention placed on young people and crime, and in particular the young unemployed.

What this means is an extraordinary waste of young people's lives. It also means that there will be more and more attempts to control marginal young people through organised interventions into their lives and communities (White, 1991). Unemployed young people will, we suspect, become more and more visible on the streets and this in turn will lead to increased police and welfare agency crack-downs. By raising the spectre of the unemployed underclass, we wish to emphasise that the causes are structural and demographic changes, not deficits that are within individuals.

We would anticipate that increased young male unemployment will influence serious assault, rape and domestic violence rates. Increasingly, women will become the victims of the humiliation felt by young males as a result of their unemployment (Braithwaite, 991). Data suggest too (Naffine and Gale, 1989) that male break and entering offences will increase with increasing youth unemployment.

The scenario we paint from the research evidence is bleak. It includes:

- increases in offending rates for serious crimes by young males, especially serious assault, domestic assault and sexual assault;
- increases in non-serious property offences and drug and alcohol use by young unemployed males;
- increases in victimisation rates of the young unemployed who are most likely to be on the streets and vulnerable;
- increases in alcohol and drug-taking, mental illness, suicide, young pregnancies and social security frauds by young unemployed females;
- increased targeting by law enforcement agencies of marginalised young people as calls for 'law and order' reach another peak;
- increases in those in the underclass taking up criminal careers as other options are closed to them; and, importantly,
- increases in white collar crime as those in the suites attain more relative wealth and power.

The lesson is clear. If we continue to have an underclass that grows in both numerical strength and in the nature of its entrenchment, then we should expect crime and violence rates to escalate. This is an inescapable conclusion. Demographic composition, in particular the declining numbers in the adolescent age group (15-25 years) will be the only factor that offers some protection from a total blow-out in crime in the foreseeable future in this country.

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