

**Rights of Passage:
Social Change and the Transition from Youth to Adulthood**

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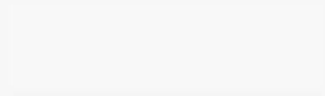
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To my parents, Ann and Hew.

Declaration

This thesis is the original work of the named author.



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Abstract

The thesis is a study of change in the transition from youth to adulthood in contemporary Britain. Through an analysis of data collected in a survey of young adults and their parents, undertaken in conjunction with a critical appraisal of more general evidence on the organisation of employment and life cycle processes, the thesis explores the social organisation of dependency and obligation. Following the recession and mass unemployment in the early 1980s there has been an increasing interest in the consequences of economic change for life cycle processes. Several writers have explored the question of whether employment restructuring has disrupted the attainment of adult lifestyles, and citizenship rights, amongst recent cohorts of young people. Research, however, has reached contradictory conclusions over the significance of economic change for patterns of transition to adulthood. Another problem is the failure of research to locate youth adequately in relation to the social structure. Further, the coherence of gender processes in the organisation of transition has been obscured, since the life cycles of men and women are conventionally seen to be structured around different principles. It is an argument of the thesis that these problems are related, and arise from an inadequate consideration of the interrelations which give meaning to youth and transition as *life cycle stages*. Existing studies of family related life cycle transitions and studies of the youth labour market both embody, and reflect, a conceptual division between 'social' and 'economic' processes. This division, however, does not reflect real processes. The framework developed in the thesis offers an integrated analysis of life cycle dynamics and economic processes, through which changes in the organisation of transitions from youth to adulthood are explained.

1. Introduction

The subject of this thesis is change in the transition from youth to adult status. Research in the area has been dominated by a concern with the consequences of economic restructuring on experience within this life cycle phase. The research reported here started with a question shared by several other commentators: what are the consequences of economic change, in particular changing structures of employment and labour demand, for the transition from youth to adulthood? In the course of the research it became apparent that this question, and the ways in which it is variously formulated and addressed, is unhelpful. It suggests a causality from employment restructuring to life cycle relations which entails a division between 'economic' and 'social' processes. As a consequence, research into youth in transition has failed to develop a coherent explanation of the relationship between life cycle processes and economic change.

Some of the problems which arise are reflected in recent criticisms, which charge youth research with a failure to locate youth, as a meaningful social category, within the structures and values of society (Jones, 1988; see also Ashton and Lowe, 1991; Chisholm, 1990). This points, correctly, to a remarkable impasse. It brings into question the efficacy of understandings which operate with an 'unlocated' version of youth. The failure to 'locate' youth does not arise from neglect. On the contrary, the problem has been important in shaping research agendas. 'Youth' has been problematised, although it will be argued inadequately so, in efforts to explain its social construction, and its relationship to 'adult' forms of inequality, to citizenship and to economic change. Quickly, however, such reconstructions fall back onto a division between separate spheres, the 'social' and the 'economic', 'youth' and 'adult', and locating youth in relation to general processes becomes a post hoc affair. To define youth as a category and then to acknowledge a failure to locate it suggests that the category has attained precedence over the relations which give it social meaning. This thesis argues that an elucidation of social change in the experience of youth, and in patterns of transition from youth to adulthood, requires a wider interpretation of youth as a life cycle stage than that offered by contemporary commentators.

Youth research in the 1980s was shaped by the experience of recession and mass unemployment at the beginning of the decade. Some writers suggested that the collapse in job opportunities amongst young people undermined traditional routes to independence and adult status (eg. Willis, 1984, 1985; Williamson, 1985). This hypothesis was taken up and explored by those interested in the 'social' consequences of economic insecurity amongst young people. Previous research on the transition from school to work was overtaken by an interest in life cycle trajectories, and in the consequences of economic change for the organisation and timing of family related life cycle events. In such accounts, employment is seen to underwrite transitions from dependence to independence and adult lifestyles through a series of status transitions, specifically leaving the parental home, cohabitation, marriage and parenthood. Much of this research has focused on the experience of the 1980s, comparing the timing of life cycle transitions amongst unemployed and employed young people, and comparing their experience with that of cohorts seen to experience 'normal transitions' during the 1950s and 1960s, decades of full employment. Contradictory conclusions have emerged as to the consequences of economic change for the transition to adulthood. Some writers argue that employment restructuring has, at least for some groups, underlain a prolonging of dependency at the parental home (eg. Wallace, 1987; Harris, 1988), and others maintain that economic change is not really significant to the attainment of adult status (eg. Hutson and Jenkins, 1989).

Behind the ambivalence over the nature of change in transitions to adulthood, which characterises the sociological literature, is a curious neglect of evidence on patterns of demographic change. The neglect is surprising because the demographic data demonstrates aggregate level changes in the timing of marriage and childbearing, precisely those life cycle events which are identified in the youth literature as labelling the 'upper end' of youth and of the transition to adult status. However, recent research into youth in transition has relied heavily on ethnographic and micro level evidence and has focused on the experience of the 1980s (eg. Coffield, 1986; Wallace, 1987a; Hutson and Jenkins, 1989). Hypotheses of delay have been explored in relation to the economic and political events of the decade but national level demographic evidence

demonstrates a reversal, since the early 1970s, of a long term trend to younger ages at marriage and parenthood. In other words, the sorts of changes envisaged as a consequence of the employment crisis of the early 1980s, principally amongst the most disadvantaged, were already in train across the general population. The contradictory conclusions which have emerged from youth research can be traced, in part, to the gap between macro and micro level analyses and the associated failure of youth research to relate its hypothesis of delay in household and family formation, as a consequence of employment crisis, to the practice of delay in family formation relative to previous cohorts manifest in the 1970s.

Running in parallel with the neglect of demographic explanation is the limited engagement with historical change in the organisation of the family and, in particular, the family life cycle. There has been little consideration of the processes underlying changes in family structure or in the organisation of family resourcing amongst its members. Much of the youth debate concerns the undermining of claims by young people to adult lifestyles, and the increasing emphasis of government policy on parental responsibility for young adults without independent means. Change in the organisation of the family has been described in terms of a privatisation of unemployment and insecurity amongst young people where parents are increasingly expected to meet the costs of extended periods of dependency amongst their young adult children (eg. Jones, 1987; Harris, 1988; Hutson and Jenkins, 1989). This is an important element of changes in social security legislation but it is only a partial picture, reflecting a particular aspect of change in the organisation of dependency and obligation at the level of the household. More general processes of change in the organisation of the household as an economic unit have been sidelined in these accounts. The emphasis on employment and a wage as the key to independence and adulthood has led to a partial view of family related life cycle transitions, where these are explained in relation to the 'sphere' of paid employment but not in relation to the organisation of households. Historical developments in the structure of households indicate quite significant changes in the relations of different family members to family income maintenance and related changes in the position of youth within the family. However, these changes have not been integrated into accounts of change

in patterns of transition from youth to adulthood.

Another aspect of the theoretical division between employment structure and life cycle dynamics, which characterises the youth debate, is the model of parallel trajectories which is used to describe individual biographies through the labour market on the one hand and through domestic, or family related, transitions on the other hand. Those researching the consequences of economic change for the attainment of adult status have argued that a longitudinal model provides a solution to the limitations of earlier, cross sectional, descriptions of transitions from school to work. Employment and a secure wage is seen to enable independence, and transitions to adulthood are described in terms of associated status transitions around departure from the parental home, household and family formation. Labour force trajectories and household 'careers' are understood to interact but it is here, in particular, that difficulties are encountered in attempts to specify the articulation of 'the economic' and 'the social' and it is here that contradictions emerge as to the consequences of economic change for the organisation of the domestic life cycle.

The analytical frameworks focus attention on life cycle trajectories but do so at the expense of an understanding of the relation between dependency and independence. In order to explain the consequences of such an omission it is useful to draw a parallel with theories of gender and inequality. Labour market theories and descriptions of inequality often bracket together women and young adults as disadvantaged in employment by virtue either of their low productivity relative to adult men, or through their exclusion from forms of employment advantage by direct or indirect discrimination. Critiques of descriptions of inequality, in which individuals are seen to be rewarded according to their productivity, have stressed the importance of the family, and the domestic division of labour, to patterns of inequality in employment. Drawing on Marx, but extending his argument to analyses of gender inequalities, labour is understood to be valued not according to its product but in relation to the costs of its reproduction (the day to day reproduction of people's livelihoods, relative to some customary standard of living). Because labour is reproduced through the domestic

division of labour, women in paid work are rewarded not at their true costs of reproduction but are partly dependent on others for the resourcing of their day to day livelihoods. Gender inequalities in rewards to employment are organised in relation to the domestic division of labour, and adult male earnings reflect men's particular relations to household income maintenance (Beechey, 1978; Humphries and Rubery, 1984; Brenner and Ramas, 1984). In addition, the availability of labour at different costs affects the organisation of labour demand, so people's differing relations to household income maintenance are themselves significant to the organisation and reproduction of employment inequalities (Garnsey, 1982; Stanworth, 1984). In these arguments, the processes underlying inequalities in the 'social' sphere of the family and in the 'economic' sphere of employment are inseparable. There are important parallels to be drawn here in developing an understanding of the particular position of youth as a life cycle stage, and in developing a framework for exploring change in the organisation of the transition from youth to adulthood.

The separation of life cycle structure from the distribution of resources through employment, and through the state, has become part of a dualistic model, one which apparently gathers momentum since the parameters of youth and adulthood cannot be read off from economic structures. However, in drawing back from a definition of youth which is economically reductionist, sociological writers have at the same time left intact the concept of the economic sphere as a realm of distribution which is neutral with respect to the earnings claims of different social groups. In consequence, inequalities in earnings and employment opportunities become an issue of access and constraint. The gender critique of conventional theories of class and stratification sees the 'labour market' as a process of distribution which embodies the relations of different groups to the resourcing of social reproduction, through the domestic division of labour. If the value of this critique is accepted (and it will be argued that it should be) then it is clear that it holds similar value for analysing life cycle processes.

Youth and transitions to adulthood have been defined in relation to trajectories from (partial) dependence to independence. Independence, however,

is a misleading term. The concern with trajectories focuses attention on biographical journeys from dependence to independence, but in the absence of a theory of their mutual significance, explanations of change in life cycle processes must be called into question. Claims by dependents for resources, for reproducing their day to day living, are met indirectly through the state or, more generally, through immediate kin with 'independent' access to a wage. In the case of young children and to some extent amongst dependent young adults these claims are standardly met by parents. The ways in which claims to resources by children and women are met cannot be separated from the historical "success" of claims to a family wage by adult men. A structure of earnings which is patterned in relation to domestic obligations suggests that independence is a misleading term because it entails the accumulation of domestic financial and caring obligations, through which the claims of dependents are met. Changes in the structure of life cycle transitions from dependence to independence is simultaneously a restructuring of the relations between dependents and those on whom they make claims for resources. The historical structuring and reproduction of these relationships has been of quite limited interest to recent youth research, and marginal to its methodology, yet an adequate understanding of processes of change in the structuring of life cycle transitions requires that it be placed centrally.

Issues of citizenship are often considered indirectly in discussions of change in the transition from youth to adulthood but are important, especially where economic changes and government policy are seen to have undermined the claims of young people to independence and adult lifestyles. Some writers have placed questions of citizenship more centrally in their descriptions of transition (eg. Hutson and Jenkins, 1989; Jones and Wallace, 1990). The latter authors stress the value of a life cycle approach to citizenship and argue that we should consider the biographical incorporation of individuals into citizenship rights, and address the ways in which such rights vary over the life cycle. In such an argument, however, citizenship, like independence, is represented as a set of rights from which some people are excluded, or to which they are formally entitled yet, through a lack of social or economic resources, are unable to exercise. Issues of citizenship thereby become an issue of access. Rights are divorced from the social claims on which

they are based, and the organisation of rights is not itself called into question.

Historical studies of change in individual and family life cycle trajectories demonstrate clearly an articulation between 'the social' and 'the economic', that is between the organisation of daily, and generational, reproduction in the domestic sphere, and the structuring of access to, and rewards from, employment. Evidence of change at an aggregate level illustrates the historical interdependency of labour supply and labour demand structures. Whilst recently youth studies have struggled with the hypothesis that economic change may be significant for domestic life cycle transitions from dependence to independence, an historical understanding suggests that the ambivalence which characterises such research can be a consequence only of its conceptual and methodological particularity. *The need to 'locate' youth in its social context is simultaneously a need to transform the ways in which youth as a life cycle stage is conceptualised.*

The Research Design and General Social Processes

This section outlines the design of the survey, of young people and their parents, on which the thesis reports. A two stage questionnaire was carried out in the spring and summer of 1988. The first stage of the survey was employer based and comprised a series of interviews with 92 young people in varying occupations and in a range of domestic life cycle stages. The second stage was a linked survey, of parents of 36 of the young respondents. These linked surveys will be referred to throughout as the main survey and the parents' survey. A principal objective of the survey was to gather evidence on the processes underlying transitions from youth to adult status, and to contribute to a more general analysis of change in the structure and organisation of early life cycle transitions. Before describing the sample and questionnaire design in detail it is important to point to some general methodological issues, in order to explain the place of the survey within the research.

To understand the processes underlying change in life cycle event timing

it is necessary to locate the data gathered in a small scale, cross sectional, survey in relation to more general evidence. Such a strategy will help to avoid the pitfalls of being too quick to generalise from a relatively small number of cases. Whilst the problem of locating survey evidence is brought into sharper focus when the survey sample is small, a larger sample would not itself provide a simple solution. To locate the data next to other evidence helps in assessing the validity of the former and helps to 'contextualise' such data. However, such a strategy is only a partial one. As well as evidence from other studies of youth in transition there is, of course, a wealth of data available on patterns of demographic change, on, for example, ages at marriage and parenthood. As we will see, this has not received the attention it deserves. Since such data reveals historical changes in life cycle event timing, that is, in precisely those family related transitions generally considered as indices of the transition to adult status, it demands our consideration. Whilst this macro level evidence has not been totally ignored by youth researchers, it is generally invoked as a device for contextualising analyses of contemporary patterns of transition. The aggregate level changes which it reveals tend to be vaguely specified and there has been little engagement by youth researchers with explanations of these changes. Why should this be? In part it appears to reflect a division between disciplines, with aggregate level, historical changes in patterns of marriage and fertility more the concern of demographers, economists and social historians than of sociologists. It may be too, that it reflects the methodological difficulties of relating macro and micro level evidence. However, these are difficulties which must be resolved in order to furnish a more adequate understanding of change in the organisation and experience of transitions to adult status.

To address the problem of the division between macro and micro level evidence it is essential not only to locate the latter with respect to the former, but to recognise also a need to go beyond 'contextualising' our interpretation of the experience of survey respondents. Such an approach suggests that understandings of aggregate level changes are themselves unproblematic. As we will see this is not the case. Simply stated, the relationship between experience at an individual level and general changes in the organisation of life cycle transitions is a

conceptual as much as an empirical issue. The call to locate youth 'within the structures and values of society' reflects an artificial dualism between youth and transition on the one hand and social structure on the other hand. Locating data on patterns of transition requires more than simply contextualising empirical evidence, socially, historically or whatever. The 'context', after all, is also the substance of the research problem. The format of the thesis is not one of simply reporting evidence from my survey, suitably located. Rather I analyse data from the survey, and from other sources, as part of an attempt to reconstruct a more adequate understanding of the transition from youth to adult status. Data from my survey can be only part of the story. It was, however, designed with a view to enabling an exploration of particular relationships and processes which have not been well handled in existing youth research. These features, of the survey sample and of the questionnaire design, are described below.

The main survey was principally employer based, that is all respondents were in employment or on a training programme at the time of interview. It was conducted in the insurance, retailing and construction industries. Small scale studies have provided detailed descriptions of the experience and perceptions of youth (eg. Coffield et al, 1986; Cockburn, 1987; Wallace, 1987a,b,c; Hutson and Jenkins, 1987a,b; 1989). However, they have been less successful in informing hypotheses of change in the transition to adulthood. A focus on particular, often problematic, circumstances has contributed to the difficulties in locating hypotheses of delay in the attainment of adult status, as a consequence of economic recession and unemployment of the 1980s, in relation to more general and longer term patterns of change in life cycle structure. My survey was employer based in order to furnish data on, and contribute to an analysis of, standard processes shaping the organisation and experience of the transition to adulthood. The timing and, as we shall see, the organisation, of household and family formation has changed over recent decades across the population. It is the processes shaping these general changes which have been neglected by youth researchers and with which I will be principally concerned.

Another important features of the sample is its age structure. Much of the

research into youth and transitions to adulthood has defined its subject in terms of a specific age group (eg. Wallace, 1987; Hutson and Jenkins, 1989; Banks et al, 1992; Ashton et al, 1990). Several authors maintain the inappropriateness of an arbitrary age limit to 'youth', arguing that the 'upper end' of youth transitions would be better defined in relation to household and family formation. However, even amongst its proponents, this view is rarely matched by the design of data collection involving people aged over 25. The problem here is clear, since in 1988 the mean age at first marriage amongst men was 26.7, and the median age 25.6. The mean age at first marriage amongst women was 24.6, and the median age 23.6 (Population Trends, 1989). Amongst married and unmarried women in 1989 mean ages at first childbirth were 26.9 and 24.4 respectively (Jones, 1991). Samples which do not include respondents aged over 25 fail to do justice to the diversity of experience which is associated with older, as well as younger, ages at these family transitions. Further, the social meanings of age should properly be part of the analysis. An age based definition of youth is quite inappropriate for exploring hypotheses of a prolonging of this life cycle stage. For this reason a strategy of the main survey was to furnish information on the experience, perceptions and attitudes of people in a range of life cycle stages. Respondents to the main survey were between 16 and 35. The sample, however, was defined principally with reference to life cycle related criteria.

The respondents left school between 1970 and 1988. In a larger survey it might be tempting to consider separately the experience of those leaving school at different periods in this timescale, taking into account the raising of the school leaving age in 1973, the recession of that period, equal pay legislation, the recession and employment crisis of the early 1980s and the growth of the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) as a standard route into employment for many, especially disadvantaged, school leavers. The consequences of such changes are not sensibly explored through disaggregating an already small data set. In analyses of the survey data the young adults are treated as if they form a single cohort. There are reasons why such a treatment may in any case be more appropriate than a division between the experience of young people pre- and post the recession of the early 1980s. The latter division might appear more valuable than is in fact the

case because of the stress by youth researchers through the 1980s on this particular period. Data on aggregate level changes in event timing suggests that the early to mid-1970s marked the most significant turning point in patterns of leaving home and family formation that has occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The survey was conducted in Scotland. Interviews with young adults in the insurance and retailing sectors were conducted in Edinburgh. Young people in the construction industry were interviewed in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Most respondents to the parents' survey lived in Edinburgh, or in other parts of Lothian. Those living further afield were sent postal questionnaires. Because of the importance attached throughout the analysis to locating the data in relation to more general evidence, the Scottish base of the sample need not compromise the salience of the evidence to understanding patterns of transition across Britain more generally. Edinburgh itself is probably closer to the socioeconomic make-up of parts of England than it is to the rest of Scotland. Further, it may be no more appropriate to point to the particularity of a Scottish base of the survey than to question the national representativeness of any regional or local base for empirical research. With respect to national differences in youth employment opportunities between Scotland and England and Wales, it appears that the similarities outweigh the differences (Raffe and Courtenay, 1988). The evidence presented by the authors shows that the occupational and industrial structures across Scotland and England and Wales are broadly alike, and have very similar labour markets (Raffe and Courtenay, 1988).

There are two key areas of contrast between Scotland and England identified by Raffe and Courtenay. Firstly, there is a more staggered entry into the labour force amongst youth cohorts in Scotland, in contrast to the more clearly defined transitions at ages 16 and 18 in England and Wales, the latter associated with the completion of 'A' level courses. In contrast the Scottish students who stay beyond the minimum school leaving age standardly sit the Higher grade of the Scottish Certificate of Education. Highers are usually taken over one year of study although the flexibility of the system means that a number

of highers are often spread over a two year period. For this reason, along with school leaving arrangements which differ to those in England and Wales, 17 is a more significant transition stage in Scotland (Raffe and Courtenay, 1988). The second key difference is described by Raffe and Courtenay as the weaker labour market in Scotland. Data comparing the Scottish Young People's Surveys of 1985 and 1986 to the England and Wales Youth Cohort Study indicates that two years after the minimum school leaving age, by April 1986, rates of employment stood at 61% in Scotland and at 72% in England and Wales. Where YTS trainees were excluded from the analysis the rates stood at 68% and 76% respectively.

The Youth Training Scheme was slightly more extensive in Scotland where, of the year group who were eligible to leave school in 1984, 42% had entered YTS by 1986 compared with 37% of their English and Welsh peers. Raffe and Courtenay note that this inverse relationship between the scale of YTS and the strength of the labour market is apparent also in gender differences. A demand for young male employees which is more depressed than that for young females is mirrored in YTS participation rates of 39% and 46% amongst girls and boys respectively in Scotland, and of 35% and 39% respectively amongst girls and boys in England and Wales. Trainees in Scotland had more difficulty entering employment at the end of their schemes. Of those on YTS in April 1985, one year subsequently 56% in Scotland were in full time jobs compared with 65% in England and Wales. Amongst males the respective percentages were 57% and 67%, and amongst females, 56% and 63%. By April 1986, 49% of full time employees in the surveys had been on YTS (Raffe and Courtenay, 1988).

Early in the design of the research project I was interested in the operation and consequences of YTS. However, it became apparent that this was a rather narrow approach, particularly as I became more interested in the general features of the transition from youth to adult status. Further, the operation of YTS, where it is employer based, cannot easily be separated from more general employment processes. It is the relation between these general processes and the reorganisation of life cycle transitions which became the central concern of the research. However, my initial concern with YTS is reflected in the choice of

employment sectors in which the main survey was based. The insurance, retailing and construction sectors were chosen for the variety of youth training strategies and the differing articulation of YTS with their recruitment policies and employment structures. This is described in Chapter 3. The inclusion of YTS related factors did not limit the sample choice, but rather was consonant with a strategy of defining a sample which would cover a wide range of employment circumstances. The choice of sectors enabled the sample to cover manual and non-manual employees, different gender patterns of employment, and a range of socioeconomic class backgrounds and employment and income prospects amongst respondents.

Interviews were conducted during work hours on the companies' premises. The main survey comprised 28 interviews in the insurance sector, 27 in the retailing sector and 32 in the construction sector. The insurance and retailing sample comprised similar numbers of female and male respondents. All respondents in the construction sector were male. The employers, and a Construction Industry Training Board representative, knew of no female apprentices or crafts workers in Lothian or Strathclyde. Interviews with young adults in the insurance and retailing sectors were conducted in Edinburgh, the sample drawn from two large, Edinburgh based, insurance companies and two retailing organisations, one a national DIY chain and the other a supermarket retailer. Construction workers and trainees were drawn from two large companies, a college of further education and a Scottish District Council Direct Labour Organisation, where interviewees were on the Community Programme, a government training programme for people aged 18 to 25 who had been unemployed for a year, or on a YTS Special Measures programme established for those in particularly disadvantaged circumstances. Most respondents in the construction industry were apprenticed or qualified joiners and brickworkers, although some were in white collar occupations.

Within the three employment sectors the sample of organisations in which employees were interviewed turned simply on access. I interviewed senior management personnel about their company's employment structure, recruitment

and training programmes in several companies across the three sectors. After detailed discussion of my research design a number of organisations agreed to allow me to interview a number of their employees. In most of the survey organisations potential respondents were identified and approached by a manager with whom I had discussed the criteria for selecting a sample of respondents. The principal criterion was to organise a sample which covered a variety of occupational grades, ages and domestic circumstances, 'up to' those who had recently become parents, but including also older, single or childless respondents. In two companies I was permitted to identify the sample of respondents directly. In one of the the insurance companies I was provided with an anonymised list of employees which identified their occupational grade, age, sex and marital status, and interviews were scheduled with the sample I identified. In the supermarket I was permitted to approach staff directly, through department managers. In all organisations I was provided with a private room in which to conduct interviews. Current workloads on staff appeared to be the main criterion by which respondents were 'filtered' in the other organisations. However, the level of access granted allowed me to interview a range of respondents which appear representative of the available spectrum of employee 'types' within the organisations.

Not all respondents were in employment at the time of interview. Access to a small group of respondents who were on YTS in building industry schemes was gained through a college of further education. Also, in the building sector, some respondents were on a Scottish district council special measures youth training scheme, providing training for disadvantaged school leavers, and some on the Community Programme. Other than these all respondents were working in the private sector. The sample includes some, mostly those on the Community Programme, with a background of unemployment. In general, however, the most disadvantaged and those with continuous records of unemployment are excluded by the sample design. Another consequence of basing the survey in employing organisations is the particular gender structure of the sample. Women with young children were interviewed but their inclusion in an employer based sample suggests that they may be in particular circumstances which require or enable

them to work full time, and which may differentiate them from their non-working peers (all of the five mothers in the main survey had divorced or separated from the father of their children). Whilst all respondents were in employment or on a training programme at the time of interview, their backgrounds are diverse, some arriving at their current position through continuous employment and promotion through an internal career ladder, some with a background of unemployment, temporary jobs and training scheme placements and some women with children entering or returning to work after full time childcare obligations.

The questionnaire schedule for the main survey is included as Appendix 1. Interviews lasted between fifty and ninety minutes, the typical interview lasting one hour. Interviews collected information on socioeconomic circumstances, labour force histories and employment expectations; domestic or 'demographic' histories and expectations, focusing in particular on the timing of life cycle events; and on attitudes towards 'appropriate' forms of household resourcing and employment participation. The questionnaire design will be described in more detail shortly. At the end of each interview, respondents were asked for their parents names, addresses and telephone numbers and, if willing, to tell their parents about the survey. A total of 63 contact names were given (14 from retailing, 24 from insurance and 25 from construction workers).

Contact with parents was made by telephone where possible and interviews, with one of the parents, were arranged and carried out in their homes. A total of twenty parents (ie. parents to 20 of the original respondents) were interviewed in this way. The interview schedule for the parents' survey is included as Appendix 2. The schedule again followed a structured format but a number of open ended questions were followed through in some detail. These interviews lasted from one to over three hours but were typically one and a half to two hours duration. A number of parents lived outside Lothian. To supplement the face-to-face interviews the questionnaire schedule was revised and posted to 24 households, that is to all the remaining households who had not refused to participate over the telephone. Eleven completed schedules were returned. The postal survey questionnaire schedule is included in Appendix 2. Adding

questionnaires from pilots for the face to face interviews and postal survey gave a total of 36 completed parental questionnaires. The final sample of parents was inevitably self selected, the most obvious feature of which was a gender bias in the sample structure, towards respondents' mothers. Access to parents was filtered through the permission of their children before approaches were made to parents themselves, and the sub-sample of parent-child pairs is liable to be biased towards households with more sympathetic relations between generations.

As well as providing a basis for inter-generational comparisons, in designing the survey I was exercised also by the question of how to explore class variation in the transition to adult status. This was in preference to exploring the experience of a particular (say, unemployed) group, without the resources for locating it adequately in relation to standard labour force careers and life cycle transition behaviour. Clearly, however, characterising the class location of young people has particular problems, given that youth tend to be concentrated in fewer occupations than the (male) adult population, and given the potentially diverse labour force trajectories on which they have embarked. Research into the timing of family formation based on analyses of large data sets clearly demonstrates class related differences, where working class youth tend to leave their parental homes, marry and have children at younger ages than their middle class counterparts (eg. Dunnell, 1979; Kiernan and Diamond, 1983; Joshi, 1985; Jones, 1987; Oppenheimer, 1982). Much of the variation is accounted for by socioeconomic indicators: parents' (typically fathers') social class, own occupation, educational qualifications and so on, but most studies stress also the significance of orientations and class related norms and expectations. Patterns of early event timing by working class young adults is rational in relation to their lifetime labour force circumstances, which typically manifest a shallow, and often insecure, earnings profile. In contrast, later event timing by middle class young adults is rational in relation to standard careers, which entail security, promotion and a rising earnings profile, at least to middle age. This clearly reflects standard male, rather than female, experience, as women, typically, are involved in childbearing at precisely those ages at which promotion decisions are important to male careers. It is male earnings profiles which are central to these explanations of

class related differences in life cycle event timing. To explain differences in event timing in relation to such earnings trajectories clearly requires a theory of orientations to the future, and all those studies just cited invoke concepts of class culture, norms and expectations as part of their explanation of class differences in life cycle event timing. However, attitudes are rarely available for empirical investigation in analyses of large data sets. Exploring attitudes and perceptions is more important in ethnographic studies of transition, and often detailed in research with a more qualitative leaning. In designing the survey an objective was to gather sufficient data to furnish some form of quantitative analysis, albeit within the methodological provisos already indicated. Within this format I wished to address perceptions and attitudes in some detail, and to do so in a way which would be amenable to quantitative analysis.

Another intention of the questionnaire design was to provide a basis on which to make inter-generational comparisons in patterns of transition. I hoped that attitudinal data would help in extending an understanding of young adults' social circumstances, given the limitations to socioeconomic data gathered from their own, often short, labour force careers. One possibility would be to disaggregate the sample so as to explore co-variation between socioeconomic circumstance, attitudinal data and life cycle event timing. This sort of analysis would provide a basis from which to consider differences in event timing across the generations. For example, would there be evidence that some socio-economic groups were deferring transition relative to their parents, in contrast to other socio-economic groups? Such an analysis would provide a basis for an inter-generational comparison of life cycle event timing. However, whilst elements of such an analysis are revealing, it became clear that as a general strategy, it relied too heavily on a small sample, whose diversity is better understood in relation to other available data. Further, the potential for comparison was reduced since the reporting of parental ages at marriage by respondents to the main survey are unreliable. Respondents were asked the ages of their siblings and the year in which their parents married, but where comparison with parents' self reported ages at marriage is possible, it is clear that there is some inaccuracy in the reports of their young adult children. Across the sample as a whole, then, such reports of

parents' ages at marriage are liable to be less accurate still. The sample allows at best a limited comparison of life cycle event timing across both generations.

I outline some of the questions designed to gather attitudinal data here, since they comprised a substantial element of the questionnaire schedule, and are important in subsequent analyses of the survey data. The questionnaire collected data on labour force and life cycle event histories. Where respondents were not yet married or parents they were asked if and when they expected to marry and have their first child, and to describe what they saw as important in deciding when to marry and have children. Those who had already married or become parents were asked parallel, retrospective, questions. These open ended questions were designed to gather data on attitudes towards the timing of particular life cycle events. Given the varied ages and circumstances of respondents, the questions about cohabitation, marriage and parenthood clearly have differing salience, a problem which is taken into account in subsequent analyses of expectations.

To supplement these open ended questions a series of other, structured, attitudinal questions were asked of respondents. The questions cover information on attitudes relating to life cycle event timing, to independence, and to the appropriate domestic division of labour in particular circumstances, and on perceptions of the strength of claims to employment and earnings by different social groups. Respondents were asked to self-complete a list of Likert style attitudinal statements. However, a number of other forms of questions were used. Their inclusion has the advantage of providing a diverse array of attitudinal data, and also 'livened up' the interviews, engaging respondents with a variety of questions and tasks. For example, a series of vignettes were read to respondents, outlining imaginary scenarios in which social actors are faced with some dilemma which needs resolving. Respondents are invited to advise on the best course of action. The vignettes covered questions concerning decisions whether to marry without access to independent housing, decisions about childcare, employment and the division of labour in a marriage, and decisions around female earnings, careers and parenting. The use of vignettes was inspired by Finch's description of their possibilities (Finch, 1987). One of the problems in their use which she

identifies is the inability to know precisely the interpretation of the scenarios made by respondents and hence whether comparisons of responses are comparing like with like. However, this is a charge which presumably could be levelled at all 'closed' attitudinal questions. The advantage of such questions is that they enable more straightforward groupings and comparisons of responses than do open ended questions.

The questionnaire also invited respondents to rank the claims to employment of a series of individuals, described in terms of their household circumstances. Respondents were also asked about the structure of their employing organisation through a series of questions asking for the typical attributes (sex, age, marital status) of employees across a series of job grades. Respondents were asked to say what the typical earnings carried by these grades were, and to say whether or not they felt that the pattern of earnings across job grades was fair. As well as revealing the significance of life cycle stage and domestic obligations in respondents' perceptions of appropriate actions in given circumstances, and in their perceptions of fairness, some of the questions revealed a pattern of attitudes which varied with respondents' own life cycle circumstances. Further, questions assessing the claims of young people relative to other groups reveal a broad consensus suggesting the claims of young people, whilst seen to be important, have less sympathy than the claims of groups seen to hold obligations to dependents. Domestic circumstances are clearly salient in respondents' perceptions of 'who should get (and do) what'. It will be argued that these perceptions reflect the social arrangements through which relations to household resourcing are important to the structuring of social inequality.

In summary, the survey was designed to furnish 'qualitative' information but also to enable a quantitative analysis, where survey data can be located with respect to more general evidence on change in the organisation of transitions to adulthood. As we will see, youth and transition have generally been treated as objects of analysis, as pre-given categories. Whilst the focus on life cycle events by recent writers begins to address this problem, their research does not go far in defining youth and the transition to adult status as truly *social* categories.

Issues of transition to adulthood, then, are central in the questionnaire but the form of questioning is often structured, and indirect in its approach to perceptions of adulthood or adult status. Such questions, I believe, hold advantages over direct forms of questioning on this issue. For example, to ask respondents whether they feel, or perceive themselves to be, adult (eg. Hutson and Jenkins, 1989) may be interesting, but interpreting responses is fraught with problems given that we do not know the basis on which responses are given. It seems likely that an important basis on which responses to such a question are made will be a desire by respondents to demonstrate to the interviewer that they possess the social competencies implied by adult status. To address the psychological and emotional aspects of the transition to adult status clearly has intrinsic interest and reflects on broader societal expectations and forms of support. The transition to adulthood entails more than a progression through a series of employment and family related circumstances. Maturity reflects experience, and it is often a perception of maturity which is reflected in everyday distinctions between youth and adult status. However, in a study of change in the organisation of transition, I have kept to a minimum questions addressing young respondents' perceptions of their own adult status, or parents' perceptions of their sons' and daughters' status.

Several writers have focused on the timing of life cycle transitions as indices of the attainment of adult status. It is, however, meaningful to consider these life cycle events as more than simply proxies, or indices, of adulthood. Because they label transitions through forms of family dependence to forms of independence and obligation in the resourcing of households and dependents, they also reflect the social arrangements through which individuals and families reproduce their living conditions. It is not simply that change in the organisation of transition is reflected in changes in these social arrangements, particular aspects of which have been identified by youth researchers. We might also consider that changes in the social organisation of obligation and dependency will be reflected in the timing of transitions between life cycle stages. Such an approach acknowledges that changes in the structure of the life cycle are integral to change in the social organisation of obligation and dependency. It meets the

call to locate youth and the transition to adult status within 'the structures and values of society' because it acknowledges that these life cycle processes are an integral aspect of those structures and values.

The chapters are organised as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 describe the two, broadly distinct, research agendas which have developed through the 1980s, and which focus on the consequences of economic change and employment restructuring for the experience of youth and young adults. Chapter 2 focuses on research into domestic life cycle transitions from youth to adult status, a transition seen by some to be disrupted by resource constraint and job insecurity. The chapter questions descriptions of gender in understandings of transition, and examines the reasons why youth research has reached contradictory conclusions as to the significance of economic change for life cycle organisation. In part this is due to the failure to locate the findings of small scale studies in relation to demographic evidence on change in life cycle event timing, despite the importance of the latter in definitions of the transition to adult status. In part, too, it is due to the conceptual framework in which the consequences of economic change are thought through. Employment routes are seen to underwrite domestic trajectories from dependency to independence and adult status. The employment, or 'productive' sphere, then, is of particular importance yet there is no analysis of the significance of the domestic division of labour, or the 'reproductive' sphere to the organisation of employment and rewards to employment. Such an analysis would address the ways in which 'dependence' and 'independence' are constructed. The framework of parallel trajectories through the labour market and through domestic life cycle events fails to address the interrelation of rewards in employment and the domestic division of labour and, in connection, fails to acknowledge the interrelatedness of dependency and 'independence'. To hypothesise change in the transition from youth to adult status is necessarily to hypothesise change in the social organisation of dependency and obligation.

The division between life cycle processes and the labour market which characterises theories of the transition to adulthood is a feature, too, of the development of the two, distinct, research agendas. Chapter 3 continues the

review and critique of research into the consequences of economic change for youth but here the discussion lies with research into the youth labour market and change in the structure of youth employment opportunities. Chapters 2 and 3 are organised in terms of these distinct research agendas in order to clarify their arguments, and to posit the value of an approach which challenges the treatment of employment processes and the domestic division of labour as autonomous 'spheres' of social experience. As in the literature on domestic transitions, this dichotomy is reproduced within the literature on youth labour markets which, influenced by labour market segmentation theory, operates with a division between labour demand and labour supply side processes. Whilst the debate on transition treats labour demand as independent, research into youth labour markets fails to analyse the organisation of labour supply. Different types of labour are treated as entities, meaningful through employers' discriminatory recruitment practices. These are shaped, in the case of gender, by expectations of childcare obligations. However, rooted in a model of direct or indirect discrimination, such an approach fails to account adequately for the diversity of gendered experience or for change in its contours. Youth is assumed to be a distinct labour supply group, and is defined principally as an age group. In consequence, there is no scope for analysing change in the organisation of youth as a life cycle stage, even though its significance as an age period derives in large part from its particular life cycle relations of semi-dependency and a lack of extensive material or caring obligations. The agendas described in Chapters 2 and 3 share explanatory problems. The conceptual division between 'economic' labour market processes and 'social' life cycle processes is entailed within, and reflected by, their distinct research agendas. The following chapters develop an analysis which attempts to move beyond this dualism in order to locate change in the transition to adulthood as an historical process, and one which reflects the integrated development of social reproduction and employment structure.

Chapter 4 describes aggregate level patterns of change in the organisation and timing of life cycle events, in particular marriage and birth of the first child, over the twentieth century. This evidence gives historical perspective to hypotheses of delay in the transition to adult status. Demographic evidence

demonstrates that the long term trend through this century, to younger ages at marriage and parenthood, was reversed in the early 1970s. Writers on youth in transition have compared the experience of the 1980s with 'normal transitions' seen to have obtained during full employment in the 1950s and 1960s. However, a longer term perspective illustrates clearly the historically specific nature of both periods. Whilst this is an obvious point it is stressed because existing youth research has failed to locate contemporary patterns of transition as part of a wider historical process. The chapter considers patterns of event timing amongst the survey sample in relation to aggregate level evidence. Within the survey, information on parents' perceptions of changes between the experience of young people now and their own experience of transition was gathered. Their responses are described and examined in relation to other evidence on changes in factors which are salient to the timing of family formation. The most important changes are seen to lie in job security, housing availability and home ownership, female careers and expectations concerning living standards amongst contemporary cohorts of young adults.

Female employment and careers were the most frequently cited aspect of change. This response touches on a set of issues which has been barely addressed by the youth literature. However, there is evidence to suggest that changes in gender relations, in employment and with respect to household resourcing, are of great importance in historically recent changes in the timing of family formation. Deserving of an extended treatment these issues are the subject of Chapter 5. To elucidate the processes which are operating here requires an understanding of the contingency of productive and reproductive processes. Changes in the organisation of the family and relations to its resourcing by family members are inseparable from changes in the organisation of labour demand and the patterning of rewards to employment. Changes in gender relations to employment and to the family are central to this dynamic. Economic theories of demographic change explain declines in fertility and delay in the timing of marriage and parenthood in terms of historical changes in female, relative to male, earnings. Economic models rely on macro level data and have been criticised for their assumptions about individual behaviour. Their conclusions are contradicted by studies which, using

data on household level earnings, identify stability in the relative contributions of female and male partners. It is argued that such a conclusion is misleading, and derives from still too general an interpretation of the data. An analysis of national level earnings data, disaggregated by age groups, reveals significant changes in gendered earnings ratios amongst recent cohorts of young adults. There has been an improvement in young women's earnings relative to those of young men. This is associated with a decline in the earnings of young men relative to peak adult earnings. Improving female to male earnings ratios are a consequence of differing, gendered, rates of decline relative to those of older workers. These developments in gender and age related patterns of earnings correspond with patterns of delay in the timing of family formation relative to previous cohorts. These processes are integral to one another. An understanding of the contingency of relations in the domestic and economic 'spheres' is essential to an explanation of change in the organisation of the transition from youth to adult status.

In Chapter 5, peak adult earnings, against which changes in the earnings of young women and men are measured, are used as an index of general consumption standards. Chapter 6 disaggregates this general measure and considers the class related patterning of life cycle event timing against a measure of consumption standards, derived from the survey data, which is sensitive to the differing socioeconomic circumstances of the survey respondents. Recent research has failed to reconcile its hypothesis of delay in the attainment of independence, as a consequence of 'new' forms of employment disadvantage amongst youth, with the traditional expectation that socioeconomic disadvantage is associated with the attainment of independence at young ages. Associated with this problem is the limited analysis of class variation in life cycle event timing. Models of class differences propose that lifetime employment and earnings profiles are significant in shaping orientations which in turn are necessary to explaining class differences in the timing of marriage and parenthood. Middle class life chances reward long term planning and later ages at parenthood are seen to be a rational strategy in relation to an earnings profile which rises progressively over the working life. In contrast, early ages at family formation amongst the working class are seen as rational in relation to 'careers' where earnings levels do not increase much

beyond early adulthood and where insecurity is common. However, whilst a theory of orientations to the future is necessary to explain class related differences, such orientations are typically deduced from a measure of class location. Consequently, such a theory adds little to the analysis of class differences.

Accepting a cross sectional measure of class location as an adequate description of social difference is questionable because it neglects the way standard class related employment trajectories may entail mobility across jobs. The analysis of Chapter 6 attempts to build in respondents' expectations for the future, in part through exploring their perceptions of the circumstances of salient reference groups. Gendered relations to employment careers and family formation are described, and illustrated through respondents' attitudes towards the timing of marriage and parenthood. The association between current employment position, orientations and patterns of life cycle event timing is explored. The discussion questions the marginality of life cycle processes to definitions of class related inequality. This issue is developed in Chapter 7 through a consideration of recent critiques of sociological theories of inequality, critiques which are informed by a concern with demographic change and a growing dependent population. A reading of the literature on ageing, and inter-generational conflict, reveals similarities with research into youth and transition. Both proceed as if economic processes and social relations over the life cycle have their own dynamic, yet it is precisely this dichotomy which compromises explanations of social change.

The ageing population structure, and claims on resources by non-working groups, are seen by many to be contributing to a growing welfare crisis. In particular, the interests of the working, 'productive', population and the interests of the non-working, 'dependent' population are understood to be at odds with one another. Further, historical changes in the relative welfare of different non-working groups, in particular between the young and the elderly, are expected to engender perceptions of injustice. In these arguments, relations between age groups and generations will become increasingly fraught, as 'unacceptable' levels of taxation are expected to blight the experience of a contracting workforce,

required to resource a growing welfare population. Social conflict will ensue and undermine the welfare project. The chapter questions the division between 'the political' and 'the economic' on which these arguments rely. The division is part of a conceptual framework where the claims of particular (welfare) groups appear as problematic while other aspects of resource distribution (claims to employment) are not questioned. As it is, more seems to be known about researchers' views on distributive justice than is known about the perceptions of their subject populations. It has not been demonstrated that members of age groups share interests which are consonant with their cohort experience, or perceive their interests to be in conflict with those of members of other age groups or generations. Further, the literature offers little evidence on social actors' perceptions of inequality over the life cycle. Empirical evidence drawn from the survey suggests that standard processes do not place age groups or generations in an antagonistic relationship. The changing structure of the life cycle amongst women and men, and the diversity of experience of those not in paid employment, present a challenge to theories of inequality which prioritise people's location within the 'productive' (employment) sphere over other areas of social experience. Understanding the relations between age groups and generations is essential to explaining change in patterns of inequality, but the interdependency of these relations is not a precursor to crisis but part of a coherent social structure.

As we have seen, existing research has been charged with a failure to locate youth and transition within 'more general' social processes. Part of the reason such a criticism can be made is because youth research has proceeded as if life cycle processes and economic processes have their own dynamic. The potential of such research is compromised because it fails to specify the relationship between individual biographies and social change. Change in the transition to adult status simultaneously reflects and embodies changes in the social arrangements through which the reproduction of day to day living, and the reproduction of generations, are organised. 'Locating' the transition to adulthood in relation to social processes requires also that we explore the ways in which it is an integral part of such processes. This is the task taken up through the thesis.

2. Economic Change and the Transition from Youth to Adulthood

Transitions in the Youth Debate

Youth research has reflected shifting sociological paradigms in recent decades, from neo-marxist analyses of youth culture, and representations of the transition from school to work as a critical moment in the reproduction of the labour force (eg. Willis, 1977; Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1981; Frith, 1984; Rees and Atkinson, 1982), to recent concerns about citizenship, gender inequality and socioeconomic polarisation in the transition from youth to adult status (eg. Ashton et al, 1990; Jones and Wallace, 1990; Ashton and Lowe, 1991; Chisholm et al, 1991). The changing circumstance of youth, and the perceived inadequacy of previous theories for explaining contemporary developments, have led to theoretical reformulations. These are aimed at exploring the consequences of economic restructuring for the experience of youth and the patterning of transitions from youth to adult lifestyles. However, the static model of youth which characterised earlier studies of the transition from school to work has not been adequately transformed.

In the 1960s and 1970s, years of relatively full employment, processes of class continuity in the transition from school to work were a principal concern of youth research. Forms of socialisation, through the family, school and work relations, were seen to underlie 'smooth' transitions between these life cycle stages (Roberts, 1968; Ashton and Field, 1976; also cf. Willis, 1977). This research was, in part, a critique of human capital theories of occupational selection. It emphasised the significance not only of structural constraint but attempted also to describe its 'acceptability', through the structuring of young people's conceptions of their interests and capabilities. The structuring of orientations was therefore a central theme. Class related orientations, formed through the family and through school were seen to be 'confirmed', and reified on entry into different career routes (Ashton and Field, 1976). For Willis, the structuring of orientations was a dimension through which working class schoolboys 'seal their own fate' (Willis, 1977). The issue of life cycle transitions

amongst youth was directed at processes underlying class continuity, as individuals traversed the distinct institutions of school and work.

Through the 1980s, following the severe recession and employment crisis at the start of the decade, youth research moved its focus to novel forms of structural discontinuity. This shift in emphasis reflected a concern that the school to work transition had been replaced, for many working class youth, by a 'school-to-no-work' limbo. Writers focused on the changing structure of demand for youth labour as it was shaped by economic recession, by industrial restructuring and by government policies on youth training, employment and wages. Different research agendas developed. These focused on the political and social consequences of government, in particular youth training, policy, and on economic restructuring and its consequences for domestic life cycle trajectories and for labour force careers and occupational mobility. These research agendas, concerned respectively with domestic life cycle and labour force trajectories, have remained largely distinct. They are addressed in some detail through this and the subsequent chapter.

The circumstance being addressed by researchers was one of rapid change in the structure of demand and levels of reward to youth labour. The number of school leavers entering the labour force with no guarantee of a secure wage was a cause of increasing political and social concern. The percentage of 16 to 18 year olds in Britain who were unemployed or on training schemes grew from 10.1% in 1979 to 27.0% in 1984 (DES figures, quoted in Raffe, 1987). The percentages of 16 year olds in paid employment fell from 60% in 1975 to 16% by 1986 (rising slightly to 20% by 1988). In 1988, 25% of the age group were on the Youth Training Scheme, a slight decline from the peak participation rate of 27% between 1985 and 1987. 47% were in full time education and 8% were registered as unemployed. Of 17 year olds in 1988, 33% were in full time education compared to 25% in 1975. YTS was extended to a two year scheme in 1986, and the proportion of 17 year olds on the scheme increased from 10% in 1987 to 21% in 1988. Those in employment fell from 45% to 36% between 1987 and 1988. In 1975, 84% of 18 year olds were in paid employment, a percentage which fell to

62% by 1983 and recovered slightly to 68% by 1988 (Employment Department, Labour Market Quarterly Report, 1989). By 1988 the most common route into employment amongst 16 years olds was via YTS, accounting for 36% of labour force entrants, compared to 30% who went directly into employment, and 30% who entered employment after full time education beyond the minimum school leaving age (Employment Department, Labour Market Quarterly Report, 1990).

Social security legislation was altered throughout the 1980s, effectively increasing the age at which independence, as recognised by social security arrangements, is deemed to start (Harris, 1988). In 1988 the Social Security Act replaced the supplementary benefit system with Income Support, and only in exceptional circumstances would payments be made to 16 and 17 year olds. Guarantees of a place on YTS, with its weekly allowance, replaced the automatic claim to benefit amongst the age group. Whilst the YTS allowance is higher than rates of Income Support it is well below wage rates for most young people. Harris argues that the consequences of such policies has been to extend the dependency of young people on their parents, a situation which has grown through the twentieth century because of the extension of compulsory education and, more crucially, according to Harris, because of the growth of youth unemployment through the 1970s and 1980s (Harris, 1988).

An assumption quite general to youth research, and only indicated here since it will be addressed in some detail through the thesis, is that the transition from school to employment, and the independence achieved through earning, once underwrote 'normal', class related, transitions to adulthood. Now hypotheses of change in the attainment of adult status are assessed in relation to the timing of life cycle events which mark transitions from semi-dependency to independence, through departure from the parental home, household formation, marriage and parenthood. The prime mover in this change is seen to be unemployment, job insecurity and resource constraint amongst youth, all potential obstacles to achieving adult lifestyles and familial independence. Changes in the earnings of youth relative to older workers have received some attention in studies of the relation between youth wage rates and unemployment rates (see

Raffe, 1987 for review), but otherwise they have been largely neglected. In fact, mean earnings amongst young people have been increasing over recent years, but at a slower rate than amongst older age groups, and amongst the lower quartiles of the earnings distribution, young adults have experienced a decline in real wages (New Earnings Survey data). These changes are indicative, too, of important changes in the economic relations of youth and early adulthood. Since the unemployed and those on training allowances are not included in the earnings data, the evidence suggests more broadly based changes in the period of youth and early adulthood than is suggested by the emphasis of youth researchers on YTS and unemployment.

Early accounts of the unemployment crisis amongst youth in the early 1980s presented vehement critiques of government policy, then in the early years of the Thatcher administration. Writers addressed the perceived discrepancies between youth labour supply and demand as they were manifest in training policies, and many argued that government intervention amounted to an ideological assault on working class youth. Policies were argued to be restructuring the substance of youth as a life cycle stage, by forcing down youth wages, and shaping the ambitions and expectations of the young in order to meet the demands of industry. Government policy, the increased powers of the Manpower Services Commission and, in particular, the development of the Youth Training Scheme were characterised as a form of ideological management by the state (eg. Markall and Gregory, 1982; Finn, 1982, 1987; Benn and Fairley, 1986). The 'skill deficit' model implicit in YTS was a theme connecting the writing of several authors. Training policy, in particular the emphasis on training for 'Social and Life Skills', was argued to reify the popular myth that unemployment is a consequence of the mismatch between young people's abilities and those required by employers (eg. Bates et al, 1984; Rees and Atkinson, 1982). State training policy was seen as an attempt to ingrain the work ethic in the young, and "to break people, especially working class young people, into a life of low wages and long periods of unemployment" (Benn and Fairley, 1986, p.3). The critiques were accompanied by rather vague policy recommendations, features of what now seems a fast dated political manifesto, with arguments for a participatory debate

on the kind of work society needs (Benn and Fairley, 1986) to teaching 'subversive skills' (Atkinson et al, 1982).

A number of writers claimed that the sorts of changes being addressed would effectively prolong the period of youth. The collapse in employment was simultaneously a collapse in the means by which young people could secure independence and adult lifestyles. Young 'adults', in their early twenties and unemployed, or in work but without security or decent prospects, were said to be 'trapped as teenagers' (Williamson, 1985; see also Caffrey et al, 1986) or to experience an extended youth as a period of suspended animation, and be caught in a 'frozen transition' (Willis, 1985).

The argument that routes to adult status and independence were being undermined remained a euphemism for the problematic employment status of young people, but it presented a hypothesis that wage security was necessary to 'normal' transitions, through leaving the parental home, getting married and becoming parents in an independent household. A number of research projects were set up to explore the relationship between youth and young adults' experience in the labour force and the organisation of family related life cycle transitions (eg. Jones 1986,1987; Wallace, 1987a,b,c; Hutson and Jenkins, 1987a,b; 1989; Furlong and Cooney, 1990; Murphy and Sullivan 1986). Consequently the earlier emphasis on the transition from school to work shifted to a more general concern with labour force and life cycle trajectories. The age at leaving parents, setting up a household, cohabiting, marrying and becoming a parent are standardly used as indicators of the attainment of adult status. Their incidence is not necessary, nor equivalent, to adulthood, their order not rigid nor uniform, but their timing serves as a useful and parsimonious framework for exploring class differences across the population and patterns of change across cohorts or generations. As life cycle events, of individuals and households, they provide indices which map out patterns of progression from childhood dependency through the partial independence of youth to the attainment of forms of 'adult' independence and responsibilities.

The longitudinal emphasis of this research was a useful departure, reflecting a concern to elucidate processes of structural change in life cycle trajectories. It will be argued below that this commitment has fallen short of its objective since it has not adequately challenged the cross sectional limits to earlier definitions of youth. The concern with trajectories focuses attention on biographical journeys from dependence to independence, but in the absence of a theory of their interaction, explanations of change in life cycle processes become problematic.

Reformulations and Contradictions

Youth research, focusing on the consequences of economic change for the labour force and domestic careers of young adults, has been shaped by a concern with individual, cohort and class trajectories. The integrated nature of the statuses of dependence and independence that youth is supposed to bridge is largely neglected, or ruled out by notions of transition between life cycle stages where different structural principles appear to operate. The dichotomy between youth and adult labour markets based in segmentation theory (eg. Ashton et al, 1987) or between relative gender equality in youth which contrasts with its 'wider context' of gender inequality in adulthood (Hutson and Jenkins, 1989) are two examples of a more general paradigm which seeks to elucidate processes structuring life cycle continuity as individuals 'traverse' different social statuses. It is the conceptual separation of individual trajectories from these statuses which is, in part, responsible for contradictory statements concerning economic change and the structuring of transition to adulthood. Such contradictions are in evidence not only across the conclusions of different writers, but are embedded, as we shall see, in supposedly unified statements of contemporary circumstances.

Youth research has been dominated by ethnographic evidence, with relatively small scale studies often using in-depth interviews, and focusing on the experience of contemporary cohorts of youth and young adults (eg. Sawdon, Pelican and Tucker, 1981; Griffin, 1985; Coffield et al, 1986; Stafford, 1981;

Cockburn, 1987; Wallace, 1987a; Hutson and Jenkins 1989). The success in achieving detailed descriptions of the experience, social relationships and attitudes of young adults has not been matched by the development of general frameworks capable of exploring change in the structuring of transitions to adult status. Evidence of historical change is used anecdotally, or general references are made to aggregate level patterns of change in the timing of early life cycle events but the processes underlying such changes are not explored and are not methodologically integrated in studies of the contemporary experience of young adults (Chisholm, 1990, and Bynner, 1991 make similar criticisms). The class related patterning of transitions to adulthood is well established (eg. Dunnell, 1979; Kiernan and Diamond, 1983, Jones, 1987), but its relation to 'new' forms of disadvantage (eg. mass unemployment) is less clear.

The following discussion considers two recent research projects in some detail, those of Wallace and Hutson and Jenkins, since they are important in their attempts to move the youth debate forward by reframing its remit, and both help to illustrate problems which are general to conceptualisations of the transition to adult status. Parallel issues which confront theories of gender in the transition to adulthood are discussed in the next section. These problems are fundamental to the incoherence of discussions of change in transitions to adulthood, and addressing them may enable us to move on from the current vogue of mutual chastisement, amongst youth researchers, for allowing the critical questions of the late twentieth century to pass us by (Bynner, 1991; Chisholm, 1990; Ashton and Lowe, 1991).

Wallace argues that the 'normal' paths to adulthood, established in the 1950s and 1960s during full employment, are no longer possible, and a substantial proportion of under twenty fives have joined a marginal, subemployed, population (Wallace, 1987a). A central theme of her research is the impact of new patterns of work and unemployment on patterns of transition to cohabitation, marriage and parenthood. The empirical basis of her work is a sample of young people living on the Isle of Sheppey, who she interviewed three times between 1979 and 1984, from the ages of 16 to 21. In the context of previous theories based on a

narrow concept of 'transition', and the tendency to equate youth with an age period, this longitudinal emphasis is welcome, although the structure of her sample still poses a methodological difficulty given that most people marry and have their first child at ages over 21. Wallace could therefore examine the *attitudes* of her interviewees to marriage, cohabitation and parenthood but relate these to the *practice* of only a minority of her sample. Most of her respondents were opposed to the idea of marrying and having children whilst unemployed, but in practice a number did:

"Hence, unemployment would appear to inhibit 'normal' family transitions in principle. However, in practice .. those with irregular employment careers were just as likely to have had children by the time they were 21, particularly amongst the girls. This would confirm the idea that the unemployed tend to 'drift' into parenthood for lack of any positive alternatives" (Wallace, 1987b, p.126).

Wallace suggests that marriage was postponed as a consequence of unemployment. Unemployed people were more likely to be cohabiting with their partners, either independently or with their parents, than they were to have left home, married and established a household in a 'conventional' way. She notes the growing significance of owner occupation to patterns of household formation amongst young couples and argues that female, as well as male partners' earnings were crucial to house purchase. This is an important point. It hints at a changing relationship between the earnings of young men and women, in relation to the timing of household formation, an issue to which I shall later return.

The tension in Wallace's argument between *the attitudes of her sample as a whole* and *the practice of a few* in terms of family formation is not resolved. The cut-off age of 21 amongst her sample presents a fundamental problem. Only 13 of the 84 young adults interviewed at the age of 21 were parents. The point made by Wallace that those with irregular employment careers were as likely to have children as those with secure employment careers is based, amongst men, on a sample size of 4. It is the attitudes of the sample as a whole and the level of unemployment amongst them which leads Wallace to her speculative conclusion that family formation amongst the unemployed is likely to be postponed "at least

in principle" (Wallace, 1987b, p133). Yet simultaneously "unplanned family formation .. may increase as prospects look increasingly hopeless for young couples" (Wallace, 1987b, p.135).

Wallace's conclusion of change amongst the unemployed turns more satisfactorily on patterns of cohabitation, marriage and housing 'careers', but it is not clear how the experience of the unemployed relates to general patterns of change here. She notes a general growth in the incidence of cohabitation, the national rate being exceeded amongst her unemployed interviewees, and she points to aggregate level changes in the timing of marriage and parenthood, specifically "a tendency towards younger marriage and first pregnancy and a compression of the child bearing years generally" (Wallace, 1987b, p.115). She does not address a footnoted reference to an argument by Rindfuss and Morgan that "a longer time span in the USA (sic) [suggests there is] increasingly a tendency for young people to postpone having the first child" (1987b, p.135). This pattern, in fact, is not unique to the USA. It is surprising that the implications are not addressed. Aggregate level patterns of marriage and parenthood, as Wallace is clear in the case of housing availability, are not a distinct explanatory problem. It is as if such patterns, which are simply aggregate level statements of change in life cycle, or demographic, event timing, do not touch on questions which are central to the sociological debate on transitions to adult status. The failure to integrate understandings of macro and micro level changes has been a fundamental obstacle to progress in theorising the structural dynamic of life cycle trajectories.

The level of generality in Wallace's description of aggregate level changes in marriage and pregnancy is not helpful. The tendency towards younger marriage and first pregnancy is true only as the most general characterisation of change through the twentieth century. The long term trend to lower ages at family formation, quite marked in the 1950s and 1960s, was reversed in the 1970s, with the trend to later ages becoming more pronounced through the 1980s (OPCS, Marriage and Birth statistics). Since the mid-1960s there has been a significant decline in marriage and birth rates, most dramatically amongst younger age

groups. The number of births per thousand women aged under 20 fell by 40% between 1971 and 1986, and by a similar rate amongst those aged 20 to 24 (Social Trends, 1988, figures for England and Wales). These figures on birth *rates*, of course, do not clarify patterns of the timing of childbirth. However, other evidence suggests that cohorts of women born from the mid 1950s onward showed a significant change in the timing of their first births, relative to older cohorts. While up to age 18 the cohort born in 1955 had a fertility rate higher than that of previous generations, as the cohort aged it manifested a pattern of delayed starts in childbearing (Thompson, 1980). Later cohorts have continued this trend.

These patterns of aggregate level demographic change are addressed in detail in Chapter 4, but are sketched here in order to highlight the significance of their neglect, both theoretical and methodological, in the youth literature. The changes have been the subject of a largely separate research literature, the remit more of demographers and economists than sociologists, and the explanatory problems raised by aggregate level theories have not been addressed in youth research. Busfield and Paddon attempted such a project in the 1970s (Busfield and Paddon, 1977), but the implications of the framework they adopted, and the inferred necessity of cross-disciplinary engagement, has been passed over by recent youth research. The authors note that despite the widely acknowledged importance of economic factors to patterns of nuptuality and fertility, the relation of the latter to material standards, or orientations to living standards, has received little detailed study (Busfield and Paddon, 1977). The writers address this omission and explain changes through the twentieth century, up until the 1960s, in terms of increasing affluence, and a decline in the advantages to be gained by accumulating material assets prior to marriage. They suggest that economic recession, and increased difficulties in attaining a mortgage at a time when there were newly inflated expectations of home ownership, underlay the decline in marriage rates at young ages through the 1970s. Whilst they are interested principally in questions concerning decisions to parent, and in family size and the spacing of children, they offer some evidence on the timing of first births, suggesting that economic considerations, particularly accumulating assets prior to family formation, were of particular significance in decisions about when to start

a family (Busfield and Paddon, 1977). As we will see, such considerations were important also to many of the young adult respondents in my own survey. The ambivalence amongst recent writers over the relationship between material circumstances and patterns of life cycle event timing is partly a consequence of the lack of interest in linking detailed evidence from ethnographic studies on attitudes and perceptions with aggregate level changes in life cycle event timing. For example, in Wallace's research it is unclear how processes of change, identified in the experience of her survey respondents, relate to general patterns of deferral in the timing of marriage and first births. Her evidence of change is partial and provisional.

Wallace, however, does provide some evidence in support of the hypothesis that employment restructuring has been important to life cycle processes. She argues its consequence has been a 'fracturing' of work and domestic transitions (Wallace, 1987a,b). In contrast, Hutson and Jenkins vigorously oppose the suggestions that unemployment amongst young people undermines the process of 'becoming adult'. The significance of other aspects of adult status makes absurd, in their view, the idea that its attainment is somehow undermined by changing economic conditions. The authors take issue with the failure to theorise adult status within youth research and place this problem centrally in their research on youth transitions (Hutson and Jenkins, 1987a,b; 1989). Their study is based on in-depth interviews of unemployed young adults and their parents, conducted in the mid 1980s in Swansea and Port Talbot. The 'great majority' of young respondents had been unemployed for six months or more, and were aged 18 to 25 at the time of interview. Broadly, Hutson and Jenkins approach the definition of adulthood, and the structuring of transitions, from two directions, firstly stressing the social psychological aspects of attaining adult status and secondly, developing an understanding of transitions in relation to a general concept of citizenship. On the first, the authors point out that most of their respondents considered themselves, or their sons and daughters, to be adult, and they ask why this should be so. Reasons given by respondents lay partly in terms simply of their age, but more typically in terms of achieving maturity and an "independence of mind and action, and responsibilities in their attitudes and behaviour" (Hutson

and Jenkins, 1987a, p.94). So, the authors argue:

"The language which is used implies that the transition from childhood to adulthood is in large part a moral transition - a change in the individual's ability to make certain kinds of decisions - and that a bargain, and an agreed definition of adulthood, is struck between parents and children" (Hutson and Jenkins, 1987, p.94).

Ultimately, it may indeed be appropriate to characterise the transition to adulthood, and change in its social organisation, as having a moral character, but in a broader sense than that implied by Hutson and Jenkins. For them, the significance of inter-family relationships for young people's attainment of adult status, lies in the 'symbolic economy' of the family. Transitions to psychological independence are managed through financial and other exchanges, where young adult children negotiate greater responsibilities and independence with their parents. Where money is short, in this argument, the payment of dig money may be more important symbolically than economically, but it is an important precursor to managing one's own, adult, affairs. Further, social security benefits "while not as symbolically powerful or as economically substantial as a 'proper wage', allow young men and women more independence from their parents than they enjoyed whilst at school" (Hutson and Jenkins, 1989, p.108).

Like Wallace, the authors appear to agree that economic change may have particular consequences for the attainment of adulthood but, they argue, adult status is not as compromised as suggested by Willis because it is rooted in a much wider notion of citizenship than implied by the stress on economic relationships. In particular, jural and political adulthood is not dependent on employment status. Core components of adult status are independent of material resources. In criticism of Willis, they argue that:

"It is the failure to distinguish the legally constituted rights and duties defining adult status - which, taken together, may be conceptualised as a portfolio of enablement and obligation - from the capacity, whether economically based or whatever, to actualise the potential bound up in that status, which allows Willis to diagnose the suspension of adulthood for the young unemployed" (Hutson and Jenkins, 1989, p. 107).

Thus, the authors argue, independent living or marriage and sexual partnership are only facets of a much wider set of relationships which constitute adult status: "It is the *right* to each, not their presence at any particular instance, which is most important" (1989, p. 109, original emphasis). This emphasis on rights over their realisation leads to a static and uniform model of adulthood unable to address one of the principal research questions asked by the authors, of the consequences of unemployment for the transition to adult status. In fact, amongst many quotes from their respondents are a number which suggest particular concerns regarding the possibility of attaining adult lifestyles, and responsibilities, while unemployed. The authors note that these are broadly consistent with Willis' arguments, and are themselves ambiguous about the 'social' consequences of long term unemployment. Written in their slightly earlier publication, but consistent with their subsequent arguments, the authors maintain that:

"Young people continue - despite all the odds that are stacked against them - to achieve adult status. Although it would be stretching credulity too far to argue that they can achieve *full* adult status or *full* social membership as long as they are unemployed, neither is it the case that they are left in limbo, abandoned to a purgatorial appendix of the life cycle. Despite youth (and adult) unemployment life - of a sort - goes on" (Hutson and Jenkins, 1987a, p. 106, original emphasis).

Clearly adulthood is a vague concept and, as the authors maintain, poorly developed in the youth literature. However, the ways in which they define adulthood present problems for exploring change. Keen to highlight the problems inherent in arguments of delayed adulthood, arguments which they presumably see as labelling disadvantaged young men and women as childlike dependents, the authors fail to elucidate those aspects of transition which are changing in structured ways. Their conclusion of continuity in patterns of transition to adulthood, despite economic restructuring, becomes tautological when economic relationships are defined as trivial to the substance of adulthood.

The argument of continuity is the outcome of a framework which is ill suited to exploring processes of change in the social relations of youth and adulthood. Three points serve to illustrate. Firstly, Hutson and Jenkins define

adulthood in terms of jural and political citizenship rights on the one hand and as a managed transition to forms of psychological and emotional independence on the other, but it is unclear how these two aspects relate to one another. The implied significance of respondents' perceptions of their personal identity is not integrated with the argument of citizenship. Further, it is not clear why economic relationships have no role in relation to living standards as an aspect of citizenship rights, nor in relation to their consequences for the uneven mobilisation of jural and political rights. The authors acknowledge that unemployment has effects on the substance of adult experience, but their point is that many aspects of adult status do not depend on material resources. However, the drive to an eclectic definition of adulthood ends up with a level of generalisation where, along with aspects of citizenship status and forms of financial management, adult status is defined simply in terms of its inevitability; becoming adult is, the authors suggest, 'only natural' (Hutson and Jenkins, 1989, p.109).

Secondly the emphasis on the 'symbolic economy' of the household neglects the significance of its material economy. This emphasis on the symbolic nature of exchanges within the household in relation to the structuring of transitions from youth to adulthood is part of a more general reluctance to engage with processes of change in the structuring of the individual and family life cycle. If family structure, and the relationship of household members to the resourcing of households were autonomous, and not related to economic processes, then the relatively limited contributions of dependent youth might indeed allow what Hutson and Jenkins label as symbolic to take precedence in explanations of transitions to adult status. However, the substance and structure of transitions to adulthood requires an understanding of the relationship between household structure and the organisation of household resourcing amongst its members, and their relationship to patterns of access to and rewards from employment. General patterns indicate changing relationships between household members in their respective contributions to household income maintenance. To give the 'symbolic economy' precedence over processes of change in the structuring of households' 'real economies' is to confront dynamic social processes with a cross sectional

conceptual framework.

Lastly, as with other studies, data gathered from the interview based fieldwork is not related to more general processes, of the patterning of life cycle trajectories across the population or over generations, in any detailed way. The historical and methodological particularity of such studies diminishes the significance of social change.

Before describing further the outlines of an approach more sensitive to processes of change it is instructive to consider the ways in which gendered patterns of transition to adulthood are addressed in the youth literature. Again, models established to explore change in the transition to adulthood are compromised, here by understandings of static forms of 'adult' gender inequality, and by a notion of processes which adhere to categories as if such categories, and their relationships to one another, are not problematic.

Gendered Processes and the Transition to Adulthood

As we have seen, an earlier emphasis by youth research on the transition from school to work has been overtaken by more recent concerns with the impact of economic restructuring for early labour force careers. For many authors the emphasis on employment relationships was inadequate to the task of understanding female transitions to adulthood. For women, adult status appeared more appropriately thought of in terms of family formation, or motherhood in particular (eg. Bazalgette, 1978; West and Newton, 1983; Busfield, 1987). Surveys which asked young people about their expectations for the future found 'gender typical' expectations which were argued to:

"reflect a prevailing view in society .. that adulthood for the male is generally marked by his entry into the world of work whereas adulthood for the female appears to be contingent upon her marriage" (West and Newton, 1983, p.162).

More recently, writers have begun to consider the relationship between

work and parenthood for both men and women. However, there remains a tendency to emphasise the distinctness of work and family careers, although increasingly they both are seen as relevant to men and to women. The transition from youth to adulthood still appears to crystallise the divergence of female and male life cycle trajectories. Female life cycle trajectories are still seen to be shaped principally in relation to the domestic sphere. There is some recognition of the importance to employers' recruitment strategies of male domestic status. For some employers family men with financial obligations to dependents will be more reliable employees than those without similar obligations (eg. Wallace, 1987a; Hutson and Jenkins, 1989; also cf. Blackburn and Mann, 1979). In parallel, it is women's domestic responsibilities which are seen to exclude them from 'male' career routes and the associated rewards. An extreme version of this argument is presented by Bynner, in his synopsis of a UK/USA comparison of transition made by Kerckhoff, where:

"The conflicting demands on girls, stemming from their desire to pursue a 'domestic career', is seen to stunt their progress towards qualifications and consequently to depress their opportunities in the labour market" (Bynner, 1991, p.649).

Whilst many would be sceptical of locating gender inequalities in female 'choices', there is nevertheless a general characterisation of forms of gender inequality which reside in processes of discrimination, whether it is through labour market segmentation in the economic sphere (eg. Ashton et al, 1990) or through patriarchal processes in general (eg. Jones and Wallace, 1991). Gender inequality, as a feature of social arrangements, is not so much addressed as taken for granted, even where the processes giving rise to it are seen to be of decreasing salience for the study of gender relations in youth. Such an approach again underlies a curiously isolated theory of youth. Hutson and Jenkins, for example, identify relative equality amongst young adults living with their parents, underwritten, they suggest, by mothers' domestic work. They therefore argue that:

"The apparent gender equality of young women within the family can .. only be understood in the context of a wider, generational pattern of gender inequalities" (Hutson and Jenkins, 1989, p. 155)

In such a view, youth and adulthood appear as distinct spheres with respect to understanding structures of inequality. The biographical, or life cycle transition between these 'spheres' is abrupt:

"The young women's relative freedom within the [parental] household is likely to be shortlived, vanishing with marriage and the move into an independent household" (Hutson and Jenkins, 1989, p.155).

There is no consideration here that 'adult' forms of gender inequality might be anything other than static. The argument suggests that there is increasing equality in the treatment of young women and men whilst they are still dependent, but the domestic division of labour which follows parenthood reflects more general continuities in 'wider gender inequalities'. Such an understanding, as will be argued in detail later on, is misleading.

Cockburn, too, argues that continuity prevails, although aspects of change are apparent. Here differences lie not across life cycle stages but between social norms and social action. Her study of YTS schemes in London in the mid-1980s addressed the reproduction of gender inequalities amongst youth, via YTS, to gender inequality in adulthood. Critical of models of gender discrimination and stereotyping, models which cannot explain the dynamics of change, Cockburn maintains that her respondents were more liberal in their attitudes to 'gender appropriate' jobs than such models suggest. However, in the context of economic recession, and the associated risk of making gender contrary choices, "this openness at the level of ideas coexists with an actual behaviour that is almost always conformist" (Cockburn, 1987, p.198).

The characterisation of gender inequality as general, uniform and unchanging is a common feature of research. In consequence there has been a neglect of processes of change in the structuring of forms of 'adult' inequality. Change, it appears, requires a particularly dramatic quality to arrest the attention of researchers. Recently, Chisholm has argued that gender has been marginalised and argues the reason for this is the relative weighting of the sphere of production over the sphere of reproduction. She maintains that the latter effectively "becomes

that which cannot be allocated to the production sphere" (Chisholm, 1990, p.38, original emphasis). As a result, she notes, reproduction is treated analytically as if it were secondary to, and dependent on, production. She argues that we should regard the two spheres as interdependent so that issues of gender are integrated rather than 'tagged on'. However, despite this promising statement of intent, she goes on to argue that:

"The changes in patterns of marriage, childbearing and household size and structure over the course of this century are both fascinating and are becoming increasingly complex, but the central point remains that kinship and marriage expressed through the life cycle of the nuclear family still structures most people's domestic arrangements for most of their lives .. all studies of the domestic division of labour show that neither ideologies nor (still less) practices have changed with respect to gender roles .. Young people's experience of family life are unlikely to change dramatically in the near future, then" (Chisholm, 1990, p.53).

Other authors, similarly, have argued in favour of a balance between research into the reproductive and productive spheres, between domestic and employment experience. Jones and Wallace suggest that "attempts to produce gender-symmetrical studies of men and women in terms of both their labour market behaviour and their domestic responsibilities are lacking" (Jones and Wallace, 1990, p.138).

Calls for a 'gender-symmetrical' methodology seem bound to fail as a critique of the theoretical division between male and female experience because a dualism is already built into the call for symmetry. Such an approach would presumably endeavour to produce a theoretical balance between the significance of work to women and of domestic responsibilities to men. However, this sort of methodological 'symmetry' would not redress the fragmented nature of explanations of male and female transitions, or of employment and household processes. Patterns of difference, whether in gender inequality or between the claims of youth and adults, are aspects of a coherent social structure. A symmetry would follow not from balancing the fragments, but from locating differences in relation to the processes which underlie them. A number of problems ensue from

the treatment of gendered relationships and inequalities in the transition to adult status, although these issues are salient also to the broader debate on gender, work and inequality. The problems are summarised in three points.

Firstly, there is a standard supposition that the gender division is itself a sufficient statement of the causes and dimensions of gender related inequality. The outcome is a failure to account for change in the organisation of gendered relations and for diversity and change in the experience of women and men. As Siltanen has argued, the category 'gender' provides an inadequate statement of the processes giving rise to related forms of inequality in employment (Siltanen, 1986). She develops this argument through an analysis of forms of segregation amongst Post Office employees. Conventionally, analyses of occupational segregation by sex, see gender to be the defining characteristic and principal of such segregation. Such studies, however, fail to account for empirical 'exceptions', and the presence of a minority of women or men in jobs atypical for their sex are glossed over. In her case study, Siltanen differentiates job types on the basis of their rewards, as these relate to domestic obligations. She defines as a full wage job one which enables its incumbent to take sole responsibility for maintaining an independent household, which may entail contributing to the maintenance of dependents. In contrast, a component wage job allows its incumbent to contribute to household financing, but not to resource the household single-handedly. Siltanen illustrates the way in which financial need and relations to household income maintenance structure the distribution of people to full and component wage jobs. Thus, she present evidence which demonstrates inequalities in employment, and patterns of segregation, correspond not directly with gender, but with relations to household income maintenance. 'Exceptions' to conventional explanations of gender inequality, where people are employed in 'gender-atypical' jobs, are accounted for within a more coherent explanation of employment inequalities. Material and social obligations to dependents are essential to understanding patterns of inequality in employment, and provide a more inclusive explanation of patterns of inequality in employment than do undifferentiated understandings of 'gender' (Siltanen, 1986). Evidence suggests that a full wage job may be more appropriately defined as a principle wage job, and that two wages

are increasingly necessary to family formation and household income maintenance. Siltanen's analysis suggests the value of considering the relations of young women and men to household resourcing, both in their parental households but also in household and family formation, rather than adopting a 'symmetrical' approach where women and men are given equal space but treated separately. Historical change in the relative contributions of women and men to household income maintenance suggests the value of such an approach.

Secondly, within the youth literature, 'parallel' models of work and family related trajectories maintain the significance of each to the other, but they fall short of locating the experience of men and women in relation to this interaction. In part, the methodological frameworks, which generally focus on young and single adults, detract from developing this argument. Young single adults have received more attention than young couples, and questions about change in the joint organisation of family formation amongst couples are rarely addressed.

Finally, there has been little engagement with the causes and consequences of the post war changes in female labour force participation rates. As we will see, there are strong grounds for being suspicious of arguments that the consequences of increasing levels of female employment mean simply 'more of the same' in terms of inequality in earnings and in patterns of household income maintenance. These changes are important to understanding the underwriting of youth as a period of semi-dependency within the parental household, as well as to understanding change in patterns of household and family formation amongst recent cohorts of young adults.

Whilst gender issues have been addressed in a separate section, to clarify their treatment in youth research, the problems they raise are not separate from those which characterise theories of youth transitions more generally. Both models entail conceptual divisions, between youth dependency and adult forms of independence, and between female and male life cycle trajectories. Further, there are parallels in analyses of the experience of youth and of women, parallels which are formalised in labour market segmentation theory. Both groups standardly

achieve lower rates of earnings than their adult male social class peers. Both are characterised by their partial dependence on others for material resources, where the organisation of the family and the domestic division of labour is inseparable from inequalities in rewards to employment. By implication, then, the relationship between dependence and independence should be central to understanding processes of change in the transition to adult status.

Reconceptualising Transition: the Interaction of Economic Processes and Social Claims and Obligations

This chapter has argued that the interaction of family and work related processes must be a central component of an adequate understanding of change in the transition from youth to adult status. The interaction reflects the social organisation of 'dependence' and 'independence'. Claims to resources by those who are dependent, or partially dependent, are standardly furnished, at least in part, by the income of those who have direct access to a full wage (cf. Siltanen, 1986). For example, the ways in which claims to resources by children and by women are met, cannot be separated from the historical 'success' of claims to a family wage by adult men. Independence, then, is not an 'independent' category. Where it is defined in material terms in the youth literature, the definition is vague and entails a uniform notion of adult status being gradually achieved through the receipt of a secure wage. However, the longitudinal definition of transitions to adult status as a combination of life cycle events entails more than simply a transition from dependence to independence. For example, the 'independence' enabled by a youth wage is partial, and contemporary household structures standardly enable dependent young adults to be net consumers where the costs of their day to day living are subsidised by their parents. The 'independence' signalled by parenthood implies the need for access to resources sufficient to care for dependents. In short, transitions through these domestic life cycle events do not simply label a 'more complete' independence, but entail changing circumstances with respect to the organisation of social claims and obligations. Further, developing an explanation of life course transitions in terms

of social claims and obligations allows us to explore male and female transitions to adulthood as aspects of an integrated dynamic. In youth research, women are represented as being excluded from male forms of advantage because of their particular position in the family and their relation to childbearing and childcare. However, this approach neglects the ways in which aspects of 'male advantage' are predicated precisely on their own, particular, relationship to domestic obligations. Defining both youth and adult statuses in terms of social and economic claims and obligations is theoretically coherent. Youth and adulthood, then, are located in the same conceptual framework. Rather than seeing them simply as different statuses, such an approach allows us to explore the ways they are interrelated.

Acknowledging the interrelatedness of dependence and 'independence', where the latter may entail the means to resourcing dependent kin, also enables a dynamic understanding of change in life cycle structures. The youth debate is, after all, a debate about the changing nature of claims by youth to independence. However, the emphasis on changes in labour demand in the youth literature has not been accompanied by a parallel interest in changes in household structure. There has been little interest in the processes underlying the development of 'youth' as a significant life cycle stage, or in the changing ways in which youth, as a period of semi-dependency, is resourced, other than in terms of its direct access to employment-based earnings. Recent generations of youth and young adults have grown up in a period of increasingly parent centred obligations to household resourcing. This, historically recent, dispensation of the young from the sharing of economic obligations for maintaining their parental household is part of the background to contemporary studies of the transition to adult status, yet such studies barely address the processes by which changing household structures have enabled youth as a period of semi-autonomous independence, partly underwritten by the income of parents. These processes demonstrate the interaction of labour demand and labour supply side structures and are outlined below.

The patterning of income over the family life cycle demonstrates an historical continuity with relative poverty occurring around the family building

period and in old age, and relative affluence occurring during middle age. In their study of intergenerational income mobility, based on a 1970s follow-up survey of families interviewed by Rowntree in York in 1950, Atkinson and his colleagues present data which manifests a life cycle related profile of relative wealth and poverty, similar to that identified by Rowntree in his 1899 study of poverty. (Atkinson, et al, 1983). The reasons underlying the general pattern, however, have changed. At the turn of the century relative affluence occurred in the middle years because children had begun earning, and contributing substantially to household income maintenance. In the latter part of the twentieth century the financial contributions of children are less important. The most important factor influencing relative affluence in the middle years is identified by the authors as mothers' employment (Atkinson, et al, 1983).

The most significant aggregate change in women's employment patterns this century has been the increased participation rate. This is accounted for largely by the amount of time spent in employment over the life cycle, a period which has increased dramatically in association with the reduction in the time spent childbearing. Thus, there are many more women in the labour force at any one point in time. Fertility declined significantly in the inter-war period, in part because of the imbalanced sex ratio following the first world war but also because improvements in infant survival rates, and extended periods of familial dependence by young people, meant that children had become an economic burden rather than an asset to their parents (Gittins, 1982. Also cf. Banks, 1954, on declines in fertility amongst the Victorian middle classes as this related to rising aspirations; and Lewis, 1980, on declining fertility amongst the working class through the early decades of the twentieth century). Low fertility rates in the inter-war years meant smaller cohorts of new entrants to the labour force in the 1940s and 1950s. Economic growth and an increasing demand for labour faced labour supply side shortages. High marriage rates and a trend to younger ages at marriage and childbirth after the Second World War further reduced the population of single women from which employers could recruit. Employers turned increasingly to the recruitment of married women (Tilly and Scott, 1978). Compression in the ages of childbearing also have been identified as an important

supply side factor in the rise of female participation rates since the 1950s. Whilst the overall female participation rate doubled between 1921 and 1981, the married women's participation rate increased from 12% in 1931 to 57% in 1981 (Joshi, 1990).

These processes are essential to understanding the structure of contemporary households, and they demonstrate the interaction of economic and demographic processes. The domestic 'sphere' interacts with economic processes not just in relation to daily resourcing but also in relation to fertility patterns, and to the restructuring of households and the composition of the family. Perhaps at first sight the changes described merely underline the current position of youth as a period of semi-dependency, partly enabled by an historically small typical family size and by the high labour force participation rate of middle aged mothers. However, it is an argument of this thesis that changes in gendered patterns of employment and rewards over the life cycle are bound up with recent patterns of delay in household and family formation. The relationship between economic and demographic changes is not merely 'historical background' but part of the substance of a restructuring of transitions from youth to adulthood.

Some authors have hinted at a recent decline in the relative economic value of the 'traditional' male breadwinner wage (Humphries and Rubery, 1984). The significance of female earnings to household income maintenance is sometimes described in terms of the importance of female employment for keeping a percentage of families out of poverty. For example, Bruegel notes, after the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth (Research Report 6, 1978), that when wives do not work in paid employment the chances of a family being in poverty are one in three. In contrast, in families where wives work the chances of being in poverty are one in fourteen (Bruegel, 1986). However, there seem to be few studies of historical changes in the significance of the relative contributions of household members to household resourcing. Those empirical analyses that exist, in fact suggest evidence of generational continuities in the relative contributions of male and female partners in household income maintenance (eg. Rainwater et al, 1986; Joshi, 1990). Such analyses, based on

aggregate level data, are misleading. Changing patterns of earnings indicate that female contributions are, indeed, increasingly important to household resourcing, and particularly so in relation to household formation. This evidence is explored in detail in a later chapter. It is highlighted here in order to stress the shortcomings of arguments which maintain continuity in patterns of gender inequality, and which simultaneously compromise an adequate understanding of change in patterns of transition to adult status.

To summarise, this chapter has traced developments in the youth debate, focusing in particular on research into the consequences of economic change for patterns of transition from youth to adulthood. Research conducted through the 1980s, in the wake of the employment crisis at the beginning of the decade, explored a hypothesis that lack of employment or security amongst a significant section of the youth population would give rise to extended periods of dependency at the parental home and to a disruption in the ability of young people to attain independence and adult lifestyles. Earlier interest in the transition from school to work was replaced by a concern with biographical trajectories, and the relation between labour force careers on the one hand and the timing of domestic life cycle transitions on the other hand. Despite this focus, research has failed to specify adequately the relation between employment processes and life cycle structures. This problem lies behind the contradictions which characterise descriptions of the consequences of economic change for patterns of transition from youth to adulthood.

Such research has left itself open to the charge of a failure to locate youth, as described in the last chapter. There a number of reasons which underlie this failure. Firstly, whilst writers stress the significance of life cycle events, most studies of youth and transition operate with a sample defined in relation to age, rather than in relation to those life cycle events. This results in a tension between a concern with the consequences of economic change for youth as a life cycle period, suggesting that the age boundaries of youth may be subject to change, and a framework which ties youth to a given range of ages. Secondly, the question of change in the timing of life cycle events has been explored principally in relation



to 'new forms' of disadvantage, in particular unemployment, but with an inadequate concept of the relationship between hypotheses of delay in the timing of independence, marriage and parenthood and the processes underlying general patterns of deferral in the timing of these events since the mid-1970s. Thirdly, whilst the focus of research on life cycle trajectories is a positive development, the frameworks offered are still too narrowly defined to provide a basis adequate to the task of explaining change in the organisation of transitions from youth to adult status. The emphasis on biographical trajectories has led to the foregrounding of dependency and transitions through domestic life cycle events, and to a neglect of their relationship to independence and obligation. The literature would seem to suggest that dependence is socially constructed, yet independence and adult status are largely taken for granted, as a straightforward outcome of attaining a secure wage and adult lifestyles through family formation and parenthood. The notion of a secure wage, or of employment which would underpin 'normal' rites of passage to adulthood, is undertheorised in the literature, and appears to be an ahistorical concept. This not only has significant consequences for explanations of how gender related differences in transition are organised but it also limits explanations of change in the social organisation of transitions to adulthood. Before looking in detail at the elements of an integrated analytical framework, which would address the historical interaction of family organisation and employment processes, I will examine another area of youth research, into employment restructuring and change in youth employment opportunities. The next chapter explores these issues and argues that the related research mirrors the problems of the transition literature, where the interest in youth as a life cycle stage, and the relative neglect of employment relations, is transposed into a position where employment relations are central, but youth, as a life cycle stage, defined in terms of age, is taken for granted.

3. Employment, Training and the Experience of Youth

Introduction

Research into the consequences of employment restructuring has been characterised by a division of academic labour. Studies of youth and early adulthood have been organised around hypotheses of change in domestic life cycle transitions or around the restructuring of the youth labour market. The former research, described in the last chapter, defines itself in relation to changes in employment opportunities amongst youth, exploring their consequences for experiences of transition to adult status. The latter research, into youth labour markets, has focused on processes of employment restructuring and changes in the demand for youth labour. Such research traces the implications of economic changes, both national and global, for youth employment opportunities, and has highlighted their association with increasing inequality in life chances across the British population since the late 1970s. The first part of this chapter continues the review begun in the last chapter but the focus here is on studies of youth in the labour market rather than on studies of domestic life cycle transitions. I have argued that the theoretical division between these spheres is one which obscures the nature of change in the experience of youth. The emphasis of this and the last chapter lies with these divisions only in order to clarify their particular features and in an attempt to establish the value of an approach which places centrally the historical interdependence of the 'spheres' of production and reproduction. It is to the task of developing an historically located understanding of youth as a life cycle stage which the thesis turns in later chapters.

Labour market segmentation theory has been developed by a number of authors in their descriptions of change in youth employment opportunities (Ashton et al, 1990; Lee et al, 1987). Part of the reason for this appears to lie with a theoretical inclination towards structural, employment-demand led, explanations of inequality. In a segmentationist framework, gender and age are recognised as important dimensions of inequality. Their significance is seen to stem from the organisation of household circumstances and constraints. As

explanations of employment inequality, however, they are invoked at the point at which people 'enter the labour market', or in relation to this life cycle transition point through, for example, gender socialisation. Position within the family is seen as a constraint on access to certain types of employment. Ironically, through a framework which appears at first sight to challenge individualist explanations of inequality, household circumstance becomes simply another attribute which individuals bring to the labour market. Further, segmentationist approaches to youth employment opportunities operate with a taken-for-granted definition of youth as a life cycle stage. This is highlighted by the essentially static character of a division between youth and adult labour markets which is a feature of youth labour market research. The interest in labour force trajectories is sustained only up to this division, beyond which youth 'graduates' to adult forms of employment. However, if young people are still partially dependent on others for their livelihoods or without extensive financial commitments of their own and can thereby afford to take low paying jobs, a trajectory approach which stops when 'youth' become 'adult' neglects a particularly interesting dimension of change in the experience of youth and transitions to adult status.

The youth literature has drawn on developments in labour market segmentation theory directed at explaining patterns of gender inequality in employment. The next section describes these developments and considers some difficulties presented by recent empirical analyses in the area. Similar difficulties are reflected in youth labour market theories and are taken up in the subsequent discussion.

Labour Market Theories

Dissatisfaction with orthodox economic models of socioeconomic inequality has led several authors to develop arguments that the labour market is segmented, or organised around barriers to labour mobility. Important to both approaches is the relationship between labour demand and supply. In orthodox, neoclassical analyses of the labour market, all commodities, including labour, are

seen as homogeneous economic units whose prices are a function of their scarcity and their marginal productivity (del Mercato, 1981). With respect to labour, differences in price, or wage inequalities, are seen to stem from the characteristics of individual workers, who compete freely in the labour market. In this approach, earnings differences are seen to measure inequalities in the quality of labour, whose productivity is largely dependent on its acquisition of human capital (Rubery, 1988). Most criticisms of orthodox theory focus on its assumptions of open competition between workers. Segmentation theory formalises the importance of institutional barriers to labour mobility, that is of barriers to a market equilibrium where rewards to employment would be in line with a worker's market value.

Early, dualistic versions of segmentation theory focused on the demand side of the labour market distinguishing between primary and secondary labour markets (eg. Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Piore, 1975). White, male, middle class workers are associated with the internal labour markets and career ladders which characterise primary sector employment, and women, young people and older workers, ethnic minorities and the disadvantaged working class are associated with secondary sector jobs characterised by low pay, poor conditions and high turnover. This characterisation of the employment circumstances of young workers implies that all primary sector workers have spent some time in the secondary sector, a life cycle aspect to employment careers which is rarely addressed by segmentation theorists. Dual labour market theory has been criticised for its crude characterisation of labour market structure, its stress on labour demand over labour supply side factors, and the interpretation of divisions between labour market segments in terms of a capitalist conspiracy to divide and rule the labour force (Rubery, et al 1984). The emphasis on demand side processes has been criticised for understating the importance of reproductive processes, or the way in which the resourcing of daily life is organised (del Mercato, 1981; Humphries and Rubery, 1984). Processes of reproduction, in particular the organisation of the family, and of waged and unwaged labour, underlie a heterogeneous wage labour force. In this argument, the broad divisions of labour which characterised family organisation since industrialisation, and most markedly so during the interwar

period of the twentieth century, have been embodied in a system where employment rewards are patterned in relation to claims by men for a family wage (Pahl, 1984; Land, 1980; Barrett, 1980; Brenner and Ramas, 1984; Humphries and Rubery, 1984). Much of the literature here focuses on the dualisms which are part of the Marxist-Feminist debates on the relation between gendered forms of opportunity and inequality and the dynamics of capital accumulation. Women's lower earnings are explained in relation to expectations of their, at least partial, dependency on male earnings. Thus, jobs may be low paid, or classified as low skilled, on the basis not of technical content or the product market characteristics of firms, but because they are performed by female labour or by unqualified labour (Rubery, 1988). In other words the market model, barriers or not, is an inadequate statement of how women standardly come to have lower remuneration from employment than do most men. The model operates with a division between labour supply and labour demand, and segmentation theory considers that certain groups are allocated to particular labour market segments on the basis of their perceived attributes. However, if labour demand and rewards to employment are patterned in relation to the costs of labour then the treatment of supply and demand as autonomous structures must be called into question. Humphries and Rubery criticise divisions made by segmentation theorists between pre- and in-market segmentation, where social, pre-market inequalities and divisions are invoked but not adequately explained. They argue that:

".. if [labour supply] differences are in fact endogenously determined by, for example, different current opportunities for market work and differences in family organisation resulting from historical differences in income earnings opportunities, then labour supply cannot be taken as independent of demand side variables and an historical interactive analysis of the relationship between production and reproduction must be undertaken" (Humphries and Rubery, 1984, p.334)

However, in an attempt to operationalise the argument in an empirical study of employers' policies and recruitment decisions, rather than, as might be expected, locating these strategies in relation to more general social processes, Rubery allows that some continuity exists between employers' recruitment decisions and labour supply inequalities, yet maintains that women 'have already

been categorised in the social and economic sphere as relatively disadvantaged workers' (1988, p.274). The division between pre-market segments and labour market processes is thereby reproduced in her analysis, where employer recruitment decisions are no longer located with respect to the interaction of social and economic processes but take on an explanatory force of their own. In consequence, it is difficult to sustain the argument that labour supply and demand structures are integral to one another, and the claim that labour supply inequalities and demand processes interact in a dynamic relationship becomes suspended in her analysis of current processes:

".. the structuring or segmentation of the labour supply has been recognised to be itself in part the outcome of policies of recruitment, pay and promotion adopted by firms; women are available at low wages and relatively high efficiency because of the exclusion of women from large areas of the employment system. Thus the breaking of the direct link between current labour market demand and current labour market supply still allows for recognition of interdependency in an historical or long period sense" (Burchell and Rubery, 1989, p.4).

The central argument in the revised segmentation model, of the inseparability of productive and reproductive processes, becomes merely the historical context of empirical analysis. This need to 'bracket off' the explanatory claims of the earlier theoretical statement stems from a model of employers as gatekeepers where recruitment decisions are seen as constitutive of employment inequalities. Originally, for Humphries and Rubery, an explanation of such inequalities required an analysis of coherent social relations, and of the organisation of the reproduction of labour. By treating ensuing inequalities as already determined they become static, their continuity explained only in relation to employers' recruitment strategies. Here, and, as we will see, in youth labour market theory, the salience of reproductive processes, and the associated endeavour towards a unified understanding of employment inequalities, are pushed into the wings as writers focus on the particular features of labour market segments.

Like women, youth are often seen to hold a distinct set of labour market characteristics which give them restricted access to adult male employment

opportunities. In the case of women, it is their particular relation to childbearing and childrearing which are seen as constraints to equality of opportunity in employment. However, changes in these relations, for example the reorganisation of female labour force participation over the life cycle, are neglected because gender itself becomes treated as a principle of employment inequality. Similarly, as we will see, youth is not considered in terms of the social relations which constitute its particular character. Rather, youth as an age group appears as the principal dimension around which labour demand is organised. Interest in change amongst youth relates to its particular circumstances and prospects but in the absence of a theory of change in the social relations of youth the category acquires a static character. Consequently such theories do not address change in youth and transition as *life cycle* stages.

Central to recent research into the 'youth labour market' is the concern with economic and institutional changes and their consequences for youth employment through the 1980s. Part of what is at stake for contributors to the debates about the impact of recession, the growth of the Youth Training Scheme and industrial and occupational restructuring is how best to characterise the nature of change in youth employment opportunities, and their relationship to the general pattern of socioeconomic polarisation which occurred through the 1980s. The following sections consider research into change in youth labour markets and debates over the relation of YTS to the general labour market. Paradoxically, approaches which operate with a division between youth and adult, in order to explore change in the former, become caught in a static analytical framework. To move beyond this requires a reappraisal of the social organisation of dependency and obligation, structures which are reflected in patterns of transition from youth to adult lifestyles.

Structural and Cyclical Change and the Youth Labour Market

The reorganisation of youth employment opportunities through the 1980s has been heavily contested (Raffe, 1986; 1987; Ashton and Maguire, 1986;

Ashton, Maguire and Spilsbury, 1987; 1990). A central issue in the debate is whether demand for youth labour is contingent on general labour demand, or whether school leavers enter a youth labour market distinct from the adult market. In the former case, labour demand processes are seen to increase the vulnerability to unemployment of youth relative to adults. Unemployment has a cyclical nature, and during economic recession the slowing of new recruitment and the operation of last-in first-out policies has a disproportionate effect on levels of youth unemployment. During economic upturn, in this argument, youth are recruited more rapidly than other groups. These processes are represented by a job queue model, where youth are understood to be subject to the same processes as adults, but differently located in their attractiveness to employers depending on macro economic circumstances (Raffe, 1987). The empirical evidence for this argument is derived mostly from analyses of the relative concentration of youth in declining industries, which suggest that those sectors which declined the most rapidly during the recession of the early 1980s did not hold a disproportionate share of young employees. Raffe illustrates his argument through an analysis of change in employment rates across industries. Using data from the Scottish School Leavers Survey for 1979 and 1983, he argues that the decline in school leaver employment was a consequence of a heavy reduction in the recruitment of school leavers within industries, rather than a consequence of a disproportionate concentration of youth in contracting industries (Raffe, 1984; see also Main and Raffe, 1983). Raffe is critical, then, of arguments which insist that structural change in youth employment has occurred, resulting in a permanent decline in youth employment opportunities (Raffe, 1986, 1987).

Ashton and his colleagues are critical of Raffe's analysis, and of his argument that economic upturn would see a rapid rise in the recruitment of school leavers, mirroring the decline in youth employment during recession. They repeat Raffe's use of shift share analysis in assessing the pattern of losses and gains of youth jobs across industries and occupations and the extent to which this is a consequence of change in the general demand for labour, or of change in the industrial and occupational structure. Their evidence, drawn from the Labour Force Survey, suggests that Raffe's aggregated analysis obscures different patterns

of change in the organisation of employment amongst young men and women. For young men in particular, changes during the recession and since have had negative consequences. The authors argue that recession contributed to structural changes in the youth labour market, having long run consequences for the nature of youth employment opportunities. Using a measurement of the relative concentration of 16 to 19 year olds across industrial orders and occupational sectors the authors criticise job queue theories. Their analysis of Labour Force Survey data suggests that there was a continued decline in the relative proportion of youths employed in most industrial sectors through the recession and early economic recovery, between 1979 and 1984. Across occupations the measure suggests a decline in youth employment in the higher level occupations and an increase in the lower level ones, particularly in clerical employment for young men, and in selling and catering and cleaning both for young men and young women. They suggest that the extensive use of youth training measures in these sectors were partly responsible for job growth there. Changes in the organisation of production, in particular technological change and the rationalisation of labour, were responsible for a loss of many skilled and semi-skilled manual jobs in the manufacturing sectors (Ashton et al, 1990).

Data gathered in a survey of young adults, aged between 18 and 24, conducted by the authors in the early 1980s across four English towns, illustrate the extent of the decline in manual, particularly skilled manual, occupations. The percentage of men in the sample employed in skilled manual employment two years after their minimum school leaving age, fell from 44% to 14% between 1975 and 1981. Employment in semi- and unskilled jobs declined from 15% and 13% of the 1974/75 cohort to 11% and 3% of the 1980/81 cohort. Amongst young women the largest single occupational group at both points was in clerical work, declining from 21% to 13% of employment amongst eighteen year olds over the period. The largest single labour force status in 1981 was unemployment, accounting for 45% of the 18 year old young men and 30% of the 18 year old young women interviewed, although a further 13% of the younger female cohort defined themselves as being out of the labour force altogether (Ashton et al, 1990).

The authors, then, are critical of models of cyclical change in employment demand and argue that youth employment opportunities changed irrevocably over the decade to the mid-1980s. Economic recession contributed to change and may have quickened its pace, but its consequences were not separable from those of a more general economic restructuring. In particular the authors stress the position of British industry in relation to global product markets and the changing international division of labour. In part the rise of transnational corporations and the associated new management strategies have loosened the relation between national product demand and the level of demand for labour. The recession accelerated a longer term restructuring of companies' labour strategies, a process which has led to the spread of flexible work practices and the growth of casual and part time labour and the use of subcontracting. The authors argue that these processes, along with the growth of technology, have had profound consequences for youth employment opportunities. In particular there has been a decline in 'traditional' routes of entry into employment, not least through the collapse of manufacturing industry, with a severe decline of employment opportunities for minimum age school leavers. Further there have been shifts in the composition of labour market segments as employers have switched between different types of labour. In the service sector the growth of part-time jobs and preferences for older, married, female workers has in many cases meant the further displacement of youth jobs. The growth of youth unemployment and of YTS have meant a diverse set of responses by employers to these changed circumstances (Ashton et al 1990).

It is not the intention here to try and resolve the disagreements over the causes of youth unemployment. It seems that the authors may not be so irreconcilably at odds with each other as they maintain. Raffe concedes that during the early 1980s the demand for young workers may have changed in non-cyclical ways as youth unemployment has increased in its duration, and may permanently affect the life chances of disadvantaged groups in the relevant cohorts; that macro economic processes may have changed, and that government training and employment policies may have encouraged employers to structure recruitment more along age lines than hitherto (Raffe, 1987). Further, both Raffe,

and Ashton and his colleagues, examine the period 1979 to 1984, which appears to be a rather narrow time span for analytical confirmation or rejection of Raffe's argument that economic recovery will underwrite the reabsorption of youth into employment. Lastly, the argument by Raffe that recession underlay the massive rise in youth unemployment in the early 1980s is not necessarily incompatible with the argument by Ashton and his colleagues that recession was accompanied by industrial reorganisation which altered the structure of demand for young workers.

Segmentation and Transition

i. Youth and Adult Labour Markets

The argument of significant and permanent changes in youth employment opportunities raises questions concerning the relation between youth and adult employment and concerning the nature of employment trajectories. It is here, however, that a segmentationist perspective and the focus on a distinct youth labour market provides only a partial description. Ashton and his colleagues provide an interesting and detailed account of change in patterns of employment amongst young adults. This is set out in relation to particular occupational groups, or labour market segments, defined by the authors as covering professional, administrative and managerial occupations, clerical occupations, skilled manual occupations and semi- and unskilled occupations. Each of these segments, the authors maintain, manifest a dual, gendered, opportunity structure. The labour market consequently comprises eight segments (Ashton et al, 1990).

Age is understood to be another central dimension along which the labour market is organised. The authors argue that the significance of age discrimination in shaping the labour market has been largely neglected. Much here turns on employers' recruitment policies. Employers are seen to differentiate types of labour, principally on the basis of qualifications, gender and age, and through their recruitment decisions, to allocate labour force groups into different market segments with very different prospects for career advancement. These segments

are represented as clusters of occupations into which young people tend to get 'locked' after entry, with mechanisms operating to restrict movement across segments. Segments are created in part by employers' recruitment strategies, by legal requirements (eg. under 18s cannot work shift systems, under 17s cannot do driving jobs), and by union pressures, for example restrictions on age of entry into apprenticeships. The general structure of the youth labour market, then, is one in which more jobs become available as young people grow older, although sectors into which young adults (defined by the authors as between 18 and 24) can enter from outside are limited. By the age of 18, those who have not obtained a formal training are excluded from large parts of the labour market (Ashton and Maguire, 1986; Ashton et al, 1990).

How, then, are particular labour force groups typed and defined as appropriate labour by employers? The authors are critical of neoclassical treatments of labour as an undifferentiated commodity and stress the significance of sex and age discrimination in structuring the labour force. One of the most important sources of such discrimination is the way in which employers perceive worker characteristics as these relate to the position a person occupies in the domestic division of labour and in the life cycle:

"It is the ability of employers to enforce their definitions of worker characteristics that provides one of the most important mechanisms linking the position a person occupies in the family to their position in the labour market (Ashton et al, 1990; p. 76).

The authors acknowledge the influence to their own work of members of the Cambridge Labour Market Studies Group (Rubery et al., 1984; Wilkinson, 1981). However these writers' critique of the theoretical division between pre-market 'social' inequalities and in-market 'economic' inequalities is not developed (eg. Humphries and Rubery, 1984).¹ Ashton and his colleagues stress change in the access of young people to different job opportunities but do not consider together the organisation of rewards to youth and change in the meaning of youth as a life cycle stage. The influence by the Labour Market Studies Group, as acknowledged by Ashton and his colleagues, appears to relate to their shared

emphasis on macro economic change and the position of Britain in the global economy, and the significance of technological change for patterns of employment at a national level, but not to issues concerning the interdependence of labour supply and labour demand structures. Household and family circumstances are seen by Ashton and his colleagues as constraints to equal participation in the labour market. Position within the family, through institutional constraints and discriminatory recruitment practices, appears as another attribute which *individuals* bring to the labour market. The family as a social institution is treated ahistorically. Thus, the authors address changes in the relative demand by capital for different types of labour but they do not discuss the social construction of such labour force groups nor, importantly, changes in the relations between them.

However, changes in household structure and the division of labour amongst its members appear to be important to changing patterns of, and rewards to, employment. For example, the growth in part-time work amongst older women, which Ashton and his colleagues see as displacing youth jobs in the service sector, cannot be separated from the increasing availability and preference for work of women through the post war period. By treating gender unproblematically, as a description of employment inequality, any changes in gendered relations in employment are elided. Similarly, youth is treated as a 'type' of labour, but its meaning as a life cycle stage is treated obliquely. The majority of those aged 18 to 24 have no dependents of their own and many are partly dependent on others for the day to day reproduction of their lifestyles. The age group itself covers a diverse set of social relations with respect to household circumstances. Whilst relations of dependency and independence are implicit to the definition of youth, it is youth as an age group which counts in Ashton's definition of a distinct youth labour market.

Unfortunately, the authors cannot explore the patterning or timing of transitions to the 'adult labour market' in relation to domestic circumstances. They define as 'adult jobs' those from which young people (16-18) are excluded on the grounds of age, and youth jobs as those which have sheltered access for young people (eg. apprenticeships) or those where young and older workers

compete. On this definition, their data reveals that of 18 year olds, 94% held youth jobs and 6% held adult jobs; and of 24 year olds, 53% held adult jobs. This distribution clearly reflects the salience of life cycle trajectories to employment processes. It would be interesting, here, to know in more detail the circumstances of those in youth and adult jobs, and the pattern of movement between 'youth' and 'adult' jobs as it relates to domestic circumstances. How did the almost even split between such jobs amongst 24 year olds relate to class location and to domestic obligations? The authors note that only 11% of their male respondents were married. That they tended to show greater occupational stability after a life cycle event such as marriage or parenthood the authors see as partly underlying the exclusion, by employers, of young employees from a large part of the labour market. Further, they suggest that amongst young adults, the absence of responsibilities allows them to move more freely between jobs. This evidence is indicative of the salience of domestic circumstances not only to age related differences across occupations, but also to the patterns of movement through occupations.

Associated with the definition of youth as a 'type' of labour, defined principally in relation to labour demand and separated from the social relations through which it takes on its characteristics as a life cycle stage, is the lack of specificity in descriptions of labour force trajectories between youth and adult labour markets. For young people, according to Ashton, the transition to the adult labour market "will be made automatically as a result of the ageing process" (Ashton et al, 1990, p. 170). After Stewart, Prandy and Blackburn (1980) the authors invoke the concept of 'upward drift' to describe the processes by which movement between first and subsequent occupations shifts the population into better paying and more prestigious occupations. Ashton and his colleagues explain this pattern in relation to the exclusion of young people from senior jobs, and in terms of the decline in less skilled jobs in the youth labour market, a structural effect which points to a difference between cohorts (Ashton et al 1990).

The authors also point to household relations as having some significance for occupational mobility. For example, they see family formation as having

important implications for the behaviour of young adults, and note that across their sample of young adults, 24 year olds were almost twice as likely as 18 year olds to mention 'more money' as their reason for making a job move. This example suggests that a pattern of job movement may be related to domestic circumstances, but this relationship, pointed to by the authors, is not taken up in their analysis. Rather, patterns of job movement are seen as more firmly dictated by the labour market and processes of age discrimination. Such processes then are firmly located with respect to labour demand but the salience of labour supply side structures is not integrated within their analysis. Whilst the authors point to forms of occupational segregation which distinguish youth and adult labour markets, they do not analyse the differing rewards which accrue to jobs across the 'markets'. However, a patterning of rewards in relation to life cycle stages suggests that the potential value of an analysis of the relation between labour force trajectories on the one hand and domestic life cycle trajectories and the organisation of dependency and obligation on the other.

For Ashton and his colleagues, the distinctness of youth and adult labour markets is attested to by age related segregation across employment sectors. They note the skewed nature of the industrial composition of youth employment. The authors treat age related differences across employment sectors as evidence of a segmented labour market. However, an examination of the earnings associated with the industrial sectors suggests a pattern which is consonant with patterns of movement over the life cycle into higher paying jobs. The young adult respondents of the authors' surveys were heavily concentrated into 5 industrial sectors, specifically in the Distributive Trades, Miscellaneous Services, Professional and Scientific Services, Clothing and Footwear, and Public Administration. These sectors, notably, are amongst the lowest paying industries. Data from the New Earnings Survey for 1988 shows that of 25 industrial sectors, for male full time manual workers, only two industries pay less per hour than any of the five sectors in which Ashton's sample is concentrated. The lower paying sectors are the Hotel and Catering sector (which appears anyway to be bracketed by the authors alongside distributive trades), and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. Amongst full time non-manual males the gross hourly earnings of those in professional and

scientific services compare quite well with other industries. However, amongst the remaining industries, all except construction have significantly higher average earnings than those associated with youth labour. Amongst full time manual females, of 14 sectors the six lowest paying are Hotel and Catering, Clothing and Footwear, Retail Distribution, Textiles, Professional and Scientific Services and Miscellaneous Services. Amongst full time non-manual women the relation between youth entry and lower paying sectors is less clear, with Professional and Scientific Services and Miscellaneous Services both lying amongst the higher paying of the 13 industrial sectors. However, it is amongst young men in particular that we might expect patterns of job movement into higher paying jobs, reflecting the accumulation of domestic financial obligations. In other words, young people are concentrated in lower paying industries.

Whilst the association between earnings and age is commensurate with different explanations, its very existence calls into question the treatment of youth and adult labour markets as structurally distinct entities. The significance of changes in the economic position of young people described by Ashton and his colleagues, suggests a reorganisation of the labour force trajectories on which young people embark. They argue that household circumstances relate to position within the labour market through employers' appraisals of potential workers on the basis of their perceived attributes. This 'gatekeeping' function shapes access to different occupations and different career routes. However, the interest in the salience of domestic circumstances to employment inequality might better go beyond questions of access, which leave intact a notion of the reward structure dictated by economic and technological exigencies, to a consideration of the relation between the domestic division of labour and the patterning of rewards to employment (cf. Garnsey, 1982). Rewards to employment are not independent of the social relations of labour. If young people standardly earn less than adult labour, yet are simultaneously partly dependent on the latter, as parents, for resourcing their lifestyles, then changes in patterns of demand for, and rewards to, youth labour raise questions about its relationship to adult labour. One might expect, too, that any changes in this relationship would necessarily be reflected in the organisation of trajectories from youth to adulthood.

Earlier I argued that problems which characterise general labour market segmentation theories have been reproduced in descriptions of a youth labour market. One of the central problems identified by Humphries and Rubery was the way in which 'cruder' versions of segmentation theory take 'pre-market' labour supply side divisions as given, rather than as an integral aspect of employment processes (Humphries and Rubery, 1984). However, the revised versions end by reproducing the same divisions, accepting as given, prior, 'social', inequalities. Thus Burchell and Rubery accept that, on entering the labour market, women are already categorised as disadvantaged, that is, secondary, workers. Similarly, Ashton and his colleagues accept age as a pre-given dimension of labour market inequality. However, in so doing, they neglect to consider the ways in which changes in age related inequalities are bound up with change in employment structures. The framework of distinct youth and adult labour markets leads to a position where changes in the former are assessed in isolation from the latter. In part this is a consequence of the stress in the associated literature on the causes of youth unemployment. Ashton and his colleagues see segmentation as a description of the differential consequences of economic change across age groups. The significance of change in the relative circumstances of, and opportunities for, youth, indicated by the writers, would seem to suggest the possibility of change in the structure of relative poverty and wealth, across the life cycle, and between age cohorts. However, without a theory of the organisation of relations across age groups we are left in the dark over change in youth and transition as life cycle stages.

ii. Training and employment structures

As an aspect of general changes in the employment circumstances of youth and young adults there can be no doubt that government training measures and policies through the 1980s, which encouraged low pay for young workers, have had a significant impact. Many see the Youth Training Scheme as part of the more general package of measures which reduced pay amongst young people (eg. Cockburn, 1987; Finn, 1987). Such measures included, for example, the

introduction of the Young Workers Scheme in 1982, which paid a subsidy to employers for employees earning less than £40 a week, and the exclusion of those under 21 from the protection of the Wages Councils in 1986. YTS, as we have seen, has often been characterised as a cynical measure by the government to remove unemployed young people from the register, and as a politically motivated measure which constructed the problem of youth unemployment in terms of the shortcomings of youth and of the education system (Rees and Atkinson, 1982; Finn, 1987; Benn and Fairley, 1986). After Edelman, Solomos has argued that such measures served a symbolic political function, both in blaming the victim for unemployment and in reassuring the public that the problem was under control (Solomos, 1985).

YTS was always principally an employer based scheme, where trainees were to be provided with work experience and on-the-job training, and a 13 week component of off-the-job training. Such (Mode A) schemes, organised by managing agents (employers or groups of employers), operated between 1983 and 1986 and were complemented by Mode B schemes, which ran as community projects, training workshops or Information Technology Centres, where employer based schemes could not provide sufficient training places. When YTS was extended to a two year scheme in 1986 there was an attempt to overcome what had become a two tier system, with the most disadvantaged youngsters concentrated into the Mode B schemes, and new funding arrangements meant that extra funding would be available for those trainees with particular needs, but within a uniform system of provision.

Because of the employer based nature of the scheme, it does not seem entirely surprising that YTS has reproduced prior patterns of entry into employment, whether these follow patterns of gender segregation across occupations, or post-YTS employment chances which are patterned in relation to prior educational qualifications. As we will see, such evidence of continuities underlies tensions in descriptions of YTS as a surrogate labour market. The MSC estimated that 18800 young people left a YTS scheme in Scotland between April and August 1986. Of these, 15500 had been on Mode A schemes and the rest on

Mode B schemes. In their survey of YTS leavers' labour force status in February 1987, the MSC estimate that 60% of those on Mode A schemes were in employment, and 25% were unemployed. In contrast, of those who left Training Workshops, 21% were employed and 61% were unemployed. Information Technology Centres had a higher rate of employment placement at 50% (MSC, Office for Scotland, YTS 100% survey).

The ways in which YTS was absorbed into employment processes, yet replaced a wage with a low, fixed, allowance, suggests that it has been important to changes in the relative position of young and older workers. Some writers, however, characterise YTS as a distinct, or 'surrogate' labour market (Lee et al, 1987). Such an approach appears to be bound up with the particular institutional features of YTS and to neglect the ways in which it has become a part of more general processes which have undermined the expectation of secure employment and a wage amongst early school leavers. The significance of such developments to youth as a life cycle stage is marginal to such descriptions which, like analyses of youth labour markets discussed above, accept 'youth' as a prior category. Paradoxically, perhaps, such approaches may understate the significance of the changes in the experience of youth which have occurred over recent decades.

Lee and his colleagues criticise studies of YTS for keeping too narrow a focus on the immediate objectives of training policies, and neglecting to locate such policies in their context of social and economic change. Through their townwide case study of the impact of YTS, the authors argue that stratification is an inadequate metaphor for the complexity of socioeconomic inequality. Segmentation theory, they argue, is more sensitive to socioeconomic diversity, where both pre- and in-market aspects of inequality interact in shaping life chances. They maintain that age divisions constitute important axes along which labour market segments arise. Routes into the labour market are seen to affect young people's subjective evaluations of work and its rewards. Socialisation into appropriate orientations is, they maintain, an essential element in the creation and continuance of segments in the adult economy itself. They argue that government policies in youth training and employment have restructured the

period of transition and are essential to understanding inequality and social divisions as a whole since the significance of YTS extends not just to the life chances of young workers, but to their values and social perceptions. In this argument, YTS is seen to have been imposed on employment processes and to have an independent effect. However, YTS is also seen to be increasingly drawn into general labour market processes:

"employer based YTS had created a *surrogate* youth labour market in which, as one might expect, ties of mutual dependence with the actual labour market were developing" (Lee et al, 1987, p.144, original emphasis).

Lee and his colleagues attempt, then, to assess the impact of YTS on general structures of inequality but see the former as if it were separable from those structures. To treat YTS as a surrogate labour market suggests a distinctiveness, but one whose parameters prove difficult to locate. For example, in the survey conducted by Lee and his colleagues, approximately one third of the YTS intake possessed 'O' levels. The authors note that better qualified youth had greater choice over the occupational sector which they enter, and tended to enter firms with a tradition of systematic training, such as in the engineering industry, or to enter banking and insurance companies, with the possibility of access to internal promotion ladders (Lee et al, 1987). Indeed, the partial autonomy of a 'youth labour market' appears to be called into question by the arguments of the authors themselves, when they recognise that:

"YTS had .. largely 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" (Lee et al, 1987, p.144).

Several authors have argued that YTS and other government training schemes have not made a major impact on the number of young people recruited nor on access to different types of jobs (Ashton and Maguire, 1986; Roberts et al, 1986; Jones, 1984). Roberts and his colleagues argue that the demand for less qualified school leavers in the early 1980s virtually collapsed, resulting in a polarisation of employment chances amongst youth. However, the authors argue

that, within these general processes of change, government training and employment measures were not altering but rather themselves shaped by these trends and inequalities in employment (Roberts et al, 1986). For example, 23% of the establishments in their survey had participated in the Young Workers Scheme (YWS). This scheme, in which employers were granted a government subsidy for employing young people so long as wages were beneath a ceiling, set between the YTS allowance and average youth earnings, was frequently used to employ young women in unskilled jobs. Only 6% of employers using the YWS in Roberts' survey had qualified by lowering beginners' rates. The remainder were already low wage companies, who were benefitting from the YWS subsidy (Roberts et al, 1987). In general, the authors argue, firms were using or ignoring schemes depending on their compatibility with existing recruitment and training practices. There is some tension here with the argument they present of patterns of change in youth employment, however, where it would seem that government policies have indeed had some influence in shaping structural change in youth employment opportunities. In their survey of rates of pay across over 300 employers they note a widening of youth to adult pay differentials since 1979. They argue that the low pay 'solution' to youth unemployment by the Conservative government incumbent since 1979 in fact aggravated the problem of unemployment, since instead of encouraging bridges to adult rates and occupations it provided an incentive for employers to replace one generation of beginners with another (Roberts, et al, 1987). Therefore, they argue, low pay and subsidies helped to retain some jobs on youth labour markets, and these came to account for a growing proportion of employment accessible to less qualified young people (Roberts et al, 1987). However, the evidence presented by the authors suggests that youth training measures themselves have had a limited independent influence on patterns of recruitment.

From a somewhat different perspective, Main and Shelley question the extent to which YTS has improved employment outcomes amongst its participants (Main and Shelley, 1988). The suggestion that training should improve employment chances amongst its participants is based within a human capital framework, and is difficult to sustain with any conviction. Through an analysis of

the employment and earnings of school leavers, Main and Shelley suggest that YTS increases the probability of employment amongst its participants by 20%, although as the authors note, the displacement of some teenage jobs by YTS training positions suggests that this figure overestimates the direct effect. On earnings, the authors suggest the effect of YTS is 'less clear' than in the case of recruitment. Former YTS participants earn wages on average 7% less than those achieved by similarly employed school leavers who had not been on YTS. Wages to ex-YTS participants were lower in most occupations than those of continuously employed young adults (Main and Shelley, 1988). Unfortunately, the basis for comparison between YTS participants and their non-YTS 'peers' is limited, and because YTS has been used most extensively in lower paying sectors the authors suggestion that further training is the cause of subsequent low pay to YTS participants is questionable. It would seem more plausible that YTS is associated with low paying job routes because it has become the standard route into the labour force for disadvantaged school leavers, and is attached more extensively to lower paying employment sectors.

Lee and his colleagues suggest that YTS and other government measures, through lowering the wages of young people, further lower their expectations as to what they can earn (Lee et al, 1987; see also Ashton et al, 1990). However, in this it would be useful to look at the long term relationship between the earnings of youth and of older workers. Such an analysis is undertaken in a later chapter. To anticipate the argument which will be elaborated there, national level earnings data demonstrates a decline in the earnings of young men relative to peak adult male earnings since the early 1970s. The rate of decline was faster for men in their twenties than for male teenagers, although post war improvements in teenage earnings up until the early 1970s had levelled out well before the introduction of YTS and the recession of the early 1980s. It could therefore be argued that the context in which the government insisted that young people were 'pricing themselves out of the market' was one in which claims by youth to adult wages were already being undermined by general processes. Whilst clearly YTS has had far reaching implications the evidence suggests that it has been absorbed into general employment processes and become integral to a general restructuring

of age related claims to employment and earnings commensurate with independent living.

iii. YTS and the Survey Employers

The way in which YTS was taken up by different sectors in association with their prior recruitment and employment policies is well illustrated by the employment sectors in which my fieldwork was based. The survey of young adults was conducted in the retailing, insurance and construction industries. As described in Chapter One, I chose these sectors for the main survey sample partly because of the diversity of their training strategies and the different relation of YTS to their recruitment and training policies. In this section I describe the articulation of YTS with the employment structures of the three sectors, to illustrate some of the institutional continuities which, along with the processes described in the last section, call into question the characterisation of YTS as part of a distinct, or surrogate, labour market.

Each of the three employment sectors has held a different relationship to YTS since its inception. In sum, construction and insurance industries are characterised by an extensive period of training, structured around standard career routes within the sectors. Retailing is characterised by a low level of training, with requisite skills for performing jobs tasks learned quickly, and by high levels of turnover and temporary employment. Construction and retailing sectors are both very important YTS participants, while large insurance firms have made limited use of YTS. The sectors therefore cover a diverse set of training practices. Construction and insurance have high levels of skills training and high and low participation in YTS respectively. Retailing has low levels of skills training and high participation in YTS. It is suggested that the form of linkage of YTS to these sectors is dependent upon their longer term recruitment and promotion strategies, and their respective employment structures. Both construction and insurance sectors have long periods of training involved in career routes which are available to a significant proportion of workers who remain

employed in the sector.

Clearly there is a great deal of variation in the level of promotion achieved in insurance, especially across male and female employees. However promotion within internal labour markets is a standard (though not uniform) employment route for those with continuous participation. YTS has not been avoided by insurance companies, but neither has it been taken up extensively, and interviews with employers revealed their ambivalence towards its value. Reasons for lack of participation were explained by different employers in terms of levels of qualifications required for entry, set by some companies at five "O" grades or above, by the burden of administration required by running YTS, by the desire to offer 'real career jobs', and because of the low pay associated with YTS. Reasons given for discontinued participation, a feature of one of the companies in the sample, related to its administrative burden, the desire to avoid pressure to recruit trainees, and dissatisfaction with the trainees' ability. This pattern of temporary participation characterised a number of the companies visited. YTS trainees could not normally progress to take Chartered Institute exams, which require a minimum of 5 "O" grades. Whilst not explicitly raised by employers, the structure of a one, and subsequently two year training scheme may not sit easily with existing training practice and promotion policies within the insurance sector. The frequent reference to the heavy administrative load associated with running YTS suggests that it could not be incorporated within existing practices to employers' satisfaction.

In the building industry completion of a time served apprenticeship is prerequisite to attaining skilled craft status. Approximately 90% of apprentice starts achieve full craft status (Construction Industry Training Board, in discussion). YTS was taken up by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to augment their apprenticeship training programme. Immediately prior to YTS the apprenticeship period stood at three years duration. Currently, training for craft status begins with one year YTS which feeds into a three year apprenticeship in Scotland and two and a half year apprenticeship in England. In Britain 60-70% of apprentices come through the YTS route (CITB, in discussion).

The ability to fit YTS within the apprenticeship system also met a desire by the CITB and building employers to lengthen the apprenticeship period (CITB and employers, in discussion).²

In the retailing sector the proportion of young to older employees has fallen dramatically. Under 18s employed in the sector declined as a percentage of total retail trade employment from ten to five percent between 1961 and 1981. This change is partly accounted for by the raising of the school leaving age in 1973. Retailing is still an extremely important employer of young people, with over 20% of school leavers entering the distributive trades in 1983 (26% of girls and 18% of boys; figures from Distributive Trades EDC, 1985). Turnover in the sector is very high with interviewed employers commonly reporting annual rates of 30-40%. Moves out of the sector by young people are as typical an employment route as internal career progression. Around 10% of the total British workforce is employed in the retail sector, compared to around 20% of school leavers. Of the former, 55% of employees are part time (Distributive Trades EDC, 1985, figures for 1984) and unlikely to be attached to career routes. It is suggested that the ease of attaching YTS as a training programme within existing recruitment criteria (16 year old entry and limited school qualification requirements) and existing employment structures underlies the breadth of its take up in the retail sector.

In summary, the evidence suggests that the take up of YTS by employers was contingent on existing recruitment strategies and employment structures. To treat YTS as a surrogate labour market seems warranted only to the extent that it was not directly attached to employment. However, the hierarchy of schemes of which Lee and his colleagues speak suggests that YTS, through 'reflecting' general processes, contributed to a general restructuring of the demand for, and rewards to, youth labour. Theories of the youth labour market have not addressed problems intrinsic to more general statements on segmented labour forces, and have reproduced these problems in a new guise. The tendency of the general segmentation literature to treat disadvantage as a homogeneous attribute of women is not paralleled in the youth debate, where youth is understood as a

temporary status covering a spectrum of inequality. However, "youth" is separated from the adult, or "real" labour market as it is described by Lee and his colleagues (Lee et al, 1987). In consequence we appear to need different frameworks for analysing the experience of youth and adulthood. Youth is equated with an age group yet, paradoxically, the life cycle circumstances which make such a description meaningful are marginalised. The next section considers the necessity of rethinking the theoretical categories and divisions through which youth and the transition to adulthood have been defined.

Summary: Transition and Social Reproduction

This and the last chapter have traced debates which are central to descriptions of youth and the transition to adult status and which follow two themes. The first addressed the issue of the social, domestic life cycle consequences of economic change, the second the consequences of economic restructuring, and the introduction of YTS, for youth employment opportunities. These research agendas share problematic assumptions over the nature of youth and the transition to adulthood as life cycle stages. The research described in the last chapter has gone furthest in questioning 'common-sense' definitions of youth as an age category, and has emphasised the life cycle processes through which chronological age acquires social significance. There, however, adult status is defined in relation to economic independence. The approach leaves intact a concept of 'normal' transitions and does not question the social organisation of occupations and rewards other than where there is a breakdown in standard expectations, that is, where there is unemployment. Research into youth labour markets addresses the reorganisation of employment at a general level yet it assumes the salience to employers of youth as an age category in the structuring of employment opportunities and rewards. Segmentation analyses commence with a statement of the salience of the domestic division of labour to understanding the organisation and reproduction of employment inequalities. In associated descriptions of youth, relations to the domestic division of labour are recognised as having some significance to the substance of youth as a life cycle period, but

the organisation of family relations is marginal to explanations of the causes and consequences of change in the labour force circumstances of youth. It is argued that in order to understand change in the organisation and timing of transitions from youth to adulthood it is necessary to move beyond this dualism between life cycle processes and domestic circumstances on the one hand, and labour 'market' or employment processes on the other.

Theory which places centrally the interaction of the spheres of production and reproduction, and consequently the relationship between labour demand and labour supply, challenges market based explanations of inequality (Stewart et al, 1985; Humphries and Rubery, 1984). The arguments have been directed principally at market explanations of gender inequality. Neoclassical approaches assume that the economic system is neutral with respect to labour supply in the creation of low paid work, and low pay amongst women is explained by their lower productivity, imperfect mobility or forms of discrimination in revised neoclassical formulations (Humphries and Rubery, 1984). Labour market segmentation theories, which formalise the significance of structural barriers to occupational mobility, argue that various, extraneous, factors determine labour supply side inequalities, and the allocation of disadvantaged groups to disadvantaged jobs. 'Conventional' theories of stratification have been criticised for treating the occupational structure as a given, a system of rewards whose level is determined by 'economic' processes, across which different labour force groups are allocated. Such theories fail to explain how labour supply structure, and the varying success of claims to resources by different labour force groups, are implicated fundamentally in the patterning of access to, and rewards from, employment (cf. Garnsey, 1982; Humphries and Rubery, 1984; Stewart et al., 1986; Rainwater et al., 1986; Holmwood, 1991). More specifically, labour is reproduced through the family, or through the domestic division of labour. Individual workers are not rewarded as if they have equivalent, or even potentially equivalent, value. Rather, the organisation of rewards to employment is structured in relation to the costs of reproducing labour, and differing relations to household income maintenance are important to the structure of employment inequalities. Whilst the value of such an approach has been demonstrated in analyses of

gender related inequalities (eg. Garnsey, 1982; Stewart et al., 1986; Siltanen, 1986) there are similarly good, and related, reasons why it is salient to an analysis of life cycle related inequalities. Such an analysis would acknowledge the mutual interdependence of domestic circumstances and relations to household resourcing, and inequalities in access to, and rewards from, employment.

In discussions of domestic life cycle transitions amongst youth and theories of change in the youth labour market, there is a general acceptance that the problem for recent cohorts of young people has been one of *access* to employment, careers and earnings sufficient to underwrite the attainment of adult lifestyles and to furnish a decent standard of living. In taking access as the principle issue there has been little interest in the position of young people in employment relative to other groups. In the transition literature, described in Chapter Two, writers have addressed the consequences of change in employment demand for patterns of dependency and family relations but there has been no parallel inquiry into the significance of the domestic 'sphere' to the organisation of employment inequalities. In youth labour market research, domestic circumstances are seen to be significant to employment inequalities, although principally amongst women, in terms again of access and constraint to employment and earnings opportunities, rather than in terms of the substance and organisation of those opportunities. Neither approach has explored the extent to which the domestic division of labour, and the resourcing of daily reproduction, are significant principles in the structuring of inequality and change in employment relations. Attempts to explore the effects of employment restructuring on the organisation of life cycle transitions are necessarily partial since they neglect the ways in which life cycle processes are integral to employment structures.

In the following chapters an approach which moves beyond the division between 'economic', employment, processes and 'social', domestic or life cycle related processes, is developed. An historically rooted understanding of change in the transition to adult status would reflect the integrated processes through which the domestic division of labour, or family organisation, and rewards to

employment are linked. Change in the relative rewards to young adults cannot be separated from the social relations by which youth, and transitions to adult status, are resourced. Researchers have neglected to locate youth adequately in terms of these processes, beyond the question of 'independent' access to employment. However, changes in family structure and in the family life cycle are of central importance in shaping contemporary patterns of departure from the parental home and of family formation. These changes are examined in the next chapter.

4. Demographic Change and Rites of Passage: Locating 'New' Life Cycle Transitions

Recent commentators have stressed the significance of the early 1980s to patterns of change in life cycle transitions, yet they have been vague in their descriptions of the historical specificity of this period. The emphasis on economic and government policy changes of the time has been accompanied by comparisons of recent transitions to adulthood with "normal transitions" seen to have characterised rites of passage to adulthood during the 1950s and 1960s, and seen to be a consequence of full employment (Wallace, 1987; Willis 1985). However, aggregate level changes in demographic event timing, in particular ages at household and family formation, show delays relative to previous cohorts beginning not in the 1980s but in the early to mid-1970s. The continuity into the 1990s of trends established two decades previously calls into question the value of seeing the recession, employment crisis and government policies of the early 1980s as a turning point in the patterning of life cycle transitions amongst young adults. Rather, the demographic evidence points to the problems which ensue from failing to properly differentiate hypotheses of delay in the attainment of adult lifestyles as a consequence of the changed circumstance of the early 1980s from the practice of delayed family formation which commenced a decade before. Further, the appeal to "normal transitions" of the 1950s and 1960s as an appropriate basis for comparison neglects the particular relation between full employment and life cycle processes during this post war period. Evidence surrounding the general patterns of delay in the timing of family formation since the early 1970s suggests that it is necessary to move beyond approximations of national economic prosperity or decline in order to understand the complexity of processes underlying changes in the life cycle.

This chapter outlines the historical antecedents to post war patterns of demographic change, and describes in some detail subsequent changes in life cycle event timing. Patterns of historical change in the timing of household and family formation, and explanations of such changes, have been neglected by recent

sociological research into transition, despite the importance accorded to life cycle event timing as a measure of change in the attainment of adult status. However, such evidence would help not only in placing recent patterns, but also in locating youth and transition, as life cycle stages, in relation to historical change in the social organisation of reproduction. After describing some of the historical evidence on change in life cycle structure and family organisation, data gathered in the surveys is analysed in relation to aggregate level changes. Aspects of change, in the housing market, in employment security and in the importance of female careers, are discussed. These have all to varying degrees been identified as salient to contemporary patterns of transition from youth to adult status. Another set of issues, concerning resource availability and lifestyle aspirations, are frequently invoked in explanations of historical changes in the timing of family formation, as well as family size, but are rarely developed in detail. There is strong evidence to suggest that the salience of the relationship between resource availability and lifestyle aspirations for transitions to independence and family formation is currently bound up with the significance of change in women's labour force participation over recent decades. This relationship has been largely neglected, yet it appears to hold a central importance to the shape of contemporary life cycle transitions. Deserving of an extended treatment, it is taken up in detail in the next chapter.

Demographic Change and Rites of Passage

i. The Making of the 'Modern' Life Cycle

Anderson, in his description of historical change in the individual and family life cycle, suggests that the 1960s and 1970s might be characterised as embodying 'the modern life cycle' (Anderson, 1985). However, the reversal in the 1970s of the long term trend to younger ages at family formation gives some aspects of this characterisation an already dated prospect. Anderson proposes that the historical tendency towards a clustering of the ages at life cycle events across the population is the principal feature in the emergence of the modern life cycle. For example,

in the 1970s most people married within an eight year span, between ages 17 and 25.³ This compares with a spread of twenty years in the mid 19th century and of seventeen years in 1917 (Anderson, 1985). Further, there has been a marked reduction in the span over which certain life cycle transitions occur over the life cycle of individuals. Accompanying the sharp decline in fertility from the mid 19th century to the 1920s there was a clustering of childbearing in the early years of marriage and a continued decline in ages at marriage and childbearing until the 1960s. As we shall see the age span over which childbearing occurs across the population has subsequently widened. Through the 18th century until the mid 19th century the median age of women at the birth of their last child is estimated by Anderson to have been 39, by the 1930s to have been 32 and by the 1970s to have been 28 (Anderson, 1985; see also Modell et al, 1976, for a similar analysis of life cycle changes in the USA). Some of the changes in average ages at different life cycle events are illustrated in Table 4.1.

The ages at parenthood shown in Table 4.1 hint at, but do not fully reflect the dramatic nature of changes in fertility rates from the end of the 19th century to the 1930s. A decline in family size occurred amongst the middle classes from the 1870s, a pattern explained in terms of parents aspirations for their children, in particular for maintaining customary living standards and for enabling provision for their children's education (Banks, 1954). Significant reductions in fertility rates became the general pattern through the first decades of the twentieth century as working class families had fewer children. In 1860 approximately 20% of married couples had two children or less, compared to 67% by 1925 (Royal Commission on Population, 1949, reported by Gittins, 1982). Gittins, in her research into change in family size and structure between 1900 and 1939, explores declining fertility rates amongst the working classes and, in particular, the diversity of family size and birth control across couples in different regions and occupations. In general the improvement in infant mortality rates was significant in shaping decisions which reduced family size. The position of mothers and children was, Gittins argues, bound up with an increasingly elaborate 'ideology of childhood' and with policies which reinforced the centrality of the male wage to household resourcing (Gittins, 1982).

Table 4.1. Estimates of the average ages at demographic events

Life cycle event:	Year of birth					
	1850	1870	1890	1910	1930	1950
First marriage						
Men	27	27	28	27	27	24
Women	26	26	26	25	24	22
Birth of first child						
Men	29	29	30	29	28	26
Women	28	28	28	27	26	24
Birth of last child						
Men	37	36	35	32	30	28
Women	36	35	33	30	28	26
Spouse's death						
Men	56	60	62	64	66	63
Women	55	58	61	63	65	67
Own death as widow/er						
Men	75	77	79	80	81	82
Women	75	79	81	81	82	83

(Halsey, 1986)

At a rate of 10%, fewer married women were active in the labour force during the period 1900 to 1939 than had been in the latter half of the 19th century (Hewitt, 1959, reported by Lewis, 1980). Pahl describes the inter-war period as "the high water mark of the privatized little domestic unit", a situation explained in part by the greater involvement of central government in family related matters, including the introduction of the Marriage Bar, preventing women in some occupations working after marriage (Pahl, 1984). In the context of a growing concern for the health of children and fears about population decline and national security, the child and maternal welfare movement and state policies reinforced a model of the family where 'good mothering' was a full time home centred affair (Lewis, 1980). It is, however, important to stress the diverse experience of the period, and that in some regions and occupations married women did work, particularly amongst the poorest households (Gittins, 1982; Roberts, 1982). Also, high levels of abortion, estimated as terminating 16% to 20% of conceptions, were prevalent during the period (Inter-Departmental

Committee on Abortion, 1939, reported by Gittins, 1982). Some commentators have pointed to the widespread availability of The Pill from the 1960s as a cause of recent patterns of delay in family formation but the dramatic changes in fertility in other periods must call into doubt this sort of technology-led explanation.

The Second World War is often seen as a convenient marker of change in life cycle patterns, in part because of the subsequent development of the modern welfare state but, perhaps just as significantly, because it separates the Great Depression years from post war prosperity and growth. Linked with the latter was a set of changes in the structure of the household as an economic unit, yet these changes have been understated in accounts of contemporary patterns of transition from youth to adulthood. This neglect has contributed to the incompleteness of accounts of the relationship between resource availability and orientations in shaping patterns of transition to adulthood. Anderson has suggested that prior to the Second World War the contours of the life cycle were shaped in relation to demographic and economic uncertainty. From the war to the 1970s, he argues, improved health and longevity, full employment and the welfare state were essential in shaping the modern life cycle (Anderson, 1985).

The historical tendency to an increasingly 'normal' pattern in the timing of life cycle events as well as in, for example, family size, identified by Anderson, has been equated with a rise in individualism and in the salience of social norms in determining patterns of leaving home, household and family formation by a number of, mostly American, commentators. Social and economic security, concomitants of postwar prosperity, full employment and a state welfare system are seen in these arguments to have enabled a greater degree of choice than previously possible in the timing of early life cycle transitions. In part too, this choice is seen as a consequence of changes in family structure, freeing youth from obligations to their parental family. The context in Britain in the early decades of this century, was one where young adult children were likely to have many more obligations to their parental household, both financial and caring, than is typical of the post-war period. Many had several siblings, and still high levels of

mortality amongst the working class often disrupted households, and entailed the loss of the main breadwinners' earnings (Jamieson, 1986). Hareven, writing in an American context in the early 1980s, argues that contemporary life cycle transitions are more strictly age related and more strictly governed by age norms than they were historically. In the late 19th century familial obligations and duties prevailed over age norms, and the most important aspects of the timing of transitions were not age, but how such transitions were related to the position of other family members (Hareven, 1981). Hareven argues that age norms have become more important, particularly since the welfare state took over the underwriting of various economic risks and obligations, whose previous domestic resolution was very influential in structuring the life cycle. In the 19th century event timing was critical to families' efforts to maintain control over their resources, and in balancing the contribution of different members of the family economy. Familial assistance was an exclusive source of security. The multiplicity of obligations over the life cycle, Hareven argues, was a more complex affair, to be worked out amongst family and kin, prior to the extension of state welfare provision. She maintains that the decline in such obligations has led to an increased individualism in early life cycle transitions, where the timing of departure from the parental home, and of family formation is structured now less in relation to the family cycle, and more in accordance with age norms. The suggestion of a significant, yet inadequately explored role granted to normative aspects of life cycle timing is taken up by other authors (eg. Hogan, 1981; Elder, 1978; Modell et al., 1976). The latter authors argue that there has been a relaxation of constraints on the ability to marry, allowing its timing to be increasingly preferential. Paradoxically, a greater uniformity of action is identified and simultaneously explained in terms of an increased individualism. However, patterns of event timing beg the question as to how "choices" are structured in particular ways, and how supposedly increasingly evaluative decisions should be located.

British writers have been less inclined to stress choices although, as we have seen, some have been quick to define 'new' forms of constraint in contrast to the 'normal transitions' of the 1950s and 1960s. The latter, then, appear to hold a sort

of authenticity, to suggest a 'natural' set of life cycle processes accompanying full employment. However, reasons underlying the changed patterns from the 1960s on have been described in rather ambiguous terms. Busfield and Paddon, in their study of post-war fertility patterns concur with Anderson and the above authors that the economic security and relative affluence of the 1950s and 1960s meant that individuals were less worried about their future material circumstances than previous generations, and were therefore less likely to defer family formation. They argue that through the 1970s the housing market and general economic circumstances became less favourable to early family formation and contributed to the reversal of earlier trends (Busfield and Paddon, 1979). Similarly, Leonard speculates that these changes were related to the recession of the 1970s, a period where real wages levels became static and were consequently out of line with expectations of rising living standards and increasing house prices (Leonard, 1980). In contrast, and from the more recent vantage point of the mid 1980s, Kiernan suggests that the lower rates of marriage amongst younger age groups in the 1970s were a consequence of greater choice than experienced by previous cohorts as, for example, increasing proportions chose to stay at school beyond the minimum leaving age. It is the 1980s pattern of continuing decline in marriage rates that Kiernan identifies as a consequence of economic constraint (Kiernan, 1986). The relative and contingent nature of economic choice and constraint, and the difficulties of addressing their relation to changing life cycle transitions are well illustrated by the ways in which one or the other are invoked in explanations of the experience of the 1970s depending on whether it is being compared with the preceding or subsequent decade. This problem is taken up later. First, it is appropriate to look in some detail at patterns of change in domestic life cycle event timing over recent decades.

ii. Patterns of Family Formation

The long term trend to lower ages at family formation from the early part of the twentieth century, quite marked during the 1950s and 1960s, was reversed in the early 1970s with a significant decline in marriage and birth rates, especially

amongst those under 25 years old. These demographic patterns are aggregate level measures of change in domestic life cycle events, central to the recent youth research agenda, yet they have received remarkably little attention amongst youth researchers. This section outlines the changes that have occurred over recent decades in ages at departure from the parental home, household and family formation.

Full details of age at marriage were not recorded before the beginning of the twentieth century. Estimates of the percentages of men and women married by certain ages are shown in table 4.2. Deaths in the First World War resulted in an imbalanced sex ratio, reflected in the contrasting proportions of men and women, born in the early 1900s, who ever married. The twentieth century low point in marriage rates occurred amongst the cohort born in 1905, and is explained by Haskey as a consequence of the Great Depression (Haskey, 1987).

Table 4.2. Proportions of males and females who had ever married by certain ages, by birth cohort, 1900-65.

Birth year	Age							
	Males				Females			
	20	25	30	50	20	25	30	50
1900	2	40	73	93	7	49	72	85
1905	1	31	68	91	6	44	69	85
1910	2	32	70	91	7	47	74	88
1915	2	36	69	90	8	54	76	89
1920	2	42	76	92	13	62	83	92
1925	4	47	77	91	15	67	84	92
1930	3	51	81	92	19	74	89	95
1935	3	57	83	93	21	79	91	96
1940	6	60	83		27	81	91	
1945	7	63	84		29	81	92	
1950	9	60	81		29	78	88	
1955	10	52	73		32	75	87	
1960	6	41			22	61		
1965	3				12			

After Haskey, 1987.

The average age at first marriage amongst men rose from 26 to 27 between the mid 1880s and the early 1900s. By the end of the First World War it rose by a further year to 28, fell to 27 by the Second World War, to 25 by the mid 1960s and reached a minimum of 24.4 in 1970. Since then it rose to 26.0 by 1985. Ages of women at first marriage followed similar trends over the century with average ages two years below those cited for men (Haskey, 1987). Increasing ages at marriage and falling marriage rates have continued throughout the 1980s. 61% of all women aged 15 to 44 were married in 1980 compared with 54% in 1989. These changes were accompanied by a continued rise in average ages at first marriage which reached 24.8 years amongst women, a rise of 22 months over the period (Cooper, 1991).⁴ Whilst first marriages have been postponed and the proportion of women who have never married has increased, so pre-marital cohabitation has risen substantially over the last twenty years. More than half of the women marrying in 1987 had lived with their husband before marrying, compared with 36% of those marrying in 1980 and 8% of those marrying in 1970 (Haskey and Kiernan 1989). However, declines in marriage rates amongst younger age groups are not a simple consequence of increasing rates of unmarried cohabitation but part of a more general pattern of delay in the attainment of independence and in the timing of family formation. The decade from 1971 to 1981 saw an increase in the proportion of time spent by young people aged 16 to 30 living with their parental family, or living alone, and a decline in the amount of time spent living as part of a couple or with a child of their own. Using data from the OPCS Longitudinal Survey, a 1% sample linking individuals enumerated in the 1971 and 1981 censuses, Penhale estimates that over the decade the average period spent living with one or both parents increased from 35% to 38.6% of time amongst women, and from 48.8% to 51.5% of time amongst men aged 16 to 30.⁵ More strikingly, the average time spent by members of the age group in a household of their own making (as a couple, with or without children, or as a lone parent) decreased from 55.8% to 49.4% amongst women, and from 39.4% to 32.8% amongst men (Penhale, 1990). During the period the median age at leaving the parental home increased by six months to 22.8 for men and 20.9 for women. (Penhale, 1990; see also Wall and Penhale 1989).

As well as a pattern of delay in ages at marriage from the early 1970s onwards there has been a decline in fertility rates amongst younger age groups and a rise in average ages at first childbirth. Table 4.3 shows the decline in fertility rates, from the late 1960s, amongst women over 20. The small decline in fertility rates between 1976 and 1981 shown in table 4.3 reflects a recovery between 1977 and 1980 which has been followed by a steady fall in fertility rates amongst women in their early twenties and a growing divergence in age specific rates with significant increases in births to women in their early thirties (Werner, 1985; Jones, 1992). Age specific fertility rates refer to aggregate fertility within age groups and reveal less about the specific timing of births or birth order. Evidence on the timing of first births shows significant changes in patterns of family formation with women born from the mid 1950s onwards delaying the timing of their first birth, at ages over twenty, relative to previous cohorts (Thompson, 1980).⁶ Birth rates continued to decline through the 1980s with the steepest decline over the decade occurring amongst women aged 20 to 24 amongst whom rates fell by 19% (Jones, 1992). The mean female age at first birth within marriage was 26.6 years in 1988, the highest figure recorded since 1946 (Dollamore, 1989). Mean ages of women at first birth within marriage rose from 24.2 in 1965 to 25.5 in 1982, and from 1971 to 1981 the percentages living with a child at age 29 fell from 79% to 69% amongst women and from 63% to 52% amongst men (Penhale, 1990).

Table 4.3. Age Specific Fertility Rates

Age group:	Birth year					
	1961	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986
under 20	37.3	47.7	50.6	32.2	28.1	30.1
20 - 24	172.6	176.0	152.9	109.3	105.3	92.7
25 - 29	176.9	174.0	153.2	118.7	129.1	78.1
30 - 34	103.1	97.3	77.1	57.2	68.6	78.1

From Population Trends, 1988, figures for England and Wales.

The median interval between marriage and first birth increased from 19 months in 1970 to 31 months by 1978, and declined to 27 months by 1988. The increase through the 1970s occurred alongside an increase in average ages at marriage (Shaw, 1989). Whilst there have been dramatic increases in the percentage of births outside marriage over recent years, this rise does not appear to explain the older ages at parenthood within marriage. In 1964, 7.2% of all births occurred outside marriage, rising to 10.2% in 1978, 15.8% in 1983 and reaching over 25% by 1988. (Population Trends, 57, 1989). The increase to the late 1970s was therefore quite gradual compared to the rapid increases over the last decade and do not coincide with the patterns of deferral of parenthood within marriage. Further, the upward trend in mean ages at childbirth has occurred both within and outside marriage (Dollamore, 1989).⁷

Over the period 1970 to 1983 birth rates to women aged under 25 fell across all social classes. First birth rates to women with husbands in skilled non-manual occupations were higher than to women with husbands in other social classes. In 1970 the lowest first birth rates occurred to women with husbands in Registrar General social classes I and II but by 1983 women married to men in skilled manual occupations had the lowest birth rates. In part this was due to middle class women being increasingly likely to start childbearing in their thirties. It is amongst this age group that the most significant differences in class related fertility trends emerged over the period. Amongst women aged 30 and over in 1970 the distribution of fertility rates across RG social classes was within 4% of the average rate for all classes, yet by 1983 women married to men in social classes I and II had a fertility rate 29% above the national average and women married to men in skilled manual occupations had a fertility rate 21% below the national average (Werner, 1985; figures for England and Wales). Class related changes in first birth rates to all married women aged 15 to 44 are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Legitimate first birth rates per 1000 married women by social class of father

Year of birth	Social class of father				
	all	I/II	IIIN	IIIM	IV/V
1970	44	38	50	43	47
1973	39	38	43	38	39
1977	34	35	36	31	36
1980	38	36	43	37	42
1983	35	34	40	33	37

(Werner, 1985. The rates are based on estimated populations of married women aged 15 to 44 in each social class. Birth rates up to 1977 are based on the 1970 OPCS classification of occupations; subsequent rates are based on the 1980 classification of occupations).

Werner suggests the possibility that childless married couples with husbands in skilled manual occupations may be more strongly committed to uninterrupted labour force participation than middle class women married to men whose rising earnings through their thirties make it easier to forego, at least temporarily, wives' earnings (Werner, 1985). The restructuring, through the 1980s especially, of skilled manual work, with increasing casualisation and less security to workers in some sectors, may have contributed to a greater reliance on female income amongst affected couples. Evidence from the National Child Development Survey (NCDS) suggests that, in the late 1970s, the men most likely to become young fathers were in skilled manual occupations. Amongst men in such occupations at age 26, the probability that they had become fathers by 22 was 80% greater than amongst their contemporaries in non-manual occupations but also, surprisingly, 30% greater than amongst their contemporaries in semi- and unskilled occupations (Kiernan and Diamond, 1983). This is contradicted by other evidence which shows a straightforward correlation between social class and age at childbirth, with those in the most disadvantaged circumstances likely to have children at the youngest ages (Joshi, 1985; Jones, 1986; Werner, 1985). The traditional expectation that the most disadvantaged will attain independence and families of their own at young ages has not been satisfactorily reconciled with hypotheses of delay in family formation as a consequence of 'new' forms of

disadvantage in the labour force. This issue is taken up in detail in Chapter 6. With respect to characterisations of general patterns of change in the latter part of the twentieth century, it is clear that, along with new class related differences, there is a growing diversity in the timing of family formation across the population. The supposed tendency to an increasingly age related, 'normal' pattern of life cycle transitions appears to reflect a temporary pattern specific to the 1950s and 1960s. However, the suggestion that national economic retrenchment and unemployment caused the subsequent patterns of delay in household and family formation is too narrow a model, embodying a static and deterministic notion of the relationship between economic processes and life cycle structure.

Given the emphasis by youth researchers on the value of life cycle event timing as an index of change in transitions from youth to adult status, it might be supposed that aggregate level demographic changes, and change in the organisation of family structure, would be central to analyses of the changing experience of young people, yet this is not the case. Part of the difficulty here stems from the lack of detailed work towards linking analyses of small scale studies with analyses of macro level trends in the timing of household and family formation. The particular findings of small scale studies have not been located adequately with respect to general processes of change in life cycle event timing. My own survey is clearly modest in its ability to furnish a 'quantitative' analysis, so it is essential to locate the information gathered in the survey in relation to more general evidence on patterns and processes of change in transitions to adult status.

Life Cycle Event Timing and Attitudes Across Two Generations

The main survey of young adults collected information on changes in domestic living arrangements and ages at which a series of life cycle events occurred. Expectations of marriage, parenthood and their timing were asked of those who were single and/or childless. Table 4.5 shows patterns of dependency

at, and independence from, the parental home across different age groups over the sample. The majority of male respondents were living with their parents at ages up to 22. Half of those who were aged 22 and over had left home by age 25. Amongst women, half of those who were 19 and over were living independently of their parents, and around three quarters had left before their 25th birthday.⁸ These broad patterns correspond with aggregate level data where median ages at leaving home are 23 for men and 21 for women (Penhale, 1990). Data from the 1981 Labour Force Survey indicates that the main period of leaving home amongst young women is between the ages of 19 and 23 by when four fifths of women have left home. Amongst men the main period of leaving is between the ages 20 and 25 although approximately one fifth of young men aged 26 still live at their parental home (Kiernan, 1986). Respondents to the NCDS were asked their reasons for leaving home. 39% of men and 52% of women left to marry or to live with a partner. The next most common reason for leaving was for an educational or training course, accounting for 21% of male and 18% of female departures, and the third most common reason was to take up, or look for, a job, accounting for 19% of men and 11% of women. Friction with parents was cited as a reason for leaving by 5% of men and by 6% of women (Kiernan, 1986). There is some evidence that increasing numbers of young people are living independently of their parents prior to cohabiting, marrying or having children (Penhale, 1990). However, the exact nature of these patterns is difficult to specify due to the lack of comprehensive evidence.

Table 4.5 Distribution of dependence at, and independence from, the parental home by age group and employment sector.*

Age and household status										
	19 and under		19.1 - 22		22.1 - 25		25.1 - 28		over 28	
	dep	ind	dep	ind	dep	ind	dep	ind	dep	ind
SECTOR	MEN									
construction	32	1	19	5	7	6	2	7	1	5
insurance	14	0	8	5	5	2	1	3	0	1
retailing	13	1	7	5	3	7	0	3	0	3
TOTAL	59	2	34	15	15	15	3	13	1	9
SECTOR	WOMEN									
insurance	13	5	9	8	2	13	0	9	0	4
retailing	11	2	6	7	4	6	2	1	1	1
TOTAL	24	7	15	15	6	19	2	10	1	5

* Main survey; 'dep' and 'ind' refer to dependent and independent status amongst respondents)

Table 4.6 show the distribution of marital status, by age, across the sample. Amongst men it is at ages 25 and above that marriage or cohabitation is the majority experience, amongst women this is the case at ages over 22. Aggregate level data shows significant changes in the timing of family formation occurring amongst cohorts born from the mid 1950s onwards. The decline in marriage rates at young ages through this period is shown in Table 4.2. There was a national decline from 52% to 41% of men getting married by age 25 over this period. At ages 22 to 25 43% (or 13/30) of men in my survey had married or were cohabiting. Amongst women there was a national decline from 75% to 61% in the numbers who had married by age 25, over this period. At ages 22 to 25, 72% (or 18/25) of women in my survey had married or were cohabiting.

Table 4.6. Distribution of single and cohabiting/married status, by age group and employment sector.*

Age and marital status										
	19 and under		19.1 - 22		22.1 - 25		25.1 - 28		over 28	
	s	c/m	s	c/m	s	c/m	s	c/m	s	c/m
SECTOR	MEN									
construction	31	2	20	4	8	5	3	6	1	5
insurance	14	0	10	3	4	3	1	3	0	1
retailing	14	0	10	2	5	5	0	3	0	3
TOTAL	60	1	40	9	17	13	4	12	1	9
	WOMEN									
insurance	15	3	12	5	3	12	1	8	0	4
retailing	12	1	8	5	4	6	2	1	1	1
TOTAL	27	4	20	10	7	18	3	9	1	5

* Main survey, 's' and 'c/m' refer to single and cohabiting/married status amongst survey respondents.

The patterning of dependence and independence, and of single and married status, by age, are disaggregated by occupational sector in Tables 4.5 and 4.6. Amongst men employed in retailing there is a higher rate of leaving home at ages under 25 than in the other sectors, although age specific marriage patterns do not show sectoral differences which are marked enough to warrant comment on rather small cell sizes. Amongst women, those in insurance are more likely to have attained independence by age 25, and to have married at ages between 22 and 25 than are women in the retailing sector. It is not immediately apparent why women in retailing should be slower to attain independence than women in insurance, nor why men in retailing should attain independence at younger ages than men in construction and insurance. Rather than speculating here over various interactions which may account for such patterns it is appropriate to suspend judgement over the extent to which respondents' employment sectors marks a homogeneity of experience in their labour force careers. The issue of how best to disaggregate the survey data with respect to labour force trajectories is

addressed in Chapter 6.

The remainder of this chapter describes some of the responses made by members of both surveys to questions on the timing of marriage and parenthood, and considers their relation to changes over recent decades in those circumstances which respondents see as salient to decisions about the timing of family formation. The first set of responses illustrate some of the stated concerns of young women and men in their decisions about when they will marry and start families. Unmarried respondents were asked if, and when, they expected to marry, and childless respondents were asked if, and when, they expected to have their first child. The reader is referred to the questionnaire in Appendix 1 for the context and detail of these questions within the questionnaire. The questions about the timing of family formation and reasons given were placed quite early in the questionnaire, so that open ended responses would not be shaped in relation to prior questions, which might act as prompts to particular types of response. Asking respondents if they expect to marry and expect to have children may, of course, encourage a positive response even where individuals are ambivalent about whether or not they will marry or have children. Further, such questions will have a differing salience to respondents depending on their current circumstances and whether or not they anticipate a change in their household circumstances in the short or the long term future. These issues are addressed later in the thesis, when I will look in more detail at attitudes to family formation and their relation to social circumstances and orientations to the future.

Within the parents' survey, respondents were asked to think about the experience of their young adult children, in relation to leaving home, getting married and having children, and to compare it with their own experience. They were asked to consider a range of circumstances, relating to male and female job security and career prospects, independent accommodation, home ownership and savings, and to say if they felt that any of these had become more, or less, important since the time that they married, and since the time that they had children. They were invited to talk about their responses. Respondents in the parents' survey were then asked to continue thinking of their children, and their

children's generation, and to say what they thought of as sensible ages for young men and women to leave home, marry and have their first child. I then asked them to say if they felt that things are different nowadays in deciding when to leave home, and in deciding when to marry and start a family, than they were when they themselves were young. The initial questions asked of the parents were structured, reflecting my own perceptions of the issues which would be seen as most salient. Part of the background to this was an optimism about the value of a quantitative form of analysis, an optimism which the final sample size did not warrant. The quotes from parents which are presented below are drawn from the responses to the open ended questions. The sample, of course, is small and the responses can be no more than illustrative of the issues which are seen to be salient to decisions around family formation.

It should be noted here that I did not tape interviews, but relied on recording responses to questions directly onto the questionnaire schedule. There might be slight errors, then, in the exact wording of some responses where my own shorthand was less accurate than a transcribed tape recording of the responses to open ended questions. I am confident, however, that most quotes are accurate, and those that are not verbatim transcripts correctly convey the detail of the responses given. The responses given here, and later in the thesis, I have chosen to illustrate the sorts of circumstances and concerns which respondents held to be important for the timing of marriage and parenthood. I lay no claim to a systematic procedure for deciding which responses to include and which to exclude, but I have chosen responses in part to convey the variety in people's concerns. It is of course tempting to choose the more articulate, and lengthy, responses, a temptation which I have not wholly resisted at this juncture. However, a shrug and a "dunno", whilst a rare form of response, is significant since it may illustrate the irrelevance of the question to the respondent, a possibility which needs attention. Later, in considering the relation between decision making issues and patterns of event timing I pay more detailed consideration to those who, because of the brevity of their response, are so easy to exclude from a report on attitudes. The following are examples of responses by young adults to the questions about the timing of marriage and family formation. Issues of change in the organisation of

transition are returned to through a consideration of the perceptions of parents, and continued in the next chapter.

One respondent, employed by the supermarket, was a 28 year old man, working as a baker. He had left school at just under 16 and started a painting and decorating apprenticeship. He left after two months and took up a bakery apprenticeship. He qualified as a time served baker at 20 and continued working in the bakery until he was 24. He then took a job as a baker at the supermarket where I interviewed him, because of better pay and prospects, and so that he would not have to work the nightshifts which, he explained, his wife did not like. When he left school he was living with his aunt and uncle, since some years previously family problems had led to him and his brothers being, as he put it, split between family. At 17 he moved into private rented lodgings, because he did not get on with his cousins. He stayed in similar accommodation until he bought a flat with his fiancée at 23, and they married one month later. At the time of interview she was employed as a clerk. When I asked him why he married when he did, he replied:

"I thought it was the right time. I had enjoyed myself with my mates .. time was getting on. We looked for a house January and February of the year we got married. We didn't plan the wedding until about the same time. I was not prepared to stay with family, as its the worst way to start. So we got a house. We had decided it would be the summer [when we married] but we decided we would make it soon after we got the house."

They do not have any children, and the respondent explained that he expected to start a family in about 18 months time, when he would be 30. When I asked 'why then?' he explained:

"We have discussed it quite a lot. We could have a family now but we want to buy a bigger house, rather than the flat, with a garden, so now we are looking for a new house. We hope to move by next January or February, and maybe be there a year before children. We try to plan ahead rather than throw ourselves in at the deep end."

Another respondent in the retailing sector, this time in the DIY store, was

a female, aged 27 and a supervisor in the home decorating department. She was living with her parents, engaged and expecting to marry the next year. She had, she said, started work as a shop assistant after leaving school in 1976, which would have meant she was 15 at the time. She had worked as a checkout operator and general assistant since, until she was promoted to a supervisory position at age 22. She had been engaged from age 24. Her partner was a technician with an electronics company. She expected to marry at 29. When I asked her 'why then?' she replied:

"I would get married tomorrow but I don't have the money. We need to save. I want no hassles with bills. I want to do things now with money, I'm feeling that when we are married we will need to put money aside to pay for bills et cetera. I like life now how it is. I sometimes wish I had saved up, I'm starting to save up now. We want to buy a house."

She expected that she would have children, and to start when she was 30 or 31, after she and her husband had lived together, wanting 'a couple of years to ourselves before children'. When I asked her for more detail about the sorts of things she saw as important in deciding when to have children, she replied:

"I think I will be happier then to give up my time and devote it to kids. [My partner] is younger than myself, he's 24. About my own work, I hope [my partner] will have more money, we'll be thinking about whether we can afford to have children. When I have them I would like to bring them up myself, and maybe get a part time job when they are school age. I wouldn't like to be not working at any time, I would hate to be out of a job when they are old enough".

The following respondent was on the Community Programme when I interviewed him. Aged 25, he had left school at 15 and subsequently worked in a number of labouring jobs, interspersed with spells of unemployment. He had been made redundant from his labouring job at a leatherworks at age 23, and after 18 months unemployment joined the Community Programme. He left his parents' home at 23 and moved into a privately rented flat with his girlfriend. They moved into council rented accommodation when he was 25, and his girlfriend was pregnant with their first child at the time of interview. She was working as a laundry assistant at a hospital. He explained that he had moved in with his

girlfriend in order to get away from his parents. He was, he said, about to get thrown out of his parents' house anyway. He said that he and his girlfriend had no plans to marry, feeling that there was no point. He explained that the current pregnancy was an accident. I asked him if he wanted more children in the future. He explained that he would, eventually, when he and his girlfriend were sorted out, that they wanted to leave the area in which they were living, and when he had a more secure future. When I asked later what he expected to be doing in five years time he replied that he hadn't got a clue, and that he expected his girlfriend would not work again 'until after the kids have grown'.

The next two respondents both worked in the insurance sector. The first provides a good example of the complexity of many life cycle trajectories, and of the ways in which transitions are not necessarily 'cumulative' but may entail moves back to prior living arrangements. This respondent was female, aged 29 and a junior supervisor in an insurance company. She left school at 17, planning to work before going to university. She started working as a senior clerk in the pensions department of a large insurance company. She left at 19, in order to travel, and spent time working as a waitress and chambermaid. At 20 she returned to Edinburgh, was unemployed for 7 months, and then took a job as a bank teller for 10 months. She then started work as a clerk at her present employer, where she achieved promotions to her present grade, by age 27. When she returned to Edinburgh she rented a flat, and then bought a flat at 22, where she lived with her boyfriend. They broke up 18 months later and she sold the flat and returned to stay with her mother (her father died when she was 20). She bought a flat again when she was 28 and a house at 29 where she lives with her boyfriend. They own the property jointly. She expected to marry, but was not sure when. She anticipated it might be when she was around 35, when she thought they might start a family. She thought 35 would be a good age to have her first child because, she said, she did not want to be too old.

The final example here illustrates well the range of concerns which were raised by many respondents, in particular the combination of 'personal' and material concerns standardly seen as relevant to decisions around household and

family formation. The respondent was male, the supervisor of the new business policy section of an insurance company. He had left school at 17, and started working as a junior clerk with his current employer after being unemployed for two months. He had achieved promotion over the years and become a section supervisor at age 22. He bought a house at 21 and moved in with his girlfriend. She was a clerk, working in the same company. He was 22 at the time I interviewed him, and engaged to be married later that year, shortly after his 23rd birthday. When I asked him why he and his girlfriend moved in together when they did, he replied that:

"We knew each other well enough, and qualified for a staff loan. I had been at home for long enough. Sharing with someone halves the cost."

He explained that he planned to marry in the autumn. When I asked 'why then?', he said:

"We have been living together for two years. We decided we were compatible, and its the normal thing to do, with living together. We got engaged in February, there's no need to save up as we have got a house sorted out. Normal folk have to save up and have a long engagement."

When I asked if he expected that they would have children at some stage, he replied:

"I was going to try and put my fiancée off the idea, me not liking children, [pause] .. not in the immediate future, I may have changed my attitude toward them. At the moment I see them as a tie. I would not want to be too old, at about 30 would be old enough".

When I asked him to say more about why he thought 30 would be the sort of age to start a family, he replied:

"There is certainly no way that we could afford it just now. So we would need a lot more than now. We would need to be earning in excess, - our combined salary is £14000 before tax, - we would need to be earning in excess of that before even contemplating it. If we were comfortably off I might contemplate it. [My partner] would probably stay off work with kids. We would need to be financially secure before we even thought about it".

It may be that, pressing the question of why people anticipate marrying or having children when they say they expect to do so, encourages responses which highlight material considerations, where these are not as central to patterns of family formation as theory would suggest. Wallace, for example, argues that whilst material considerations, particularly job security, are central to people's statements about the circumstances in which to marry and start a family, in practice people tend to 'drift into' marriage and parenthood (Wallace, 1987a). However, as a general statement this is inadequate to the task of explaining patterns of change in the timing of family formation. Below I return to the question of change in the organisation of transitions to adult status. As we have seen, recent research has focused on the experience of recent cohorts of youth and young adults who have 'come of age' (or not) in the 1980s. Much emphasis has been placed on their particular experience but, without an adequate comparative or historical framework, it has proved difficult to locate understandings of the consequences of economic change for the organisation and timing of transitions. Whilst the perceptions and attitudes of contemporary cohorts of youth must be central to an understanding of their experience, the latter is not in itself sufficient as a framework for analysing contemporary processes. A more adequate framework requires not only an historical 'background' but also that contemporary experience itself be understood as part of an historical process. In the rest of this chapter I describe some of the perceptions, of parents, of continuity and change in the experience of youth and transition. The experience of recent cohorts of youth in transition are then considered in relation to more general evidence of change in the processes which are seen to be significant to the timing of household and family formation.

Parents to approximately one third of the young adults were interviewed, one parent in each household. The parents who completed questionnaire schedules were born between 1920 and 1950, and apart from one who married in 1948, all married in the 1950s and 1960s. Whilst young adults were asked their parents ages at marriage, comparisons with self reported data by parents indicates inaccuracies in young adults' reports of this information. It is possible that amongst the youth sample as a whole reports on parents' ages at marriage would

be less accurate still, so these proxy responses are not used in analysis.

Aggregate level trends in ages at family formation broadly follow a U shaped curve from the post war period, with lowest ages occurring in the late 1960s. Since the parents' generation were young adults over a period of decreasing ages at family formation and the younger generation are growing up over a period of later ages at family formation we may be agnostic about what to expect of an intergenerational comparison of ages at marriage and parenthood across the sample. The clearest difference between generations lies in female ages at marriage. In the parents' survey, the twelve male respondents ages at marriage ranged from 19 to 28, with a mean age of 24 and a median age of 26. Amongst the 24 female respondents, ages at marriage ranged from 17 to 26, with a mean age of 22 and a median age of 20.5. Amongst men, ages at first childbirth ranged from 19 to 32 with a median age of 26, and amongst women ages ranged between 18 and 31, with a mean age of 24 and a median age of 23.5. Amongst men in the main survey approximately half who had married did so at a younger age than did their fathers, and half at older ages. Amongst the women there was a tendency to marry at ages older than their mothers. Of the thirteen women who had married three did so at younger ages, and ten did so at older ages than had their mothers.

The structure of the sample across youth and parent generations confounds a comprehensive analysis of generational differences in patterns of event timing within the survey data. However, a more informal but nonetheless interesting insight is possible through a consideration of parents' perceptions of change in the experience of youth over recent decades. The variation of event timing across the main sample is explored later. This and the subsequent chapter focus on general processes underlying change in patterns of transition to adult status over recent decades. Certain areas were identified by parents, as they have been by other commentators, in influencing the attainment of independence by young people. Housing costs and availability, job security, careers and, in particular, female careers and general lifestyle orientations were seen by parents as important to household and family formation. These latter areas have been poorly attended to

in explanations of change in life cycle event timing, and will be taken up in further detail in the next chapters.

In drawing up the questionnaire an aim was to see if any patterning amongst perceptions and priorities would be apparent. There is a tendency for parents of children working in insurance to identify several aspects of change, in particular referring to heightened expectations amongst young people now, and a tendency for parents of children working in the retailing sector to be more ambivalent in identifying aspects of change, or suggest that things have not really changed. Divisions between groups of responses are not clear cut however. The following quotes are drawn from the sample of twenty parents who I interviewed in their own homes. The purpose is not to be representative of the sample, some respondents felt that little had changed in relation to these issues, but the responses cited are indicative of the most important aspects of change which were identified by parents.

One father was born in 1930, and had been a time served sheet metal worker and had held a variety of jobs including labourer, bus conductor, and clerical work prior to early retirement. His wife was unwell and had stopped working four years previously. He married at 21, and had no children by his first marriage. His first wife died aged 25, when he was 26, and he remarried when he was 29. He had four children with his second wife. The son who I had interviewed was working on the Community Programme and living with his parents in a council house. Aged 19 he was engaged to be married to a secretary in the civil service. He expected to marry at 22 or 23. I asked his father if he thought that things are different for young people now in deciding when to leave home than they were when he was young. He replied:

"We never thought of leaving home. Life was so different, it is hard to put it into context. You were in a family unit, life was much slower... The way we were brought up, the first time I thought of leaving home was to get married."

I asked him then if he thought that things are different for young people nowadays in deciding when to get married and start a family than they were when

he was young. He said:

"To get married nowadays you've got to give it an awful lot of thought. The attitudes of young people are entirely different. Women used to be trained for marriage, if you couldn't do certain things you weren't fit to be a wife. Now young men and women are much more similar. A girl in our time wasn't giving up very much. Now a girl's got to think, .. and neither are prepared to settle down. For ourselves, a marriage could survive through hard times. Now young people wouldn't accept it, there would be rows."

Another, female, respondent was interviewed while she was visiting her son. She lived abroad. She was born in 1941, left her parents to marry at 17 and moved into private rented accommodation with her husband. She had her first child a year later. At the time of interview she was a printer, her husband a chemist, and they had lived outside Britain since 1972. Her son was a trainee butcher, aged 23. He had lived overseas with his parents since he was seven, and he returned to Britain at age 21, staying with his godparents initially and then moving into private rented accommodation. At 22 he bought a flat with his partner who he married when he was 23. He expects to become a father at age 26. I asked his mother to consider those circumstances, job security, housing, career prospects and so on which might be relevant to decisions about marriage and parenthood. I then asked if she thought that any of these have become any more important or less important since the time that she married. She replied:

"Home ownership is more important now. Then you were just keen to rent a place, anything to have a roof over your head."

When I asked her in general terms "Do you feel that things are different for young people nowadays in deciding when to get married and start a family than they were when you were young?" she replied:

"It's a lot better. They've got money to buy things now. I had second hand stuff. The first washing machine I got was eight years ago. Its the same over the world. [Where I live] now kids have got to have things new .. TVs, videos, fridges, .. its a good thing."

Another respondent was the mother of a 17 year old boy who I had

interviewed. He was on a special measures Youth Training Scheme, painting and decorating. He was not currently engaged nor going out with anyone. He lived alone with his mother in a council house. His father died 7 years after marrying his mother and had been receiving hospital treatment out of the country, being away most of the time when his son was a baby. His mother went to work when he was 1 year old. She is currently an audio-typist in a solicitor's office. She was born 1950, left home to marry age 20, and her son was born when she was 21. In response to the question on what issues had changed in their importance since the time that she married, his mother replied:

"The woman having good career prospects has become more important. I think a woman nowadays thinks about having a career... I think the other things are just as important as they were in our day."

I asked her then if she thought that any of the considerations had become more, or less, important since the time that she had children. She said:

"The man having a secure job is important. There is no point in bringing kids into the world to suffer nowadays, though other people would think differently." I asked her: "Are there any other changes, do you think?" and she replied: "I don't know. I think they would think twice with the unemployment, I think so, I know I would think twice if I couldn't afford .. if I was with someone who didn't have a secure job. I have done it myself with my husband's low income but I think it's unfair. I think maybe being able to own their own homes as well. I think it's more important for people to own their own house, maybe as its an investment. Before it didn't matter so long as you had somewhere to live. Security over the years has become more important to people, they like to, or do, buy their own home. A lot of women have to work. I feel that's changed, they have to work and have a secure job for example if they are married, or if they are widowed. Money in the bank is more important now, we never used to think about it so much."

Another father who I interviewed was semi-retired from a career in the police, and was working half time as an office messenger. He had been born in 1930, had left home at 17 to serve National Service, stayed in the Marines for 7 years, married at 24, and was 26 at the birth of his first child. His wife was a seamstress in a dress shop at the time of interview. Their son was an actuarial clerk in an insurance company, aged 22 and living with his parents in their own

home. He was engaged to another clerk, and expected to marry at 26 or 27. I asked his father to think about the relative importance of the issues listed, in decisions about marriage and parenthood. I asked him if he thought that any had become more important or less important to decisions about marriage now, since the time that he got married. He answered: "Being able to afford home ownership is more important because of the present circumstances. Then there was no possibility of being able to buy a council house. Now tenants are able to purchase." I asked him if any of the issues had become any more important or less important to decisions about parenthood now, since the time that he had children. He said:

"I don't see any as more or less important. I would say women having a secure job now has changed tremendously with the number of career women now. It's maybe that women want a bit more security behind themselves now because of, for example, the possibility of break up of marriage, there seem to be more break-ups now. There is more emphasis now on women having a secure job rather than an ordinary job .. as so many women are into careers rather than marriages."

When I asked him in general terms whether he thought things are different for young people nowadays in deciding when to get married and start a family than when he was young, he replied:

"Generally I would suppose they are just the same. On average people tend to marry about the same age as we did. It appears now that more are having to get married because of pre-marital pregnancy....In my younger days .. employment, it's a big factor, it has to be taken into consideration now, security and prospects. Things are more expensive now, although salaries are comparable, though things seem to be very tight, as they were in my day. As you grow older you have more money to do things, but it must be the same nowadays. In later life, as you get on, the amount you need to be paying doesn't seem so difficult to be committed to than in the early days of marriage. As you get older you get more secure in life, with promotion et cetera... I remember my parents always struggled in one way or another, largely due to the size of the family. It was common then to have seven or more children, now there is a reduced family size. Things were difficult for parents then. It doesn't seem to be the case nowadays."

It is interesting to note the significance of relative wealth and poverty across the family life cycle emphasised by the above respondent, and his reference to the

way in which this pattern has changed between his own household and that of his parents, an issue to which I shall return.

Another father I interviewed was born in 1941, was a labourer in a bakery at the time of interview, and married when he was 22. He and his wife stayed with his brother for two months, and then moved into private rented accommodation and into a council rented flat in 1968, where they currently live. He became a father at 24. His 16 year old son was on a Special Measures training scheme. When I asked him what issues he felt had changed in their importance with regard to having children he replied:

"Then you never thought about it. Now I'd be inclined to think before ... the young fellows at work want savings, a house of their own, a good job. They are all more important than when we were married ... They expect more than we did. They expect they should be getting something better. In my day you had kids and got a rented flat. Nowadays they want to be established."

Across the parents' responses to the questions described the most commonly cited areas of change, all seen to have increased in their importance for transitions to independence and family formation, were female employment and female careers; housing costs, availability and expectations of home ownership; job security and unemployment, and higher expectations regarding living standards. Of the twenty parents interviewed face to face, twelve mentioned female careers, nine mentioned unemployment and the increased significance of job security, nine mentioned housing and six aspirations as significant to changes in the experience of youth. The stress by some respondents on changes in the costs of living and increased aspirations, sometimes identified together as sides of the same coin, were not prompted in the same way as those issues which had been identified by the preceding fixed choice question.

Aspirations, or orientations to particular standards of living, are often drawn on in the literature in a general way in attempts to locate the inevitably relative quality of economic circumstance and resource availability as a cause of changes in the timing of household and family formation. Most work which draws on

orientations in any formal way stresses their variability across social classes. There has been little analysis of lifestyle orientations and their relation to social practice. In part this is responsible for a paradox at the centre of the youth debate, where recent hypotheses of deferral in the attainment of adult lifestyles amongst young unemployed people have not been reconciled with understandings of patterns of early independence and parenthood as they are associated with disadvantage. The concentration of unemployment amongst groups who would generally attain independence and families of their own making at young ages complicates hypotheses of delay in ways which have not been adequately addressed. A recent study presents evidence which demonstrates that women who are unemployed at the ages seventeen to nineteen are more likely, across all social classes, to become mothers at younger ages than their class peers (Penhale, 1989). Evidence on the domestic careers of young men, and on the linked domestic careers of young couples is, as we have seen, not well established. There is, for example, contradictory evidence over whether or not young unemployed people are likely to remain dependent on their parents longer than their employed peers. Data from the 1981 Labour Force Survey indicates that unemployed men and women in their late teens and early twenties are more likely to be living with their parents than are their employed age peers (Kiernan, 1986). Wallace presents evidence to suggest that young adults living at home are more likely to be unemployed than are those who have left (Wallace, 1987). In contrast, evidence from the Scottish Young People's Survey suggests that teenagers remaining at their parental home were more likely to be employed than teenagers who had left home (Furlong and Cooney, 1990). Furlong suggests that this discrepancy with Wallace's data may be a consequence of the older sample interviewed by Wallace, where unemployed people who had attained independence from their parents had later returned, unable to support themselves on state benefits (Furlong and Cooney, 1990; see also Harris, 1988).

Many of the interviewed parents as well as general commentators saw unemployment and the need for job security as holding a central significance in the experience of contemporary youth, although it is significant that, at an aggregate level, these issues, along with housing considerations, took second place

to changes in women's labour force commitment. This may reflect the particular socioeconomic composition of the sample, and the employed status of most young adult respondents. With regard to unemployment and insecurity, and their relationship to domestic life cycle transitions, it is important that theorists should address explicitly issues of citizenship and justice in the shaping of life chances. If a pattern of delayed transitions to independence is general over the population, as indicated by the demographic evidence, life cycle event timing is necessarily a poor indicator of changes in class related disadvantage. Too great a stress on the timing of transitions to adult status as measured by particular life cycle events also risks neglecting the plight of young families bringing up children on state benefits. It seems probable that unemployment has a variable relationship to the timing of family formation and parenthood, and that suggestions of uniform consequences with regard to the timing of life cycle transitions is misplaced. For example, prolonged dependency at parents amongst recent cohorts of youth may be as much an aspect of relative privilege as of disadvantage. There is no simple relationship between dependence and disadvantage or independence and advantage.

Housing availability, too, is central to the ability to attain independent lifestyles, and seen to be important to changes in patterns of transition. Busfield and Paddon, in their survey of two cohorts of couples who married in the 1950s and 1960s noted that, despite their younger ages at marriage, 29% of those marrying in the 1960s had a mortgage on their own home, compared to 10% of those marrying in the 1950s (Busfield and Paddon, 1977). The authors suggest that difficulties in achieving home ownership in the 1970s, when fewer houses were being built and prices rising, contributed to the trend to older ages at marriage during the period (Busfield and Paddon, 1977). From 1956 to 1984 the average house price to earnings ratio was 3.5. Over the period this peaked dramatically at 4.95 in 1973, declined to 3.34 in 1977 and rose to 3.82 before declining to the mid-1980s (Building Societies Association, 1985a). By 1989 a disaggregation of rates of owner occupation by socioeconomic group of the household head revealed that 89% of intermediate nonmanual workers, 72% of skilled manual workers and 70% of junior nonmanual workers were owner occupiers, as were

53% of semi-skilled manual and personal service workers and 43% of unskilled manual workers (GHS 1989). Whilst home ownership increased dramatically through the 1980s this was not the case for households with a head aged under 25, amongst whom 30% owned their own home throughout the decade. However, amongst 25 to 29 year old household heads levels of ownership rose from 52% to 66%, slightly faster than overall rates which rose from 54% to 66% (GHS 1981, 1989).

In an international comparative study the Building Societies Association presents data which indicates British levels of owner occupation amongst young adults to be markedly different to those in other countries, with especially high levels of home ownership amongst householders aged under thirty (Building Societies Association, 1985b). In this context it is interesting to note that the majority of respondents, over both generations interviewed, believed that young adults should delay getting married until they could live independently. The interview schedule presented respondents with a series of vignettes, which were described in the first chapter. One of the vignettes presented to respondents read: "Iain and Lynn intend to get married. They don't have a place of their own to move into yet though. What should they do?". The majority of respondents, 67 out of the sample of 92 young respondents and 24 out of the sample of 36 parents, said the couple should delay getting married until they can get a place of their own. 13 young respondents and 6 parents said that the couple should marry and stay with parents until they can get their own place. Whilst having a place of their own is not necessarily equivalent to owning it, the responses point to a general expectation of home ownership as the principal tenure of young couples. This pattern may be somewhat exaggerated amongst the sample given the policy of insurance companies in which the survey was partly based to subsidise the mortgages of its employees. However, actual rates of home ownership amongst the sample are in line with evidence on general rates from the GHS. Table 4.7 shows first housing tenure at marriage and cohabitation amongst the youth and parent samples. The prevalence of cohabitation prior to marriage amongst the parent sample was negligible. Amongst young adults the distribution of housing circumstances at cohabitation is similar to that recorded at marriage, with a slight

increase in home ownership and a decline to a very limited number living with parents or in private rented accomodation.

Table 4.7. First housing tenure at marriage amongst the Parent sample and first housing tenure at cohabitation and marriage amongst the Main sample

tenure:	parents	young adults at	
		cohabitation	marriage
owner occupied	10	15	17
council rented	1	4	4
private rented	13	4	1
at parental home	4	5	2
with other relatives	4	0	0
housing association	0	1	1
other	3	0	0

The table shows general rates across both samples, so only some of the parents are related to some of the young adults, and vice versa. Of the subsample of youth with parents who were interviewed and who were themselves married, four out of eight had owned their own home at marriage compared to the parents of only one out of eight of the young adults (not shown in the table). These changes are in general accord with aggregate level changes revealed in larger scale surveys which demonstrate the increased prevalence of home ownership amongst young couples. This change is reflected by several parents in their perceptions of the increased salience of home ownership for young peoples decisions about family formation. Home ownership, and increased aspirations in general amongst contemporary cohorts of youth, were standard themes which were taken up by parents. Whilst the sample of parents was to some extent self selected and consequently may be biased to more advantaged households, the evidence suggests that the processes identified are general to a large proportion of the population.

The most common single aspect of change in transitions to independence

identified by parents, more frequently than either the increased expectation of home ownership or the significance of unemployment and job security, was the greater salience of female labour force participation and female careers. Here the informants appear to part company with youth researchers. The latter, as we saw in Chapter 2, have stressed that continuities in patterns of gender inequality are more persistent than a first reading of recent 'superficial' changes might suggest. In such arguments, any increases in gender equality amongst young single adults are understood to be subsequently lost at family formation, beyond which point the 'traditional' division of labour is seen to persist. Interestingly, some of the parents who identified changes in female employment, and the importance of female job security and earnings, related these changes to rising expectations regarding living standards and home ownership amongst young adults and in the ability to afford children. General evidence demonstrates that changes in gendered patterns of employment and earnings are indeed bound up with change in household structure and life cycle processes. These processes should be placed centrally in understandings of change in patterns of transition from youth to adulthood.

Some of the processes operating here are caught well in the following quotes from two interview respondents, both middle aged mothers of young adults, who were asked, in relation to leaving home, marriage and parenthood, how they felt things had changed since their own youth. One of the women was born in 1942, she was a clerk in a stockbrokers, and her son who was interviewed in the main survey was a sales assistant. She came from a family of two children, herself has three children, the youngest of whom was born when she was 25. She returned to work when the youngest child was three years old. She said:

"A woman needs to work a lot longer than we did to be able to afford a family. People don't have a family so quick as we did. We made do with a lot less. I think we were more content with less, they want a lot more now."

Another respondent, born in 1931, was head of a retail payroll department, and her interviewed daughter was a junior supervisor in an insurance company. The mother was an only child, and she herself had two children, the first at age 29.

She returned to work when the youngest child was ten years old. She replied to the question on change in the circumstances of young people as follows:

"I really don't know, the cost of living now and the standards. I would think young people getting married today expect what to them are essentials, to us were luxuries. Quite a few start families later now, and then again they get so used to the good earnings the woman is making that they couldn't do without it. When we were married my earnings were extra as opposed to bread and butter."

The processes indicated are not uniform or universal ones, but nor are they particular to a narrow set of 'career women'. The responses identify changes in female contributions to household resourcing, changes which are seen to be inseparable from changes in orientations towards living standards or perceptions of living costs. What the respondents point to is a relationship which has not been satisfactorily addressed in research on life cycle transitions, specifically the relationship between resource availability and general consumption standards, and the significance of female labour force commitment. These relationships are explored in the next chapter.

To summarise, this chapter has described aggregate level patterns of change in the organisation of life cycle event timing over this century, and considered perceptions, of continuity and change in the experience of youth and transition, amongst respondents to my survey of parents of young adults. A detailed historical perspective is missing from recent literature on the transition from youth to adulthood. Despite its authors central concern with life cycle event timing as an index of change in the organisation of transition, the literature has focused almost exclusively on the experience of the 1980s. Some have compared this with 'normal transitions' seen to obtain during full employment in the 1950s and 1960s. The evidence on historical change in life cycle event timing, however, demonstrates that these decades were characterised by patterns of transition which were no more 'normal', and no less historically particular, than are recent developments. An understanding of such developments requires not simply an historical context to add sophistication to our interpretation of current experience, but the development of a framework capable of locating such experience as itself

historically specific. This requires a more comprehensive understanding of the processes underlying change in the organisation of transition. Youth theorists have defined economic change in narrow terms, reflecting, in particular, a concern with the consequences of unemployment for patterns of transition. The issue of an age related deferral in the attainment of a 'full' wage, capable of resourcing an independent household, has received less attention, paradoxically so, since it would seem essential to locating the life cycle related consequences of unemployment amongst youth. The theme of this chapter, of locating 'new' life cycle transitions, is continued in Chapter 5, which explores historically recent patterns of deferral in marriage and parenthood as they relate to changes in age and gender related employment inequalities.

5. Earnings, Gender and Reproduction

Economic processes are central to most explanations of change in the timing and organisation of marriage, and birth of the first child, and to change in fertility rates.⁹ Youth research, however, has not adequately located its hypothesis of change in patterns of life cycle event timing in relation to economic change. To explain the significance of material resources to patterns of life cycle event timing necessarily requires an understanding of the ways in which life cycle stages are resourced, and an understanding of their relation to general orientations or aspirations to some standard of living. It is an argument of this chapter that an adequate account of change in the organisation of the transition to adult status requires an understanding of change in the gender and age related patterning of rewards to employment. The neglect of such changes by youth theorists is surprising, given the significance accorded to material resources for underwriting 'normal' transitions. However, this emphasis is typically reflected in a concern with labour force status and class related inequalities. Discussions of economic change amongst youth researchers have contrasted the life cycle consequences of unemployment and subemployment with transitions which are underwritten by 'traditional' forms of employment security and continuity. The operation of the labour 'market' is an object of analysis, then, only in relation to what is seen as the most problematic facet of 'market' processes: that of exclusion. There has, in consequence, been little interest amongst youth theorists in the causes or consequences of age related change in the structuring of rewards within employment. However, evidence of change here must speak of related changes in the relative position of youth as a life cycle stage.

Aggregate level earnings data demonstrates that the earnings of male youth increased relative to adult earnings through the post-war period up until the mid 1970s. Earnings appear to have increased quite rapidly in the early 1970s, following the lowering of the age of majority from 21 to 18 in 1969, and the subsequent reduction in ages at which adult rates were paid to young employees, and with the raising of the school leaving age from 15 to 16 in September 1972. From the mid 1970s onwards there has been a pattern of decline in the earnings

of young men relative to those of older men. This trend has been accompanied by an increase in the earnings of young women, relative to young men. These developments have not been addressed in youth research, yet they are potentially very significant, since they point to changes in the relative position of youth and early adulthood as life cycle stages. Indeed, the trends parallel changes in the timing of family formation, where there was a reversal of the post-war trend to lower ages at family formation from the early to mid-1970s onwards, as described in the last chapter. It has been argued that employment processes and life cycle relations are interrelated. This dynamic appears to be reflected in the historical co-incidence of change in gender and age related earnings structures and patterns of deferral in the timing of family formation.

Evidence of change in the relative earnings of young women and men, relative to each other and relative to the earnings of older workers, are suggestive of changes in the organisation of resources on which young people draw in attaining independence from their parental home, in setting up an independent household and in commencing a family. There has, however, been very limited research on the resources seen to be necessary to household and family formation nor, importantly, on the organisation of resource acquisition amongst young couples involved in household and family formation. The organisation of parenthood, *as a joint enterprise*, has received limited attention amongst youth theorists. In part this is due to an age related definition of survey samples, in studies of transition, which fall short of furnishing evidence on patterns of family formation. In part, too, it would appear irrelevant if we were to accept conventional statements of continuity in the structure of gender inequalities. However, the separate treatment of female and male transitions is theoretically problematic. Youth research has characterised the transition to adult status amongst women and men in terms of a divergence in employment chances, a divergence organised in relation to parenthood and differing, gendered, childcare obligations. As we have seen, gender inequalities are described in terms of female exclusion from male forms of advantage. However, if the latter are predicated on men's particular relations to household income maintenance it would be more appropriate to consider the interrelatedness of female and male life cycle

transitions. In this way we can see them as different facets of a single process, rather than accept such differences between male and female rites of passage to adulthood as an adequate description of gendered patterns of transition.

Further, arguments of continuity in gender inequalities in employment and in household resourcing are at odds with empirical evidence. It will be argued that the closing of gendered earnings differentials amongst young adults is an integral aspect of changes in earnings relations across age groups over recent decades. Whilst there is limited evidence available on changes in gendered contributions to household income maintenance, there is some evidence which suggests an increase in the importance of female contributions to the financing of households. Such developments need to be understood in relation to orientations towards living standards. As one of the parents quoted towards the end of the last chapter said, 'what to them are essentials, to us were luxuries'. In other words, achieving a level of material sufficiency prior to family formation or parenthood may be as much to do with meeting the costs of living as with furnishing a particularly high living standard. Further, in these quotes, there was a perception that the change in orientations towards living standards amongst young couples cannot be separated from the increased importance of the employment and earnings achievements of young women. The aggregate earnings data explored in this chapter suggests that these processes, largely neglected by youth researchers, have a general significance to change in patterns of transition to adult status.

Transition, Gender and the Labour Force

In the last chapter, descriptions of historical changes in transition couched in terms of greater choice and an increase in individualism were questioned for their suggestion that values and attitudes have a greater salience now than in the past, and a different role to play in the explanation of life cycle event timing. This chapter continues to develop the argument begun in the last, that contemporary patterns of event timing are organised in relation to the social and economic resources which underwrite the attainment of independence and which structure

its relationship to privilege and disadvantage. As Hareven argues, the development of the welfare state and the post war organisation of resource transfers in the public domain has been very important to the structure of the individual and family life cycle (Hareven, 1981; cf. Mayer and Schoepflin, 1989). The structure of social security, housing costs and availability, inter-generational resource transfers, as well as labour force opportunities and rewards are all essential to an explanation of life cycle structure. However, welfare provision and changes in household demography have not increased choice in the sense argued by Hareven, but are rather part of a changing structure of which life cycle transitions are an inseparable part.

Arguments which posit an increase in choice amongst young adults in their decisions about family formation, on the grounds that they do not face the economic or familial constraints and obligations faced by earlier generations, impose an historically relative interpretation which may have little salience for current generations of youth. Young people do not measure their action against that of their forebears, and few would appear to perceive a large degree of choice in the opportunities available to them. However, there are at least two ways in which the experience of prior generations has a direct bearing on the organisation of transition amongst contemporary cohorts of young adults. Firstly, family background may be significant to orientations towards living standards, although any such influence would need to be considered in conjunction with that of other, perhaps more salient, reference groups, such as age peers. Secondly, the experience of the parents of young adults is significant to their particular household circumstance, to the composition and resourcing of households. As indicated previously, the relative freedom, amongst youth, from financial obligations to their parental family, cannot be separated from long term changes in family structures nor from changes in the respective obligations of different household members to household resourcing.

It was noted earlier that the youth debate has not engaged with aggregate level patterns of demographic change nor with the literature which addresses these changes. Research from a different tradition, into aggregate level rates and

timing of marriage and fertility, explains historically novel patterns in terms of gendered changes in employment relations, in particular stressing female employment and earnings opportunities. Economic theories explain changing fertility patterns as a consequence of increases in female, relative to male, earnings. Whilst theorists writing in the area take gendered earnings differences as a starting point rather than as an explanatory issue, it is notable that sexual inequality is central to explanations of change in the life cycle, in particular to changing patterns of marriage and parenthood. Whilst the approach, based in utility theory, has raised many pertinent criticisms, it is interesting since it locates centrally the interaction of demography and economy, and identifies gender relations as important to this process. Before examining the arguments of these approaches, I will consider some of the developments in gendered patterns of employment over the post war period. These developments demonstrate the interaction of reproductive and economic processes. The dynamic is important to contemporary household structures and to the resourcing of household social reproduction. The interaction of supply and demand is significant to youth, not solely in terms of late 20th century employment processes, but also through its being embedded in current household and family structures.

Patterns of demographic change and developments in family organisation through the twentieth century were described earlier. Below I consider post war developments in patterns of female labour force participation, and their relation to changes in household organisation and resourcing. The increase in female employment participation since the war has occurred mostly amongst married women in their thirties and forties, and largely in part time employment (Martin and Roberts, 1984). The increased participation rate is accounted for by the greater spread of employment amongst married women, across the population and over the life cycle, as intervals out of work around childbearing have contracted (eg. Main, 1988). This latter trend has continued since the war, with it being rare now to quit the labour force prior to pregnancy, and with increasingly rapid returns to employment after childbearing. The proportion of women who did not work at all between their marriage and first birth fell from 37% of those with a first birth in the 1940s, to 12% of those with a first birth in the 1970s. A

significant proportion of the latter were pregnant at the time of marriage (Martin and Roberts, 1984). Declines in periods out of employment during the childbearing years are summarised by Martin and Roberts, who provide data on the cumulative percentages of women making an initial return to work after given periods. Of women having their first birth in 1950-54 the percentages returning to work within 1, 3 and 5 years stood at 13%, 20% and 28% respectively. Of those having their first birth in 1975-79 the equivalent percentages stood at 25%, 37% and 58%. Whilst 51% of women had returned to work within ten years of their first birth in 1950-'54, by 1970-74 the proportion was 79% (Martin and Roberts, 1984).¹⁰

Other data shows particularly dramatic increases occurring during the 1970s, with increasing activity rates of 28% amongst women aged 25-29 between 1971 and 1981, and of 18% amongst women aged 30-34 (United Nations, 1985). Although these rates seem high they are substantially lower than those of a number of other countries. The United Nations report explains the growth in terms of the increasing speed with which women return to work after childbearing. They argue that this did not change significantly in Britain over the period, where in 1979 67% of children aged three and four had mothers not engaged in paid employment, a decrease of 5% since 1973. This change is smaller than that identified in a number of countries which exhibit rapid growth in economic activity rates of mothers of very young children, specifically in Canada, USA, Sweden, Norway and Italy (United Nations, 1985). Britain has increasing participation rates but they are relatively low where children are very young. It is likely that another important influence on change in women's participation rates, dramatically increasing over the "main childbearing years" as described by UN, is the decline in fertility and the postponement of childbearing. The drop in fertility, reductions in family size, and the increasingly compressed childbearing period must be extremely significant to high levels of participation amongst the age group.

A number of authors, then, cite as highly significant the relationship between demographic and employment structures at an aggregate level. Economy

influences the timing and level of fertility. This in turn influences potential labour supply structure. The population which is socially 'available for work' is an important factor in recruitment strategies. For example the availability of labour prepared to work part time is important to the restructuring of particular sectors. Growth and change in employment opportunities in some service sectors has in large part been constructed around this option, retailing being the outstanding example, where part time labour allows a flexibility and a cost efficient employment strategy on the part of employers (eg. National Institute of Economic and Social Research, 1986; Hart, 1988). Some employers have reassessed their reluctance to recruit youth labour on a part time basis given the willingness of youth, in the context of high unemployment, to accept available employment on less than preferable terms. (eg. Ashton, et al, 1990).

In the 1950s and 1960s, as ages at childbearing fell and periods between births decreased, and as returns to work by mothers were made increasingly quickly, so the standard middle family cycle phase was one where household resourcing became increasingly parent-centred. Economic growth meant that most youngsters could firmly expect to enter employment on leaving school. The growing affluence amongst youth underlay its new significance to commerce. The targeting of this section of the population as a significant consumer group reflected a circumstance where young people, with limited family obligations, could spend their income in the market rather than dedicate it to household finances. The general importance of parental earnings in supporting a reduced family size contributed to the enablement of youth as an extended period of semi-dependency. Change in household structures over the long term is important as an aspect of contemporary economic processes. Positioning with respect to household obligations is important to the structuring of relative rewards for different groups within the labour force, but also in terms of how, and under what circumstances, people organise the resources required for daily reproduction.

Whilst over recent decades young people in general have fewer financial obligations to their parental families than did their parents and grandparents, these changes do not equate with an increase in individualism, or a greater

salience of norms to the timing of life cycle transitions. The suggestion of greater choice, and of a change in the explanatory validity of norms, is problematic, and begs the question as to how such evaluative decisions should be located.¹¹ An argument that social norms are historically more important, like the emphasis by Hutson and Jenkins on nominal dig money as an exercise in money management (Hutson and Jenkins, 1989), suggests that family, or household, structure is less relevant now to an understanding of the life cycle than it once was. However, changes in household structures over the long term are an important aspect of contemporary economic processes and are inseparable from developments in labour demand, levels of female participation, changing expectations concerning women's employment and changes in the significance of female contributions to household income maintenance.

Pay Structures and Household Reproduction

i. Economic Models of Fertility

Unlike the youth literature, economic models of fertility patterns take as axiomatic the interaction of economic structure and patterns of household and family formation. Two schools dominate explanations of change in fertility patterns: Easterlin's Relative Income Hypothesis and the New Home Economics model of fertility. Both approaches identify significant changes in life cycle patterns and place economic relations centrally within their explanation of change. A problem for demographic forecasting has been measuring the extent to which dramatic falls in period fertility rates signal an overall drop in total fertility, or a deferral amongst younger age groups. The economic models are concerned primarily with aggregate patterns of fertility but also, as an aspect of this, with the timing of first and subsequent births. Within the models the significance of economic change to the timing of parenthood is formalised. They present an explanation of early life course transitions, formulated at an aggregate, national level. Although they are concerned with similar issues these explanations have had a negligible impact within sociological discussions of transitions from youth to

adulthood.

Easterlin explains change in fertility in terms of aspirations towards living standards, as these are determined by relative cohort size. The size of successive generations is seen to affect economic opportunities, with large cohorts depressing opportunities through increased competition for available work, and small cohorts, conversely, experiencing more favourable economic circumstances. Fertility is a function of relative economic status, or relative income: the ratio of young men's earnings relative to their aspirations. These aspirations are formed during adolescence in relation to fathers' income. Fertility is positively associated with economic status so the model predicts a cyclical variation in fertility rates. In the American example, the generation of childbearing age in the early post war period were members of small cohorts born during the Depression years of the 1930s. Faced with limited competition as they entered work, they experienced high achievement and earnings relative to their older peers. Combined with aspirations formed during the depression, economic achievement encouraged earlier marriage and high fertility. In contrast, cohorts born in the 1950s and '60s grew up in a period of relative affluence and formed high aspirations, but met with relative economic disadvantage on entering the labour force. This cohort was therefore responsible for delays in marriage and a reduction in fertility rates. (Easterlin, 1968; also see Oppenheimer, 1982).

In this model, incomes of young relative to older men is assumed to be a function of relative cohort size. This, of course, assumes a perfectly competitive labour market (or one where the aggregate consequences are the same), a finite level of employment and an aggregate structure of rewards which accords with aggregate fertility patterns. British evidence indicates a covariation between relative cohort size and fertility rates, but not between relative income and fertility rates (Ermisch, 1979). That is, the relationship between cohort size and relative income across generations does not accord with the Easterlin hypothesis. Easterlin has admitted that covariation of fertility and age structure may be coincidental (Easterlin and Condran, 1976, quoted in Ermisch, 1979). This patterning is anyway country specific, and the hypothesised relationship between

cohort size and fertility fails to provide an adequate description of fertility patterns across several countries (Wright, 1989).

Oppenheimer, in her analysis of patterns of marriage and fertility in the United States, is influenced by Easterlin, but develops a more detailed analysis of the importance of changes in female labour force participation (Oppenheimer, 1982). One of her principle concerns is to explain class related differences in the timing of marriage and parenthood, which she explores through an analysis of reference groups. Social classes with steep age earnings profiles form families at later ages in part because of an 'economic squeeze', an imbalance between their lifestyle aspirations and their current resources. Oppenheimer analyses data from the United States Census for the period 1959 to 1969, a period which saw a decline in the earnings of young, relative to older, men (in contrast to British developments). She suggests that, other things remaining equal, the period would have seen a postponement in the timing of marriage, but, critical of Easterlin, she argues that the increasing employment commitment of young women became a functional substitute for young men's earnings, and that female contributions to household resourcing became increasingly significant. She challenges Easterlin's model of a cyclical relation between economic circumstances and aspirations, arguing that the more extensive work commitment of women, and their financial contributions to the household economy, has been incorporated into family strategies in the timing of parenthood (Oppenheimer, 1982).

The New Home Economics (NHE) school similarly stresses the importance of changes in female employment participation, and claims a more accurate description and explanation of changes in fertility patterns than that proposed by Easterlin (eg. De Cooman et al, 1987; Ermisch, 1988). Ermisch criticises the significance granted by Easterlin to relative economic status, since empirical evidence suggests its failure to accord with recent declines in fertility (Ermisch, 1983, 1988). The preferred model emphasises changes in women's labour force participation rates, and in female relative to male earnings. Here the relationship between female and male positions and rewards in the labour market is the most important motor of change in fertility rates and timing. As with Easterlin, the

relationship between economic and domestic spheres is central, but here it is articulated in terms of the gendered patterning of rewards. Based in utility theory, the NHE model assumes that the relative disparities between male and female earning opportunities underlie the household sexual division of labour. Marriage is seen as a partnership whose aim is to maximise the expected well being of a couple, where the complementarity of their time is related to differential earnings opportunities. The gain from the domestic division of labour increases with the disparity in spouses' wages. Rises in women's wages relative to men's therefore reduces incentives to marry and similarly the desirability of children is inversely related to the ratio of female to male wages (Ermisch, 1981). The probability that a woman of childbearing age will enter the labour force is a function of her husband's earnings and her own earnings capacity. For working wives, as their earnings increase, so do the opportunity costs of having children. The model predicts then, that for any level of male income, as relative female wages increase, women will have fewer children and space them more closely. The models also predict a delay in the timing of first births, with later marriage, and a longer childless period in the early years of marriage (Ermisch, 1983, 1988). Increases in earnings capacities of women relative to men will increase female lifetime labour force attachment and this, along with high income ratios, will result in lower marriage and fertility rates, and a delay in marriage and parenthood relative to previous cohorts. The steep decline in fertility since the late 1960s, and older ages at parenthood are interpreted in Ermisch's argument as a consequence of increased female labour force commitment and increased female relative to male earnings.

Cast at an aggregate level, the NHE argument posits that increases in female employment opportunities and earnings levels are central to an explanation of declines in fertility rates and to deferral of marriage and parenthood. Other factors are acknowledged as important, for example housing costs and housing availability, the subjective costs and ease of contraception, and lifestyle aspirations. The theory does not address women's career paths in any detail although change in career structures is an implication of the approach. Nor does the theory attempt to explain why later family formation should be an

optimum strategy in relation to employment sector specific career and earnings prospects. The argument does not predict a continuing decrease in fertility in the hypothetical event that aggregate earnings ratios were to continue their trend to increasing parity, but that fertility rates would follow an asymptotic approach to a minimum level (Ermisch, 1979). There are a number of critiques of the characterisation of individual level behaviour in these models (eg. Blake, 1968; Turchi, 1975; Sanderson 1976; Wright, 1989). Turchi criticises the NHE models for their assumption of homogeneous tastes across the population, and asks whether reproduction is governed by differential social norms. It is not so much potential parents' objective situation with respect to income and expenditure but their subjective assessment of their current and future situation which is important to understanding reproductive behaviour. This issue is taken up in Chapter 6. Turchi also argues that the aggregate level data used for the models is often inappropriate for factors affecting individual or family decisions (Turchi, 1975). The purpose here is not to dwell on all the standard objections but to consider the nature of causality as it is represented in the NHE explanation of change in fertility patterns.

ii. Diversity and Explanation

Models, of course, simplify complex processes, but their strength is dependent on the efficacy with which they correctly identify and reconstruct the most salient of these processes, and on their success in reproducing patterns to be explained. The latter of course is no guarantee of the former, in which case such models will mislead as to their explanatory and predictive potential. In simplifying change in gendered earnings patterns, the economic models use average earnings data. However, given the interrelatedness of life cycle stage and earnings this appears to be problematic. For example, the direction of causality implied by the NHE models is not necessarily as straightforward as it might at first appear. Inter-cohort improvements in earnings ratios between sexes may be a consequence as well as a cause of reduced fertility and later ages at parenthood. Similar earnings ratios amongst male and female youth fall off with age. As a

youth cohort ages so its working female population is increasingly divided between those with continuous and those with discontinuous employment histories. Further, aggregate earnings data ignore those women who are temporarily out of the labour force. Gender earnings ratios increase with age. This pattern reflects different earnings opportunities, and greater access to internal labour markets and career routes for young men. However it is also likely that the ratio of female to male earnings for those women with continuous employment histories falls at a slower rate than the aggregate average. As cohorts age this average will cover a great diversity of labour force experiences. With ample evidence that female returners experience 'downward mobility' (eg. Dex and Shaw, 1986; Martin and Roberts, 1984; Elias and Main, 1982), their earnings average is expected to be lower than women of equivalent age with continuous work histories. There has been limited research conducted into the patterning of earnings amongst continuous and discontinuous workers. Better earnings ratios amongst female continuous workers are a consequence not solely of their continuity but also of their positioning within employment. Discontinuity is more likely to be attached to employment disadvantage, and continuity to advantage. A study of earnings of continuous workers is likely to select out women involved in careers and with a better ratio to age equivalent men. There is some empirical evidence in support of this argument. A comparative, European, study found that in most countries across Europe, and in most employment sectors, length of job tenure reduces the female to male earnings gap (United Nations, 1985).

The implications of this for aggregate earnings data are not straightforward. On the one hand earnings ratios decrease as age increases. This would suggest that the overall average might be reduced as more women at older ages are included in a sample of the working population at any point in time. On the other hand, it seems possible that reduced fertility amongst younger age groups, and longer continuous periods in work prior to childbirth would inflate a cohort's female to male average earnings ratio, relative to that of earlier cohorts. The direction of causality implied by the NHE models is not as straightforward as it might at first appear. Inter-cohort improvements in earnings

ratios between women and men may be a consequence as well as a cause of decreased fertility and later ages at parenthood.

Data from my own survey is limited with respect to these issues, but evidence is in accord with the argument that female continuous workers maintain a level of income more similar to their male peers than do discontinuous workers. Individual level data on female to male income ratios is obviously restricted to those members of the sample who had a partner. The survey did not collect detailed income history data of partners, so amongst the sample the following uses only the current ratio of partners' income. Dividing the sample into three age groups each with a similar number of respondents indicates a female to male ratio which declines over successive age groups; that is, women's earnings do not keep pace with male partner's earnings. This pattern is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Female to male earnings ratios amongst partners, by sex of respondent to the main survey

	Age					
	20-23	N	24-27	N	28+	N
	<u>MEN*</u>					
income (all)	£6700	10	£8200	9	£9000	7
ratio (all)	.99	5	.79	6	.71	4
	<u>WOMEN</u>					
income (all)	£5000	8	£6400	9	£7800	6
income (childless)	£5000	8	£6800	7	£8700	3
ratio (all)	.85	8	.71	5	.88	4

* Only male retail and insurance workers are included to enable sector specific comparability with women.

The data amongst female respondents shows no patterning of earnings ratios over age groups. It may be that the high ratio of the oldest groups is related to long, unbroken careers. Seven out of the eight women aged 20 to 23, a group with very low earnings, are employed in the retailing sector. Their high income ratios suggest that, with their partners, they are in quite disadvantaged economic circumstances. A comparison between income for all women in this sample, and

income for childless women, shows a higher level of earnings for the latter group. These women have an earnings average which is much closer to the male average amongst equivalent (insurance and retailing) sectors. Whilst the numbers are very small the evidence corresponds with what we would expect: women with continuous employment experience have earnings profiles which are more similar to those of their male peers than do women with discontinuous employment profiles.

Ermisch rejects the validity of the Easterlin Hypothesis through an analysis of British data which indicates the earnings of young men, relative to older cohorts, continued to rise over a period of both increasing and decreasing fertility rates. Older cohorts' earnings are assumed to match fathers' earnings during sons' adolescence. "Sons'" real wages are shown to increase relative to "fathers'" throughout the period 1955-1975, although they are quite constant between 1966 and 1973. The theoretical significance of "fathers'" income at a point fixed 15 years previously does not take into account current cost of living. It may be that it is considered to serve as a proxy for perceptions of age related distributive justice, although this is not developed. Ermisch, in comparing fathers' and sons' earnings, constructs a series of cohort earnings relativities by taking average earnings for seven years before time t (to represent sons' earnings) and comparing this figure to the average over ten years before $t-5$. The resulting series shows increasing real wages of young men from 1955 through 1975, a period of both increasing and decreasing fertility. Ermisch uses these results to reject the validity of a relative income hypothesis. However, these results reflect the earnings of youth to those of still quite young men. Ermisch graphs change in fertility rates amongst 20-24 year old women, and these demonstrate the downturn in fertility in the mid 1960s. This he uses to argue a discrepancy between fertility and (male) relative earnings (Ermisch, 1979). Yet other evidence on the *timing* of first births shows the most dramatic recent historical change to have occurred somewhat later, through the cohorts born in the mid 1950s on (Thompson, 1980). This along with another measure of relative earnings suggests the value of reconsidering the relationship between youth and adult earnings in explaining patterns of parenthood.

It is suggested that the models of fertility described above are most interesting for their stress on the link between female and male earnings in relation to family formation, and their concern with gendered processes as important to the patterning of life cycle transitions. It is possible to develop this emphasis without adhering to the tenets of a model based in utility theory but to develop it in a way that addresses the nature of change in the domestic division of labour, rather than taking it as a given.

iii. Diversity and Change

Models from within the NHE school were criticised above for focusing on aggregate patterns of change without taking on their manifestation at the level of the household, and of earnings relationships between spouses. There is some research which has been conducted into this issue, and analyses made of the relationship between increases in female labour force participation and financial contributions within the household. Findings here indicate a high level of stability in female contributions to family finances. A more detailed disaggregation of available data suggests that arguments of stability flow from a still quite aggregate level of analysis, one which hides important processes underlying change.

Two recent research studies argue a relative stability in the level of wives' earnings contributions to their households. Rainwater and his colleagues, in a comparative study of the United States, Britain and Sweden, argue there has been continuity of female contributions over their data period from the late 1950s to the late 1970s, with slight increases only in the Swedish case. Joshi, using British data, argues that there was an increase in wives' income contributions in the 1970s, and that its level stabilised thereafter. It is argued below that both studies reach their conclusions on the basis of too general an interpretation of their data, since a more detailed reading suggests that, contrary to their conclusions, significant changes are occurring both in gendered contributions to household resourcing, and in the age patterning of earnings.

Rainwater and his colleagues criticise the "two revolution" description of change in gender inequalities which posits that the revolution in female labour force participation is associated with an equity revolution where women, in consequence, become more equal partners with their husbands. They argue that the framework treats women as an homogeneous category, and fails to differentiate changes in participation rates amongst different categories of women. They prefer to distinguish aspects of female employment in terms of participation, attachment, continuity and contribution to family income. Their analyses are based on mothers' earnings, and they emphasise in particular the importance of separating labour force participation and contributions to family income (Rainwater et al, 1986). Thus, in the United States in 1959, 20% of mothers had earnings. This had increased to 42% by 1969, and to 64% by 1978. Over the same period, according to the authors, women's contribution remained quite constant at around 20% of the total household income package.

In the analysis by Rainwater and his colleagues there is no distinction between the different career stages of women. Given that the sample is based on mothers, it must cover a range of different ages of children, periods spent back in the labour force, presence in full and part time work, and of course, availability of employment and income opportunities. Because the analysis is conducted in cross section it tells nothing about change in longitudinal earnings contributions. In a further analysis the authors examine mothers' earnings, differentiating by periods of unbroken labour force attachment (Rainwater et al, 1986). Here there is some association between level of continuity and contribution, but it is argued to be still quite limited. The authors note the furthest progression in patterns of continuity is in Sweden, where by 1978, 69% of women with pre-school children were labour force participants. Here they find that there has been a substantial rise in female contributions to family income. Yet, they argue, once continuity is controlled for, there is no trend towards a growing contribution in either the U.S. or Sweden. The process of change, it appears, is illusory. By standardising for continuity the authors drop a fundamental aspect of gender inequality. What they suggest may be important to arguments that gendered earnings differences cannot be accounted for solely in terms of labour force discontinuity. However, it is

surprising that this aspect of female experience and gender inequality should be 'controlled' for so readily. Continuity is extremely important to income patterns, and is also important to contribution profiles over the individual and family life cycle. Evidence of change in female employment continuity over the life cycle suggests that we might be especially interested in its relation to household resourcing.

Data on participation rates amongst American birth cohorts, presented by Rainwater and his colleagues (Rainwater et al, 1986) illustrates the dramatic changes over this century, with the cohort born in 1946-50 being the first to manifest a profile involving a higher cohort participation rate amongst the 25-29 year olds than amongst 20-24 year olds. This is almost certainly a consequence of declines in fertility and historically later ages at childbearing. However, the analysis of continuous participation extends only to 1979. If the most "revolutionary" change occurred in patterns of fertility amongst those born in the late 1940s and on, for these women to fall within the analysis of mothers' participation rates would require them to be young mothers. Included women would, therefore, be representative of a particular subsample, and not amongst the vanguard of "postponers". The authors' analyses of continuity, and its relationship to contribution, do not differentiate by cohorts, and do not contain data on those with the most historically novel fertility behaviour. Yet it is amongst such women that more significant changes in earnings contributions are likely to occur.

Joshi, using Department of Employment data, also notes evidence of continuities in levels of female contribution to household finances. Whilst there was an increase in female relative to male earnings ratios during the 1970s it was, Joshi maintains, a one-off occurrence. The ratio amongst manual sectors rose from 60% from the late 1960s to over 70% by 1977. This ratio has remained quite stable since that increase which Joshi associates with the Equal Pay Act (Joshi, 1989). It is possible to reproduce this finding from an appraisal of New Earnings Survey data which demonstrates very similar aggregate patterns of stability from the late 1970s onwards, as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Gross hourly pay: female as a percentage of male earnings (medians).

year:	occupation	
	manual	non-manual
1968	58%	54%
1976	72%	63%
1982	70%	61%
1988	70%	62%

Estimated from the New Earnings Survey. The ratio of gross weekly earnings is lower, at around 60%)

Disaggregating these earnings ratios by age suggests the above figures impose a uniformity which is at odds with the experience of different groups within the labour force.

Table 5.3 Gross hourly pay: female as a percentage of male earnings by age group (medians).

Age group:	Year			
	1968 %	1976 %	1982 %	1988 %
under 18	100.0	100.8	97.4	105.2
18 - 20	81.3	90.5	90.4	92.9
21 - 24	72.8	84.6	85.4	89.0
25 - 29	70.2	81.8	84.7	89.3

estimated from the New Earnings Survey.

The data shown in Table 5.3 illustrates the similarities in male and female earnings averages at the youngest ages, and their rising discrepancy over successive age groups as employment processes reward men more highly than women. Joshi's data indicates a stability in average earnings ratios from 1977 to 1988. However, the age disaggregated data reveals that disparities between female and male earnings have continued to decline throughout the 1980s.

However, while female earnings appear to be improving relative to male ones, the data says nothing of the relative wealth or poverty of young people. It

might hide a pattern where earnings relative to those of the general population have declined so that young people are worse off in relation to general consumption standards than they were say twenty years ago. This, indeed, appears to be the case. There are no consistent data series on age related earnings patterns across all workers throughout the post-war period. It is, however, possible to reconstruct available data to show the trends in the earnings of youth relative to older workers. Wells undertook such a reconstruction in his analysis of data from the October Enquiry and the New Earnings Survey. The former is a survey into the earnings and hours of manual workers, carried out annually from 1948, and providing data on age related earnings until 1980, based on aggregate returns by employing establishments. The New Earnings Survey is based on a sample of employees, and covers all occupations and industries, and provides a disaggregation of earnings by age group and gender.¹²

Wells analyses the October Enquiry data (on manual workers) for the period between 1948 and 1979. The average earnings of males under 21 relative to those of adult men rose, gradually, from 41.6% in 1951 to 49.0% in 1972. The average earnings of females under 18 relative to those of adult men remained constant at 33-34% between 1952 and 1972, the earnings of both girls and boys, relative to adult male workers, having fallen slightly between 1948 and 1951. From 1972 the average earnings of young men and women relative to those of adult males rose rapidly until the mid 1970s. After this period they remained constant, at around 56.5% for young males under 21 and at around 40% for young females under 18 (Wells, 1983). Wells explains the relatively sharp increase in the earnings of young men from the late 1960s to the mid 1970s, and the similarly sharp increase in the earnings of young women from 1972 to 1974 as attributable to a number of factors, specifically the lowering of the age of majority from 21 to 18 in 1969, the raising of the school leaving age from 15 to 16 in September 1972, and as a consequence of income policies of the period. After the lowering of the age of majority, there was a rapid decrease in the ages at which adult rates were paid to employees. Department of Employment statistics cited by Wells show that in 1975, 16% of young workers did not receive adult rates until they were aged 21 or over, in contrast to 72% in 1970 (Wells, 1983).

After the mid-1970s there was a decline in the earnings of young relative to older workers (Wells, 1983; Black, 1990). Both of these authors examine New Earnings Survey data up to 1982. In Table 5.4, I reproduce data from the New Earnings Survey from the early 1970s up until 1990. Young adults earnings are shown as a percentage of male peak earnings. The latter serves as an index of general consumption standards, or living costs, based on the median earnings of the highest earning age group across the population, that is of men aged 30-39 or 40-49, whichever is the higher. It might be considered as a measure of a 'full adult wage', that is, a wage that can carry the major part of household resourcing (cf. Siltanen, 1986). The table presents percentages derived from data on gross hourly earnings, but an analysis of gross weekly earnings shows a very similar trend, in the continued decline, through the 1980s, in the earnings of young men and young women, relative to male peak earnings. I have chosen to use the measure in preference to an aggregate average of those aged over 21. Indeed, the changes amongst age groups in their 20s is suggestive of a general 'stretching' of age related earnings, with an increasing differential between young male and older male workers, where the former includes those in their 20s. Amongst men in their 20s, the decline in earnings relative to the highest earning age group commenced prior to the decline amongst the youngest age groups. This trend is not apparent from Wells' comparison of youth and adult earnings, and suggests that the average of adult earnings over the period of his analysis disguises changes in the age distribution of male adult earnings.

The earnings of young women and men relative to the full adult wage index reveal a pattern of decline from the late 1970s onwards. As female to male earnings have narrowed so this has been accompanied by a decline in the earnings of young men, relative to full adult earnings, starting in the mid to late 1970s and becoming pronounced through the 1980s. It is apparent from Table 5.4 that the improving female to male earnings ratio cannot be separated from the decline in young men's earnings. The earnings of teenage women and men declined relative to adult peak earnings, from 1976 to 1990. Over this period, there was a decline in the relative earnings of women aged 20 to 24, relative to peak adult earnings, but it was less marked than amongst age equivalent men. Amongst women aged

Table 5.4. Young adults' earnings as a percentage of those of the highest earning age group. Median, gross hourly, earnings.¹³

Age	Year										
	1968	1970	1974	1976	1978	1980	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	MALES										
under 18	31	33	39	40	40	40	39	36	35	36	35
18-20	57	57	61	62	62	61	57	55	53	52	52
21-24	82	82	83	82	81	79	75	73	72	70	71
25-29	93	94	96	95	94	92	89	88	86	85	85
	FEMALES										
under 18	31	32	37	41	40	40	38	35	38	38	39
18-20	46	47	51	55	55	54	52	50	49	48	50
21-24	60	61	63	69	68	66	64	63	62	63	64
25-29	65	66	69	77	77	77	76	76	76	76	78

25 to 30, relative earnings held quite constant, even improving slightly between 1988 and 1990. The improving ratio of female to male earnings, through the 1980s, appears to be a consequence of differing, gendered, rates of decline. The change in gendered earnings patterns amongst young adults has as much to do with declines in young men's earnings relative to peak adult earnings as with improvements in the earnings of young women. Among the youngest age group the increase from 1970-74 coincided with the raising of the school leaving age, which is expected to raise average earnings amongst the sample. Amongst males aged 18-24, the periods of most rapid change coincided with the recessions of the early 1970s and '80s.

From 1974 to 1982, men aged 30 to 39 were the highest earning age group. From 1984 onwards, the highest gross weekly earnings, including overtime, fell amongst the 40 to 49 year age group. By 1988, gross hourly earnings, as well as gross weekly earnings, were achieved by the male 40 to 49 year age group. Black notes the decline in the relative earnings of 20 to 24, and 25 to 29 year old males

from 1974-'75 onwards but, like Wells, he focuses in his discussion of changing age differentials on the experience of those aged 20 and under. He notes the widening of the (teenage) youth to adult pay differential since 1979 which, he suggests, may be due to increases in the relative pay of more highly paid workers, who tend to be older, rather than due to a widening of age differentials *per se* (Black, 1990). Given his acceptance that the age-earnings profile across the population is a reflection of increases in human capital attributes, in the form of skills and work experience, this argument seems disingenuous. That the highest paid workers 'happen to be older' does not undermine the significance of age related changes in the structure of earnings differentials.

In summary, the earnings of male youth relative to those of adult men improved gradually through the post-war period up until 1972, and female youth earnings remained constant as a proportion of male youth earnings. From this year until 1975, there was a rapid rate of increase in the earnings of both male and female youth relative to those of adult male average earnings (Wells, 1983). Full age-disaggregated data are not available for this period. From the mid-1970s onwards, and considering also young adults in their 20s, there was an improvement in the earnings of young women relative to young men, and a decline in the earnings of young men relative to the median earnings of the highest earning age group. The increasing discrepancy between young men's earnings and peak adult earnings from the mid 1970s on, and improvements in young women's earnings, coincide with patterns of deferral in family formation, relative to previous cohorts.

This pattern also corresponds with expectations concerning home ownership, and with escalating house prices through the 1980s, and corresponds with evidence of the current importance of joint contributions to house purchase, and with expectations concerning women's employment continuity prior to childbirth. The series of events which occurred in this period very probably coincided in their influence on patterns of birth timing, so their effects are difficult to isolate. The raising of the school leaving age in 1973, the onset of world recession, equal opportunities and equal pay legislation are expected to

have been important to the 'deferral' of parenthood. The male and female earnings figures should not be seen in isolation from one another. Changes in female and male earnings relative to general consumption standards, and their association with changing patterns of family formation, suggest a growing salience of female earnings to patterns of family formation as well as to household income maintenance over the family life cycle. Improvements in the earnings position of young women relative to young men should not be seen straightforwardly as a positive reason for later ages at parenthood as suggested by the New Home Economists' assumptions of opportunity cost. Rather, patterns of deferral in family formation are inseparable from changes in the income of both young women and young men, relative to general consumption standards.

Contrary to arguments of continuity in gendered earnings ratios since the mid 1970s, the empirical evidence shows that the gap between the earnings of young men and women has narrowed, and that this pattern has coincided with an increasing discrepancy between the earnings of young people, and those of older age groups. In turn, these developments are associated with patterns of deferral in the timing of family formation, relative to previous cohorts, from the mid 1970s onwards. It is argued that declines in the earnings of young men, relative to those of the highest earning age group, and improvements in the earnings of young women relative to those of young men, both embody and reflect changes in the ways young adults organise the resourcing of new households. The literature on transitions from youth to adult status has considered the impact of economic change *on* event timing or *on* the life cycle, but the way the research questions have been formulated has resulted in a static notion of the life cycle, as if it were an autonomous area of social experience. This chapter has attempted to demonstrate the value of exploring the dynamic relationship between life cycle processes and economic change.

It is suggested that improvements in young women's earnings are inseparable from the general decline in young men's earnings, relative to those of the highest earning age group. There is a restructuring of gendered earnings patterns amongst young adults, which appears to be linked to the increased

discrepancy between rewards to youth and full adult earnings. The latter is considered as an index of general consumption standards. It is suggested that, in not keeping pace with improvements in the earnings of the highest earning age group, the earnings of young men have lagged behind increases in living costs. A corresponding trend is the improvement in young women's earnings and, it seems plausible to argue, these aggregate level trends reflect on changes in the importance of young women's earnings in patterns of family formation. These joint processes, of changes in the relative earnings amongst young adults, and their relation to changes in the position of young adults relative to general consumption standards, are inseparable from patterns of deferral in the timing of family formation. In the aggregate level analysis, median earnings of the highest earning age group have been used as a proxy for general living costs, or lifestyle orientations, against which to appraise changes in the relative position of young adults. Such an analysis is theoretically coherent, reflecting as it does the inseparability of resource availability and orientations towards living standards in decisions around household and family formation. The next chapter develops this theme at a more disaggregated level of analysis, in order to examine social inequalities in the organisation of transition.

6. Lifestyles, Orientations and Occupational Careers

Introduction

Youth research, in hypothesising and exploring the possibility of an extended period of dependency, has inadvertently set something of a riddle: why should labour force disadvantage prolong youth dependency when traditionally it has been associated with early independence? Research which argued the collapse in employment opportunities, and social polarisation between those with and those without secure employment, suggested that young people, displaced by economic change, faced novel social circumstances as a consequence of their labour force disadvantage. The hypothesised social disruption was set up in terms of researchers' expectations that employment, however limited in its rewards and opportunities, is a prerequisite to "normal" transitions from youth to adulthood. Deferral in the attainment of independence and adult lifestyles has been seen as a potential consequence of resource disadvantage, yet this argument has not been located in relation to the traditional expectation that economic disadvantage is associated with early adult status. As we have seen, conclusions have been reached in the absence of an historical understanding of patterns of change in life cycle event timing. Comparisons amongst contemporary cohorts have been inconclusive. In the last chapter, a method of relating the resource circumstances of youth to an index of general consumption standards proved valuable for elucidating patterns of change in the position of youth and young adults relative to the population as a whole. This chapter disaggregates the index of general consumption or living standards, and explores the relation between inequality and the organisation of early transitions from dependence to independence.

A positive feature of the life cycle literature lies in its interpretation of the interaction between transitions to adult status and longitudinal, or lifetime, career and income prospects. Through emphasising the relationship between patterns of event timing and differing lifetime resource and income profiles, it forces attention to prospective, as well as current and 'background' socioeconomic circumstances. Class related differences in the timing of domestic life cycle events

are explained with reference to future, lifetime, economic prospects. Rising earnings over (male) middle class careers suggest that later ages at parenthood can better accommodate the probable, if temporary, loss of mothers' earnings and the costs of children, relative to lifestyle aspirations. Job insecurity and a shallow earnings gradient over working class employment trajectories, where young adults quite rapidly attain earnings levels which they will not progress far beyond, are seen to encourage younger ages at family formation since there is little to be gained by delay. A class related patterning of early life cycle transition behaviour, whose explanation invokes future careers and life chances, requires a theory of the orientations through which such futures are rendered meaningful for individual action. However, the structuring of orientations is rarely addressed in detail. Models of class differences in life cycle event timing rely on rather crude distinctions between class categories, within which orientations are deduced, and equated with a set of attitudes and expectations. In these descriptions, class processes are seen to underlie differences in life cycle event timing because of differences in lifetime income profiles and life chances, where middle class careers reward long term planning and working class circumstances render it irrelevant (eg. Roberts, 1968; Ashton, 1975; Wallace, 1987a; Jones, 1986; Dunnell, 1979; Kiernan and Diamond 1983).

The problem, then, is one of translating the relationship between *lifetime* careers and earnings profiles on the one hand and the patterning of life cycle transitions amongst young adults. Prospective careers are standardly seen to be significant to current behaviour through social actors' orientations to their futures. Orientations are seen to be strongly class related. However, in studies of life cycle event timing, particularly those using large data sets (eg. Kiernan and Diamond, 1983; Jones, 1986; Oppenheimer, 1982) orientations are rarely subject to empirical analysis. Rather, they are deduced from a cross sectional definition of class, based on current employment position. However, given the problems which arise from assuming current employment position to be an adequate indicator of a 'class career' (Jones, 1986; cf. Stewart et al, 1980) such a definition of orientations is reductionist, and fails to improve our understanding of actors' socioeconomic location and subjectivities. Assumptions of orientations based on current class

location impose their authors' understandings of rational action, in the absence of data on lifetime labour force trajectories, or empirical investigation of the perceptions of young adults themselves. An adequate theory of orientations requires that we locate actors' perceptions of their circumstances in relation not only to measures of their current social location but also to the processes which shape labour force and domestic careers over the life cycle. Indeed, standard patterns of movement through employment over the life cycle suggest that an adequate understanding of current class location necessarily requires a sensitivity to potentially diverse career routes. Orientations, then, should necessarily be integral to an understanding of class related variation in life cycle event timing. However, it is necessary to explore the ways in which orientations are constituted in relation to lifetime trajectories, rather than attempt to read them from cross sectional definitions of class.

This chapter considers variation in patterns of life cycle event timing amongst survey respondents, in relation to a measure of respondents' orientations to the future derived from respondents' perceptions of the circumstances of others in their employing organisation. Orientations are defined here as perceptions of current circumstance and well being, relative to significant reference groups and relative to associated expectations for the future. Through data gathered in the main survey the analysis explores the relationship between employment circumstances and life cycle trajectories and develops a theory of orientations which makes central the perceptions, amongst respondents, of the relationship between their current and future circumstances.

Class and Careers

Goldthorpe and his colleagues provide a succinct statement of the standard understanding of class related orientations, an understanding which is conventionally reflected in descriptions of class differences in the timing of marriage, parenthood and so on (Goldthorpe et al, 1969; Ashton, 1976; Oppenheimer, 1982; Jones, 1986; Wallace, 1987a). The 'traditional' working class

model is one where a structured lack of opportunity corresponds with orientations which are immediate in their outlook, "the major economic concern is with being able to *maintain* a certain standard and style of living, not with the continuous advancement of consumption norms and widening of cultural experience. --This emphasis on the present and lack of concern for "planning ahead" are -- encouraged by the view that there is in fact little to be done about the future, that it is not to any major extent under the individual's control. Fatalism, acceptance and an orientation to the present thus hold together as a mutually reinforcing set of attitudes." (Goldthorpe et al., 1969, p.118-119). In contrast and "consistently with the notion of a social ladder that all have the opportunity to climb, wants and expectations are, from a middle class standpoint, capable of continuous enlargement" (Goldthorpe et al, 1969, p.120). The typical objective amongst the middle classes then, is to make a progressive improvement in consumption standards, social prestige and lifestyles over their careers. Goldthorpe and his colleagues maintain that, from the point of view of the individual or family, it is a key expectation that these lifetime advances will occur, through promotion, a progressive income and so on.

Orientations, then, are seen to be organised on a class basis. Indeed, general statements frequently invoke such orientations as part of class culture which, in descriptions of transitions to adulthood, is important to understandings of class differences in the timing of independence, parenthood and so on (Dunnell, 1979, Kiernan and Diamond, 1983; Wallace, 1987a). Goldthorpe places some importance on employment trajectories, over the life cycle, as part of the substance of class inequality. This appears to be at odds with his later statements of the lack of consequence of life cycle related processes for understandings of class (Goldthorpe, 1984; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). This latter position is made explicit by Goldthorpe in his 'defence of the conventional view' of descriptions of women's location in stratification theory. In maintaining that the secondary earners' jobs do not make a difference to household class position, Goldthorpe argues that such differences as do occur:

"we should regard .. as being among those resulting from changes in household composition - in turn often associated with life cycle stages - and, hence, as ones which are *independent* of class position and which can, and typically do, occur while class position remains stable" (Goldthorpe, 1984, p.498, original emphasis).

However, if life cycle changes occur whilst class position remains stable might we not just as easily see such changes as contributing to the definition of stability? Goldthorpe refers to Rowntree's cycle of poverty model to illustrate the logic of his argument. Exposure to threat of poverty was an abiding feature of the class position of labourers' families. Whether or not such a family was below the poverty line at any time was largely influenced by its composition, particularly its balance of dependents and of secondary workers (most importantly the presence of older children). Goldthorpe acknowledges the significance of family composition but, he argues:

"..it would have been rather obviously unhelpful to see it as testifying to high rates of mobility in and out of the class of labourers" (Goldthorpe, 1984, p.498).

Indeed it would seem rather unhelpful. If the threat of poverty is seen as an abiding feature of a particular class position why should its realisation undermine that position? Goldthorpe appears to maintain a division between these two aspects of social experience, but the argument of an independent life cycle dynamic is at odds with his earlier statement of its class related reproduction.

To separate, as Goldthorpe does, the work of secondary earners, associated with changes in household composition, or the consequences of life cycle changes, from household class position, defined by the head's occupation, is a curious position if we acknowledge that family structure and the family life cycle are themselves organised in relation to class processes. They are not, however, reducible to class. Changes in the life cycle of individuals and families have significant consequences for the organisation of employment demand and rewards and, by extension, might be seen to have their own consequences for class related processes. Goldthorpe argues that married women standardly can be allocated to

their husbands' class position on the grounds that they are secondary wage earners (Goldthorpe, 1984; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). However, this neglects the significance of changes in female, relative to male, earnings. These changes, described in the last chapter, are bound up with life cycle changes, such as changes in patterns of childbearing and in returns to work, changes in the organisation of households: their formation, structure and resourcing, and changes in the relation of members to household income maintenance. To accept the employment position of the household head as an index of inter-household inequalities would, quite inappropriately, place such changes outside the concerns of theories of class and stratification.

The division between life cycle processes and definitions of class is echoed by Jones in her study of class reproduction and transitions from youth to adulthood (Jones, 1986; 1987). She argues that conventional models of stratification are inadequate for describing the experience of youth and early adulthood, a period characterised by high levels of occupational mobility. Transitions to adulthood are stratified by class, but current socioeconomic position is a poor indicator of future class location. Jones proposes that the class position of young people is best defined by the class of their families of origin. Relations to fathers' social class is considered a better indicator of class position than current occupation, since the latter is only 'a stepping stone in a class career' (Jones, 1986, p.78). Over time, as young adults attain a more stable occupational identity, class is better defined by their own occupational position. An understanding of class arrangements amongst youth, then, needs to take account of current class position but also, importantly, the life cycle trajectory on which it is situated (Jones, 1986, 1987). However, whilst such an approach suggests the value of treating life cycle processes as integral to class careers, Jones accepts the validity of prior class categories, without discussion of their relation to longitudinal, life cycle, processes.

In her analysis of patterns of transition based on General Household Survey (GHS) and National Child Development Study (NCDS) data, Jones develops a typology of youth classes, based on a comparison of occupations across

generations.¹⁴ This typology forms the basis for comparison of life cycle event timing amongst young adults. The stable middle class and stable working class are those who 'reproduce', on entry into the labour force, their fathers' current position in non-manual and manual work. Between these two extremes lie youth who are described as upwardly mobile from a manual background into non-manual jobs and those who are downwardly mobile from a non-manual background into manual jobs. Of the latter, those who 'regain' a middle class, non-manual position are described as counter-mobile. Jones argues that:

"inter-generational stability is not a matter of simple and direct class reproduction, but may be achieved through mobility on an intra-generational basis. Intra-generational mobility is therefore important not only as a means of achieving upward mobility for those from working class backgrounds, but also a means of achieving class stability, through counter-mobility of the middle class. A surprisingly high proportion of the early school leavers among sons and daughters of middle class fathers are downwardly mobile on entry into the labour market" (Jones, 1986, p.505).

Jones' youth classes are defined in terms of occupational mobility vis-a-vis fathers' social class. This shades the complexity of inequality within the youth classes. For example, if working class respondents are not upwardly mobile to non-manual employment they remain classified as a single group, and variation in the experience of those in skilled, semi- and unskilled work is occluded.¹⁵ Despite her acknowledgement of the problems of accepting current employment position as an adequate description of class position amongst youth, Jones accepts as an appropriate index for defining youth classes a cross sectional measurement of class background: fathers' current employment position. There is no description of fathers' own employment careers. Evidence from my survey, however, suggests that where young adults' social class is compared to fathers' social class position where the latter were themselves young adults, there is a much greater level of inter-generational stability than suggested by Jones. This suggests that those occupational trajectories which she describes as counter-mobile, where a 'lost' position is regained, might be better described as reflecting inter-generational class stability, where occupational mobility is a standard career over the life cycle.¹⁶

Jones is right to pause over the appropriateness of assigning a class position to youth on the basis of current occupation, but the problem of cross sectional definitions of class inequalities is not confined to the particular occupational circumstances of youth. Jones' study falls short of defining life cycle processes as part of the substance of class related inequality. This problem echoes that of studies, important to the debate on stratification, of the class position of clerical workers. Male clerical workers appear to occupy a contradictory class location, where their earnings are low in relation to those of manual workers, and out of line with their educational level and occupational status compared to other occupations. Accounts of this situation which accept the apparent discrepancy as a valid description of the location of clerical workers in the class structure, because they accept clerical work as a unitary category, fail to analyse the diverse career routes into and out of clerical employment. Stewart and his colleagues argue that through such an analysis the 'discrepancy' between class and status disappears:

"The mistake implicit in the general formulation is one which identifies the market circumstances of individuals with the particular occupations they hold. Individuals at very different career stages may be gathered under one occupational title and, in addition, many different types of career may be developed from some general occupations" (Stewart, Prandy and Blackburn, 1980, p.201).

Stewart and his colleagues demonstrate the strength of an occupational career approach, sensitive to the precise nature of the relationship between occupations and their incumbents. In their distinction between occupational categories and life cycle stages the authors demonstrated an integrity in career experiences lost or mishandled by a series of studies assuming the unity of occupational and social location (Stewart et al, 1980). So, in the case of social mobility:

"rather than seeing individuals as moving between positions in a fixed structure, crossing and re-crossing boundaries as they change occupations, we need to look at occupations and incumbents together. It is not a matter of one's position at a given time, *but of that position in relation to past and anticipated future experience*. Thus, typical patterns of occupational movement represent not change, but stability" (Prandy, 1986, p.146, my emphasis).

Here, then, statements of 'downward mobility' on entry in the workforce, or of counter-mobility, where a 'lost' position is regained, are argued to be an artefact of a measurement procedure which neglects to analyse the processes by which occupational routes, over the life cycle, represent standard, class related careers. Stewart and his colleagues have been criticised for overstating the strength of standard processes through which individuals move into promoted positions and higher status occupations as they age (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). The latter authors stress that by no means all sons who are downwardly mobile achieve counter-mobility, and they maintain that a higher degree of uncertainty characterises individuals' worklife mobility chances than suggested by Stewart and his colleagues. This uncertainty, they argue, is not likely to be unappreciated by the individuals involved. Nevertheless, the authors also point to the significance of counter-mobility in creating inter-generational stability in social class arrangements. It should be noted, too, that 'downward mobility' on entry into the workforce, where this is defined in relation to fathers' current class position, is not likely to be interpreted by those involved as a 'loss' of position, as it appears to be by its theorists.

Clearly, that which Erikson and Goldthorpe describe as mobility strategies may be undertaken, yet the distribution and propensity to take, for example, a part time education route to occupational mobility is hardly, itself, incidental to the class structure. Further, the 'loss' by sons, relative to their fathers, of position on entry into the workforce, is a misnomer if the standard expectation is one of economic and status improvements over their working lives. Erikson and Goldthorpe, in their cross-national comparative analysis, assess mobility rates against fathers' class at the time of respondents' early adolescence. It seems implausible to suppose that young adults expect to achieve the occupational position of their fathers, at the time they enter their first permanent job. It also seems unlikely that, if young adults leave their parental home to set up a household and commence a family, they should expect to reproduce the living standard currently achieved in their parental home. This is not to say that they are uninfluenced by customary living standards in their orientations to adequate standards in new households of their own making. No doubt this dynamic may

contribute to a secular increase in levels of expectations about 'adequate' material standards for resourcing new households. However, the life cycle dynamic of earnings and familial obligations, and the expectation of relative wealth and poverty over the life cycle, is no more likely to be lost on young adults than that which Erikson and Goldthorpe see as the uncertainty of their class position. In fact, available evidence, explored in the next chapter, suggests that there is a perception of fairness in societal resource allocation where higher rewards accrue to those with greater material obligations to dependents, that is, resource adequacy is seen to have an important life cycle element.

Both Goldthorpe and Jones see life cycle processes as having some relevance for understandings of class but for both it is only a partial statement. For Goldthorpe, different lifetime opportunities obtain across different social classes, yet by arguing that class related patterns of job mobility, at an individual level, are irrelevant to class location, he appears to argue also that the life cycle, and family related processes, are irrelevant to the reproduction of class related inequality. For Jones, patterns of job mobility are problematic for describing the circumstances of youth, but not of adults. *However, a trajectory, or life cycle, approach to understanding inequality is salient not because life cycle processes sometimes encroach on the efficacy of measuring inequality, but because they are integral to its organisation.* The operation of these processes is taken up in detail in the next chapter. Here I will be concerned principally with the relation between socioeconomic inequality, orientations and patterns of early life cycle event timing.

Occupations are inadequate as measures of inequality where they are not analysed in relation to the particular circumstances and material obligations of their incumbents. For example, just as we may accept that a female part time shop assistant married to an unskilled manual worker has a differing class position than one married to a manager (after Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992), so it would be curious to suppose that a young single man and an older married man with dependent children, working in an identical occupation, necessarily share more than do the female shop assistants. We should be cautious too, in supposing that

similar entry occupations will channel their incumbents into similar employment careers. Clearly there is a need for caution over straight divisions, based on current occupation, as a basis for assuming homogeneity and difference in social action. In the case of young adults we do not know the precise shape of their future careers, and to group them on the basis of conventional class divisions would impose a homogeneity of experience which may be inappropriate. A preferred approach is to develop a means of identifying social groups which are cohesive with respect to the processes which structure and differentiate the attainment of adult status, rights and obligations. Individuals within similar occupations may be on different career paths and have differing social reference groups. To explore the orientations and expectations of these young adults will not allow a privileged understanding of their future but it may accommodate a more detailed understanding of their current social location. In this way it is possible to explore event timing in relation to prospective careers, as they are reflected in the perceptions of the respondents, rather than assume the shape of future careers on the basis of current occupation. Such an analysis is undertaken in the subsequent sections, and patterns of actual and anticipated life cycle event timing amongst respondents are considered in relation to an index of social location which includes prospective careers as well as current occupation.

Gender and Careers

In Chapter 5, I argued that there has been an increase in the significance of female financial contributions to household resourcing and that, in recent decades, this trend is integral to patterns of deferral in the timing of family formation. The trend is suggestive of a change in the gendered division of labour in the reproduction of households and family formation, that is, in the reproduction of a new generation of children, as well as in the maintenance of day to day living standards. Female earnings within conjugal households generally comprise a secondary, component, wage, but it is one that appears, for many, increasingly necessary to resource an 'adequate' living standard. This dynamic appears to call into question the adequacy of measures of household inequality

based on head's occupation (cf. Goldthorpe, 1983; 1984) for elucidating changes in the organisation of inequality. It is, however, still clearly the case that male earnings tend to contribute the major component of household financial resourcing. Nevertheless, a consideration of careers and orientations, and their relation to patterns of family formation, require a greater sensitivity to the necessarily joint nature of female and male decisions around marriage and family formation than is conventionally the case in studies of the transition to adult status. It would be valuable to compare gendered earnings relativities, at the household level, prior to the birth of the first child, across generations. To my knowledge there is little data available on this. In this and the subsequent section, I address gendered relations to career routes, amongst the respondents, and across their employing sectors more generally, and explore respondents' perceptions of gendered responsibilities for household income maintenance.

The youth sample covered respondents aged between 16 and 35. Whilst there is a corresponding variation in the career stages of the respondents, the most difficult issue to establish is the extent to which they are embarked on significantly different career trajectories. The sectors within which the survey was based serve as rough indicators, but they are approximate and may cover a wide range of circumstance in respect of income and career expectations, marriage and parenting patterns and social networks. The most obvious dissimilarity here is with respect to the gendered variation in such circumstance, since young men and women in the same occupations are not necessarily social peers. In this section I consider gender and the distribution of promotion chances and expectations across the insurance and retailing sectors. In the subsequent section I develop an analysis based on an index of the circumstances of reference groups, in exploring the timing of, and attitudes towards, family formation. Rooted as it is in a measure of material resources, the index reflects a gendered pattern of inequality in the level of resources associated with married status amongst women and men. In consequence, reflecting a greater salience of male earnings than female earnings to household income maintenance around family formation, it is more effective as a framework for exploring the expectations of young men than of young women. For this reason, some of the female responses to questions about

family formation are considered separately, below.

*Table 6.1 Perceptions of choice as reflected in respondents' stated reasons for entering current employment sector*¹⁷

SECTOR	perceptions of choice		
	constrained	positive	missing
	<u>MEN</u>		
construction	10	14	9
insurance	2	7	5
retailing	4	7	3
	<u>WOMEN</u>		
insurance	6	5	7
retailing	10	3	0

Respondents to the main survey were asked why they decided to work in their employing sector. The distribution of responses is shown in Table 6.1. The male respondents show some similarity in their responses over all three sectors, although clearly men in insurance are the most positive about their reasons for entering the sector. Twice as many men than women saw their current employment situation as the outcome of a positive choice on their part, rather than as a constrained choice, or one forced by circumstance. The percentage of women in the retailing sector who saw their circumstance as the product of a "constrained" choice is particularly high. These gender differences may reflect differing expectations concerning employment prospects.

All respondents were asked what work they expected to be doing five years hence. Of the thirteen men interviewed in insurance, eight named an internal occupational grade which they expected to achieve. In seven cases this involved promotion to at least one grade up the career ladder. Of the men interviewed in retailing two were butchers and two were bakers. These trades were better paid than any other jobs held by age equivalents in retailing, and held a different relationship to the career structure than sales and supervisory jobs, but they could still feed into managerial positions. Of the fourteen men in retailing, nine named

a retail occupation they expected to hold in five years, the remainder either naming different types of work they expected to hold or not able to say what they expected to be doing. In contrast, of the fifteen women in insurance, three named an insurance related grade they expected to achieve within five years, of which two expected promotion, seven expected to be full time parents and five said they did not know what they would be doing. Of the thirteen women in retailing only one named a (promoted) grade she expected to achieve within five years, two expected to be full time parents and ten said they did not know. Amongst those in insurance and retailing the oldest current age of male respondents who said they did not know what they would be doing was 24, whereas amongst women it was 32. The level of uncertainty amongst women is substantially related to their expectations of departure from the labour force during family formation but even amongst those who do expect to be in the labour force in five years there is a high level of uncertainty.

These figures compare with those of two other studies which addressed expectations of promotion within the same occupations. Amongst male workers in my own survey 8 of 14 (57%) sales workers and 9 of 13 (62%) insurance workers expected to remain in their sectors and to achieve promotion. In the "Young Adults in the Labour Market" survey conducted by Ashton and his colleagues, the authors found that 75% of men in both sales and clerical occupations responded affirmatively to the question 'are there any chances of promotion in your current job?' (Ashton, et al, 1990). The higher figures of their study may be a consequence of the relative openness of the question, which by focusing on the chances of promotion would seem to invite a larger positive response than a question on expectations of its achievement. Amongst women in Ashton's study 41% of sales workers and 63% of clerical workers responded affirmatively to the question on promotion chances.

Crompton and Jones presented data on expectations of promotion amongst men and women in clerical work. From their interview data they found expectations of promotion to be especially high amongst younger age groups, ranging from 77% amongst men aged under 25 to 87% amongst men aged 25 to

34 (Crompton and Jones, 1984). This figure presumably increases between these ages because younger men not expecting promotion may have less commitment to the sector, and those with higher expectations would still be found there in the higher age group. In Crompton and Jones survey, of the 85% of men (overall) and 62% of women who expressed interest in promotion, 79% of the men but only 47% of the women expected to achieve it. The authors suggest that this is partly a consequence of the gendered age differences in their sample, and of women's higher concentration in jobs with fewer promotion prospects. However, in general, women at the beginning of their working lives are argued to be positively oriented to promotion and a career but, controlling for domestic circumstances from marriage onwards, the authors note a decline in complaints of sex discrimination and in the level of interest in promotion, "particularly when aspirations at work are perceived as being in conflict with domestic responsibilities" (Crompton and Jones, 1984, pp.163-4)

Census figures reflect the gendered pattern of inequality in promotion chances in the retailing sector. Of all women in retailing employment in 1981 14.4% were shop managers and 49% were sales assistants. In contrast 39.1% of men in retailing were shop managers and 12.6% were sales assistants (Distributive Trades EDC, 1985).

The stark gender differences in expectations described above reflect general sexual inequalities in promotion chances. Significant promotions are frequently made at the ages at which women are either out of the labour force, rearing children, or constrained to taking part time jobs for the same reason. Expectations of domestic time commitments amongst women, by employers, and the failure of institutional support for a career which can accommodate these terms, severely compromise women's promotion chances (cf. Craig et al 1983). It is possible, of course, that some women will ascend career ladders and there is evidence that women who have limited domestic commitments through their labour force histories may follow career routes more similar to men. This is not to say that continuity of employment allows women to realise the promotion expectations which are held for men, but it does improve their chances. For

example, Stewart and Greenhalgh, in their study of work history patterns amongst women surveyed in the National Training Survey, in 1975-76, found that 25% of women aged 45 to 54 with an unbroken employment record were in managerial, professional and technical occupations, in contrast to 13% of the age group with two or more breaks from employment (Stewart and Greenhalgh, 1984). Dex and Shaw, in their analysis of the Women in Employment Survey, traced patterns of occupational movement over women's work histories, focusing in particular on the consequences of breaks from employment around family formation. The common pattern of downward occupational mobility following parenthood is explained by the significance of part time work for female returners, and its prevalence in low paying and low status occupations, and by length of time spent out of employment. Recovery of pre-parenting employment status may be achieved but it is only the standard experience amongst professionally qualified women (Dex and Shaw, 1986).

The following quotes, drawn from the main survey, illustrate some perceptions amongst female respondents of their particular relations to employment and family formation. Such statements of course are illustrative, but they indicate the significance of relative female and male earnings in decisions about family formation, and differences amongst women in their expectations about squaring the commitments of childcare with employment. The responses to the questions about family formation which were cited earlier, in Chapter 4, are not repeated but are similarly illustrative of the variety of concerns, including joint strategies for household resourcing, identified by the young adult respondents. One of these was a female senior clerk in an insurance company, aged 26. She had lived with her partner since she was 21, and married him at 25. Her husband is a supervisor in an insurance company. She earns an annual salary of £8500 before tax, her husband earns £12000 before tax. She expects to have her first child at 28 or 29. She explained the reasons for this:

"My husband is a bit older than I am. He doesn't want to be too old before having another kid. He has a son already. Financially, in a year or so, we will be a lot better off and it will make it easier for me to stop working. I couldn't

stop working now as we would not be able to manage. We couldn't manage on one salary and with him being married before and paying support for his son.."

When I asked what she expected to be doing in five years time she replied:

"I expect hopefully to not be working and be at home with a child. I would take a part time job if we needed the money, but I wouldn't like someone else to look after the child all day."

Another senior clerk in insurance appeared to have more mixed feelings about the conflicts she felt over parenthood and a career. She was 25 and living in a flat she bought at 23, cohabiting with her partner, although he is in the navy and often away. Her annual salary is £7400 before tax, and her partner is earning ("probably") £8000 gross. She plans to marry at age 26, and expects to have her first child at about 28. She explained:

"I think I will be ready then, I would have the time and patience. We would be financially stable. I don't know that I would give up work, I suppose I am quite selfish.. I hate housewife type things. I would like to do part time work, and to keep the cars that we've got. I wouldn't want our standard of living to drop, I think that's the reason for the later age."

I asked her when she expected to return to work after having children. She replied:

"Waiting until I am 28 .. I would worry about cheating on a kid a bit, by saying that my career comes first .. But I would come back part time as soon as time allows. Not full time but the minute it gets into school I would be straight back into full time work."

The following account is by a female retail worker. She was a checkout operator, aged 23 and living with her parents. She got engaged at 22, and plans to marry at 24 and to buy a flat or house. She works a 32½ hour week but does up to 15 hours overtime, and earns £80-90 weekly net earnings, including overtime payment. Her fiance is a security guard, on £84 weekly net earnings, but he is looking for another, better paid, job, preferably as a heavy goods vehicle driver. She explained the reason for the timing of their forthcoming marriage:

"Just really that we are not getting any younger". She anticipates having her first child at 25 or 26. When asked to explain her reasons she replied "I don't know. I wouldn't like to be 29 say before the first as I think it is too old."

When I asked what she expected to be doing in five years time she replied:

"Not working anyway. I suppose I would still be here in five years. About children, if (her partner) has a good job I wouldn't work, if not I suppose I would have to come back. I would work anyway until I have children. If [he] is on a decent wage, say £150 to £200 a week, if he's a long distance driver, if he is earning that I can just retire."

In descriptions of patterns of household and family formation, there have been few analyses of the integrated structure of gendered relations in the organisation of household resourcing. In part this is a consequence of the young ages of respondents to small scale surveys set up to investigate patterns of transition to adulthood. Analyses of large data sets tend to consider male and female transitions separately. General statements of gender inequality in transition, as described earlier, have stressed the gender specificity of adult status at the expense of an analysis of the interrelatedness of male and female relations to employment and parenthood. The necessarily joint and gendered enterprise of family formation, reflected in the above quotes, is taken up in detail in the next section.

Occupations, Careers and Adult Wage Jobs

This section addresses the relation between respondents' current social location and the patterning of their actual and expected ages at family formation. The description of social location attempts to move beyond a simple, cross-sectional measure of class, derived from current occupation, by incorporating an index of respondents' orientations to the future derived from their perceptions of the circumstances of salient reference groups. It therefore allows us to dispense with the crude assumptions about class differences in orientations to the future, which characterise descriptions of class related patterns of transition to adult

status. The questionnaire was not designed with this sort of analysis in mind, so certain assumptions need to be made, but, as a bottom line, the framework developed is a useful one for ordering some of the attitudinal data collected. However, the index developed is more effective in predicting life cycle event timing than are occupational divisions because, it is argued, it builds in a measure of potential careers which is derived from the perceptions of respondents. The index, which I call the adult wage index, is drawn from a series of answers by respondents to questions about the earnings structure of their employing sector, and about the marital status of typical incumbents in differing occupational grades. It turns out that the distribution of respondents' perceptions of 'the normal' economic circumstances under which to be married, indexed by their perceived 'adult wage' adheres roughly to their employment sectors, but that the perceived adult wage index is itself a much more effective means of ordering the available data on the timing of family formation.

The index is influenced by Siltanen's work, outlined in Chapter 2, on the structuring of positions and rewards in employment in relation to household financial obligation. Siltanen demonstrates the theoretical incoherence of undifferentiated gender categories in explanations of gender inequality in employment. A more effective explanation recognises such inequality as a standard but not general nor uniform feature of employment processes. The distribution of people (within particular socioeconomic strata) to jobs with differing levels of reward is patterned in relation to financial need and obligation. In classifying the relationship between rewards to employment and household circumstances, Siltanen distinguishes full and component wage jobs, which reflect the differing obligations of their incumbents to household resourcing. Full wage jobs are ones which enable their incumbents to take principle responsibility for household income maintenance, in contrast to component wage jobs, whose incumbents contribute, but cannot maintain a household single-handedly (Siltanen, 1986). Any *particular* definition of the level of a full and component wage would, then, need to be derived from the circumstances of people within similar socioeconomic strata, who can be grouped in relation to a broadly similar level of consumption at a household level. In the following analysis, however, I am

using a measure akin to the concept of a full wage in order to index relative differences between socioeconomic groups in their evaluations of the adequacy of material resources for family formation, evaluations which are expected to vary in relation to social location and perceptions of life chances. The adult wage index provides a measure of the earnings associated with married status, amongst men and women, derived from respondents' perceptions of the circumstances of incumbents in a range of occupations in their employing companies. Consequently it allows for differing perceptions of "a normal" level of earnings which attaches to adult status, without making prior assumptions about class related orientations to future earnings prospects, of the middle class deferred gratification, and the working class fatalism, kind. The aim of the following analysis is to explore the relationship between individuals' economic and employment prospects and the way they organise early life cycle transitions. Orientations and lifestyle aspirations are integrated within the analysis through a framework which utilises reference groups, in differing life cycle stages, and which considers perceptions of "normal behaviour" and potential employment prospects amongst respondents.

In the youth interviews a set of questions concerning the structure of their employing companies were asked of respondents. A series of job grades between junior and managerial levels were named to each respondent who was asked to identify, for each grade in turn, the attributes of a typical employee.¹⁸ For each job named respondents were asked whether it was done mostly by men, mostly by women, or by both. Then, for each grade and sex, respondents were asked what age groups(s) that employee would fall into and what their marital status would be: whether they would typically be single, married or either. Respondents were then asked what they considered to be the earnings bracket associated with each job. The midpoint of the first earnings bracket associated with sex specific married status provides the adult wage estimate for each respondent. For example, if the grades named were clerk, senior clerk, supervisor and so on, for each of these the respondent would be asked to identify the attributes of a typical employee in each of these grades. In the resulting data, at the lowest job grade associated with married status, say clerk for a woman and supervisor for a man, the corresponding earnings bracket is used as an index for the adult female wage

and adult male wage. Both measures were calculated for all respondents and represent the earnings they perceive to be associated with early married status, for women and men, within their employing sector.

The adult wage index does not resolve some of the problems of other life cycle studies. By tying the question of earnings levels and married status to career structures within current employment sectors, the adult wage index assumes the salience of this structure to the respondents, both as a referent for their prospects and for their older, but socially similar, peers. The measure will be most meaningful for those who expect to progress through the specified career routes. Further, because male earnings become increasingly important to household income maintenance where women leave employment to have children, so a measure rooted in relation to employment and earnings is less useful for identifying the relationship between women's employment position, their orientations and life cycle transitions. It might be objected that the adult wage index assumes too much about the significance of employment over and above other salient circumstances, for example, obligations to family of origin, access to resources more generally, other significant reference groups, relationship to social networks and so on. However, whilst not all the respondents expected to remain in their current employing sector, the adult wage measure proves effective as a way of disaggregating the sample in relation to life cycle transitions.

Standard processes which move individuals across occupations and earning levels have clearly gendered consequences, with a divergence of male and female rewards to employment structured in relation to the division of labour within the household. The pattern is reflected clearly in respondents' expectations of earnings associated with male and female married status. Aggregated over all respondents the distribution of these perceptions is shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Distribution of adult wage estimates made by all respondents to the main survey.

Respondents estimates of adult wage				
	male adult wage	N	female adult wage	N
£5500 or less	31.0%	27	54.4%	31
£5501 - £7500	23.0%	20	28.1%	16
£7501 - £9500	21.8%	19	15.8%	9
over £9500	24.1%	21	1.0%	1
N		87		57

The distribution of adult wage estimates shown in Table 6.2 reflects a division in expectations over gendered earnings levels at marriage. While 54% of respondents suggest a man might be married at an income of £7500 or below (1988 incomes), 83% suggest that a woman would be married at below this level. A disaggregation of these estimates by sex and sector is shown in Table 6.3, which considers employees in insurance and retailing only, in order to compare male and female responses.¹⁹

Table 6.3 Distribution of adult wage estimates disaggregated by sex and employment sector.

	Male respondents		Female respondents	
	male adult wage	female adult wage	male adult wage	female adult wage
	INSURANCE			
£5500 and under	2	4	4	10
£5501 - £7500	4	6	6	4
£7501 - £9500	4	3	5	2
over £9500	3	1	1	1
	RETAILING			
£5500 and under	9	9	6	8
£5501 - £7500	0	2	4	4
£7501 - £9500	2	3	2	1
over £9500	3	0	1	0

The majority expectation amongst respondents, in both the insurance and retailing sectors, is that women will be married at lower than male earnings levels. The lowest grade in retailing is sales assistant and given its standard incumbency by married women it is not surprising that the 'female adult wage' is so low in this sector. It is interesting that the male adult wage is similarly seen to be so low, and by a majority of male respondents in the sector. Whilst responses vary across the sectors in fairly predictable manner, it is clear that within the sectors there is a good deal of variation in expectations of the typical earnings which attach to married status.

In studies of the gendered patterning of employment the expectation is that men in white collar work are attached to career routes which underwrite an age related progression and promotion through occupational categories. In retailing with its high employment levels of young people and its reliance on high turnover to maintain flexibility, many of its young incumbents will leave the sector. Sales work is low paid and its attachment to career routes is more tenuous than in clerical work. Young people in retailing are likely to hold a very diverse set of careers. It may or may not be a starting point of a 'progressive' career. Ashton and his colleagues identify the risk of unemployment associated with early starts in this low paying sector and illustrate the high levels of movement between jobs in the 'lower segments', training programmes and unemployment (Ashton et al, 1990). Whilst the survey on which their mobility analyses are based is limited to 18-24 year olds, and therefore a narrow slice of their respondents' early careers, it also demonstrates the uncertainty of their position.

The main survey questionnaire collected responses to a series of attitude statements which interviewees were asked to read and to indicate whether or not they agreed or disagreed with them. Interpretations of this sort of data tend to assume that the statements invoke a common interpretation, but it is important to exercise caution about the nature of variation in meaning. In response to the statement "earning a wage makes a young person independent", 66% of male respondents agreed, in contrast to 90% of female respondents. The breakdown by sector is as follows: of men, 70% in construction, 79% in insurance and 43%

in retailing agreed. Amongst women, 89% in insurance and 92% in retailing agreed. The relatively low level of agreement amongst men in retailing is suggestive of an inadequacy of earnings in supporting early independence. The high level of affirmation amongst construction workers is consonant with the expectation that manual workers standardly achieve independence at an early age. However, the even higher agreement amongst insurance employees, many of whom expect promotion within the sector and would, at young ages, still be some way from achieving their potential earnings expectations, suggests that the question may have been interpreted with an emphasis on independence in the more personal sense of autonomy from parents, and novel social freedoms. Responses to a statement which is more explicit about independence as a resource related status shows a different pattern of responses across construction and insurance sector employees. In response to the statement "by the time you are 19 you should be able to support yourself financially", 42% of male construction workers agreed, as did 29% of men in insurance and 14% of men in retailing. 22% of women in insurance, in contrast to 85% of women in retailing agreed with the statement. A disaggregation by level of qualification, shown in Table 6.4, indicates an association between no or low qualifications and a positive evaluation of financial independence by the age of nineteen, an association that is particularly clear cut amongst women.

Table 6.4 Attitudes towards independence in relation to qualification level attained at school: percentages agreeing that "By the time you are 19 you should be able to support yourself financially".

qualification level	females		males	
	%	N	%	N
none	100	5	46	13
CSE	100	4	31	10
'O' level	46	13	30	26
Higher	0	9	25	12

Amongst men in white collar occupations the relatively low levels of agreement might be seen as a consequence of their expectations of increasing income over the life cycle and the perceived inadequacy of earnings at the age of nineteen relative to advantaged employment careers, but this appears to hide an important source of heterogeneity. The particularly low figure amongst male retailing employees, in conjunction with their low qualification levels, suggests that resource constraints to independence are not uniform, but rather entailed by differing life cycle trajectories and thereby suggestive of differing social location and life cycle behaviour. The socioeconomic indices above do not coincide exactly with employment sector and ostensible social peers may be on differing lifetime career and resource trajectories. It is these trajectories which are essential to understanding patterns of household and family formation, and 'adult' forms of inequality. These trajectories are explored using the adult wage index in the next section.

Employment Trajectories, Orientations and Transitions to Adult Status

It is useful to combine the available survey data in order to achieve a summary measure of the timing of marriage and parenthood without breaking up an already small sample. Only some respondents are married or cohabiting, and only some are parents. To combine expectations about the timing of marriage and parenthood amongst some respondents with their actual timing amongst other respondents is not an ideal solution. However, it is worth recalling that expectations do not need to be accurate predictions for our purposes here. Rather the point of including expectations is to obtain a better understanding of current circumstances and orientations of the respondents. What is important is that there is no systematic bias across respondents in the accuracy of their prediction. Only respondents aged 19 and over are included in the following discussion since amongst the youngest groups the questions on marriage and parenthood clearly had less salience.²⁰

The distribution of current household status by whether or not the

respondent has achieved his or her adult wage shows a clear patterning across male respondents. Amongst both male and female respondents there is a greater probability that those who are independent and living with a partner are at or above their 'personal' adult wage. As we have seen, the divergence in earnings between women and men over the life cycle is associated with the particular relations of each to household resourcing and childcare. The perceived adult wage index is more strongly associated with domestic circumstances amongst men than amongst women. This may be a consequence of the greater importance of male earnings to household income maintenance at the point at which couples become parents. The association between respondents' household circumstances and the relation of their current earnings level to their 'adult wage' is shown in Table 6.5. Their association illustrates, particularly amongst men, that those earning less than their adult wage are much more likely to be single and dependent than to be independent.

Table 6.5 Relation of current earnings to own adult wage estimate by household status

	Household status	
	dependent/single	independent, with partner
CURRENT EARNINGS:	MALES	
less than adult wage	30	9
at, or above, adult wage	6	10
	FEMALES	
less than adult wage	8	7
at, or above, adult wage	7	10

Of the parents amongst the sample, four of the six fathers had children at an earnings level *below* their adult wage level, as did one out of the four mothers. (This analysis excludes members of the pilot survey). The circumstances of these parents will be discussed later on. In general, their circumstances are disadvantaged. The salience of consumption aspirations implicit within the hypothesised association between adult wage levels and the timing of family formation appears to be lower amongst these men. For the moment though it is

useful to broaden the sample under consideration to include those who are not yet independent nor parents. The rest of this section considers only male respondents, since here the adult wage index is more strongly associated with the timing of family formation than is the case among female respondents. It is apparent that the adult wage index is more effective in differentiating the sample with respect to ages at parenthood than ages at marriage. The questionnaire did not collect data on perceptions of employment structure and attributes of incumbents in respect of parenthood. Whilst the adult wage measure is related directly to married status it is treated more generally as an index of the earnings associated with family formation. A more sophisticated measure would be one that could differentiate the different stages of family formation and allow for differences across groups in the relations between these stages.

The average expected or actual age at independent cohabitation (referred to as marriage whether or not this is formally the case) is very similar in both white collar employment sectors. Actual and expected age at the birth of the first child amongst men varies very little across the white collar employment sectors, yet for the reasons indicated we should be suspicious of a conclusion of similarity in respondents social position and circumstance.²¹

Table 6.6 Average ages at parenthood (actual and expected combined), amongst men aged 19 and over, by employment sector (means and standard deviations).

employment sector	mean	N	s.d.
insurance	28.3	9	4.2
retailing	28.1	8	4.5

Average ages at actual and expected ages at parenthood together are very similar across the two employment sectors. This is illustrated in Table 6.6. However, a very different pattern is revealed where these ages are examined in relation to the perceived adult wage measure. Summarising the latter into a dichotomous variable reveals a diversity which is lost to the employment sector

disaggregation, and which is shown in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7 Average ages at parenthood (actual and expected combined), amongst men aged 19 and over, by male adult wage (means and standard deviations).

male adult wage:	mean	N	s.d.
£7500 or less	26.9	11	3.7
over £7500	31.9	5	3.4

The patterning over the adult wage brackets indicates a diversity of experience and expectations which cuts across the employment sectors. There is a relationship between the adult wage index and respondents' current ages. Those whose adult wage estimate is £7500 or under had an average current age of 23 and a half, those with the higher adult wage an average current age of 26. Whilst the older men who are without children may have higher expected ages at family formation simply because of their age, there is no solely age related reason why they should provide higher adult wage estimates. The pattern suggests that the relationship between the adult wage and ages at family formation is a substantive one.

The tables presented above suggest an association between the timing of family formation and the adult wage estimates. Whilst the latter assumes much about respondents' perceptions its principal objective is to incorporate an index of career trajectories. It still assumes the salience to respondents of sector specific occupational career routes, and that others within the employing sectors provide reference groups which are salient to the respondents. Despite these assumptions the index appears more effective in differentiating the sample with respect to household circumstances than other, 'cross-sectional', measures of current socioeconomic location. The adult wage measure is used below as a way of ordering responses to open ended questions which addressed respondents' expectations and attitudes towards marriage and parenthood. Part of the strength of the index, albeit as a proxy, was that it appeared to be patterned also in relation to this 'qualitative' information. Responses to the questions on why

respondents thought they would marry and become parents at the ages they specified, as well as retrospective questions on the same issues were diverse, and indicated different levels of decision making and planning around family formation. An examination of responses of those who were married, cohabiting or engaged to be married, and those who were parents, reveals an association between the apparent salience to respondents of decision making and the proximity of their current earnings to their adult wage. Where they have achieved a level of earnings close to their adult wage and the level of both is low, so this associates with a lower reported relevance of planning, and with early ages at marriage and/or parenthood. Where the adult wage is higher and respondents have not achieved a proximity to it, so planning and longer term orientations appear to be more salient.

The following two quotes are from two men who married at a level of earnings below their adult wage. They both refer to income and living standards in their plans for family formation. The first respondent was a senior insurance clerk, aged 26, who married at 24 on an annual gross income of £6500 and bought a flat on getting married. His partner is a shop assistant on an income of £5500. His current annual income is £8000 and his adult wage estimate is also £8000. When asked why he married when he did he referred to a desire for independence, and said he found it hard to articulate other reasons. I asked him when he thought he would have children, and he was ambivalent. I asked him then what he thought a good age would be:

"About 30; to be financially stable. Maybe my wife would not be able to work. These days when you are working off two salaries and got a bit of money ... if that is halved I would want my own salary to be reasonable to pay the mortgage and bills, and other luxuries .. if you are used to them."

The second respondent was a retail store department manager, aged 34, who married at 27 on an income of £6600, living in private rented accommodation for a few months before and two years after they were married and then bought their own house. His wife is a clerical assistant earning £8000. His current annual gross income is £7800, and his estimated adult wage is £10000. This 'shortfall'

parallels a perceived gap between his current household living costs and aspirations for a living standard he wishes to achieve for his future children. Reasons for the timing of living with his partner he related to inconvenient living arrangements prior to getting independent accommodation. He thought he would have children from the age of 36, explaining:

"The biggest reason I haven't started yet is money and the commitments I've got with the house. You have to take into account whether you can afford to start a family. I would expect, then, in a few years time to have a promotion in hand and maybe afford to start a family. We probably could afford them now ... I keep being told that, but I'm not one hundred percent sure myself. It is whether you can bring them up in the fashion you want them brought up in."

The following quotes are from respondents who were engaged to be married. Of six engaged men in the sample, three were on incomes above their adult wage and three on incomes below it, although of the latter, two were on the Community Programme, and therefore on particularly low earnings. The adult wage estimates are not cited since, as labourers, the assumption of an apprentice route to craftsman status is inappropriate. The apparent lack of salience of decision making for the following man corresponds with his disadvantaged circumstance. A labourer working on the Community Programme, aged 20, his fiancée is a secretary earning an annual gross salary of £6700. He is earning an income of £4500. He expected to get married when he was 22 or 23 and when I asked him why he replied:

"I don't know. We'll wait until she gets a better job. I'm a bit young now, I like going out with my mates at weekends." He was similarly reticent about when he expected to have children.

The next two quotes are from men who both expected to marry within a year, and were both on earnings over their adult wage estimates. They were in very different employment positions, yet they were both making trade offs, their relative "needs" being structured within very different resource circumstances. The first, on a low income and with a low adult wage is uncertain over his plans for children. He was a sales assistant, living with his parents, and he expected to be married at 21. His fiancée was an assistant manager at a cafe on an income of

approximately £4000. He was 20, on an income of £5400, with an adult wage estimate of £5000. When asked what sorts of things were important in the decision to marry (at 21) he replied:

"We both decided by that time we would have saved up quite a bit of money. We want to try and get a mortgage for a house and get it done up before with any luck."

I asked him if he expected to have children at some stage, and he replied:

"She says yes. I'm not a parent. I would like to later on." I asked, then, "When, would you say?, and he said: "I've no idea. I would like to be in my thirties. It will probably happen sooner."

When I asked, later on, whether he and his fiancée's joint income had affected their decision about when to marry, he described how they were going to buy a flat the previous year but could not afford the surveyor's fee, and also that he was now selling his car as he couldn't afford to keep it. In contrast, the next respondent was a supervisor in an insurance company, who was living with his parents, and who expected to marry at 26. His fiancée was a bank clerk on £6000. He was 25, earning £10500, his adult wage was low at £4500. He is therefore on an income substantially above his full wage, but in what he says it is apparent that he feels relatively well off: "...I was always quite highly paid in relation to what I did, that is, outside of work, it was easy to go abroad on holidays". He expected to have his first child at 28:

"Money is only important when you haven't got any. I am aiming to be financially stable so I don't have to change my way of life". Asked whether he and his fiancée's joint income had affected their decisions he discussed their plans for children: "...in say three years my wife can pack in working and start a family. Over the next three years my salary will increase, maybe not up to the £6000 she earns at the moment but by enough so that we can live comfortably on my individual salary".

In contrast to the apparent significance of the question to the above respondent was that of a sales assistant, engaged to be married and living with his fiancée at her parents, he was hoping to buy a house after learning of the waiting list for council housing. His partner works part time as a demonstrator in a retail

outlet. He was 21 and on an income of £5500, aged 21 at the birth of their child and on the same income. The pregnancy, he said, "just happened, it wasn't planned or not planned." He expected to marry later in the same year. When asked why he replied: "I couldn't say. Why not?"

The fact that the question seemed impertinent may still be revealing. It is, of course, difficult to distinguish whether it is the case that decision making had no particular relevance, in the experience of this respondent, or whether he simply wished to retain his privacy. It is interesting to note the correspondence between his earnings and his low adult wage. When asked what he expected to be doing in five years time he replied that he would probably still be working for his current employer. He currently expected to be promoted to a supervisory position. There is, then, some evidence from the responses that the salience of planning relates to the gap between current earnings and respondents' adult wage estimates. If the gap is large, and respondents are earning substantially less than their adult wage, there appears to be a greater salience of long term planning, and a relatively late age at family formation. In contrast, low earnings and a low adult wage tend to correspond with relatively young ages at family formation and, at least as reflected in the responses, a lower perceived salience of planning. What is clear from the responses is the variety of levels of resource adequacy seen as appropriate to family formation, and the variety of orientations towards the salience of long term planning.

To summarise, the adult wage measure has been designed and used as an index of the 'normal' circumstances under which to be married, as these are reflected in the experience of 'typical' workers, as seen by the respondents, within their employment sectors. The adult wage is drawn from the data available on respondents' perceptions of the structure of their employing companies, and assumes the relevance to respondents of the associated career structures. It is for this reason that the index reflects more accurately on male, than on female, experience. As we saw earlier, it was the expectation amongst the majority of male respondents in insurance and retailing, that they would remain in their current employment sector for at least the next five years, but clearly this is not

the case for all respondents, some of whom were placed differently in relation to internal career routes. A more sophisticated index would require more detailed study of salient reference groups. Thus, the adult wage index provides a rather rough proxy for orientations to the future, for what respondents saw as the 'normal' circumstances under which to be married. However, it is a step forward from assuming that orientations attach simply to current occupational class. It also builds in an understanding of norms as these attach to variable material circumstances and prospects, rather than assume that norms and values about the 'appropriate' age at which to marry and parent are more relevant to patterns of event timing in the latter part of the twentieth century than they were hitherto (cf. Hareven, 1981). It is clear, from the respondents descriptions, that patterns of, and decisions about, life cycle event timing reflect the salience of material resources and employment prospects, and any statement about the importance of age norms in life cycle event timing can be made meaningfully only in relation to the material circumstances through which transitions to adult status are organised.

In the context of the above discussion on orientations and their relation to social circumstances, it is appropriate to comment again on recent research into the life cycle related consequences of particular groups facing new forms of labour force disadvantage. Studies which have addressed the relationship between unemployment and the transition to adult status (eg. Wallace, 1987a; Hutson and Jenkins, 1989) have failed to locate the experience of particular groups in relation to general processes of change. Part of the problem, identified at the start of the chapter, is the difficulty of reconciling the traditional expectation that the most disadvantaged groups will attain independence and become parents at the youngest ages, with the hypothesis of deferral as a consequence of 'new forms' of disadvantage, particularly mass youth unemployment. The latter hypothesis suggests that societal developments are at odds with individual expectations. Thus the youngster expecting to get a secure job at 16 will be quickly disenchanted of this notion on leaving school. If he or she holds on to prior expectations, however, a 'deferral' in the timing of independence and family formation may be a consequence. The difficulty here, of course, lies in knowing what would have happened otherwise: the question of deferral, relative to what? (Amongst youth

researchers the answer seems to be relative to what an age equivalent peer would have done in the context of full employment. However, since deferral relative to previous cohorts is a general trend there is no constant basis for comparison). If, for the youngster leaving school at 16, employment seems a distant and uncertain prospect, there is little to distinguish 'new' from 'old' forms of disadvantage, and no reasons why the former should lead to early adult status and the latter to a deferral in its attainment. In short, it is not plausible to expect any single general consequence of unemployment, say of deferral in the timing of family formation, for the simple reason that we cannot treat unemployed youth as a uniform group. Any specific consequence of unemployment for the organisation of life cycle transitions will reflect the diverse experience of those affected.

The significance of class related lifetime income and employment prospects for the organisation of transitions to adult status requires an understanding of how orientations 'translate' potential future careers into class related patterns of event timing. An understanding of the structure of orientations may itself enable a more sophisticated understanding of the particular social circumstances of youth than do assumptions of a determinate relationship between current class and the salience, or otherwise, of planning for the future. An understanding of orientations would allow a more complex understanding of class location than that achieved by equating it with current occupational position. This, then, has a bearing on the argument that life cycle processes are important to understanding inequality because standard, occupationally based measures of class are insensitive to those lifetime careers which move people across occupational categories. However, as I suggested earlier, life cycle processes are also important to understanding the reproduction and restructuring of inequality across generations. In conventional statements of class related inequality, life cycle related processes tend to be seen as a distinct micro-level concern, if they are acknowledged at all, which are contained within, and have little bearing on, the macro-level issues of class and the reproduction of social inequality (Goldthorpe, 1984; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). Erikson and Goldthorpe maintain that life cycle processes, like issues of gender inequality, are marginal to the concerns of stratification theory, at the level of analysing and understanding macro-level, historical changes in the

class structure. However, what is not addressed in their replies to the criticisms of their treatment of gender, is the issue of the adequacy of treating the occupational structure as 'the backbone of the reward system' (cf. Garnsey, 1982). This criticism, however, would seem to present a fundamental challenge to 'the conventional view'. It suggests that the latter, by marginalising issues of gender, and, it should be added, life cycle processes, fails to explain the dynamics of the occupational structure, as a system of rewards, in relation to the organisation of social reproduction. As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, there is strong evidence to suggest the salience of the latter, through gender and life cycle related processes, to inequality in employment and to the historical reproduction and restructuring of social inequality. These processes are explored further in the next chapter.

7. Age Related Distributive Justice

Introduction

A number of writers have identified age related social processes and the succession of generations to be increasingly salient to the structuring of socioeconomic inequality, and to present a challenge to theories of class and stratification (eg. Foner, 1974, 1988; Kohli, 1988; Riley, 1988; Turner, 1989). Age related social claims and conflict are seen in such arguments to underlie a new dynamic of social change. Several authors, in identifying the variation in resource availability and political power across different age groups, have emphasised dimensions of injustice, and social conflict, actual or potential, along age related lines (eg. Preston, 1984; Thomson, 1989, Turner, 1989). These arguments appear as an aspect of the more generally perceived crisis in the welfare state. Two characteristic concerns of the literature addressing 'the problem of ageing' are of interest here. The first issue concerns the relationship between age, or life cycle related processes, and theories of class and stratification, a problem seen to be increasingly salient to sociological theory given the growing numbers of those, particularly the aged, and the unemployed, who cannot be straightforwardly classified by occupational schema. The second issue concerns the definition of age related interests and associated theories of the nature of conflict over the societal distribution of resources.

Some versions of the age stratification approach entail an understanding of conflict over welfare which operates around the perimeters of the productive sphere. Excluded groups appear to be at odds with one another and with the working population, as they make their own claims over welfare resources, claims which in the case of the elderly are argued by some to be successfully achieved to the detriment of other age groups, particularly the young. The division between the working population and a dependent 'welfare' population is stark in this argument, where the latter struggle over their share of the welfare pie. The welfare 'crisis' is seen to lie along conflict axes running between welfare groups and between these and the working population. The claims, then, of particular

(welfare) groups appear as problematic while other aspects of resource distribution (rewards to employment) do not.

The division between work and welfare in these arguments is only sustainable because of the conceptual separation of class and age related processes. Whilst class theories are criticised for their partiality, and the failure to elucidate the experience of those outside paid employment, the age stratification framework sets up as supplementary a set of social relationships which leave intact the premises of production based theories of inequality. It is an argument of this chapter that age related processes do not "add on" to socioeconomic inequality but rather, like gendered processes, are an integral part of it. Age and gender related processes should be central to explanations of the structuring and reproduction of inequality.

As argued earlier, poverty and inequality amongst 'dependency' groups, and the structuring of dependency itself, cannot be separated from the social organisation of access to, and rewards from employment for different social groups. The age stratification literature neglects the way in which these processes are themselves the outcome of social claims (cf. Peattie and Rein, 1983; Rainwater et al, 1986). So, for example, as argued previously, claims to economic resources by women and young adults cannot be separated from the historical 'success' of claims to a family wage by adult men. Differing rewards to men and women in employment, including claims to forms of welfare protection and pension rights, are very important to patterns of inequality in old age (eg. Arber and Ginn, 1991; Falkingham, 1989). The relationship between experience in, and outside, employment speaks of a structural coherency which is lost in the particularism of the conflict models.

The authors of the age stratification and generational conflict approaches share the assumption that contemporary changes in the population structure and the organisation of resource distribution to the 'dependent' population are polarising the well being of different age cohorts and consequently feeding a nascent sense of injustice which will crystallise into novel dimensions of social

conflict. These writers fail to describe the processes by which they insist that the changing demographic structure will engender increased age related conflict. They point instead to aggregate level changes in the welfare of different age groups, and assume that the combination of demographic change and economic retrenchment will increase age related inequality, that this in turn will be perceived as unjust, and that conflict will ensue, jeopardising the stability of a welfare project which requires a contract of reciprocity across generations. However, authors of the age stratification framework have not demonstrated that members of age cohorts share interests which are consonant with their cohort experience, or perceive their interests to be at odds with those of members of other age cohorts or generations. As it is, we appear to know more about these writers' views on distributive justice than we do about the views of their subject populations. The literature offers little evidence on social actors' perceptions of inequality over the life cycle nor on their evaluations of just claims by different age groups. Age, as we have seen, is a proxy for more fundamental sets of social relationships, importantly for life cycle stage and domestic circumstances. My survey included a number of questions designed to elicit attitudes towards the appropriate distribution of economic rewards in relation to domestic circumstances. In respondents' perceptions, claims to resources are bound up with the organisation of household resourcing, and the associated division of household labour, between men and women and across generations. Evaluations of claims reflect the salience of life cycle stage and domestic circumstance to perceptions of distributive justice. This evidence is discussed in the latter part of the chapter.

The structure of perceptions of distributive justice indicates that age inequalities are a stable aspect of social relationships. Social change may entail, and be entailed by, a reordering of age inequalities, but the latter do not drive social change in a zero sum game of age related conflict. We have seen, in the example of change in the relative earnings of young men and women and new patterns of family formation, evidence of the ways in which a restructuring of age inequalities are bound up with broader social changes. The complexity and coherence of these processes is occluded by models which assume that inequalities straightforwardly engender conflict.

Age Stratification and the Question of Generational Conflict

The debate on age stratification has grown over the last decade, reflecting increasing concerns about the social problems expected to ensue from a growing non-employed population. The relative position of the young and the elderly has been particularly important in discussions about the changing age profile of well-being. Some writers maintain that changes in the circumstances of different age groups are directly linked, and that conflict will ensue as a result of historical changes in their relative social position (eg. Turner, 1989; Thomson, 1989). Theories of change in the age profile of well-being would appear to have potentially important consequences for 'conventional' (production based) theories of class and stratification. This section commences with a discussion of the arguments of two writers, Turner and Foner, who have made this issue central to their descriptions of age related processes and social change (Turner, 1989; Foner, 1974, 1988).

Turner points to the absence of a coherent sociological theory of ageing and age groups as aspects of social stratification. In developing an argument of the significance of age related processes to the organisation of inequality, he proposes an alternative approach which relies on a model of conflict between age groups:

"Given the current recession which characterises the world economy, the ageing of the human population poses not only serious economic implications for economic growth, but also raises the spectre of significant political conflict between age groups .. we can refer to such struggles as a politics of resentment between welfare clients". (Turner, 1989, p.603).

The politics of ageing is conceptualised here as a series of conflicts around economic class, political inequality and cultural lifestyles (Turner, 1989). The stigmatisation of the elderly, a state of affairs which he takes as axiomatic, is to be understood in terms of an age related model of varying reciprocity and social exchange over the life cycle. In this argument, stigmatisation is a consequence of a lack of social reciprocity and long term dependency. Turner's initial assumption

of age as a meaningful dimension of social and welfare antagonism is reified in a model of direct conflict between the young and the old:

"Because compulsory retirement creates a condition of extended and in principle probably unlimited dependence on welfare, the aged become stigmatised as parasitic recipients of social benefits in a situation where they are forced to compete for scarce resources with unemployed youth" (Turner, 1989, p.600).

Turner argues that the problems of ageing cannot be analysed independently of their economic context, but he argues simultaneously that age groups, as status blocs, cannot be assimilated analytically to economic class analysis. The question of the relationship between age strata and conventional understandings of socioeconomic stratification is set up in terms of conflict between the old and the young as 'dependency' groups. Turner's argument of stigmatisation may speak more of the evidence of poverty amongst the elderly than a politics of resentment. The argument of stigmatisation as a consequence of 'low reciprocity' is merely postulated by Turner, and is at odds with the arguments of others writing on age and inequality, studies which are not addressed by Turner (eg. Taylor Gooby, 1985, and those reported by Preston, 1984; Minkler, 1986). These studies suggest that claims by the elderly achieve a high level of popular support, for a variety of reasons, and will be addressed later on.

Others writers also maintain that age inequalities will engender conflict over the societal distribution of resources (Johnson, 1989).²² This model, of latent antagonism, or overt conflict between age groups, appears to stem from an analogy between age inequality and class inequality:

"Age inequalities occur because age is used as a criterion for assigning people to roles that are differentially rewarded. 'Age strata' are formed as people of similar ages fill similar sets of age related roles .. In this sense, age forms the basis of a stratification system" (Foner, 1988, p. 178).

Like Turner, Foner argues that conventional theories of inequality pay insufficient attention to age related processes. She maintains that:

".. age inequalities cannot be understood solely in class terms because dynamic processes related to age contribute directly to age inequalities; and, therefore, understanding how these age processes operate is important for grasping the roots of inequality" (Foner, 1988, p. 176).

Class analysis, Foner argues, is inadequate for dealing with the structuring of inequality outside the occupational sphere. She suggests that scholars interested in age and class stratification have tended to focus on the impact of class on age stratification and on class differences within age strata but not on the impact of age stratification on the class system. This argument is important, yet it has not been developed very far in the literature. Foner poses two questions: do age inequalities lead to age conflicts and, if so, how do they affect the relationship between classes? Part of the significance of a theory of age stratification is seen, by Foner, to lie in its emphasis on a structural potential for political conflict between the young and the old. However, whilst such age groupings may be important to conflict over 'idealistic' issues, she argues, political conflict over the distribution of material resources, implicit in the structure of age inequality, is defused by "age conflict reducing mechanisms", specifically 'age mobility' (ageing) and socioeconomic heterogeneity within age groups, (Foner, 1974), both somewhat begging the question of whether conflict is an appropriate model with which to approach these issues. In her more recent paper, Foner returns to the question of why age is not a *standard* dimension of social conflict. However, she attempts to reclaim the argument that age stratification affects class relationships by pointing to specific examples of age related behaviour or conflict which she sees as undermining class cohesion, such as youth subcultures diverting working class youth from class related activities, or age related disputes within the workplace reducing class solidarity (Foner, 1988).

Kohli suggests that the relationship of the age stratification approach to the question of class is mostly metaphorical (Kohli, 1988). I would suggest further that the age stratification model rests on an analogy with class divisions, an analogy which is overdrawn. "Age mobility", for example, is a cumbersome term for ageing. Why should it be presented as a 'conflict reducing mechanism' given its

uniformity and inevitability? Foner recognises that career trajectories are bound up with class, but sees the latter as constraining the way in which social benefits change over the life cycle rather than seeing this ordering of resources and opportunities over the life cycle as part of the substance of class related experience. Her general argument fails to demonstrate, indeed points to evidence against, a systematic patterning of age based conflicts over material resources. By adhering to a theory of age based conflict despite her difficulty in demonstrating its validity in practice, class takes on a static quality. Age related processes may be as much an aspect of confirming class identity as undermining it, but more important is the possibility that age related processes influence patterns of socioeconomic inequality, with ensuing consequences for class processes. There is a potentially productive parallel here with gender theorists' critiques of stratification theory described earlier: that age related processes are central to the reproduction, and restructuring, of socioeconomic inequality. Theories of stratification which are rooted in a narrow conception of the economic sphere are not simply incomplete, they misrepresent the processes by which unequal rewards accrue to different social groups (cf. Garnsey, 1982; Humphries and Rubery, 1984). Before returning to this question it will be useful to consider further how issues of resource distribution and inequality in societies with ageing population structures have been constructed as a problem of age, and generational, conflict.

A great deal has been written on 'the problem of ageing' in the United States where there has been something of a backlash against the perceived success of the grey lobby. Similar arguments have been published in Britain, however, suggesting an unfair redistribution by the welfare state in favour of the elderly. In the United States, Preston argued that the relative well-being of the young and the elderly have diverged over recent decades. Transfers from the working age population to the elderly are, in effect, transfers away from children and youth (Preston, 1984). Preston maintains the significance to this pattern of, for example, the rise in numbers of lone mother headed households, and cutbacks in federal expenditure on welfare which benefits the young, for example in entitlements to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and he argues that a series of public and private choices have dramatically altered the age profile of well-

being (Preston, 1984). In 1970 the incidence of poverty among the elderly in the U.S. was twice the national level, but by 1982 the proportion of elderly living in poverty had fallen below the national average. Over the same years the incidence of poverty amongst children aged under 14 increased from 37% below that of the elderly to 56% above (Preston, 1984). The success of the elderly in pressing welfare claims appears, in his argument, to have undermined the position of the young, a group with little political support or leverage. There is a suggestion here that the young are relatively weak as a political group, and the elderly relatively strong, but the structural relation between these groups is acknowledged to be more complex, and less direct, than that posited by Turner (1989). In Preston's argument the success of the elderly is born of their numbers and consequent political influence, and further by a wide constituency of support, comprising the elderly themselves and the working age population favouring public welfare for the elderly who might otherwise need family support, and simultaneously voting on behalf of themselves when they reach old age (Preston, 1984).

The publication of the argument of Preston, then President of The Population Association of America, and a report by the U.S. President's Council of Economic Advisors stating that the elderly were financially better off than the general population, and the accompanying media attention in the United States have been cited as part of the background to the development of 'AGE', or Americans for Generational Equity, an organisation which attacked the U.S. government for creating a situation in which "today's affluent seniors are unfairly competing for the resources of the future elderly." (Hewitt, quoted in Minkler, 1986; p.541). This statement assumes that increased poverty amongst children and youth is directly related to improvements in the relative economic standing of the elderly population. Entitlement programmes for the latter are seen, consequently, to "mortgage our children's future", to jeopardise their life chances as a consequence of meeting 'excessive' claims by the elderly population (Minkler, 1986). Such arguments are criticised by Minkler as a new form of victim blaming.

According to Thomson, who focuses on New Zealand but claims his arguments to have a much wider salience, ".. a prevalent image of the elderly is

still of impoverishment, but in the 1980s this no longer accords with the facts" (Thomson, 1989, p.52). He argues that there will be a change in perceptions of the affluence of the elderly, as the members of the first welfare generation, now approaching retirement, reach old age. This generation have been the prime beneficiaries of the welfare state through their adult lives. As they have aged the welfare state shifted from one that was oriented to programmes benefitting the young to one that favours the elderly. By cutting welfare expenditures to the young in the 1970s and '80s, the state has, he suggests, undermined the incentive to maintain the implicit social contract between generations on which the welfare system largely depends, since welfare insurance is underwritten by an intergenerational contract in which current pensions are financed by current employee taxes. Why, Thomson asks, should today's young people honour a welfare contract that has not benefitted them and which will require them increasingly to subsidise the 'welfare generation' in its old age? (Thomson, 1989).

In the United States, whilst it appears that the elderly have defended their position more effectively than other welfare claimants, it is not clear that their claims have undermined the position of those other groups. Pampel and Williamson, in their study of the determinants of social welfare spending across 18 advanced industrial nations, argue that population age structure has been largely neglected in studies of welfare state development, yet, they suggest, the strongest influence on the rise in spending from 1950-1980 has been the size of the elderly population, whose political efficacy has resulted in increased expenditure per head of the elderly population. However, the authors also argue that the percentage of elderly in the population has no effect on age standardised spending for programmes not directed to the aged, such as public assistance, family allowance and unemployment benefits (Pampel and Williamson, 1989).

The generational equity framework, and the theory of competition between generations from which it derives, have been strongly criticised for presenting a new form of victim blaming, and for advocating cuts in support to the elderly to restore justice between generations. Minkler outlines her objections to the generational equity arguments in terms of the implied homogeneity of 'the

elderly', in terms of the measures of poverty used and through survey evidence which suggests cross-generational consensus rather than conflict in attitudes towards government spending.²³ However, the latter point, critical of arguments for reduced expenditure for the elderly, appears to sidestep Preston's point that this consensus is part of the problem in so far as it is not matched by support for the young. Minkler does not directly address the possibility that a large cohort with a broad constituency of support and political power may detract attention from the extent of poverty elsewhere. Most authors appear to concur that the elderly are well placed with respect to popular affirmation of state expenditure and pension maintenance, achieving a level of support not attained by some other 'dependency' groups. However, this situation is simultaneously described as unjust because of a public failure to acknowledge the legitimate claims of the young. This raises questions concerning the structuring of evaluations of justice. There is evidence that the processes underlying such judgements are more complex than suggested by arguments of age related self interest.

With respect to claims amongst the non-working population, Heidenheimer points to an historically clear demarcation in the United States between social insurance and welfare programmes. He argues that the concept of contributory insurance benefits has permeated the politics of social security so that any alterations to these programmes are resisted since they represent individually earned rights to income. In contrast, public assistance programmes have no similar legitimacy and consequently are much more vulnerable to demands for public spending cuts (Heidenheimer, 1990). Taylor Gooby notes a similar distinction in Britain, where his survey evidence revealed general support for services directed towards the elderly, sick and disabled, and education and the National Health Service, and much less general support for benefits for the unemployed, low paid, single parents and children (Taylor Gooby, 1985). This evidence suggests that children and young adults are not so well placed as the elderly in general perceptions of the legitimacy of their claims. However the relationship between the young and the elderly does not hold the symmetry which is implied by a theoretical dichotomy between work and welfare, where the young and the old are seen to hold a parallel social location simply on the grounds of

their exclusion from the productive sphere.

The emphasis, by class theory, on employment based relationships has neglected the structuring of rewards and life chances over the life cycles of men and women, and neglected patterns of continuity and change as people move through different life cycle stages (Arber and Ginn, 1991; Rainwater et al, 1986; Kohli, 1988). Writers on age stratification have argued that inequalities across age groups present a challenge to class theory, and have substantive consequences for social change. By extending this analogy between age and class they suggest that age divisions, in conjunction with a growing welfare burden, also entail age related conflict. In turn this is seen as significant to class theory. In Foner's model age related conflict undermines the potential for conflict between classes; in Turner's model age conflict appears to be fought out around the perimeters of the productive sphere. Claims in the latter are not treated as problematic, but 'problem groups', dependent on state or family, struggle over their rights to welfare resources. Questions about distributive justice then, appear as claims about welfare distribution, but not about the distribution of well-being more generally, and not about the relation between the experience of 'dependency' groups and the productive sphere (cf. Holmwood, 1991, Arber and Ginn, 1991). In the next section some of the problems which arise from separating claims by the 'dependent', or non-employed population from claims to rewards in employment are discussed.

Age, Cohort and Inequality

It has been an argument of this thesis that explanations of the historical development of the modern life cycle require an understanding of its social and economic construction, and that access to, and rewards from, employment do not operate independently of more general social relationships. Rainwater and his colleagues similarly criticise the autonomy of 'market' processes in explanations of inequality, and develop a conceptual framework around claiming, partly in order:

".. to reject the placing of claims from work ('earnings') in a special status given by national economic processes, but rather to develop a language within which 'earnings' may be seen as quite as institutionally determined as claims on consumption arising out of kinship relations or through the welfare system" (Rainwater et al, 1986, p. 12; see also Peattie and Rein, 1983).

The following considers some problems which arise from theories of age stratification and conflict which separate the claims of welfare groups in the 'political' arena of redistribution from claims to rewards in employment. The examples point to the joint nature of life cycle and class related processes in ordering resource distribution and in the reproduction of inequality.

The intersection of biography and history is frequently documented and has been the subject of research into the life chances and experiences of broadly adjacent birth cohorts (eg. Elder, 1974; Hogan, 1981; Riley, 1988). The convergence of severe economic recession in the early 1980s and entrance into the labour force by cohorts born in the 1960s had not only dramatic age related consequences, manifest in the level of youth unemployment and in related government policy, but may leave a substantial proportion of people in affected cohorts disadvantaged over their lifetimes, relative to previous and subsequent cohorts. The experience of the 1980s suggests that such a convergence is inseparable from the incidence of long term unemployment and socioeconomic polarisation. The intersection of life cycle stage and economic slump, where employment structures heighten the vulnerability of youth, is an aspect not simply of age inequality but of lifetime opportunity and constraint. Youth employment could not be so disrupted at no cost to the future absorption of a large section of the population into 'standard' employment trajectories.

The representation of unemployed youth as a group located in a structurally determined antagonism with the elderly (eg. Turner, 1989) appears to be a consequence of the perception of their joint claims on a finite level of welfare resources. This is a peculiar argument given that the issue for unemployed youth is more fundamentally an issue of employment! Claims to security amongst young unemployed adults and retired workers are quite distinct

elements of the welfare project. Social security amongst the unemployed is about underwriting the risk of insecurity in the labour force. The British obsession with scrounging and work disincentives, seen as particularly problematic for young unemployed adults, is significant in setting benefit levels and rights of entitlement. Many arguments about restructuring the social security system are principally concerned with the issue of work incentives amongst unemployed people (eg. Cooke, 1987; McLaughlin, 1989). In contrast pensions to retired people are organised precisely to be a disincentive to employment. It is therefore not clear how claims amongst these groups can be construed as antagonistic.

Age inequalities hold contrasting meanings over differing, class related, life cycle trajectories. Greater income inequality over an individual's life cycle is a standard aspect of white collar careers, where expectations turn on job security, promotion and a rising earnings profile at over the life cycle. A flatter, and possibly interrupted, earnings profile attaches more clearly to male manual work and female employment trajectories. In the context of individual life cycle trajectories, age equality is an aspect of relative disadvantage and age inequality an aspect of relative advantage. It would seem extraordinary, then, if age inequalities were to engender conflict between young adults and older workers.

The separation of claims to welfare from employment processes further neglects the ways in which inequalities amongst the non-employed are structured in relation to claims to rewards in employment. The claims of children are entailed in adult claims to a family wage, and in gender inequalities in earnings. In turn these relationships are essential to understanding patterns of poverty and inequality in old age. The description of structured dependency of the elderly has been criticised for suggesting an unwarranted notion of independence during their working years. The elderly with the lowest pensions are typically those who held low paid and precarious employment careers. Retirement means more control over their incomes than such individuals may have experienced for large parts of their economically active years (Kohli, 1988). To this can be added the gendered pattern of employment rewards, economic dependency within the "economically active" years, and differences in pension rights and in life

expectancy. These are fundamental to the gendered patterning of poverty in old age (Arber and Ginn, 1991; Ginn and Arber, 1991). A pensioner who lives alone is at higher risk of poverty than pensioner couples, and is more likely to be female than male (cf. Millar and Glendinning, 1987).

Heidenheimer presents data describing the risk of poverty amongst different household types over a number of countries. Examples of some of these international differences are shown in Table 7.1. All countries except Sweden show a higher risk of poverty amongst lone elderly women. Such women in Britain are at a particularly high risk of poverty, although Britain is also unusual for the extent of poverty amongst elderly married couples, a circumstance which Heidenheimer explains as a consequence of minimum, uniform levels of income security in Britain (Heidenheimer, 1990; see also Hedstrom and Ringen, 1987).

Table 7.1. Percentage of children and elderly in poverty by family type and country (1979-'82).

	children		elderly		
	single parent %	two parent %	male living %	female living %	married %
Britain	39	10	55	70	24
Germany	35	5	19	24	9
United States	51	9	26	31	8
Sweden	9	5	7	3	0

(Heidenheimer, 1990, after Palmer, 1988).

The gendered patterning of poverty in old age has several causes: the longer life expectancy of women, diminishing savings over the post retirement years, and the greater probability that a female pensioner will be living alone than her male counterpart, in a situation where risks of poverty amongst the single elderly are much higher than amongst elderly couples. Pensioner couples comprise 9.7% of all households and 14.7% of all poor households, single male pensioners comprise 2.7% of all households, and 4.9% of all poor households, and single

female pensioners comprise 10.9% of all households and 23.6% of poor households (Millar and Glendinning, 1987; their poverty line is set at 140% of supplementary benefit levels).

The poverty of the elderly is clearly partly rooted in their employment experience. Whilst this continuity in inequality is broadly recognised (eg. Pampel and Williamson, 1989; Kohli, 1988) it does not sit comfortably with a model of conflict between welfare 'dependency' groups. The salient issue for claiming seems more appropriately addressed to inequalities in retirement as these are rooted in the organisation of income support on the basis of past employment contributions. These inequalities cannot be reduced to claims in employment, but nor should explanations neglect the extent to which such claims are significant to the structuring of poverty and inequality in old age.

Table 7.1 also shows the risk of poverty amongst single and two parent families. Heidenheimer argues that the differences illustrated in the table are consistent with the structure of income maintenance programmes, it is the high minimum benefits and broad entitlement approach of Sweden, for example which is consistent with the low poverty rates amongst children and the elderly there. Presumably this can only be the case if employment policy is considered to be an aspect of income maintenance policy. In Sweden the labour force participation rate of lone mothers is 85% in contrast to 67% in the United States and 39% in Britain (Lewis, 1989). Lewis suggests that the high rate in the United States is a consequence of many states treating lone mothers as workers under their workfare programmes. In Britain, changing patterns of household dissolution have contributed to the significant rise in the number of lone parent families, from 570000 in 1971 to 940000 in 1984 (Lewis, 1989). The history of policy debate and formulation has been characterised by uncertainty over the treatment of women heading such families as workers or mothers (Lewis, 1989; see also Lewis, 1980). The comparison between Britain and Sweden illustrates the constructed nature of the division between work and welfare statuses, and the range of experience which characterises 'dependency' statuses as these relate to structures of claims to, and within, paid work.

Evidence of change in these claims structures has been demonstrated in earlier chapters, importantly the restructuring of female employment over the life cycle, and of claims to employment by youth. Another problem for the age conflict models is the failure to take on issues concerning the changing employment composition of the population aged 16-64, with respect to levels of unemployment and to changes in female labour force participation, especially the extension of labour force continuity over the female life cycle. These changes are not addressed in any detail in accounts of the impending "demographic timebomb". The dependency ratio has been widely quoted in relation to this problem, and used in guiding pension policy formulation. It measures the ratio of the population of non-working age to the population of working age and does not take into account changes in levels of unemployment and non-employment amongst the latter, nor does it consider the relative value of social activity which is not accorded a market value, nor the level or structure of private transfers across the population (cf. Falkingham, 1989, Arber and Ginn, 1991). Changes in the patterning of female employment have been discounted as unimportant for the dependency ratio because they are equated with the growth of part time work, a situation seen to have negligible consequences for the system of tax accounting and social transfers (eg. Thomson, 1989). However, changes in the lifetime participation of women in employment must be significant to the balance of the dependency ratio. As we have seen such changes appear significant to extended periods of dependency amongst youth. Furthermore, they may be important to the resources that families accrue and carry into old age. The lifetime experience of different cohorts is essential to understanding the resourcing of those outside paid employment, and changes in living standards amongst the elderly, children, youth and the unemployed.

The age conflict approaches focus attention on distributive justice, yet their emphasis on the circumstances of age groups and 'welfare' or 'dependency' status neglects the historical structuring of claims in the 'productive' sphere, and the relationship of the success or failure of such claims to people's circumstances as they move between work and 'dependent' statuses. In consequence, the arguments of the conflict theorists tend to understate the significance of inequality within age

cohorts and overstate the extent of shared interests on the basis of cohort experience (cf. Ryder 1965). The attempt by Foner to move beyond this aggregation of cohort experience by considering the articulation of age and class presents the related processes in terms of distinct dynamics. Class factors 'constrain' the way in which benefits vary with age (Foner, 1988). This position maintains some autonomous basis for age related rewards, yet offers no independent explanation of their dynamic. As we have seen age has limited meaning outside its social context. The age stratification approach distinguishes the experience of dependency groups from the structures of access to, and rewards from employment, and from the structuring of dependency itself. The division reifies the tendency to present issues of distributive justice around the fringes of employment. Questions are raised about where the boundary should be drawn and 'what counts' as social participation (eg. Turner, 1989; Minkler, 1986) but they are still framed in a way which encourages a view of welfare, and processes of secondary redistribution as political, in the realm of claiming and distinct from processes of 'primary allocation' seen to reside within a distinct economic sphere (see Holmwood, 1991).

Arber and Ginn have also suggested that age conflict models fail to take into account the social and economic value of unpaid work (Arber and Ginn, 1991). They emphasise the ways in which dependency is a socially constructed and, importantly, gendered, concept. Like Land (1989) they suggest that interdependence is a preferable framework for understanding social interaction, although they stress how only certain forms of dependency (those typically associated with women, children and the elderly) entail a loss of power and status, in contrast to other forms of dependency (for example, of men on women, for caring services). I will return to this question of dependency and independence, and the division between them, as value laden concepts, in the final chapter. It is, however, clear that social evaluations of dependency and independence are reflected, and embodied, in the structuring of rewards to different types of labour. The next section considers the relationship between claims to employment and earnings, and domestic divisions of labour, as it is reflected in perceptions of fairness across the life cycle. Data from my survey is consistent with more general

evidence, and suggests that the patterning of inequality over age groups is an aspect of stability in the social structure, rather than its undoing.

Attitudes to Dependency, Independence and the Resourcing of Households

i. Life Cycle Structure and Claims to Employment

The definition of transitions to adult status in terms of the interrelatedness of claims and obligations has been discussed in detail. This section explores this relationship through empirical evidence concerning obligations in the resourcing of dependency, the attainment of independence, and gendered responsibilities in household income maintenance and childcare. Whilst empirical evidence is short on these questions of distributive justice, and much of the literature on age related conflict has turned more on speculation than on empirical analysis, some questions, relating to transitions from youth to adult status, can be explored through data collected in the main survey. In order to locate these questions it is useful to address empirical evidence from other, secondary, sources.

In a study of perceptions of distributive justice in the United States, Jasso and Rossi make a distinction between distribution rules, which refer to 'what is', or the current structure of resource allocation, and their legitimacy, or perceptions of 'what ought to be'. They question whether judgements of justice relate to actual distributions of resources or some utopian referent. (The relationship between actual distributions and perceptions of distributive justice is an important issue, to which I will return). In their survey the authors required respondents to rank, on a scale of over- or under-payment, a series of individuals with various attributes: sex, marital status, number of children, education and occupational level, and earnings, as described in a series of vignettes. The authors conclude the salience of both need and merit to their respondents' justice evaluations (Jasso and Rossi, 1977). In a similar, but larger scale, survey, Alves and Rossi revise the earlier argument of the existence of a consensus over just distribution rules. In the modified argument need and merit aspects are again demonstrated to underlie

evaluations of just earnings, but respondents' own social location influenced their relative importance (Alves and Rossi, 1978; cf. Stewart and Blackburn, 1975). Higher occupational status groups placed greater emphasis on merit, proposing higher earnings for those with higher qualifications or occupational position, and lower status groups placed greater emphasis on need considerations, proposing more earnings for households with more children (Alves and Rossi, 1978). Evidence from my survey suggests that there is a patterning also of attitudes towards claims which relates to respondents' own life cycle stage. Before looking at this evidence it is of interest to examine the patterning of inequality by household type. Table 7.2 compares the average total income of different types of household (after Rainwater et al, 1986), and Table 7.3 reproduces an analysis by Millar and Glendinning (1987) on the relation between household circumstance and risk of poverty.

The data presented by Rainwater, reproduced in Table 7.2, is aggregated, and it is therefore not possible to distinguish in detail the contributions of different household members, or family life cycle stage. 'No children', for example, includes young couples prior to family formation and older couples in the 'empty nest' stage of the family life cycle. Married couples without children presumably comprise two wage earners, whereas those with children are probably more reliant on male earnings. Rainwater points out that in families with children, husbands contribute a higher proportion of aggregate household income than is the case for couples without children. The median reliance on husbands' earnings for couples with children in Britain is 85%.²⁴ However such families still have an average income slightly above the national mean. This pattern reflects not only the particular significance of male earnings to such families but also a structure of earnings which rewards men with dependent children more highly than other groups. This pattern of earnings over household types is reflected also in the data presented in Table 7.3, which demonstrates a similar structure of inequality, with respect to risk of poverty. Married couples without children, in both sets of

Table 7.2. *Inequality by household structure*

household type	Ratio of mean household income to national mean income
single men	0.804
single women:	
no children	0.650
children	0.501
married couples:	
no children	1.123
children	1.007

Rainwater et al, 1986; estimated from 1973 General Household Survey.

evidence, are the best placed in respect of household income, followed by couples with children, and lone female parents are the worst placed (Millar and Glendinning, 1987).

The patterning of varying needs and claims over the life cycle is broadly reflected in responses to two questions in my survey where respondents were asked to assess claims to resources by people in different household circumstances. In a question concerning access to employment, respondents prioritised the claims of adults with dependent children over the claims of young single adults without similar obligations. Respondents were asked to imagine that there is a job vacancy for which six different people apply, to assume that they are all equally qualified, and to rank their preferences of who they would most like to get the job. The potential worker 'types' were defined in terms of household circumstance. The question, therefore, assumes the legitimacy of need and the salience of circumstances of dependency and obligation in ordering claims to employment, and describes individuals only in terms of domestic circumstance. The respondents were asked to rank all six individuals described. The question was designed in part to examine the hypothesis that youth would be more inclined to favour their age peers. Within the confines of a fixed choice question this was

Table 7.3. Extent and risk of poverty by household type, Britain, 1983.

	All households %	Poor households %	Risk of poverty (percent in each group in poverty)
		<u>pensioners</u>	
couple	9.7	14.7	42%
woman	10.9	23.6	61%
man	2.7	4.9	51%
		<u>non-pensioners</u>	
single women	3.9	4.6	33%
single man	5.1	5.5	30%
couple, no	17.2	7.3	12%
couple, children	28.2	20.7	20%
lone mother	3.6	7.7	61%
lone father	0.4	0.6	43%

Poverty is measured as net weekly income minus net housing costs below 140% of ordinary rates of supplementary benefit; Family Expenditure Survey data. After Millar and Glendinning, 1987.

the minority response and most gave priority to those with family obligations. The majority of respondents ranked first either the married man with dependent children or the single mother. Only 9 out of 92 young respondents ranked first any of the young single adults as described in the exercise. The incidence of first and second place ranking is shown in Table 7.4.

The lower preference given to young single people in the responses suggests the salience of household obligations to perceptions of the value of differing claims to resources. The low number of respondents prioritising youth over and above adults with dependent children may in part attach to the voluntary nature of residence in, or departure from, parental homes amongst the majority of respondents. It is clearly 'non-standard' household transitions which are the most problematic, transitions which are not well represented in the data, and which might encourage a higher level of preference for young, single adults. Age conflict models posit self interested claims made on the basis of age, but this sort of age related identification of interest is not evident in the structure of responses.

Their pattern is consistent with the findings of those studies reported above which suggest that perceptions of earnings justice involve judgements about relative need. The ranking, by respondents, of the relative claims to the job by the individuals described in the 'vignette' suggests the significance of social obligations and responsibilities towards dependents in perceptions of distributive justice.

Table 7.4. Ranking of claims to work amongst individuals in differing household circumstances.^{25,26,27}

individual described in vignette:	Rankings given to vignette individuals			
	young adults		parents	
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
young single man, living at home	5	5	2	2
young single man, living away from home	3	5	0	5
young single woman, living away from home	2	8	0	3
married man, young, with children, wife not working	48	28	29	4
married women, no children at home, husband not working	3	21	0	6
women with no husband, young children	33	23	4	13

There is some evidence of a relationship between responses and individuals' own household circumstances. Amongst the older generation, of parents to the youth sample, there is a strong majority preference for the married man with a young family. The limited priority for single mothers amongst the older generation is not necessarily evidence of an historical change in preference for positive discrimination for this group however, since amongst the youth sample those who were themselves cohabiting or married favoured the married man more than the sample as a whole. The division between dependent young adults and those who are independent and cohabiting is strongly associated with the division

of preference for the married man and the lone mother, a division which is quite clearcut amongst the male sample.

Table 7.5. Highest Ranking of Claims to Employment by Respondents own Status.²⁸

individual described in vignette:	Respondents to Main survey			
	men		women	
	dependent	married	dependent	married
married man	18	12	7	11
lone mother	18	4	6	5
youth	4	3	2	0

Table 7.5 shows the patterning of first preferences for the individuals described by respondents' own household circumstance. 'Youth' groups the three young and single individuals described because of the small number of respondents giving them top priority. Where the *relative* ranking of the single mother and the married man are considered, regardless of their relationship to the other individuals described, the ratio of the former to the latter is 18:22 amongst dependent men and 4:15 amongst family men. Amongst women the equivalent ratios are 6:9 and 5:11. That is, and especially amongst men, their own life cycle stage appears to be quite strongly associated with their responses.²⁹ There is no similar relationship apparent over employment sector or qualification level. This pattern of responses is associated, not directly with age, but with household status, an important distinction which is often conflated in age stratification theories. For example, 47 male respondents are aged 25 or below, of whom 7 are independent and living with a partner. Whilst those who are young and single are evenly divided in their giving priority to the single mother or married man, all 7 of those aged 25 and under who live independently with a partner favour the married man. The questionnaire did not ask respondents the reasons for their preferences, although some explicitly stated that 'positive discrimination' lay behind their prioritising the lone mother. Across the sample,

those who are themselves independent and living with a partner are more likely to favour the married man over the single mother. Relatively high levels of need, or anticipated need, characterise the family formation period as households face higher costs, and the probability of losing much, if not all, female earnings contributions, at least in the early years of childrearing. The significance of male earnings to family living standards at this stage in the life cycle is reflected in the stronger preference by similarly placed respondents for the 'male breadwinner' claim to employment.

The majority of cohabiting men and women, like the parent sample, prioritise the claims of married men over those of single mothers. The sample size is very small here, but it is worth noting that a more substantial minority of young adults favour the claims of single mothers than do respondents amongst the parental generation. It is an interesting question whether in later years, in a more affluent stage of the family life cycle, members of the younger generation would reveal a different structure of priorities.

The lower priority given to the claims of young, single adults deserves comment. Millar and Glendinning's data demonstrates a higher risk of poverty amongst single adult households than is the case in families with children or, by extension, the circumstances of young adults living with their parents. It is clear in the case of married men with young children that not to give them work would probably drop their families into poverty. This would not be a standard consequence in the case of young adults dependent at their parents. Some comments made by respondents in the course of answering the question indicated an expectation that young adults living away from home had attained their independence voluntarily. This suggests that the claims of young men living at home were ranked first more than any other group without obligations to children, because they were seen to hold a particular form of personal, as opposed to household, disadvantage, as might be entailed, for example, in being unemployed and (still, perhaps) dependent on their parents.

The significance of respondents' own life cycle stage is associated not only

with claims to work amongst different groups, but also with stated preferences for organising family formation decisions around earnings and career opportunities. Respondents were read the following vignette: "John and Maggie are a young married couple, and are both working. Maggie is offered another job which pays less than the one she has now, but it has better prospects. However, they hope to have children over the next few years. What should she do?" Of the 92 young adult respondents 37 replied 'she should stay in the old job'; 36 that she should 'take advantage of the potential career prospects and delay having children', and 13 that she should 'take the new job and quit when she gets pregnant'. Amongst the 36 respondents to the parents' survey, the corresponding responses were 9, 15 and 8. The other respondents suggested some alternative course of action. Again, amongst the youth sample, domestic circumstance is strongly associated with the pattern of responses, which are shown in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6. Preference for career and family decisions, as described in vignette, amongst respondents to the main survey

respondents circumstances:	Preferred solution to problem		
	new job and quit	old job	delay
dependent	7	18	30
married	6	19	6

The different salience of the question to young adults in different circumstances may be important to the pattern of responses. However, the greater preference for the woman described in the vignette to remain with her old job, amongst cohabiting respondents, appears to reflect the importance of earnings in a period of relative need. A substantial proportion, over one third of the sample of those who are cohabiting, suggest she should take the new job. That a minority advocates delay does not contradict the evidence that contemporary cohorts of young adults are deferring parenthood relative to previous cohorts. Such delay is not necessarily a consciously formulated decision, but rather it is embedded within

contemporary social relationships. Amongst parents it is notable that a higher percentage advocate moving to the new job than staying in the old, and as in the youth sample around half advocate delaying the start of childbearing. This relatively high sympathy to female claims to careers cannot be separated from the older generation's perceptions of better employment opportunities for contemporary cohorts of young women (described in Chapter 5).

To summarise, the evidence presented in this section suggests the significance of life cycle related circumstances, specifically relations to household resourcing, are reflected in respondents' attitudes towards the relative strengths of employment claims by different groups. Further, the perceived salience of particular needs itself varies in relation to respondents' own household circumstance. In Chapter 2, we saw how some researchers maintain that the attitudes of their respondents are often at odds with their behaviour (Wallace, 1987a; Cockburn, 1987). Cockburn looked specifically at gender role attitudes and suggested that 'liberal' attitudes were taken over by 'traditional' employment roles (Cockburn, 1987). However, the evidence presented here suggests that people's attitudes are not at odds with their circumstances, so long as the latter are located within a longitudinal, life cycle perspective.

ii. Claims to Independence and the Patterning of Social Obligation.

In Chapter 6, a set of interview questions were described, where respondents were asked to describe the attributes of a typical employee in a series of job grades and to indicate the earnings they thought to be typical of each grade. Respondents were also asked whether or not they would choose to reward any job grade more highly (even though it would mean rewarding another one less), or whether they would reward any grades less. Considering here only the lowest grade, that is the ones associated with the youngest employees, the majority of respondents said they would keep the earnings level the same, that is not reward it more highly at the expense of higher paid jobs further up the career

ladder. This result was the same across all companies. Unfortunately, for those men interviewed who are perhaps the worst placed in respect of potential employment chances, on the Community Programme and Special Measures YTS, there is no question on earnings which relates directly to their own experience, rather than apprentice based career routes. In general such men kept the level of apprentice earnings the same in this exercise. In the other two sectors, women were more inclined to increase the earnings of the lowest job grades than were men. 13 women suggested the lowest grade should be paid more highly, whilst 15 said they would leave it the same; amongst men the respective figures were 8 and 18. There is no clear association of responses with qualification level, employment sector, company or respondents' age, or expectations concerning their own employment circumstance, including promotion, five years hence. Men were less inclined than women to alter the age structure of earnings in their sector. The higher level of dissension amongst female respondents may reflect the lower salience to them of an age graded earnings profile which is a standard aspect of male white collar career structures. However, it is worth underlining that the majority of respondents, and over two thirds of male respondents, did not rearrange the age structure of earnings, which were uniformly seen to have an age graded profile.

Harris, in his discussion of the dependency assumptions built into social security policy, suggests that families now desire and expect young people to have more independence than they did in the past (Harris, 1988). Responses to the attitude statements in the survey suggest however that whilst the ability to achieve independence is viewed positively, the expectation of parental obligations to youth is also high. Rites of passage to adulthood are partly structured by the expectation that the underwriting of continued dependency is more a family affair than a public responsibility. The statement "it should be easier than it is for young people to get their own place and live independently" revealed a high and almost identical pattern of agreement amongst parents and youth: 52/69 young adult respondents agreed, 22/28 parents agreed (21/28 young adult children of interviewed parents agreed). However, in response to statement "young people should be content to stay with their parents until they are earning enough to

support themselves financially", the majority also agreed (60/79 young adults; 24/34 parents and 23/34 young adult children of interviewed parents).³⁰

Most of the young adults in the survey were either living at home or had left voluntarily. The majority of parents with young adult children at home indicated that the dig money they received from their children at most covered costs and was rarely seen as a significant contribution to household resources. Most parents accepted their role in supporting their young adult children as a 'natural' thing to do. Again this may in part be a consequence of the relative advantage of those parent-child pairs interviewed, but it is consistent with other evidence, including the experience of many unemployed youth (see Hutson and Jenkins, 1989). Both of these examples, where parents support young adults who are working but living at home, and where parents help to carry the costs of unemployment even though they may be poorly placed to do so, suggest that the structural relationship between generations is one of mutuality and not one of conflict.

Another set of cross generational comparisons reveals interesting differences in attitudes towards gendered divisions of responsibility in household income maintenance. Responses to a series of statements relating to such divisions are shown in Table 7.7. The table includes only independent, cohabiting young adults since the statements may have a different, and abstracted, meaning to youth who are single or living with their parents. The majority of young respondents disagree that 'a husband works to support his family and a wife works for the extras'. These responses suggest the salience of female earnings to household income maintenance and contrast with the responses of the parental generation. These differences are consistent both with a life cycle effect and with structural changes through the post war decades in female contributions to household resourcing. The majority of respondents believe that both partners need to work to keep up with the cost of living. The higher level of disagreement that 'a wife works for the extras' suggests that more respondents see a woman's

Table 7.7. Attitudes to obligations for household income maintenance.

		young adults	parents	young adults (paired)
a husband works to support his family and a wife works for the extras	disagree	21	11	2
	agree	10	23	10
a husband and wife both need to work to keep up with the cost of living	disagree	12	13	4
	agree	16	19	7
a mother of young children should work if the family needs the money	disagree	7	13	3
	agree	25	19	8

('paired young adults' refers to respondents to the main survey whose parents were interviewed)

wages as significant to maintaining lifestyles than necessarily to 'getting by' as implied by the cost of living statement. The similarity of responses over the generations with respect to employment and the cost of living, and the generational difference in responses to the statement concerning whether or not a wife works for extras is consistent with a life cycle interpretation. 'Extras' amongst the older generation may contribute to the ability to sustain a particular lifestyle. Young adults, most of whom are in, or entering, the family building stage, are likely to interpret female financial contributions as more basic to household resourcing than to describe them as 'extras'. The structure of responses is suggestive of the greater value to young adults of female contributions to household income maintenance.

The available empirical evidence points to the significance of both life cycle and period effects in structuring attitudes. There is no evidence, however, that standard processes place different age groups or generations in an antagonistic relationship to one another, or that age related claims engender conflict. Relationships over the life cycle and between age groups and generations are essential to explanations of structures of inequality, but the organisation of such relationships is not a precursor to crisis, rather it is an aspect of a coherent

social structure.

Conclusion

This chapter has described some of the processes which give coherence to the relationships between age groups and between generations. These processes point to problems which ensue from supposing that the relationship between those in paid work and those who are not so employed is one of structural antagonism. One such problem which is embedded within age stratification and conflict approaches is the conceptual distinction between claims amongst different age groups, or between the claims of work and 'welfare' groups. It is as if thought becomes trapped in the particularity of the experience of different social groups.³¹

The organisation of social claims is central to understanding the mutuality of relationships between 'dependency' groups and those in paid employment. For example, the claims of children and dependent youth cannot be separated from the high rewards of adult men relative to other groups of workers, nor from gendered inequalities in rewards to employment and ensuing patterns of inequality in old age. The extent to which financial rewards are structured in relation to economic and social obligations, as these are standardly carried by certain groups, underlies the material problems which characterise the experience of 'non-standard' circumstances, for example amongst lone mothers and their children, and amongst dependent youth with unemployed parents. Either way the structuring of rewards to different groups are inseparable from the relationships through which these groups are linked in the resourcing of individual and household reproduction.

The stability of 'horizontal' inequality, that is intra-class inequalities over the life cycle and across different household structures, is reflected in perceptions of distributive justice. The empirical evidence on attitudes to this inequality suggests that people perceive it to be just, partly because it reflects differing levels of need over the life cycle. Most respondents prioritised the claim to work

amongst individuals with dependents over the claims of individuals without similar obligations. The majority of young adults preferred not to rearrange the age hierarchy of earnings in their employment sector. These responses suggest that a profile of earnings graded in relation to age and domestic responsibilities is seen as a legitimate ordering of claims to economic resources. Evaluations of claims amongst different age groups appear, then, to incorporate understandings of horizontal equity, where some continuity in living standards is seen as appropriate, yet where the burden of household income maintenance is spread unevenly over the life cycle. These evaluative judgements are made in relation to a structure which rewards certain groups more highly and regards others as, at least partially, dependent. In this sense fairness judgements, or evaluations of claims, are structured in relation to "what is", to an actual rather than a utopian referent (cf. Stewart and Blackburn, 1975; Alves and Rossi, 1978). Age related inequalities cohere with expectations of varying economic obligations over the life cycle. Changes in the structure of inequalities between age groups are seen in age stratification and age conflict models to engender a restructuring of social claims. These claims are simultaneously assumed to result in conflict between different welfare groups or between welfare groups and the working population. However, the claims of 'dependency' groups are not separable from the experience of, and rewards to, those who are active in paid employment. Perceptions of fairness reflect the stability of these processes, and the coherence of age related processes and social structure.

Stability, however, is of course commensurate with social change. The reorganisation of life cycle processes, as we have seen, reflects changes in the relative position of different groups in the resourcing of social reproduction. In this way, the processes shaping 'horizontal' inequality and 'vertical' inequality are not distinct. For example, the incidence of economic vulnerability, such as unemployment amongst youth and amongst workers approaching retirement, and amongst single mothers, has significant implications for general structures of inequality. The undermining of claims by youth to an adult wage, and to independence at early ages, may exacerbate the risks of poverty amongst those who are poorly placed to make claims on other family members. The convergence

of life cycle related vulnerability with economic insecurity and recessionary and structural economic change may result in some groups being permanently disadvantaged relative to others, and relative to their age peers in other cohorts. Location with respect to the organisation of social reproduction, then, is of central importance in the distribution of risks of poverty, and in the structuring of inequality. Change in the ways in which reproduction is organised, and the position of different groups in relation to these processes, is essential for understanding the organisation of inequality. Proponents of the age stratification framework claim to challenge economically based stratification theories by pointing to their partiality, specifically their failure to take on issues of inequality outside the 'economic' sphere. However, a more convincing challenge to stratification theory lies in recognising the ways in which age, and gender, related processes hold general importance in the structuring and reproduction of socioeconomic inequality.

8. Conclusion

The transition from youth to adult status, or from dependence to independence and obligation, and change in its social organisation, is integral to the arrangements through which society is reproduced. I suggested earlier that it may be appropriate, finally, to characterise this life cycle transition as having a moral character. This is because the organisation of social reproduction embodies evaluations of the social worth of different groups, different circumstances and different activities. In this concluding chapter I summarise the main arguments of the thesis, and discuss their implications for understandings of life cycle processes, social inequalities and social change.

Through an analysis of data collected in a survey of young adults and their parents, undertaken in conjunction with a critical appraisal of more general evidence on the organisation of employment and life cycle processes, the thesis has explored change in the transition from youth to adulthood, as an integral part of more general changes in the social organisation of obligation and dependency. The 1980s saw a growing interest in the consequences of economic change for the transition to adult status. In part this was a reaction to the employment crisis at the start of that decade. Some writers explored the question of whether employment restructuring has disrupted the attainment of adult lifestyles, and citizenship rights, amongst recent cohorts of young people. Their research, however, reached contradictory conclusions over the significance of economic change for the organisation of the transition to adulthood. It has been criticised recently for failing to locate 'youth' as a group, within the structures and values of society (Jones, 1988; Ashton and Lowe, 1991; Chisholm, 1990). The difficulty in so locating youth, and the transition to adult status, is principally a consequence of the general theoretical framework in which 'social', domestic, circumstances, which are central to definitions of life cycle trajectories, are conceived of as autonomous, or distinct from employment processes and employment related inequalities.

The division between 'the social' and 'the economic' is reflected clearly in models of parallel trajectories through domestic careers and labour force careers. There is no consideration of the ways in which employment processes, and the organisation of rewards to employment, are themselves shaped in relation to individual, and family, life cycles. The question of the impact of economic change on a particular life cycle transition is itself less straightforward than it might at first appear, because life cycle related processes are themselves significant for patterns of demand for, and structures of rewards to, different labour force groups. Further, the composition and relative position of such groups are not constant. Long term changes in the organisation of household and family structure, and changes in the contributions of different members to the resourcing of households, are essential to understanding change in the shape and substance of life cycle trajectories. In conjunction, changing relations to household resourcing, the reproduction of households, day to day, and through new generations, cannot be separated from changes in the structure of employment.

These processes are central in shaping the circumstances of any particular life cycle stage, and are essential to understanding contemporary transitions from youth to adulthood. For example, the current position of youth cannot be understood in isolation from a knowledge of their family circumstance, of, for example, their parents' own family formation activities, the age difference between themselves and their parents, their parents' employment status and relative earnings, the presence and age of siblings, and the division of responsibilities for household resourcing over the family life cycle. Patterns of demand for, and rewards to, employment are shaped in relation to these processes. There are two principle, and linked, ways in which these processes underlie change in the transition from youth to adulthood. Firstly, over this century there has been an increase in the affluence of families with children approaching adult status which has been increasingly independent of the material contributions of young adult children. There is a sense, then, in which young adults in such family circumstances can 'afford' not only to stay in full time education to older ages, but also to take relatively low paying jobs. Secondly, the available evidence suggests that the general patterns of delay in household and

family formation by young couples are, in part, a consequence of the increased importance of the earnings of young women, relative to those of young men, in resourcing new households and becoming parents at a standard of living commensurate with orientations towards general, societal, levels of consumption.

In tracing the mutual interaction of 'productive' and 'reproductive' processes I have stressed the importance of the social organisation of dependence and obligation. The latter term has been a device for exploring the social construction of 'independence', challenging its taken for granted nature as a consequence of employment security. Dependence and independence, or obligation, refer to different circumstances in the resourcing and organisation of social reproduction. They simultaneously provide a framework for exploring employment inequalities as *social* processes. Some writers, however, maintain that dependence and independence are value laden concepts, and prefer to replace them with a theory, and terminology, of interdependence (Land, 1989; Arber and Ginn, 1991). This preference is part of an attempt to foreground the social and economic value of unpaid, particularly domestic, labour. Whilst my own terminology, of the interaction of dependence and obligation, is a little clumsy, the more 'streamlined' concept of interdependence would not necessarily add anything to the analysis, and risks taking away something valuable. In part, the objective of its proponents is no different from my own, where the concern is to explore the social construction of differing forms of obligation and dependence, and the ways in which their organisation reflects the social nature of all human activity. However, it is important to retain dependence and obligation as distinct concepts, whilst acknowledging that both refer to financial and care related resources, precisely because through them it is possible to articulate broader social evaluations of the worth of different activities. That some work is paid, and other work is unpaid, could not provide a clearer reflection of such evaluations. To speak of interdependence then is appropriate at one level, but as a general concept it is not detailed enough to elucidate how different values are accorded to different activities. It is important to maintain distinctions which are fine enough to reflect the complexity of evaluations of different activities, to elucidate the arrangements by which different social value and the activities of different

groups are associated, and to analyse the processes underlying continuity and change in such arrangements.

As we have seen standard arrangements place groups differently in the resourcing of their daily livelihoods. Some are dependent on other family members, or on the state, for maintaining themselves; others have 'independent' access to earnings from employment, themselves patterned in relation to claims for resourcing dependents. There is, however, no straightforward relationship between dependence and disadvantage, or between independence and advantage. In assessing particular arguments for a more equitable distribution of social resources and opportunities it is useful to distinguish between two different aspects of inequality, although they are closely related, one shaped by the other. The distinction I wish to draw is between inequality and poverty as a consequence of non-standard circumstances, which place people at a particular disadvantage, and inequality as implicit within the arrangements by which social reproduction is organised. The former might be seen as a particular instance of the latter, that is, standard arrangements place particular groups at risk of poverty, and at risk of social exclusion. Examples of the former, non-standard circumstances, are unemployment, and single parenthood. Examples of the latter can be seen in claims which counter standard arrangements, such as arguments for resources sufficient to support independent living amongst young people, and wages for housework campaigns. Youth research has been conducted in relation to the latter, particularly in its arguments of an undermining of 'traditional' claims by youth to independence and employment security. However, its methodological focus has been with the former, that is with youth in particular, and often problematic, circumstances. In short, it has failed to locate its arguments in relation to general processes of change in the arrangements by which youth, and transitions to adult status, are reproduced.

This thesis has analysed changes in the social processes through which the transition from youth to adult status is organised. Any concern with the claims of young people must be placed against an understanding of such processes. That over the long term many households are better placed to support their dependent

young adult children clearly means that those which are not so placed face particular problems, especially where government policies are encouraging greater 'privatisation' in the resourcing of material dependency. Any claims by, or on behalf of, young people, or other groups without independent access to material resources, are claims against the relations of dependency and obligation through which social reproduction is organised. Potentially, then, such claims would be part of a more general challenge to the practices, beliefs and policies which place particular groups at risk of, or in, poverty, and at the margins of society. The circumstances of such groups speaks about the broader social morality.

Notes

1. There are parallels between this critique and Garnsey's critique of conventional approaches to class analysis which treat the occupational structure as 'the backbone of the reward system'. Proponents of the 'conventional view' see the problem of class analysis as an issue of how labour comes to be allocated to particular positions in the reward structure, an approach which Garnsey criticises for seeing the reward structure as determined by economic and technological exigencies (Garnsey, 1982).

2. None of the building workers interviewed in the survey were self employed, but the significance, and recent growth, of labour only subcontracting on the structure of the industry has been an area of some concern, particularly in industry specific research on labour force segmentation (eg. Winch, 1986; Moore, 1981; Bresnen et al, 1985. See also Austrin, 1980).

3. This estimate is drawn from ranking the marriage ages of the population and removing the youngest and oldest 10% of the distribution and measuring the marriage timing of the central 80% of the distribution.

4. These cross sectional rates will underestimate the cohort average.

5. The percentages are calculated as sum of proportions in the relevant category by single years of age 16-29, thereby eliminating the consequences of any imbalance in the age distribution (Penhale, 1990).

6. Thompson's data refers to births within marriage because detail on birth order and mothers' ages was not available for births registered outside of marriage.

7. It seems likely that this late twentieth century turning point in trends from lower to higher ages at family formation will not be superseded by a new demographic transition for some time. OPCS projections of fertility, made in the mid 1980s, assumed that falling rates for women in their early twenties and rising rates for older women would level off. This had not happened by the end of the 1980s and OPCS now predict that the overall mean female age at childbirth will rise from 27.3 years in 1989 and to 28.7 years by the end of the century and will fall back to 27.8 years by 2015. The mean female age at birth of the first child is predicted to continue to rise from 25.3 years in 1989 to 26.5 years by 2000 before beginning to fall (Shaw, 1990).

8. Tables 4.5 and 4.6 treat the sample as a synthetic cohort (cf. Penhale, 1990), that is, cross-sectional evidence of age related experience is compared over age groups as if they formed a single cohort. The experience of older respondents at younger ages is treated as equivalent to the contemporary experience of younger respondents. Younger respondents, of course, are not bound to repeat the experience of older respondents.

9. As we have seen this is the case amongst recent youth theorists. It is also true of historical studies of demographic change and the timing of marriage and parenting (eg. Hajnal, 1965; Gillis, 1985; Banks, 1954, Gittins, 1982) and amongst economists' explanations of fertility patterns (eg. Easterlin, 1968; Ermisch, 1983).

10. A recent survey estimates that of women who leave work to have children, almost 50% return to work within nine months, and that more than 20% of women who were full time employees at the time of pregnancy went back to work full time, compared to 7% in 1979 (McRae, PSI survey reported in The

Guardian, 21.11.1991).

11. Another version of the significance of norms to employment patterns is provided by those interested in gender role attitudes and labour force commitment. Again, however, the significance of such norms is not located adequately with respect to material changes and, in consequences, norms and expectations acquire a static, ahistorical character. For example, Mott and his colleagues explore inter-generational influences in female labour force commitment (Mott et al, 1982). In their comparative analysis of mothers' and daughters' employment participation rates in the United States, they argue that the probability that young women work has a stronger statistical association with the attitudes of their mothers, described as gender role traditional or gender role liberal, than to their mothers' own experience of limited or extensive labour force participation. The writers argue that as gender role attitudes become more liberal, so women will be able to make more economically rational decisions about whether or not to work. They neglect the possibility of a 'reverse' form of socialisation, where mothers are more liberal in their attitudes to women working precisely because of the experience of their daughters. Neoclassical theory, they suggest, will become increasingly appropriate as a framework for analysing female employment participation, as attitudes become less constrained by traditional gender role expectations (Mott et al, 1982).

12. The NES has been carried out in its current form since 1970, although the method of estimating average weekly earnings differs slightly from subsequent years. Also, from 1974 onwards, age was measured in the survey in terms of completed years at the 1st January. For 1973 and previously, age was measured in terms of completed years at the time of the survey.

13. Data are not available from NES prior to 1968, and age disaggregated earnings data was not included in the 1972 NES data.

14. The GHS is a national survey of households in Britain, from which Jones derived a subset of data on 12000 people aged 16 to 29, combining the 1979 and 1980 surveys. The NCDS is a cohort study of all people born during one week in March, 1958, with a current sample size of 12500. Jones analysed data from the 1981 Sweep of the survey, whose respondents were then 23, and which gathered information for the period since they were 16 years old (Jones, 1987).

15. Further, one might question the definition of youth classes in relation to fathers' occupation in the absence of a theory of the salience of gender processes to the reproduction of class inequality (cf. Garnsey, 1982). Heath and Britten point to the inappropriateness of the Registrar General's social class groupings for classifying female non-manual jobs. Looking specifically at female clerical workers and shop assistants they argue that the manual/non-manual division is not a major break in the class structure and that women in sales work share more with female manual workers than they do with their relatively advantaged "peers" in clerical jobs (Heath and Britten, 1984). The problems with the RG scale however are far more serious yet. In a comparison of occupations' RG classification and their scores derived from the Hope Goldthorpe scale, Bland examined the degree of overlap between classes, using this as a measure of their failure to meet the OPCS claim that each category is homogeneous. Rearranging the cross classification to remove all overlap it is necessary to change the RG class definition for 33% of the male population. Whilst the manual non-manual distinction works more or less effectively in aggregate comparisons, within class

III the division is ineffective, with only a 61% probability that any randomly chosen skilled non-manual occupation is ranked higher, on the Hope Goldthorpe scale, than a similarly chosen skilled manual occupation (Bland, 1979). He argues that inferences made on such a distinction should be avoided.

16. The following two tables illustrate patterns of class mobility amongst the fathers and mothers of respondents to the Main Survey. Their class position is based on their occupations as reported by their young adult children.

Fathers to all respondents

social class at marriage:	current social class					
	I	II	IINM	IIM	IV	V
I	1			1		
II						
IINM		4	2	1		
IIM	2	5	4	13	1	1
IV		1		2	3	
V				1		2

Mothers to all respondents

social class at marriage	current social class					
	I	II	IINM	IIM	IV	V
I						
II		1	1			
IINM		5	9		3	1
IIM		1	3			1
IV		1	4	1	2	4
V		1		1	1	2

Both men and women experienced quite a high degree of occupational mobility over their labour force careers. Of 44 fathers, 21 are in the same class now as they were at marriage, 4 were 'downwardly mobile' and 19 'upwardly mobile'. Of 42 mothers, 14 are in the same class now as they were at marriage, 10 were 'downwardly mobile' and 18 'upwardly mobile'. A comparison of children's social class and that of their same sex parent now contrasts with a comparison based on parents' social class location at their marriage. Of the 30 father-son pairs, 10 sons are occupationally stable vis-a-vis their fathers, 9 are 'upwardly mobile' and 11 are 'downwardly mobile'. However, the comparison with fathers' social class at his marriage shows a greater degree of stability, with half of the respondents in the same social class (10/15 being in skilled manual work), and only 3 out of 30 being

downwardly mobile. All daughters are classified as skilled non-manual. The comparison with mothers' social class shows that of 11 mother-daughter pairs, 3 daughters are occupationally 'stable' vis-a-vis their mothers, 1 is upwardly mobile and 7 are downwardly mobile. The comparison with mothers' social class at marriage shows 6 out of 11 daughters to be in the same social class, and only 2 out of 11 to be downwardly mobile.

Inter-generational Mobility: sons' class by fathers' current occupational social class

father's current social class:	Son's current social class					
	I	II	IIINM	IIIM	IV	V
I				1		
II			5	3		
IIINM		1	2			
IIIM			4	7	2	
IV			1	1	1	
V						

Inter-generational Mobility: sons' class by fathers' occupational social class at his own marriage

Father's social class at marriage	Son's current social class					
	I	II	IIINM	IIIM	IV	V
I			1			
II						
IIINM			4			
IIIM		1	6	10	2	
IV			1	1	1	
V		1		2		

Inter-generational mobility: daughter's occupational social class by mother's current occupational social class and by mother's occupational social class at marriage

Daughter's current	Mother's current social class					
	I	II	IIINM	IIIM	IV	V
IIINM		7	3			1
	Mother's social class at marriage					
	I	II	IIINM	IIIM	IV	V
IIINM		2	6		2	1

17. Reasons for entering current employment sector were classified as follows: negative: better than unemployment/the dole; I needed the money; it was all I could get (I did not have the qualifications for anything else); it was the first job I was offered/it came up; respondent under pressure from 'Restart'; and positive: wanted to work in sector/area (interested in work); I wanted to get a trade/apprenticeship; I wanted to further myself (or any reference to prospects and future); better money; job seen to be more permanent, secure, better paid than previous job or alternatives. Missing values were assigned where answers were too vague to usefully classify, or where a combination of positive and negative reasons were given.

18. I am grateful to Sandy Stewart for providing me with a questionnaire designed by him and his colleagues at the Cambridge School of Applied Economics, and from which I adapted this set of questions.

19. The male adult wage distribution amongst construction workers was 6 responses to each of the lower three adult wage brackets, and 13 responses to the highest (£9500+) bracket. Tradesman was the status most typically associated with married status, and because this occupation is a standard long term employment position for many men in the building industry, with highly varied incomes, respondents in this sector are excluded from subsequent quantifications using the adult wage index.

20. Nobody under 19 at the time of interview was engaged, married or a parent.

21. What is known about respondents' educational backgrounds is sufficient cause for caution in assuming similarity on the basis of current occupational location. It should be noted that there is no straightforward patterning of life cycle event timing in relation to level of educational qualification amongst respondents.

22. Riley provides a slightly different description of the relationship between age related processes and social change (Riley, 1988). She distinguishes between ageing within cohorts and changes in society as cohorts move through historical time. Historical changes mean that cohorts age in different ways (eg. through increased longevity), and in turn these changes drive changes in the social structure (eg. as people press for re-evaluations of age related social roles). However, Riley maintains that a lack of synchrony between processes of ageing and social change results in a disruption, and 'structural strain', as age related roles and institutions outlive their original (positive) functions. Like the conflict theorists, Riley stresses inherent tendencies to disintegration within the social system. The third element in her argument, of asynchrony, appears to contradict her notion of a dialectical interplay between age related processes and social change.

23. Two separate poverty lines were used in the U.S. for those aged 65 and over and those under 65. The 1984 poverty line for the latter group was 8.5% higher than that used for the elderly. If the same poverty cut off had been used for both groups, 15.4% of the elderly would have fallen below the line, giving the aged a higher poverty rate than any other group except children (Minkler, 1986).

24. The summary measure hides sources of variation. Rainwater notes that around one quarter of their sample families have non-head earners, and in Britain such earners contribute 28% of their family's income. The analysis is based on 1973 data and subsequent changes in structures of household income maintenance, as described in Chapter 5, suggest that reliance on husbands'

earnings may have declined, particularly at some periods of a households' lifetime. Such reliance, however, remains particularly high where the arrival of children is accompanied by loss of female earnings.

25. The term 'parents' refers to the older generation, of parents to the young adults interviewed, unless otherwise indicated.

26. The ideas informing the questions on claims to work by individuals in different household circumstances were adapted from the Cambridge questionnaire (see note 18).

27. Two respondents in the main survey made a joint first ranking which are included, so the first column sums to 94, not 92.

28. The definition of young adults as dependent includes those who are living with their parents *and* those who are independent, but single. The description of young adults as married refers to those who have left their parental home *and* are living with a partner.

29. This compares with the evidence described in Chapter 6 where earnings levels manifest a stronger relation to patterns of family formation amongst men than amongst women, and is explained by the higher financial contribution of male earnings to household resourcing.

30. The denominator in these figures is the total number of respondents who agreed or disagreed. Those who said they neither agreed nor disagreed, or who responded 'don't know', are excluded here. These latter two options were grouped together in the questionnaire, although it would be better to provide for these responses separately, given their differing meanings.

31. A similar process appears to characterise recent discussions of an underclass in Britain (eg. Runciman, 1990). The problems of understanding the experience of the unemployed through conventional class theory leads not to a challenge to the latter but rather defining those outside as beyond the proper remit of class theory, literally under-class.

Appendix 1

Note that the page numbers in the appendices are as they appeared in the questionnaires.



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YOUTH AND ADULTHOOD: A SURVEY OF YOUNG ADULTS
IN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Emphasise:

I am an independent researcher from Edinburgh University.
All information will be treated confidentially and that
respondents identities will be kept anonymous.

SECTION 1.

1. What is your current job/training scheme title?

2. Please describe the work that you do.

I'd like to ask you now about educational qualifications. Could you tell me first:

3. When did you leave school? (month and year).

4. What qualifications did you get at school?

no qualification	
SCOTVEC National certificate (modules)...	
SCOTVEC/SCOTBEC certificate, SNC, ONC or equivalent.....	
SCE O grades or GCE O levels.....	
CSEs.....	
SCE Highers.....	
Certificate of 6th year studies (CSYS)...	
GCE A levels	

5. Have you ever started any courses after leaving school?

6. Please describe these.

7. Have you obtained any qualifications since leaving school?

City and Guilds
YTS certificate
Scotvec modules
other qualifications (describe)

8. What is your date of birth?

SECTION 2.

I am interested in your experience of work and training from when you left school to the present. You said you left school in .., can you tell me what training schemes and jobs you have done since then, and the pay that you received in each one? Say if there were any periods when you were unemployed. I would also like you to tell me the dates that you were doing each of these things. So, starting with when you left school, when did you start your first training scheme, job or apprenticeship? (establish if unemployed before that)

(TABULATE ON SEPARATE SHEET)

then

9. Do you work any overtime? How much? Why?

10. Do you get any company perks? (describe)

11. Do you do any other paid work?

Now I would like you to think over the period since you left school again, and tell me about your household circumstances during this time, and if and how they have changed. I want you to tell me about whether you have ever moved where you live, if you are engaged or in a steady relationship, or if you have ever married or had a child.

Starting off with when you left school:
where were you living then?

(if not with parents establish background and situation)

Who else was living in the house at the time?

Did your parents own the house or rent it ?

IF RENTED Did they rent it from the council or was it private rented?

Have you ever left your parents home?

TRACE THROUGH IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER,
CLARIFY DATES,
ESTABLISH WHO LIVING WITH AND HOUSING TYPE.
(TABULATE ON SHEET)

IF IN FIRST JOB OR TRAINING SCHEME CONTINUE, IF NOT GO TO 13.

12. How did you hear about your present training scheme/job?

careers office _____
school careers officer _____
advertisement _____
applied direct _____
job centre _____
told about it by relative or friend _____

13. Why did you decide to do this particular scheme/job? / work in(sector)?

14. Did you have any alternatives?
(Please describe these)

I would like you to think back to when you started on YTS/ your first job after leaving school. (IF YTS + JOB ASK ABOUT BOTH, IN SEQUENCE).

15. Did you feel any different about yourself after you started your first scheme/job? (Both if relevant)
In what ways?

16. Did you feel that people treated you any differently since you started your scheme/ apprenticeship /working? (eg. parents, friends, adults in general). (scheme + work if relevant).

Did your social life or your personal circumstances change in any way after you started your scheme/apprenticeship/ 1st full time job?

SECTION 2

IF STILL SINGLE/NOT LIVING WITH PARTNER/LIVING IN PARENTAL HOME
GO TO PART A

IF MARRIED/ LIVING WITH A PARTNER/DIVORCED GO TO PART B.

PART A

If living with parents

17. Do you pay any money for your food and keep?

18. How much do you pay?

Do you help out with other things at home, eg.(looking after anybody?)

continue

I would like now to talk about your ideas on marriage and having children.

19. Firstly, could you tell me if you think you will marry at some stage? (if no, ask why not)

20. How old do you think you will be when you do get married?

21. Why then?

(probe with: what sorts of things do you think are important in deciding when to get married?)

Now, thinking about children:

22. Could you tell me if you expect that you will have children at some stage? (if no, ask why not)

23. How old do you think you will be when your first child is born?

24. Why then?

(probe with: what sorts of things do you think are important in deciding when to have children?)

25. Are you currently engaged or going steady with someone?
(IF NO, GO TO PART C, IF ENGAGED CONTINUE)
26. Is your fiance working?
27. What does s/he do?
What are his/her earnings?
28. Do you think that your (joint) income has affected or will
affect your decision about when to marry?
-
-

GO TO PART C.

PART B IF MARRIED/LIVING WITH A PARTNER / DIVORCED

29. Why did you marry/ move in together when you did?
-
-

30. Have you had any children? (How many?)

IF MARRIED AND CHILDLESS GO TO 40.

IF HAS A CHILD, CONTINUE:

31. Did you plan when to start having children?

IF YES, (IF NO GO TO 34):

32. Why did you have your first child when you did?
-
-

33. Would you say that you were financially prepared for having a
child at that point? (detail)

GO TO 35.

IF NO:

34. Did having a child then make thing difficult for you?

(if yes) In what ways?

(if no) Did you have to adapt your lifestyle in terms of
work, housing or organising your finances in any way?

35. How many children do you expect to have?

GO TO 44.

IF LIVING TOGETHER:

36. Do you have any plans to get married?

IF YES,

37. When do you think that will be?

38. Why then?
.....

IF NO

39. Why not?
.....

(CONTINUE)

40. Do you expect to have children at some stage?
(if no, ask why not)
.....

41. What age do you think you will be when have your first
child?

42. Why then?
.....
.....
.....

43. How many children do you expect to have?

44. Is your husband/wife/partner working?

IF YES:

45. What job does he/she do? (detail)

46. What is his/her pay?
(ask if its full or part time)

47. If he/she were not earning do you think you would look for
a different job?
Why?
.....
.....

Did your social life change in any way after you got
married/ moved in together?
.....
.....

PART C

Thinking now about your work and the future, could you tell me

48. What do you expect to be doing in 5 years time?

Establish expectations on

- i. work/position/ pay _____
- ii. household circumstances _____
- iii. partner to be working? _____
- iv. What do you expect your joint income to be? _____

49. How would you compare it with what you are doing now?
(probe: will this level of income allow you to do things you can't afford to now?)

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your family:

50. How old were your mother and father when they left school?

51. How old are they now?

52. Were they both working when they got married?
What were they doing? _____

53. What year did they get married?

54. Are they working now?
What are they doing? _____

55. Do you have any brothers or sisters? _____

56. How old are they?
single or married/age? _____

57. (When) Did your mother go to work after having children?
Did she work between children? What as? _____
Full or part time? _____

if she worked after children:

58. How old were you/your youngest brother/sister
when she started working again? _____

SECTION 3.

Now I would like us to think generally about employment.

43. Can you imagine there is a vacancy for a job and 6 people apply. Assuming that all are equally qualified, which of the people on these cards would you most like to see given the job? Who would you next most like to see? (can rank side by side)

- Young single man, living at home
- Young single man, living away from home
- Young single woman, living away from home
- Married man, young, with children, wife not working
- Married woman, no children at home, husband not working
- Woman with no husband, young children

I would like you to answer the following questions thinking about work in construction.

First I would like us to consider the ages of people doing jobs in construction. Some jobs are done by people of any age, some are usually done by younger people, some by older people and others by those in the middle of their working lives. I am going to name some jobs and ask you to say whether you think the job would be done by men of all ages or men in particular age groups (can be more than one group) (CARD)

Job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
all ages							
19 or under							
20 - 24							
25 - 29							
30 - 34							
35-44							
over 45							

Are there any jobs where a man doing the job would be more likely than usual to be single? Are there any where he would be more likely to be married? (say if equally likely)

Job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
single							
married							

Could you tell me how much you think an average person in each of these jobs earns? (CARD) (ask for pay/week if uncertain).

Job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Less than £ 4000							
£ 4000 - £ 5000							
£ 5000 - £ 6000							
£ 6000 - £ 7000							
£ 7000 - £ 8000							
£ 9000 - £ 11000							
£ 11000 - £ 13000							
Over £ 13000							

Thinking through these jobs again, could you consider whether there need to be such differences in earnings or, on the other hand whether they need to be greater in particular cases?

- a. Are there any jobs which you think could be paid more, assuming that others would then have to be paid less?
- b. Are there any that could be paid less?

Job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
More							
Less							

SECTION 4.

People tend to think of different things as being important in their decisions about when to get married, have children and so on. Here are some cards - which of these things would you say is the most important to achieve before getting married? Which is the next most important? (Rank all)

- Having a secure job.
- Having a place of your own to share with your spouse.
- Your partner having a secure job.
- Having some savings put aside.
- Having good career prospects.
- Your partner having good career prospects.
- Being able to afford home ownership.

MARRIAGE	CHILDREN

Thinking through these again, which would you say is the most important to achieve before having children? Which is the next most important? (rank all)

I would like you now to think of four friends. I will ask you some questions about them - what they are doing, how old they are, what their living circumstances are and so on. So, thinking of the first one,

Are they male or female? _____

How old is s/he? _____

What does s/he do? _____

Who does/he live with? _____

As relevant:

How old was s/he when s/he

- i. left school? _____
- ii. got a place of his/her own? _____
- iii. got married? _____
- iv. had his/her first child? _____

SECTION 5.

I am now going to read out some dilemmas that people might find themselves in, and ask you to say what you think they should do under the circumstances.

Iain and Lynn intend to get married. They don't have a place of their own to move into yet though. What should they do?

- A. Marry and stay with Lynn's parents until they can get a place of their own?
- B. Delay getting married until they can get a place of their own?
- C. Do something else. (what?)

Why?

John and Maggie are a young married couple, and are both working. Maggie is offered another job which pays less than the one she has now, but it has better prospects. However, they hope to have children over the next few years. What should she do?

- A. Should she take the new job and quit when she gets pregnant
- B. Stay in the old job
- C. Take advantage of the potential career prospects and delay having children.
- D. Do something else. (what?)

Why?

Duncan and Sue have two children aged 1 and 3. They do not intend to have any more. Duncan is working, and Sue is offered her old job back, which she can take on a full or part time basis. Her mother has offered to look after the children while Sue is at work. Should Sue:

- A. Go back to work full time?
- B. Go back to work part time?
- C. Stay home and look after the children full time?
- D. Do something else? (what?)

Why?

Sue actually decides to go back to work part time. Things work out well for a year and Sue's boss has told her that if she was available to work full time she can expect good career prospects. Then Duncan loses his job. Sue's mother has become ill and cannot look after the children now. What should they do:
Should

- E. Sue give up her job and look after the children so that Duncan is free to look for work?
- F. Sue work full time, and Duncan look after the children?
- G. Do something else. (what?)

Why?

Jean is 19, unemployed and pregnant. She intends to keep the child. She is not seeing the father of her child and she lives with her mother, two sisters and a brother in law. If she stays at home her mother can help with the baby. However, she will get a council house now if she applies for one, but it will be in another part of town.

Should she:

- A. Get a council house and have a place of her own in which to bring up her baby, by herself?
- B. Stay at home and have her mother help with the baby?
- C. Do something else? (what?)

Why?

SECTION 6

I should now like to ask your opinions on a number of things about young adults, employment and so on. I shall give you a list of statements that people often make and I should like you to say whether you agree or disagree with them. I have tried to make the statements representative of a wide range of views so you should find some that you agree with and some that you don't. Please remember I am interested in your own personal view. Take your time in answering if you want to.
(give list)

Parents name/address/'phone number.

SECTION 6.

STRONGLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE / DON'T KNOW

AGREE

STRONGLY AGREE

Young people should not expect to leave home until they have been working for a few years.

Young people entering their first job should not expect to be able to save money.

People on YTS should get more money than they do.

Earning a wage makes a young person independent.

You're not really an adult until you have left home.

A single woman can get ahead in work in the same way that a man can.

People who are working are more mature than those who are not.

Teenagers these days need to think about the future more than they used to.

By the time you are 19 you should be able to support yourself financially.

Working wives help to raise family living standards.

Everyone doing the same job should be paid the same regardless of their age.

A woman cannot expect to raise a family and get ahead in work.

Young people should be content to stay with their parents until they are earning enough to support themselves financially.

Everyone doing the same job should be paid the same regardless of their sex.

A husband and wife both need to work in order to keep up with the cost of living.

	STRENGTHLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL AGREE / DON'T KNOW	AGREE	STRENGTHLY AGREE
Work skills that are in demand now need longer periods of training than they used to.					
A mother of young children should work if the family needs the money.					
There should be more provision for childcare so that a woman with young children can work.					
Everyone needs to work these days: being a wife and mother is by itself not satisfying enough.					
It should be easier than it is for young people to get their own place and live independently.					
A husband works to support his family and a wife works for the extras.					
A woman should not expect to work while she is bringing up children.					
There should be provision for temporary from work so young fathers can share in looking after their baby.					
If a woman can earn more than her husband then he should stay at home and look after their young children.					

WIFE LIVING WITH
HUSBAND
FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES
MARRIAGE
CHILDREN

CHILD DATES

PAY

WORK, TRAINING ETC

Appendix 2

The first questionnaire schedule included in this appendix is the one used in face to face interviews with parents. The second schedule comprises the postal questionnaire.



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YOUTH AND ADULTHOOD: A SURVEY OF PARENTS

Emphasise:

I am an independent researcher from Edinburgh University.

All information will be treated confidentially and respondents identities will be kept anonymous.

As you know I interviewed, and we discussed his/her experience of work since leaving school and his/her thoughts about being a young adult in the '80s, and attitudes towards work, and towards leaving home, starting a family and so on. I would like to talk to you about your own experience of being a young adult and the sorts of decisions you made at the time, as well as your ideas about work and family now.

SECTION 1.

Could you tell me:

1. Are you currently working? _____

2. What (work) do you do?

I would like you to think back now to your own experience of youth and early adulthood, what work you did at the time, when you left home, when you got married and so on. Lets start at the point at which you left school:

3. How old were you when you left school? _____

4. What year was that in? _____

5. What is your date of birth? _____

6. Did you have any qualifications when you left school? _____

If yes: what qualifications did you get?

7. Did you study at all after you left school - either in full time education or while you were working?

8. Did you get any qualifications after you left school?

9. What was your first job after leaving school (/college etc)?
(establish employment status, eg. if apprentice)

10. When did you start that? _____

11. How much did you earn when you started? _____
(ie. what was your first wage?)

12. Who were you living with at the time?
(if not with parents establish background and situation)

13. When did you leave your parents home? _____

14. Why did you leave when you did?

15. What type of housing did your parents live in? _____
council rented
private rented
owner occupied
other

16. Whereabouts was this? (which town?) _____

17. What type of housing did you move into? _____
council rented
private rented
owner occupied
other

18. Whereabouts was this? (which town?) _____

19. Were you still working as at this time? _____

IF YES, Had you changed your job or grade within this employment? (Please describe any changes made).

IF NO What were you doing? _____

Did you do any other types of work up to this point?

20. What were you earning at this point? _____

21. When did you get married? _____

Was this to your current partner? _____

22. What was your work at this time? _____
 IF DIFFERENT: trace through changes up to this point.

23. How much were you earning when you got married? _____
24. Was your husband/wife working at the time? _____
25. What work was s/he doing? _____
26. How much was s/he earning when you got married? _____
27. Did you have any savings put aside when you got married?

28. Did you get any significant loans or gifts of money from family to help you get started in married life?

29. Where were you living when you got married?
 (clarify any moves, and housing circumstance when married)
 self: _____
 partner: _____
30. Did your considerations for getting a place of your own to live affect when you married in any way?

31. Did you both continue to work after your marriage? _____
 (IF NO Why not?) _____
32. Were you both working full time? _____
 (IF NO Why not?) _____
33. When did you have your first child? _____
- If mother (you/your wife) was working:
34. At what point did you (she) give up working? _____
35. What was your/your husband's work at this point?
 (check if had changed grade) _____
36. What was he/were you earning when your first child was born?

37. How many children did you have altogether? _____

38. In what years were they born? _____

39. Did you/your wife do any paid work between having children? _____
What did you /she do? _____

Why did you /she (not) work? _____

(probe : would you have worked if you didn't need the money?)

40. (When) did you/your wife work after you finished having children? _____

IF DID NOT WORK: Why not? _____

IF DID WORK: When did you (she) start work again? _____

What work did you (she) do? _____

Was this full or part time? _____

IF PART TIME Did you (she) go back to full time work at any point? _____

Was this with the same job? _____

41. Was it an option, whether or not you (she) went back to work? _____

42. Why did you (she) go back to work when you /she did?
(Probe) _____

43. What job changes, if any, have you made since then?
(Dates/year)

44. What job changes, if any, has your husband/wife made since then? (Dates/year)

45. What are you earning at the moment? _____

46. What is your husband/wife earning at the moment? _____

47. Have you ever changed the type of housing ^{tenure} that you live in, since getting married? (Explain)

48. Did you move house at all before or when you were having children? (Explain)

49. Have you /your partner ever been unemployed? _____
IF YES establish when, and for what periods.

50. Have there been any other significant changes in household/family circumstance since having children?

Confirm where children are / Age at leaving

inc. _____
divorce; _____
new household; _____

changes in people _____
living in household, _____
children leaving, _____
relatives etc. moving in; _____

SECTION B.

ON SPOUSE:

51. What is you husband's/wife's date of birth? _____

52. How many brothers and sisters does s/he have? _____

53. How old are his/her parents? _____

If dead: when did they die? _____

how old were they when they died? _____

ON SELF:

54. How old are your own parents? _____

If dead: when did they die? _____

how old were they when they died? _____

55. Do you have any brothers or sisters? _____

For each of them, I would like you to tell me whether they are married or single, whether they have children, and what ages they were when they did these things.

Brother or sister?				
Married or single?				
Age at marriage?				
Age at which children were born?				

I would like you to think back now to when you had your first child. You said you had your first child in 19xx.

56. Did you make a conscious decision to have him/her when you did?

IF NO CONTINUE, IF YES GO TO 58.

57. Did having a child then make things difficult for you? _____

IF YES: In what ways? _____

IF NO: Did you have to adapt your lifestyle in terms of work, housing or organising your finances in any way? (probe: eg. husband more overtime? any less able to afford things?) _____

GO TO 61.

58. What sorts of things were important in this decision?

59. Would you say that you were financially prepared for having a child at that point?

60. Did you have to adapt your lifestyle in terms of work, housing or organising your finances in any way? (or other) (probe - eg. husband more overtime? any less able to afford things? etc).

61. Did you make plans early on over how many children to have? _____

IF NO Why did you stop having children when you did?

IF YES Did you change these plans at all after you started a family, or did you have the number of children you hoped for?

IF changed plans, ask how and why.

62. Looking back now, do you feel you got married at the right time? (detail) IF NO: how would you change it?

63. Looking back now, do you feel that you had children at the right time? (detail) IF NO: how would you change it?

64. I would like you now to think of two or three friends (relatives of your own generation, or neighbours) and I am going to ask you some questions about them - about how old they were when they left school, married, had children and so on. So thinking of the first one..

Are they male or female?			
How old is s/he?			
What does s/he do?			
Who does s/he live with?			
How old was s/he when s/he			
i. left school			
x. started working			
ii. got a place of his/her own			
iii. got married			
iv. had his/her first child			
v. had other children			

SECTION C

I would like us to think now about young people today.

65. Thinking of your children and their generation, which of the following would you say is the most important to achieve before getting married? Which is the next most important? (rank all).

- The man having a secure job.
- The woman having a secure job.
- Having a place of their own to move into.
- Having some savings put aside.
- The woman having good career prospects.
- The man having good career prospects.
- Being able to afford home ownership.

MARRIAGE	CHILDREN

Do you think that any of these things have become any more important or less important since the time that you got married?

IF YES: which? _____

Why do you think that? _____

Thinking through these again, and thinking again of your children and their generation, which would you say is the most important to achieve before having children? Which is the next most important?.. (rank all).

Do you think that any of these things have become any more important or any less important since the time that you had children?

IF YES: which? _____

Why do you think that? _____

66. Thinking still of your children and their generation, and firstly thinking of young men, what would you think of as being a sensible age to do the following:

leave home?

get married?

have a first child?

Now thinking of young women, what do you see as a sensible age to

leave home?

get married?

have a first child?

67. Do you feel that the ages you have suggested are different to the ages at which you actually did these things? _____

IF YES: Why is that?

Do you feel that things are different for young people nowadays in deciding when to leave home than they were when you were young? _____

Why do you think that?

(probe - eg. compare with own experience)

Do you feel that things are different for young people nowadays in deciding when to get married and start a family than they were when you were young? _____

Why do you think that?

(probe - eg. compare with own experience)

SECTION D

The following questions ask you about the ways in which you and your children help each other out with costs of living and so on.

IF ANY CHILDREN AT HOME, COMPLETE SECTION D1.
IF ALL CHILDREN LEFT HOME, COMPLETE SECTION D2.
IF BOTH, COMPLETE BOTH SECTIONS.

SECTION D1

68. How many of your children are living with you? _____

69. Have any of these children left school? (How many?)

yes
how many?

no

IF NO: GO TO SECTION D2
IF YES: CONTINUE.

70. Do they (s/he) pay dig money? _____
Be explicit on zz. _____

71. How much do they (s/he) pay? _____

72. How did you decide on the amount(s)? _____

73. How far do you think this goes to the cost of their
his/her living here? _____

74. Have you changed the amount at all over the time since
they (s/he) left school? How? _____

75. Do they (s/he) help out with other things at home?
(say what) _____

76. Do you give or loan money to them (him/her) or help him/her
out, for example buying him/her clothes or anything?

77. Have you thought about when your children might leave home?

yes no

IF YES: At what point do you think that might be? _____

78. Do you think it will make any financial difference to you when they do leave home? _____
Detail _____
IF NO: why not? cf. 73. _____

IF HAS CHILDREN WHO HAVE LEFT HOME CONTINUE.
IF NOT, GO TO Q. 87.

SECTION D2

Thinking about your children who have left home:

79. Did they (s/he) pay dig money when they (s/he) were living at home?

yes no

80. How much was s/he paying before s/he left?
List individually, + age at leaving (be explicit on zz).

81. Did you change this amount over the period that they lived at home?

82. How did you decide on the amount?

83. How far do you think this went towards the cost of their his/her living here?

84. Did it make any financial differences to you when they (s/he) left home?

85. Do you get any contributions to the family from your children /zz now that they (s/he) has left home, eg. any help in paying for things, or helping out with family affairs?

86. Do you give any support to your children/zz now that they (s/he) has left home, again say in helping to pay for things, or helping out in any way?

87. Do you think it is easier or harder than it used to be for young people to leave home and set up on their own?

88. Do you think that this has or will affect you in any way?

yes no

IF YES:

How do you feel about it?

IF NO:

Why not?

SECTION E.

Now I would like us to think generally about employment.

89. Can you imagine there is a vacancy for a job and 6 people apply. Assuming that all are equally qualified, which of the people on this card would you most like to see given the job? Who would you next most like to see? (rank all).

- Young single man, living at home
- Young single man, living away from home
- Young single woman, living away from home
- Married man, young, with children, wife not working
- Married woman, no children at home, husband not working
- Woman with no husband, young children

I am now going to read out some dilemmas that people might find themselves in, and ask you to say what you think they should do under the circumstances.

Iain and Lynn intend to get married. They don't have a place of their own to move into yet though. What should they do?

- A. Marry and stay with Lynn's parents until they can get a place of their own?
- B. Delay getting married until they can get a place of their own?
- C. Do something else.

Why?

John and Maggie are a young married couple, and are both working. Maggie is offered another job which pays less than the one she has now, but it has better prospects. However, they hope to have children over the next few years. What should she do?

- A. Should she take the new job and quit when she gets pregnant
- B. Stay in the old job
- C. Take advantage of the potential career prospects and delay having children.
- D. Do something else.

Why?

Duncan and Sue have two children aged 1 and 3. They do not intend to have any more. Duncan is working, and Sue is offered her old job back, which she can take on a full or part time basis. Her mother has offered to look after the children while Sue is at work. Should Sue:

- A. Go back to work full time?
- B. Go back to work part time?
- C. Stay home and look after the children full time?
- D. Do something else?

Why?

Sue actually decides to go back to work part time. Things work out well for a year and Sue's boss has told her that if she was available to work full time she can expect good career prospects. Then Duncan loses his job. Sue's mother has become ill and cannot look after the children now. What should they do:
Should

- E. Sue give up her job and look after the children so that Duncan is free to look for work?
- F. Sue work full time, and Duncan look after the children?
- G. Do something else.

Why?

Jean is 19, unemployed and pregnant. She intends to keep the child. She is not seeing the father of her child and she lives with her mother, two sisters and a brother in law. If she stays at home her mother can help with the baby. However, she will get a council house now if she applies for one, but it will be in another part of town.

Should she:

- A. Get a council house and have a place of her own in which to bring up her baby, by herself?
- B. Stay at home and have her mother help with the baby?
- C. Do something else?

Why?

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE DISAGREE // DON'T	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Young people should not expect to leave home until they have been working for a few years.					
Young people entering their first job should not expect to be able to save money.					
People on YTS should get more money than they do.					
Earning a wage makes a young person independent.					
A young person is not really an adult until s/he has left home.					
A single woman can get ahead in work in the same way that a man can.					
People who are working are more mature than those who are not.					
Teenagers these days need to think about the future more than they used to.					
By the time people are 19 they should be able to support themselves financially.					
Working wives help to raise family living standards.					
Everyone doing the same job should be paid the same regardless of their age.					
A woman cannot expect to raise a family and get ahead in work.					
Young people should be content to stay with their parents until they are earning enough to support themselves financially.					
Everyone doing the same job should be paid the same regardless of their sex.					
A husband and wife both need to work in order to keep up with the cost of living.					

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

DISAGREE

NEITHER AGR
DISAGREE/DON'

AGREE

STRONGLY
AGREE

Work skills that are in demand now need longer periods of training than they used to.

A mother of young children should work if the family needs the money.

There should be more provision for childcare so that a woman with young children can work.

Everyone needs to work these days: being a wife and mother is by itself not satisfying enough.

It should be easier than it is for young people to get their own place and live independently.

A husband works to support his family and a wife works for the extras.

A woman should not expect to work while she is bringing up children.

There should be provision for temporary leave from work so young fathers can share in looking after their baby.

If a woman can earn more than her husband then he should stay at home and look after their young children.

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR HELP

The postal questionnaire



University of Edinburgh

Department of Sociology

18 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh EH8 9LN
Telephone 031-667 1011 ex. 6419
Telex: 727442 (UNIVED G)

2nd September

Dear

Youth and early adulthood: a comparative survey of young adults and their parents.

As you may know I interviewed _____ as part of my PhD research project at Edinburgh University. I have interviewed approximately 100 young adults who I contacted through employers. I have discussed with them their experience of work since leaving school and their thoughts about being a young adult in the 1980s, as well as their attitudes towards work, leaving home, starting a family and so on. A central part of my research is comparing the experience of young adults today with their parents' experiences of being young adults, that is, making a comparison between generations.

I am therefore sending you a questionnaire which asks you questions about your own experience of being a young adult and the sorts of decisions you made at the time, as well as your ideas about work and family now. I would be grateful if you would complete the questionnaire and return it to me. Your help will be of great value to the research and is very much appreciated.

The questionnaire is really not as long as it looks and does not take very long to complete. I hope that you find it interesting.

Please note that all information will be treated confidentially and identities kept anonymous. Please return the completed questionnaire to me in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Many thanks for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Irwin.



University of Edinburgh

Department of Sociology

18 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh EH8 9LN
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YOUTH AND ADULTHOOD: A SURVEY OF PARENTS

All information will be treated confidentially and respondents identities will be kept anonymous.

SECTION 1.

1. Are you currently working? _____

2. What do you do?

(say what work you do, or if you are not in paid employment please say what you do, eg. retired; doing unpaid work looking after home and family; unemployed)

The following questions ask you to think back to your experience of youth and early adulthood, what work you did at the time, when you left home, when you got married and so on.

3. What is your date of birth? _____

4. How old were you when you left school? _____

5. What year was that in? _____

6. Did you have any qualifications when you left school? _____

If yes: what qualifications did you have?

7. Did you study at all after you left school - either in full time education or while you were working? (please give details)

8. Did you get any qualifications after you left school? (please give details)

9. What was your first job after leaving school (/college etc)?

10. When did you start that? (Year and month) _____

11. How much did you earn when you started?

(please say whether this was before or after tax and the pay period, eg. per week/take home pay)

12. Who were you living with at the time?
(if not with parents please explain your situation)

13. When did you leave your parents home? (Year and month)

14. Why did you leave when you did?

15. What type of housing did your parents live in? council rented _____
private rented _____
owner occupied _____
other (please specify) _____

16. Whereabouts was this? (which town?) _____

17. What type of housing did you move into? council rented _____
private rented _____
owner occupied _____
other (please specify) _____

18. Whereabouts was this? (which town?) _____

19. Were you still working in the same job as you described in Question 9 at this time?

IF YES, Had you changed your job or grade within this employment? (please describe any changes made).

IF NO, What were you doing?
(please say when you changed jobs)

Did you do any other types of work up to this point?
(please describe any changes made)

20. What were you earning at this point? (ie. when you first got your own place to live).

21. When did you get married? (Year + month) _____
22. Was this to your current partner? _____
23. Were you still working in the same job as you described in Question 19 at this time?
(If not, please describe any changes made, and when you made them)
- _____
- _____
- _____
24. How much were you earning when you got married? _____
25. Was your husband/wife working at the time? _____
26. What work was s/he doing? _____
27. How much was s/he earning when you got married? _____
28. Where were you living immediately before you got married?
(eg: with parents; by self in private rented flat, etc.)
- self:
- partner:
- Where were you living immediately after you got married?
(eg: did you stay with in-laws, buy or rent your own place?)
29. Did you both continue to work after your marriage? _____
- IF NO: please say why not.
30. Were you both working full time? _____
- IF NO: please say why not.
31. When did you have your first child? (YEAR + MONTH) _____
- If mother (you/your wife) was working:
32. At what point did you (she) give up working?
33. What was your husband's (your own) work at this point? (when your 1st child was born).
- _____

34. How many children did you have altogether? _____

35. In what years were they born?

36. Did you/your wife do any paid work between having children?
IF YES: please give details of work.

IF NO: please say if you considered this as an option.

37. Did you/(your wife) work after you finished having children?

IF NO Why not? _____

IF YES: What work did you (she) do? _____

When did you (she) start work again? (year + month) _____

Why did you start again at that point in time?

Was this work full or part time? _____

What were the main reasons you decided to enter paid employment again?

IF FULL TIME GO TO QUESTION 38.
IF PART TIME, CONTINUE.

IF PART TIME Did you (she) go back to full time work at any point, or change the hours that you (she) worked?

yes no

IF YES, CONTINUE OVERLEAF.

IF NO: would you (she) work full time if the opportunity was there?

IF YES: When did you (she) change your (her) hours? _____

Was this with the same job? _____

Why did you (she) change the hours worked when you (she) did?

38. What job changes, if any, have you made since then?

39. What job changes, if any, has your husband/wife made since then?

40. What are you earning at the moment? _____

41. What is your husband/wife earning at the moment?
(please describe his/her job if different to above)

42. Have you /your partner ever been unemployed?
IF YES please say when, and for what periods.

43. Have there been any other significant changes in household/
family circumstance since having children?

(Please include whether you have ever been divorced and/or set up a different household; please say if the composition of your household has changed eg. if your children have left home, if anyone has moved in at all. Did you move house at all since you got married? (Say if you changed whether you owned or rented your home). Please indicate the dates (years) of any of these changes).

continue on back if necessary.

SECTION B.

44. Do you have any brothers or sisters? _____

If you do, please fill out the table below by saying whether you are talking about a brother or sister, whether they are married or single, whether they have children, and the ages at which they did these things. An example is given for you to follow.

Brother or sister?	brother					
Married or single?	married					
Age at marriage	24					
Age at which children were born	25					
	26					
	29					

Please think back now to when you had your first child.

45. Did you make a conscious decision to have him/her when you did?

yes no

IF NO CONTINUE, IF YES GO TO 47:

46. Did having a child then make things difficult for you?

IF YES: In what ways? _____

IF NO: Did you have to adapt your lifestyle in terms of work, housing or organising your finances in any way? (for example, did your husband(you) work overtime? were you any less able to afford things?)

GO TO 50

47. What sorts of things were important in this decision?

48. Would you say that you were financially prepared for having a child at that point?

49. Did you have to adapt your lifestyle in terms of work, housing or organising your finances in any way?
(for example, did your husband (you) work overtime? were you any less able to afford things?)

50. Did you make plans early on over how many children to have?

yes no

IF NO Why did you stop having children when you did?

IF YES Did you change these plans at all after you started a family, or did you have the number of children you hoped for?

IF you changed your plans, please say how and explain why.

51. Looking back now, do you feel you got married at the right time?

yes no

IF NO: how would you change it, and why?

IF YES: please comment on this.

52. Looking back now, do you feel that you had children at the right time?

yes no

IF NO: how would you change it, and why?

IF YES: please comment on this.

53. I would like you now to think of 2 or 3 friends (or relatives of your own generation, or neighbours) and fill out the following table, saying what their ages were when they did various things. An example is given. (Please try to fill out every row, but if you cannot, just fill out as much as you can.)

Male or female?	female		
How old is s/he?	55		
What does s/he do?	school cook		
Who does s/he live with?	husband		
How old was s/he when s/he			
i. left school	14		
x. started working	14		
ii. got a place of his/her own	22		
iii. got married	23		
iv. had his/her first child	25		
v. had other children	26 + 28		

SECTION C

People sometimes say that a lot of things have changed relative to how they were and that young people today face a very different world to that experienced by previous generations. The following questions ask you to consider similarities and differences between being a young adult today and being a young adult yourself.

54. Thinking of your children and their generation, which of the following would you say is the most important to achieve before getting married? Which is the next most important? Indicate in the boxes where you would rank each of them, 1st, 2nd and so on.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ..The man having a secure job. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ..Having a place of their own to move into. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ..The woman having a secure job. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ..Having some savings put aside. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ..The man having good career prospects. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ..The woman having good career prospects. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ..Being able to afford home ownership. |

Do you think that any of these things have become any more important or less important since the time that you got married?

yes no

IF YES: which?
(please explain why
you think that).

IF NO: please comment

55. Thinking through these again, and thinking again of your children and their generation, which of the following would you say is the most important to achieve before having children? Which is the next most important? Indicate in the boxes where you would rank each of them, 1st, 2nd and so on.

- The man having a secure job.
- Having a place of their own to move into.
- The woman having a secure job.
- Having some savings put aside.
- The man having good career prospects.
- The woman having good career prospects.
- Being able to afford home ownership.

Do you think any of these things have become any more important or any less important since the time that you had children?

yes no

IF YES: which?

(please explain why you think that)

IF NO: please comment.

56. Thinking still of your children and their generation, and firstly thinking of young men, what would you think of as being a desirable age to do the following:

- leave home?
- get married?
- have a first child?

Now thinking of young women, what do you see as a desirable age to

leave home? _____
get married? _____
have a first child? _____

57. Do you feel that the ages you have suggested are different to the ages at which you actually did these things?

yes no

Please comment on this.

Are there any other things that you have not mentioned that you feel are different for young people nowadays in deciding when to leave home than they were when you were young?

Please say what, if anything, and comment on this.

Are there any things that you feel are different for young people nowadays in deciding when to get married and start a family than they were when you were young?

Please say what, if anything, and comment on this.

SECTION D

The following questions ask you about the ways in which you and your children help each other out with costs of living and so on.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CHILDREN STILL LIVING AT HOME PLEASE COMPLETE SECTION D1. IF ALL YOUR CHILDREN HAVE LEFT HOME PLEASE IGNORE SECTION D1 AND COMPLETE SECTION D2. IF YOU HAVE A CHILD (CHILDREN) STILL AT HOME AND ONE OR MORE WHO HAS LEFT PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH SECTIONS.

SECTION D1

58. How many of your children are living with you? _____

59. Have any of these children left school? (how many?)

yes no
how many?

IF NO: GO TO SECTION D2
IF YES: CONTINUE.

60. Do they (s/he) pay dig money? _____

61. How much do they (s/he) pay? _____ per week or month?

62. How did you decide on the amount(s)? _____

63. How far do you think this goes to the cost of their (his/her) living here? _____

64. Have you changed the amount at all over the time since they (s/he) left school? How? _____

65. Do they (s/he) help out with other things at home? (please say what) _____

66. Do you give or loan money to them (him/her) or help out, for example buying him/her clothes or anything? _____

67. Have you thought about when your children might leave home?

yes no

IF YES: At what point do you think that might be?

68. Do you think it will make any financial difference to you when they (s/he) leave home?

IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN WHO HAVE LEFT HOME PLEASE COMPLETE SECTION D2. IF NOT, PLEASE GO TO SECTION E.

SECTION D2

Thinking about your child(ren) who have left home

69. Did they (s/he) pay dig money when they (s/he) were living at home?

yes no

70. How much were they (s/he) paying before they (s/he) left?

71. Did you change this amount over the period that they (s/he) were living at home?

72. How did you decide on the amount?

73. How far do you think this went towards the cost of their (his/her) living here?

74. Did it make any financial differences to you when they (s/he) left home? (please explain)

75. Do you get any contributions to the family from your children now that they (s/he) has left home, eg. any help in paying for things, or helping out with family affairs? (please explain).

76. Do you give any support to your child(ren) now that they (s/he) have left home, again say in helping to pay for things, or helping out in any way?

77. Do you think it is easier or harder than it used to be for young people to leave home and set up on their own?

78. Do you think that this has or will affect you in any way?

yes no

IF YES:

How do you feel about it?

IF NO:

Why not?

SECTION E.

The following question asks you to think generally about employment.

79. Can you imagine there is a vacancy for a job and 6 people apply. Assuming that all are equally qualified, which of the people listed below would you most like to see given the job? Who would you next most like to see given the job? Please indicate in the boxes where you would rank each individual, 1st, 2nd and so on.

- Young single man, living at home
- Young single man, living away from home
- Young single woman, living away from home
- Married man, young, with children, wife not working
- Married woman, no children at home, husband not working
- Woman with no husband, young children

The following situations are of dilemmas that people might find themselves in. I would like you to say what you think they should do under the circumstances. Please tick what you think is the best solution for them.

- i.)
- Iain and Lynn intend to get married. They don't have a place of their own to move into yet though. What should they do?
- A. Marry and stay with Lynn's parents until they can get a place of their own?
 - B. Delay getting married until they can get a place of their own?
 - C. Do something else. (say what)

ii.)

John and Maggie are a young married couple, and are both working. Maggie is offered another job which pays less than the one she has now, but it has better prospects. However, they hope to have children over the next few years. What should she do?

- A. Take the new job and quit when she gets pregnant
- B. Stay in the old job
- C. Take advantage of the potential career prospects and delay having children.
- D. Do something else. (say what)

iii.)

Duncan and Sue have two children aged 1 and 3. They do not intend to have any more. Duncan is working, and Sue is offered her old job back, which she can take on a full or part time basis. Her mother has offered to look after the children while Sue is at work. Should Sue:

- A. Go back to work full time?
- B. Go back to work part time?
- C. Stay home and look after the children full time?
- D. Do something else? (say what)

Sue actually decides to go back to work part time. Things work out well for a year and Sue's boss has told her that if she was available to work full time she can expect good career prospects. Then Duncan loses his job. Sue's mother has become ill and cannot look after the children now. What should they do:
Should

- A. Sue give up her job and look after the children so that Duncan is free to look for work?
- B. Sue work full time, and Duncan look after the children?
- C. Do something else. (say what)

iv.)

Jean is 19, unemployed and pregnant. She intends to keep the child. She is not seeing the father of her child and she lives with her mother, two sisters and a brother in law. If she stays at home her mother can help with the baby. However, she will get a council house now if she applies for one, but it will be in another part of town.

Should she:

- A. Get a council house and have a place of her own in which to bring up her baby, by herself?
- B. Stay at home and have her mother help with the baby?
- C. Do something else? (say what)

Over the page are a list of statements that people often make and I would like you think whether you agree or disagree with them, and tick the appropriate boxes. I have tried to make the statements representative of a wide range of views so you should find some that you agree with and some that you disagree with. Please remember I am interested in your own personal view.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE // DON'T KNOW	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Young people should not expect to leave home until they have been working for a few years.					
Young people entering their first job should not expect to be able to save money.					
People on YTS should get more money than they do.					
Earning a wage makes a young person independent.					
A young person is not really an adult until s/he has left home.					
A single woman can get ahead in work in the same way that a man can.					
People who are working are more mature than those who are not.					
Teenagers these days need to think about the future more than they used to.					
By the time people are 19 they should be able to support themselves financially.					
Working wives help to raise family living standards.					
Everyone doing the same job should be paid the same regardless of their age.					
A woman cannot expect to raise a family and get ahead in work.					
Young people should be content to stay with their parents until they are earning enough to support themselves financially.					
Everyone doing the same job should be paid the same regardless of their sex.					
A husband and wife both need to work in order to keep up with the cost of living.					

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE N DISAGREE / DONT KNOW	AGREE	STRONGLY
Work skills that are in demand now need longer periods of training than they used to.					
A mother of young children should work if the family needs the money.					
There should be more provision for childcare so that a woman with young children can work.					
Everyone needs to work these days: being a wife and mother is by itself not satisfying enough.					
It should be easier than it is for young people to get their own place and live independently.					
A husband works to support his family and a wife works for the extras.					
A woman should not expect to work while she is bringing up children.					
There should be provision for temporary leave from work so young fathers can share in looking after their baby.					
If a woman can earn more than her husband then he should stay at home and look after their young children.					

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