

Transitions to Work

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career or job-related skills, but in more basic "life-skills" which often are crucial in determining the eventual outcome of the more traditional educational objectives.

The final two papers examine two fundamental issues. First, Benjamin Levin evaluates the role of schools in the preparation for work. A prevailing sentiment is that education ought to have a greater role in the preparation for work, but is failing to discharge these obligations. Levin questions first, whether the education system can ever be expected to have the role currently envisioned by many (especially in the business community) and secondly, whether it even ought to fulfill work oriented objectives.

The final paper by Wayne Simpson, evaluates the role of government training programs in reducing unem-

ployment. His conclusion is pessimistic. "Supply-side" policies, that is improving the quality of labour through training, is not likely to make much of a difference without commensurate demand stimulus and investment to create new jobs which will employ people.

Many specific insights emerge from the research reported in the Monograph, but the reader seeking a simple solution will be disappointed. The consensus of the literature and current research is simply that the problems inherent in the transition to work are complex and require a complex series of solutions. It is tempting when faced with such a perspective to opt for a simple solution and withdraw. The invisible hand of the market will resolve the problems, but few will be satisfied with the solution.

Transitions to Work: A Study in Education and Labour Interaction — Review of the Literature

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

All available economic and demographic projections point to a continuing unemployment problem, especially among the young, women, natives and others, and this is unlikely to be resolved within the next decade. Indeed, some predict that current levels of joblessness could persist to the end of the century without remedial action. Clearly, this is politically and socially intolerable.

The basic perspective of this review is that the education/training system and the labour market are inextricably intertwined. Furthermore, with technical change and foreign competition, this relationship will likely grow over the next several decades.

Provincial and federal governments spend many hundreds of millions of dollars to train and educate workers for productive lives in the labour force. Despite these considerable expenditures, very little is known in Canada about their benefits, how effective these programs are in terms of placing students in full-time positions, the typical student's progress through the education and training system,

and other outcomes which are believed to be the main objectives of government policy in this area. It appears that the dominant view is to support these efforts, which range from standard secondary and post-secondary schooling to apprenticeships and assistance for special-needs groups, in the face of what is widely believed to be an enduring high level of unemployment.

It is natural to begin the investigation with the transition from the secondary school system to work, but this is too limited a view. Increasing numbers of people are participating in training after having worked for a period of time. Adult education, career change, training in response to technical change, and on-the-job training are all examples of how the labour market and education system have become symbiotic. The essential perspective of this review is that, along with family, the education system and the work place are the core of the social environment for most people. Further, the education system and labour market are no longer sequential steps, but increasingly are becoming parallel systems. Individuals can expect to interact with both through the course of their working lives. In

this sense, the title "Transitions to Work" is a bit of a misnomer, but is retained to relate this research to an historic literature.

The basic question must centre on whether the existing portfolio of interventions (education and labour market) is effective (i.e., is the money being well spent?) and then turn to consideration of how these initiatives may be refined and redefined to meet evolving needs of current and future workers. Without such a perspective, neither those whose counsel is to promote efficiency, nor those whose concern is upon the effectiveness of these interventions, can view the current situation with any comfort.

2.2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are some major elements to the research program that have a long history in social science research. The review below summarizes existing work in the areas of youth employment/unemployment, occupational choice, and school-to-work transitions.

2.2.1 Youth Employment/Unemployment

North America has had a disproportionately high number of young people (15 to 24 years old) unemployed during the post-war period[1]. Recently, other areas noted for their ability to fully employ their populations such as Sweden[2] and Germany have experienced increased levels of youth unemployment. The most common reason advanced for this phenomenon is that the baby boom has dramatically increased the supply of young workers. Certainly this is true for North America; however, in Italy and Great Britain, the young have been

comprising a smaller proportion of the total labour force since 1970, yet youth unemployment continues to increase.

Currently in Canada, youth unemployment ranges in the 19 to 23 percent area, and has trended upward during the past five years. Some central questions occupy researchers in this field:

- a. To what extent does the currently high level of youth unemployment reflect a long-run trend away from agriculture to manufacturing or service sector industries?
- b. Is the currently high level of youth unemployment solely due to the recent severe recession, or are unemployment rates even higher than that which would be expected in the absence of economic downturns?
- c. Has there been a structural shift in the demand and supply of young workers?
- d. To what extent have institutional factors such as the minimum wage and increased security for older workers (produced by collective agreements) exacerbated the youth unemployment problems?
- e. Is the problem different for men and women?
- f. To what extent are youth being affected by increased skill levels ostensibly demanded by higher technologies?
- g. Has the demise of small, family-controlled businesses circumscribed employment opportunities for young people?
- h. To what extent has the educational system failed to prepare youth for labour markets and stable job holding?

With respect to Canada, a recent study[3] sheds some important perspectives on selected questions. Denton points out that youth unemployment must be viewed in relation

to unemployment as a whole, but nonetheless for females between 15 and 24 and males in the same age group, about 2/3 and 1/4 respectively of the unemployment rates can be attributed to structural change, and not cyclical behaviour of the economy.

Furthermore, there appears to have been a consistent decline in the participation rates for young men since 1953, a decline which does not vanish when corrections for population proportions are included. Young women have increased their participation. It is uncertain whether this reflects changes in behaviour (it most likely does for women) or changes in the demand for manufacturing and construction workers (as it most likely does for young men).

Denton *et al.* argue that the real problem is not the high number of youth who are presently unemployed, but "a major focus of policy debate and the associated research effort should be the consequences of lower (labour) force growth rates for the 1980s and beyond and the appropriate response of public policy to these lower rates." [4]

Viewed from the vantage of 1980, when the youth unemployment problem had not become a major social and political issue, the attention to possible future low growth rates in the labour force may have seemed appropriate. In the context of 1984, it seems uncertain that policy can shift to this longer-run perspective immediately. Of course, Denton *et al.* assuredly do not wish to downplay the seriousness of the current situation.

To consider some of the possible reasons for youth unemployment, it is useful to begin with some institutional factors, since these may be open to policy initiative in the short-run.

a. Minimum Wage: The possibility that the minimum wage may induce higher rates of unemployment for youth (and other low-skilled workers) has great face validity. It is commonly argued that the minimum wage increases labour costs, and rational employers substitute other inputs for the now more expensive workers. A number of attempts to estimate the effect of minimum wages on young workers[5] tend to show that for a 10 percent increase in the minimum wage, employment among young people falls anywhere from .5 to 3 percent. Empirical estimation of this phenomenon has proved elusive, since the data must include both the covered and uncovered sectors. For example, in many jurisdictions, part-time work is not covered by the minimum wage. Also, this legislation is typically provincial in responsibility, creating significant regional variations. Finally, changes in legislation are often not significantly reflected in time series data.

A recent study on U.S. data[6] systematically estimates a number of functional forms and concludes that the minimum wage accounts for only a small proportion of current unemployment among youth, although the effect certainly does exist. Most importantly, it is unlikely that a simple adjustment to the present coverage of minimum wage laws (such as removing young people from the scope of the legislation) would enhance their employability without creating serious administrative costs.

b. Collective Agreements: There appears to have been little systematic work in estimating the effect of the increased security provisions won by workers on the

employment prospects of young people. Certainly the hypothesis that enhanced security of workers (such as protection from dismissal, grievance procedures) would encourage employers to discriminate against younger workers seems reasonable. It is likely that any effect is modest, however.

- c. Unemployment Insurance: If the cost of leisure (not working) goes down, then neoclassical economic theory predicts that people will consume more of it. Unemployment insurance has been identified as a possible factor in the changed labour market participation of young men. One explanation is that UIC payments lower the cost of searching for a job, and therefore people will tend to undertake more search (become choosier) prior to accepting employment. Also, if the cost of leaving a job is reduced, then it is likely that periods of "paid" idleness will increase in step with the payments and eligibility.

In general, the effect of UI payments on labour supply has been controversial. In Canada, the best known study is by Grubel, Maki and Sax (1975); however, in the light of criticism and subsequent revision[7], it appears that over the period when such estimations were attempted (concentrating on the major change in UIC rules in 1971) no convincing evidence can be marshalled for the proposition in general. However, this refers essentially to labour supply as a whole and not to youth labour in particular. Thus far there appears to have been no attempt to estimate the effect of UIC legislation on young people.

In general, it appears that institutional factors play only a modest role in explaining the persistently high levels of youth unemployment. The search of potential causes must shift to more basic economic and social factors.

Two basic economic perspectives are available for the analysis of youth employment and unemployment. The first draws from the human capital literature, and pursues questions such as the impact of education and training upon the demand and supply of young workers. The school system is seen as a sorting mechanism, allocating workers to careers on the basis of both intrinsic merit as well as training acquired by the student. Derivative from the allocative function of the schools has been the increasing skill level demanded by many jobs and potential technological displacement of young people from the work force.

In addition to the allocative role performed by schools (and employment counsellors), human capital theory also provides important perspectives on career selection, a theme which is discussed in greater detail below.

The second major economic theory of youth labour markets derives from a dualistic perspective in which there are primary and secondary labour markets. This view usually confines itself to the discussion of two and at times three labour market segments. The primary labour market is the professional and trade strata, dependent upon specified qualifications, and offering the worker stable employment with reasonable expectations of security and career progress. The secondary labour market is characterized by low skill levels and a high degree of uncertainty. This market offers employers a flexible format for hiring and discharging labour in response to transitory business conditions.

A variant of the dual labour market is the theory of segmented labour markets, in which there are not merely two strata, but many, classified as to skill requirements and also differentiated along racial and gender lines. There is potentially a continuum in labour market theory, ranging from the human capital theory, offering a perspective of a homogeneous labour service, and with the amount of labour service embodied by any worker primarily a function of education, to a highly segmented labour market in which a variety of institutional barriers act to confine workers to certain jobs on the basis of race, gender, and age.

There have been attempts to test hypotheses relating to segmented and dual labour markets and how they pertain to youth. For example, Hutchinson, Barr and Drobny (1984) report on estimates using British data during the period 1952 to 1972. According to their results, during the '50s and '60s "young males seem to have been a complementary input to adult males, and a substitute for female labour." As they note, this does support the segmented labour market theory, but to the extent that human capital is correlated with identifiable attributes (gender and age), these results may also support human capital theory. In the final analysis, their attempt to rigorously test the segmented labour market hypothesis is thwarted by the aggregative nature of their data. Without longitudinal micro-data, it is impossible to properly distinguish between segmented and dual labour market theories. This distinction is not unimportant, for policy responses will be keyed based upon which review of the labour market is more valid. A human capital theory calls for education and upgrading of individuals, while segmented markets call for institutional and

structural changes in labour markets.

In developing a theory of the youth labour market, it is important to realize that the characteristics of teenage employment are quite different than the characteristics of employment for youth between 20 and 24. Many studies have attested to this separation, perhaps the most useful being by Osterman (1980). Employing the National Longitudinal Study (1967), he shows that "stability"[8] in employment increases with age. Teenage employment patterns are characteristically transitory, with frequent periods of idleness, punctuated by short-term employment. With age, the tendency grows to hold jobs for longer periods of time, until there is a consistent job, with changes generally reflecting attempts to improve wages.

Osterman also finds that the first jobs held by teenagers are frequently found as a result of informal contacts through family and friends. The longitudinal data point to a succession of low-skill, transitory and boring jobs for many teenagers, resulting in frequent separations. Also, the vast majority of initial jobs are clearly in the secondary labour market, and only with age and additional education do young people penetrate primary occupations.

An important question is the extent to which the business cycle mediates the split between primary and secondary occupations. Based again upon the NLS data, Osterman concludes that in peaks, youth are more likely to secure employment in primary sectors. Recession acts to remove job opportunities in this sector. Other studies which confirm this basic process are by Vroman (1977) and Okun (1973). Despite evidence suggesting that there is some ebb and flow between primary and secondary labour market

opportunities based upon the business cycle, the basic structure remains the same. Youth are typically confined to the secondary labour market.

A major factor in analyzing youth unemployment is the relationship between youth employment and education. Sen (1982) for example, makes a strong case for the facts that education and employment are highly correlated, and no study has found otherwise[9]. It is common to dismiss youth unemployment under the argument that since many are still in school, employment is used primarily for spending money and not required for survival. This is similar to the arguments about the high unemployment rates allegedly due to increased female participation rates. Since many women are part of households with another earner, their labour force participation has been viewed by some as a "luxury" or at least discretionary.

Gustman and Steinmeier (1981) have explicitly examined the joint decision involvement in school enrollment and labour supply. In particular, they note that the welfare cost of youth unemployment is often discounted because it is assumed that school is a preferred alternative for young people. In fact, as they note, high enrollment rates which we are currently witnessing may be a symptom of poor labour market opportunities. High enrollments may also reflect an increased demand for education in an effort to improve long-run employment prospects. They find quite strong evidence for interaction between labour markets and school enrollments, although the technique they employ (discrete multivariate analysis) does not permit precise quantification of the interaction. Another study which reports evidence of this joint decision is found in Gregory and Duncan (1980); however, the precise "trade-off"

between education and jobs is complex and not easily analyzable using existing data sets.

Another study of note is by Corman (1983), who examines the determinants of school enrollment by high school students and other adults. Couched in the human capital paradigm, investment in schooling is only undertaken if the discounted stream of benefits exceeds the costs (including time and foregone wages). While school attendance is related to a number of economic factors, as well as attributes of schooling (for example, tuition), the unemployment rate and relative unemployment rate (unemployment rate for the professions versus the crafts) were only occasionally significant. It appears from the data used by Corman (a special module added to the May 1975 Current Population Survey in the U.S.) that unemployment factors tended to have a greater influence on the school attendance of women. Of course, these data are now almost ten years old, and it may be fairly argued that they fail to provide much insight into current labour market and education dynamics.

Given that much teenage and youth employment is in the secondary labour market and is characterized by transitory and boring occupation, it is reasonable to suppose that income maintenance and other forms of transfers would provide disincentives to work. This question is closely related to the problem of how UIC influences the decision to work. Evidence from the income maintenance experiments in the U.S. has supported the notion that transfers increase schooling while reducing work among young people[10]. Most recently Venti (1984) has analyzed data from the Seattle-Denver Income Maintenance Experiment (SIME-DIME) and reports that "the results indicate a large and statistically significant long-run effect

of IM (income maintenance) on the probability that a youth will work... For the entire sample participation in income maintenance increased the probability of school attendance for an 'average' youth from .42 to .51." The reduction in work occasioned by income maintenance is offset, at least partially, by increased school attendance.

Thus far this review has concentrated upon factors in youth unemployment, but what impact do either recurring spells of unemployment or a long duration of unemployment have upon subsequent labour market activity? If youth unemployment has deleterious effects, they should appear in the form of lowered wages, and weaker labour market attachments in subsequent years. Becker and Hills (1980, 1983) employ the National Longitudinal Surveys to examine the effect of unemployment in teenage years upon subsequent wages. They find that teenage unemployment has little effect on wages earned in the early and mid-twenties, and argue that the effects of teenage unemployment are overstated.

It is important to note that the above distinction between teenage and youth unemployment is critical. If an unemployed teenager becomes bored with idleness, they may resume their schooling, thereby enhancing their long-term wages. In this case the period of unemployment may well be associated through time with higher earnings. However, the dimensions of youth unemployment encompass much more than teenage idleness, and the problems faced by a college or vocational school graduate who cannot find work may be much more serious than the joblessness of a grade nine drop-out.

Griliches (1980) has made an important contribution in the study of unemployment on future wages of youth. Responding also to the President's Advisory Committee Panel

Report on Youth: - Transition to Adulthood (1974), he also finds that teenage idleness cannot be associated with pronounced reductions in subsequent earnings.

Yet another aspect of the effect of employment and unemployment on youth has received recent attention in the human development literature. For example, Hamilton and Crouter (1980), Frantz (1980), Greenberger, Steinberg, Vaux and McAuliffe (1980), Steinberg (1982), and Greenberger and Steinberg (1981) all consider the impact of employment upon the socialization and development of adolescents. Taking their cue from an earlier work, the President's Advisory Committee (also cited by Griliches (1980)), they extensively examine the proposition that early integration of young people into the world of work has beneficial effects. This supposition underlies much current policy with the argument that even in early high school, were some students able to earn academic credit for work experience, alienation and disaffection with the school system among youth could be lessened, and a sound basis for productive work attitudes imbued in tomorrow's workers.

The evidence on this score is extremely mixed. For example, Frantz (1980) finds that "labour market success, race and employment in the private sector enhance feelings of internal control during the transition between school and work." On the other hand, Steinberg (1982) argues strongly that the "benefits of working to education, socialization and subsequent employment have been greatly overestimated."

For the most part, evidence on this aspect of youth employment is weak and inconclusive. Human development researchers have not been able to exploit the longitudinal data which are oriented toward answering "economic" issues, yet it

may be fairly argued that sociological and psychological issues emanating from youth unemployment are as important as long-run wages. To properly resolve this question requires the construction of appropriate longitudinal micro-data in which reliable measures of self-esteem, locus of control, etc. are embedded along with the more conventional economic and behavioural data.

Another model of school attendance deserves some mention. Fuller, Manski and Wise (1982) use the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 to estimate a conditional logit model of school attendance. Their results indicate that schooling costs have an important and negative impact on attendance. Also, the magnitude of foregone earnings, possibly a useful proxy for labour market opportunities, is negatively related to the probability of school attendance. Finally, they are able to model school "quality" in relation to a student's ability and find that there is an inverted non-linear relation [11]. As "quality" declines relative to ability (as measured by various achievement scores), the probability of attending that particular type of school at first increases, then declines.

As the authors point out, this study does go some way to bridging the gap between the simple question of school attendance and the issue of occupational choice. Within a given school there are a variety of program choices which could also be modeled using conditional logit procedures. An important problem, not only with these data, but with respect to the occupational choice and school attendance process in general, is the inherent selectivity associated with winning admission to a given program. This is in evidence as programs limit enrollment in the face of fiscal restraint and

historically high demand. In other words, school attendance and occupational choice models must account for the endogeneity of demand and supply for education and occupations.

Also important is the nature of expectations which are unobserved. Few studies have been able to explicitly include "latent" variables in the formation of occupation choice or labour market participation in general. Yet given recent advances in estimation technology (discussed below), this is well within current capabilities and is an important objective for investigation.

Most work on youth employment has focused on the role of training, socio-economic status, and other "objective" factors in explaining both eventual earnings and employment stability. One attempt to explicitly incorporate psychological attributes into the determination of youth labour market activity is by Becker and Hills (1981). Rotter's locus of control, or at least an attenuated version of this well-known attitudinal inventory, was developed from the National Longitudinal Survey. Employment and unemployment equations are estimated for 230 youth who were between 16 and 19 in 1967. The dependent variables are drawn from the 1975 survey, and ordinary least squares regressions estimated using a set of standard regressors (highest grade completed as of 1975, marital status in 1975, labour force experience since education completed, months of occupational training ever undertaken, a regional dummy, local unemployment rates in 1975, and spells of unemployment in 1967) and locus of control. The method of selecting a subset of items from Rotter's inventory (which was subjected to some reliability tests) resulted in possible scores between 11 and 44,

ranging from internal to external control. This construct appears very appropriate for labour market studies, since it seems to capture the essence of motivation missing from most empirical work on labour market behaviour. Those who view personal initiative as determining success are termed "internals" while those who perceive they have relatively little control over life situations are "externals."

In the study, the locus of control variable had the appropriate signs in the regression and were statistically significant (at .05 level), validating the inclusion of this variable. Unlike other regressors, it is more difficult to associate the usual structural interpretations to locus of control, and it is unclear how attenuation in the scale may produce artifacts; however, the basic validity of including "noneconomic" determinants in employment equations has been established.

To summarize, youth unemployment may be visualized in the context of either human capital or segmented labour market theory. Unfortunately, most data sets do not permit easy testing of hypotheses relating to these separate paradigms simply because objective features which might serve to segment workers (in this case age) are obviously correlated with experience and education, the core human capital. This empirical difficulty explains much of the policy ambiguity surrounding labour market policies, especially with respect to youth unemployment. The fact that education and work trade-offs are likely important, and this trade-off is likely to be extending up the demographic age profile (i.e., increasing numbers of older workers are seeking adult education) heightens the value of analyzing labour markets in relation to the demand and supply of education.

One area of importance in school-to-work transitions is that of occupational choice, which is now addressed in some detail.

2.2.2 Occupational Choice

It is possible to divide the occupational choice literature into two distinct areas. On the one hand economists using human capital theory have stressed the economic determinants of "investing" in a career. Sociologists/psychologists, however, have emphasized self-esteem, status attainment, and the intergenerational transmission of values and attitudes as factors in the selection of a career.

2.2.2.1 Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory views the selection of a career solely as an investment decision, in which personal attributes are matched against occupational opportunities to produce the highest discounted cash flow (net of education costs). Perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of job selection from the human capital perspective is to be found in Freeman (1971). In this perspective, the individual reviews the occupations available and based upon present wage data forms certain expectations about the income streams available from these occupations. The appropriate discount rate is applied and calculated, the net present value of pursuing a given occupation. A standard utility maximization framework is then employed with arguments consisting of the net present value of future income, unearned income, and a host of noneconomic attributes of the career.

As with any neoclassical theory, this view of occupational choice

assumes perfect knowledge, not only of the attributes of each job, but the future income stream. The central proposition of this view of occupational choice is that, at the margin, economic factors determine occupational choice. Freeman also assumes that occupational choice is all or nothing, and once made, because of the costs of training, changes will be comparatively rare. Certainly in the market for professionals, generally initiated after the undergraduate degree, this may be a reasonable assumption, but as Osterman (1980) argues, this view of occupational choice is probably not appropriate for the career decisions made by youth. Initial jobs are transitory and are frequently not obtained after any job-specific training. In addition, it is very common for successive jobs to be quite unrelated in terms of occupation or industry.

As Osterman points out, this instability in occupation, especially in the early life of young people, need not be inconsistent with human capital theory. It may be that the labour market is being explored in a job-shopping (Johnson, 1978) or learning (Rosen, 1976) model. Rosen, for example, stresses that it may be rational for young people to accept low wages if the employment offers significant learning potential. Also, the job-shopping approach is consistent with the frequent separations observed in youth labour markets, and is consistent with a model that views this early labour market experience as a process of learning about different occupations.

2.2.2.2 Socio-Psychological Theory

The sociological/psychological perspective on occupational choice or career development formally

begins with the work by Ginzberg *et al.*, (1951) [12]. In this early theory, individuals are hypothesized to go through three phases - fantasy, tentative, and realistic choices on their way to developing a firm career decision. Fantasy occurs in early childhood and is the familiar stage during which sports and other cultural heroes and heroines dominate career choices. The tentative phase is marked by four stages: interest, during which attributes of different occupations are investigated; capacity, during which personal abilities are tested (for example, doing drama in high school); values are then matched to the career characteristics; and finally the transition stage requires integration of all the information about personal abilities and the characteristics of the occupation.

The final phase in early adulthood in which realistic choices are made includes the stages of exploration (for example, during which initial jobs are explored), crystallization of expectations, and then final specification of the career choice.

Recently Ginzberg (1972) has restated the model to allow a firm decision to be made at any stage. This encompasses the choices of uniquely endowed individuals to make a decision early in life (for example, musical prodigies). Also, the decision process could be reversible, and the possibility of career change is now explicitly incorporated. The essence of the process according to Ginzberg is that occupational choice involves a set of compromises.

The empirical basis for Ginzberg's theory are white middle class youth, upon whom the external environment and social networks are relatively benign in impact. For marginal groups and other disadvantaged populations, the occupational choice

paradigm is likely much more constrained.

Super (1957, 1963, 1968) has made important contributions to the theory of occupational choice. Founded upon five stages during life, the main feature of this theory is that occupation choice is a continuous process. In addition, there is "multipotentiality," equipping most to satisfy the requirements of several occupations. The core of the occupation choice decision is that of developing and implementing a "self-concept," the result of interaction between inherited abilities, physical attributes, and the outcome of role-playing and approval-seeking from peers and superiors. The process of choosing, adjusting, and revising occupation choices is the outcome of personal and environmental (social and economic) factors. The basic tenet of the theory, namely that self-concept guides occupational choice, has made a major inroad into the counselling profession and has become a basic element of vocational guidance.

Holland (1966) views occupational choice as the result of channeling personal attributes and life style preferences into one of six major categories, which are associated with broad occupational characteristics. For example, a "realistic" life style preference will guide the individual into manual labouring, while a "social" life style preference will encourage choices in "people-oriented" professions such as teaching. This theory is now widely considered to be far too simplistic.

A more psychoanalytic approach was advocated by Roe (1956, 1964), founded upon Maslow's hierarchical need theory. Based upon responses to standard psychoanalytic tests (for example, Rorschach Ink Blot Test) administered to various scientists, she postulated that personality differences condition

occupational choices. These were set in early childhood and eventually conditioned lifetime vocational choices. Again, this research suffers from imperfect empirical testing, since the subjects were drawn from upper and middle class technical occupations. Also, it appears that early life experiences may now not be so important in defining personality and adult behaviour [13].

Blau *et al.* (1956) have provided a comprehensive framework for viewing occupational choice. Inherent in this formulation is the fact that no individual factor, sociological, psychological, economic, or cultural is dominant; rather, occupation choice is the outcome of a process of interaction and revision. Changes in the external environment influence the initial endowments determined by heredity and family.

With respect to the structural and environmental side there are immediate determinants conditioned by the demand for labour, objective requirements for a given occupation, lifestyle requirements (non-functional), and a reward structure. At a more general (distant) level, occupational entry is conditioned by labour turnover, demographic structure of the occupation (for example, whether seniority prevents new entrants), institutional features of the occupation, and business conditions. Even more generally historical conditions, social mobility, and other longer-term trends influence the ability of new entry into occupations. In turn, the social structure as well as physical conditions (most usefully considered as given) operate in the background.

With respect to individual factors, the immediate determinants relate primarily to the information base possessed, technical qualifications, perceptions of appropriate social role, and a reward hierarchy. More general influences are

sociopsychological attributes, which are influenced by basic personality and psychological development. In turn, background biological conditions as well as the social structure operate as givens in the determination of individual factors determining occupation entry.

Both the structural and individual factors in occupational selection filter through "dissonance." On the individual side, there is tension between preferences and expectations, while on the structural side there is tension between the ideal standard for an occupation and a realistic appraisal of the abilities of the individual.

Thus the Blau structure provides a comprehensive view of occupational selection, any element of which may be evaluated individually, but which is also amenable to testing as an integrated structure. Despite the fact that this framework has existed for almost thirty years, there appears to have been no attempt to validate the system as a whole. Occupational choice and career selection research seems to have concentrated on specific aspects, in all likelihood because comprehensive longitudinal data are unavailable, and because reliable measures of certain links, in particular on the individual side, have yet to be accepted in the literature.

The model provides both individual and structural and near and far perspectives. The key questions are the inter-play of individual and structural forces, and the relative impact of background versus foreground influences.

While the structure proposed does present useful dichotomies, the model is not dynamic in that the process of career selection, testing, and revision is not included. Neither the job searching process envisioned as part of the human capital approach to career selection, nor

the human development perspectives widely accepted in recent work on the sociopsychological determinants of occupational choice are explicitly included in the model. In other words, the model provides no "depth" or third dimension (time).

Thus far the occupational selection process has been presented in two paradigmatic formats - the human capital approach which sees career selection as the result of an investment decision; and the sociopsychological approach, which concentrates upon the development of human personality and abilities in a social context. While the framework suggested by Blau *et al.* does attempt to integrate individual and structural factors, it may be criticized on the ground that it is a static model.

Recently Young has formulated an ecological perspective of career development in adolescents [14]. He hypothesizes that there are four environments in which a young person operates to make career selection choices:

- a. Microsystems consisting of Family, School, Peer Group, and Workplace all contain patterns and roles within which an adolescent functions and is influenced in terms of expectations and behaviour. The family characteristics which influence career selection are birth-order, early child-parent interactions, role modeling by parents, perception of parental influence, and contact with parents. Most recently Schulenberg, Vondrack and Crouter (1984) have systematically reviewed the literature on the family's role in vocational development. It seems surprising that while many psychologists have identified these early developments as key to human development (except note recent qualification

by Clarke and Clarke mentioned above), this often fails to be validated in surveys and student interviews. Within the school microsystem, Young identifies explicit career interventions in the form of counselling and the implicit interventions produced by curriculum, extra-curricular activities and other school organizations. Young notes there has been very little work on the role of peer groups in determining occupational choice, yet the influence of friends is widely acknowledged as being crucial to understanding adolescent development. Finally, youth do frequently work in formal environments, even though the jobs may be part-time. Comparatively little research has been undertaken to examine the role of work in determining occupational selection.

- b. Mesosystems, the most important of which is the transition to work, occur at the interface of two or more microsystems. Public policy in terms of transitions to work explicitly exploits the school-to-work mesosystem in interventions which call for academic credit for work, or the actual interruption of education to begin work earlier than the mandatory school-quitting age. In general, while there have been studies of the school-to-work transitions (see discussion below), there has been very little study of this transition in terms of human development and comparatively little research on the relationship between microsystems.

- c. Exosystems consist of social class, media, family social network, and sex roles of parents. Public policy may also be considered part of the exosystem. The

essential feature is that there are a set of influences on career selection which cannot be influenced by the individual, but which are subject to systematic alteration.

- d. Finally, there is the macrosystem subsuming technical change, work ethic, perceived purpose of education and role of women. These are basic processes and evolutionary forces which may modify career selection in the long term. One particular phenomenon mentioned by Young is the concept of job entitlement, reflecting a growing perception that individuals are entitled to a job consistent with abilities and training. Bell (1976) has hypothesized that many hold the view that society is responsible for securing stable and dignified employment, and Derber (1978) has subjected this to an empirical test.

2.3 SYNTHESIS

Recently Sonnenfeld and Kotter (1982) have provided a useful summary of career theory, which they classify into four stages, moving from the static to dynamic.

Social Class Determinants:

Emerging from the roots of sociology and the writings of Marx, Durkheim, Parson, and Weber, this view of career and occupational choice theory visualized individuals as moving among occupations. The theoretical focus was on intergenerational mobility among occupations. While there are not rigid occupational roles, social class and socioeconomic status were identified as the key determinants to selection and attainment within a given career or occupation. The typical empirical work consisted of tracing how

sons-did or did not follow in the footsteps of their fathers. Blau (1956) and Blau and Duncan (1967) are noteworthy examples of this school of thought, with recent contributions amending the previous excessive social determinism inherent in the earlier studies. Also, this line of enquiry has become marked by technical and statistical sophistication, but the basic insights have not changed. There is a close relationship between parental occupations, education, and income, and the occupational and socioeconomic status attained by their children.

The main defects now apparent from this line of enquiry are due to an excessive reliance on a static and deterministic framework which admits little possibility for individual attributes or the environment to intercede and allow individuals to change throughout their lives, or for children to deviate significantly from the paths laid down by their parents. Typical errors also include the use of occupational status scales which have long since been invalidated. For example, Jencks (1979) uses an occupation prestige scale from the early fifties, in which an engineer being promoted to management positions actually drops in prestige. All too frequently, a father's career at a given stage in life is compared to the son's career at a different stage in life. Very important is the omission of demand factors in occupations. There are very few farming occupations now open to young people, and it is not surprising at all to find few children are able to follow their parents into agriculture. Finally, there is no possibility within the context of the social class paradigm for individuals to change over time.

Trait Theory:

This work is represented by writers such as Holland and Roe (cited

above) who concentrate upon psycho-analytic explanations for career choice and success. The alignment of mental and psychological attributes to occupation choice has led to the development of seemingly precise tools for "screening" children and youth in their choice of careers. Instruments such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the Strong Vocational Interest Bank (SVIB) are now widely employed in career counselling.

Again, the key concept is that relatively static psychological attributes can be aligned with occupational success, and while there has been some progress to systematically delineating these correlations, increasingly there is a lack of consensus on what these relationships mean, or whether they are stable. Even the MMPI is now undergoing a thorough revision and examination in the light of widely perceived shortcomings [15].

The difficulties encountered by this line of research include the facts that traits can change through time, and that changing workplace and family demands can moderate career choice and commitment. The occupational categories which are embedded in the test protocols are frequently very simplistic and immutable. Finally, changing societal norms can invalidate the reliability of the various measures included in the inventories, necessitating periodic updating. This is especially critical for longitudinal research, since it removes the possibility of developing time-invariant personality profiles.

Career Stages:

This work is associated with the occupational choice literature initiated by Ginzberg *et al.* in which the career selection and consolidation process was seen as a process

evolving through distinct stages. Although Ginzberg has changed the earlier position that occupation choice was irreversible, there still is a very strong flavour of long-term stability in the research characterizing this school of thought. Although occupational choice is usually confined to the years 16 to 24, career stage theory actually has been applied to an entire lifetime, and this more recent perspective adds an important dimension to the analysis. Super's (1957) five life stages, consisting of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and finally decline, is an example of this longer-run view, although even he concentrates upon the 16- to 24-year-old period.

This approach to career theory is clearly an enhancement, but it too has been identified as having critical shortcomings. Individuals are seen as passive, and the process of career switching is missing, yet commonly observed. There is no interaction between work and nonwork (family and social networks) despite evidence suggesting that these other influences are important. Career stage theorists tend not to include social class when it has been found significant in explaining occupational choice.

Life Cycle Approach:

Developed within the last decade, and represented particularly by the work of Levinson (1978) and popularized by Sheehy (1976), this paradigm builds on the work of Jung (1933) and Erickson (1963). Utilizing longitudinal data (most often, unfortunately, relying on recall data and oral histories), the empirical work has established the validity of life cycles in human development. The popular notion of a mid-life crisis is perhaps the most familiar contribution of this theory.

Research is now proceeding beyond

the confines of the workplace to include other aspects of human and social existence. The phenomenon of "dropping out" at the age of fifty, frequently the subject of magazine articles on senior executives who feel that the "rat race" and even the "death with dignity" movement can be viewed in terms of this life-cycle theory.

Sonnenfeld and Kotter note some short-comings to the paradigm. For example, longitudinal data are simply not available to fully describe the processes, and much of the empirical work is anecdotal or based upon qualitative research with weak protocols. It is also very difficult to develop a comprehensive validation framework, and most studies attack only selected portions of the theory. There is some possibility that recent development methods in structural modelling may offer scope in this direction and these are reviewed below. The research also suffers from a gender bias, with the emphasis remaining on men. The career decisions of women are complicated by the decision to have children, and although institutional arrangements (for example, day care) may have removed some of the impediments to career development, empirical and theoretical work must be sensitive to the more complex decision-making environment faced by women in their occupation and career planning. Finally, longitudinal life cycle approaches have tended to ignore traits and childhood development as factors in occupational and career choice.

In evaluating the future direction of development, Sonnenfeld and Kotter argue for empirical work which attempts to integrate the entire process, and for this "we need more longitudinal data." The main questions revolve around the relations between childhood, personality, education, work history, family

history, adult development, and current situation in explaining income, occupation, and job satisfaction.

2.3.1 Empirical Work in Occupational Choice - Canada

The most extensive attempt to investigate occupational choice in Canada is by Breton (1972). Based upon surveys conducted nationally in 1966 and 1967, Breton tests a number of propositions in occupation selection based upon a synthesis of the theories by Ginzberg, Holland, Super (cited above) and Tiedeman and O'Hara (1963) and Hilton (1962). Breton does not explicitly examine the entire individual career development process, but rather seeks to empirically examine the formation of "intentions and decisions with respect to his future career." These expectations are hypothesized to be a function of social origin, present experience, and attitudes and preparedness. While these three forces are interrelated, Breton argues they may also be viewed as autonomous. There is also a dynamic perspective in that "the course of any career - from its progression through initial development during adolescence and on to almost the peak of its curve and retirement - is continually being influenced by the actual circumstances encountered by the individual during this time." [16]

Breton elects to concentrate upon the school, in essence one aspect of the microsystem identified by Young, since it is likely the most important influence and also because schools represent a locus of major policy intervention in the career selection process. Of particular interest are the impact of gender, region, mental ability, family structure, etc. on vocational indecision, education intentions, and level of occupational preferences.

It is noteworthy that Breton elects to stress vocational indecision, when the literature remains committed to a "positive" decision process [17]. In this aspect the study is unique and valuable, especially since all studies on teenage and youth unemployment strongly point to unstable patterns of job holding and lack of commitment to the present occupation.

Breton finds [18] that career indecision is not random, but is associated with attitudes about oneself and one's self in relation to the future. There appear to be no gender differences, although Breton does note that the decision process for females is complicated by an initial decision whether to marry or join the labour force. It would be most intriguing to discover whether this dichotomy continues to hold in the mid-eighties.

In general, ambiguity over vocation is compounded by perceptions of poor prospects, employment anxiety, and inferior chances of locating a good job. The more positive the evaluation of the future, the more likely that career goals would be precise. More objective factors in career indecision were found to be general economic prosperity of a region, and the larger the community the more likely that career and further education plans would be articulated and well defined. Family life and SES were found to be important correlates of vocational and educational indecision.

Aside from family, school environment and organization were found to have significant correlations with educational plans and vocational indecision. Especially important were program type, program diversity, counselling. For example, all were found to have associations with lower indecision regarding education and career.

Breton's work provides a very

valuable point of departure in examining career and education decisions in the Canadian context. As a cross-sectional study it suffers from all the usual limitations of these data sets (which no amount of stratification or variable definition can cure), but certainly provides many useful insights. Because it was conducted in the mid-to-late sixties, it is intriguing to speculate on changes which may have occurred, especially with respect to sex roles, the concept of entitlements, and other features of adolescent development. Of course, there is no consideration of youth employment, and the formal process of school-to-work transitions lies beyond the scope of the study.

2.3.2 Transitions From School to Work

A number of approaches may be used to analyze the transition from school to work. This section reviews work to date, with emphasis on Canadian and U.S. studies. This is then followed by a synthesis of various models and an attempt to present an integrated approach to analyzing school-to-work transitions. Underlying the entire discussion is a basic framework which views transitions to work as a complex process, varying among individuals. Some school-leavers quickly find stable employment, others take a more prolonged period to stabilize, while others never locate permanent employment.

An important British study in school-to-work transitions was conducted by Maizels (1970), which attempted a "comprehensive assessment of the needs and opportunities of fifteen to eighteen-year-olds during the transition from school to work against the background of their working environment and of the

existing community services." Both youth employed and their employers were included in the survey, the sample sizes of which were by today's standards somewhat low and marked by nonresponse (especially for employers). Nonetheless, a number of important insights emerged from the study:

- In general education, and especially the teachers, were recalled as having assisted only some of the young employees. While favourable comments were the norm, these recalls were diffuse compared to the specific criticisms many respondents made about the shortcomings of their education.
- Considerable evidence was amassed that many youth felt more education was essential, especially among those (a minority) who were forced to leave school through personal circumstances.
- With respect to locating employment, there is clear evidence that expectations had to be lowered, and that this had produced disappointment. Whether this is part of the normal revision discussed by occupation choice theorists such as Ginzberg, or whether this reflects structural shortcomings in the vocational guidance system in England at the time is not revealed by the study.
- There appears to be an inconsistency between an education system which stresses humanities and general science (i.e., improving the minds of future citizens) if they are to be ultimately used by industry as a source of cheap labour. This appeared to be especially pertinent for working class youth, for whom the education system appeared to be "simply - and functionally - a

massive irritant." [19]

- Maizels advocates a radical restructuring of the education and work system along the lines of earlier school leaving, and a closer integration of work into the educational system.

Harvey (1973) conducted a major study of Canadians recently graduated from Arts and Science programs in Canada to evaluate the hypothesis that there is a "growing disjunction between the labour market and educational system." Essentially, he sees this disjunction as the result of technological changes producing both unemployment and underemployment [20]. According to Harvey, there are five methods for analyzing the relations between work and education.

First, there are structural factors in which attributes of an education program are matched with job requirements. Significant and persistent mismatches could then be used to identify shortcomings in training. This approach is rejected on the grounds that both the educational system and labour market are far too complex to allow simple matches between programs and given jobs. Also, data are nonexistent to allow complete matching to be attempted.

A second general approach is through employment forecasting and projection to identify demand-supply differences through time. The difficulty of labour market forecasting, and more recently the difficulty in predicting school enrollment, and the testing of relatively simple hypotheses such as "are students consistent (within a traditional economic model) with respect to the choice of program and subsequent occupation" are now well known. Furthermore, the data requirements to "feed" occupational and enrollment

forecasting exercises are significant.

Third, cross-sectional studies form the vast bulk of research in this area. However, cross-sectional analysis provides only limited insight into the causal relationships underlying the movement from school to work. The current work by Statistics Canada in this regard is important baseline information, and when linked to previous studies and perhaps to subsequent surveys, will provide important trend information. But, the evaluation of educational and labour market programs will be very difficult. Cross-sectional research allows one to say that "X" or some factor closely correlated to X shapes Y to a certain extent [21] and no more. Successive cross-sections allow one to more precisely identify trends, but causal attribution remains difficult.

Fourth, longitudinal data, especially those emanating from a randomized experimental design, represent the strongest basis for causal testing within the social and behavioural sciences. Randomization allows for significant control on extraneous variables which are not explicitly measured in the course of data collection; however, for a variety of reasons, largely technical and logistical, social science research finds great impediment to the use of formal social experiments, especially within schools and among young people. Finally, longitudinal data are very expensive to collect.

The fifth approach suggested by Harvey is historical cohort analysis. He employs samples from the 1960, 1964, and 1968 graduating classes of Ontario schools, and by using recall methods of interviewing constructs a "pseudo" panel. Of course, the data which result are not as reliable as collecting information at the actual point of graduation, but this approach does

represent a useful compromise for the purpose of his research.

Studies such as the National Longitudinal Surveys and the Panel Study on Income Dynamics are now returning very significant dividends to social and policy research in the United States. In the references cited thus far, the significant role of longitudinal data is clearly evident.

Longitudinal data are expensive to collect and maintain. Problems such as attrition leading to selection bias, panel integrity and panel conditioning, are all important issues, discussed below. However, in the past decade the technology involved in survey research and especially techniques for maintaining a panel through time have considerably improved. Furthermore, the costs of data collection can be disciplined by use of mailout and telephone surveys, both of which have also been subject to extensive refinements.

More importantly, longitudinal data require time to produce sufficient information whereby basic and applied policy insights become available. This is perhaps a more serious defect, certainly in the context of a current policy issue requiring immediate attention.

It is possible to address this by undertaking "historical cohort analysis" as suggested by Harvey. By sampling two groups, say the class of 1984 with the class of 1974 [22], and administering surveys to each group, it is possible to obtain insights into the changes due to cohort-specific phenomenon and trends in the overall environment. Some approaches to using historical cohorts and combining these with longitudinal analysis are discussed below.

Using three cohorts, those who graduate in 1960, 1964, and 1968, Harvey examines the following propositions:

- Has there been any change in the relevancy of education to chosen occupation? (For men yes, for women no.)
- Are there trends in the program chosen? (Movement away from Arts to Science.)
- Has there been a shift in source of financial support? (Less reliance on family and more on employment and public loan programs.)
- Has there been greater difficulty in finding employment after graduation? (In general prestige associated with first job has declined, there has been a shift in occupation choices, less satisfaction with employment and greater difficulty in securing work, as measured by the ratio of applications sent to offers received.)
- Have reasons for leaving work changed? (Graduates from the 1968 class are more likely to have been laid-off from their first job, or left to further their education than graduates in 1960.)

In general, viewed from the vantage of 1973, Harvey's research indicates a changing labour market/education system interaction, with evidence pointing to the increased skill requirements of the labour market, and also a response on the part of students in terms of program selection. There is strong evidence from this study that the relationship between the education system and the labour market underwent significant change during the sixties. It seems reasonable to suppose this process has continued and most likely accelerated during the seventies and early eighties.

The most recent National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Labour Market Experience is analyzed in Borus (1983). This represents the latest interview of some 12,000 young people born between 1957 and 1964. The National Longitudinal Surveys are designed to follow participants annually for about five years, and seek to shed light on youth experience in labour markets, the state of preparedness, and aspirations.

The results confirm those of studies cited above. Women and minority youth suffer disproportionately from unemployment, a position which does not improve with age, despite the fact that unemployment for young people in general declines with age. Also, youth tend to be confined to secondary and part-time labour markets. Sex stereotyping discovered in earlier studies persists, with women tending to be in clerical and service occupations. There were significant differences in wages based upon race and gender, and this discrimination does not disappear when occupations are added. An important finding, not apparent from previous work, was that unemployed youth typically had reservations wage above that which they could earn were they employed. In other words, these youth appear to have very high expectations about the wages available. Whether this reflects a certain cynicism about prospects or the fact that they could survive without working is not clear. Barriers to employment include transportation, lack of experience, lack of education, and lack of fluency with English. Interestingly, the overall satisfaction with schools was high, and the probability of pursuing post-secondary schooling (college) was more or less equal among all groups. Participation in vocational schooling did vary by race, and many had

participated in federal employment programs (CETA). Aspirations and expectations appear to be formed in the home, with family and parental attributes key. Finally, it appears that most youth have clear and well-formed occupational goals for themselves when they are 35. In other words, while they may not as yet have developed a clear career plan, they certainly express intent to have settled down by the age of 35.

Borus distills policy implications centered around a number of themes:

- Youth unemployment is a major social problem, despite the fact that the majority live with their parents and are in school. Of the 32 million people between the age of 16 and 21 (as of 1979), 1.5 million are unemployed, 400,000 have at least one child, and 800,000 come from poverty.
- Minorities continue to suffer from discrimination.
- There is substantial discrimination in wages and employment on the basis of gender.
- Age is perceived as a major barrier to employment. In other words, there is intergenerational competition for work.
- Youth and in particular minorities have poor knowledge of the world of work, and use a restricted portfolio of job search skills.
- The high school dropout continues to pose important policy problems and forms the basis for much of the long-term unemployment among youth.
- Employment and training programs appear to serve the intended

clientele and should be expanded.

One U.S. study [23] which explicitly seeks to evaluate programs designed to assist school-to-work transitions, was conducted for Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act. This legislation was enacted in 1977 as a replacement for the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). This new act was specifically designed to overcome the "barriers between school and work by more closely linking education, employment and training institutions." One particular program under this act is noteworthy, namely the Youth Employment and Training Program (YETP), which was designed to provide work experience for disadvantaged youth between 16 and 21 years old. In the U.S., at any rate, and there is little reason to believe the situation is significantly better in Canada, the employment prospects for nonwhite, nonmiddle-class youth has deteriorated rapidly in comparison with youth in the "mainstream." It is important to note that despite the many and varied programs initiated by the federal government in the U.S., the President's report of 1978 noted "the efficiency of any single program is more an article of faith than documented evidence, but also there are very few clues regarding the relative efficiency of alternate programmatic approach."

The report by Rist examines two main questions:

- Can school-to-work transitions be improved, especially with respect to institutional arrangements and new "routes" to stable employment?
- Are there better approaches for career development and employment training?

A significant aspect of the study is the use of ethnographic data, to not only supplement the usual quantitative data, but also to shed light on aspects of the transition not easily revealed by numbers. In this aspect, the study provides valuable insights similar to those contained in Osterman (1980). Indeed, many researchers [24] have argued that ethnography is the most valuable tool in researching the experience of urban poor and other disadvantaged groups. In addition to its use to penetrate the "cultural veil" social scientists encounter when attempting to research groups who are "outside" society, this technique can also be used as a method to improve program functioning by providing selective feedback to participants. Of course, this raises many methodological issues lying at the heart of evaluation research.

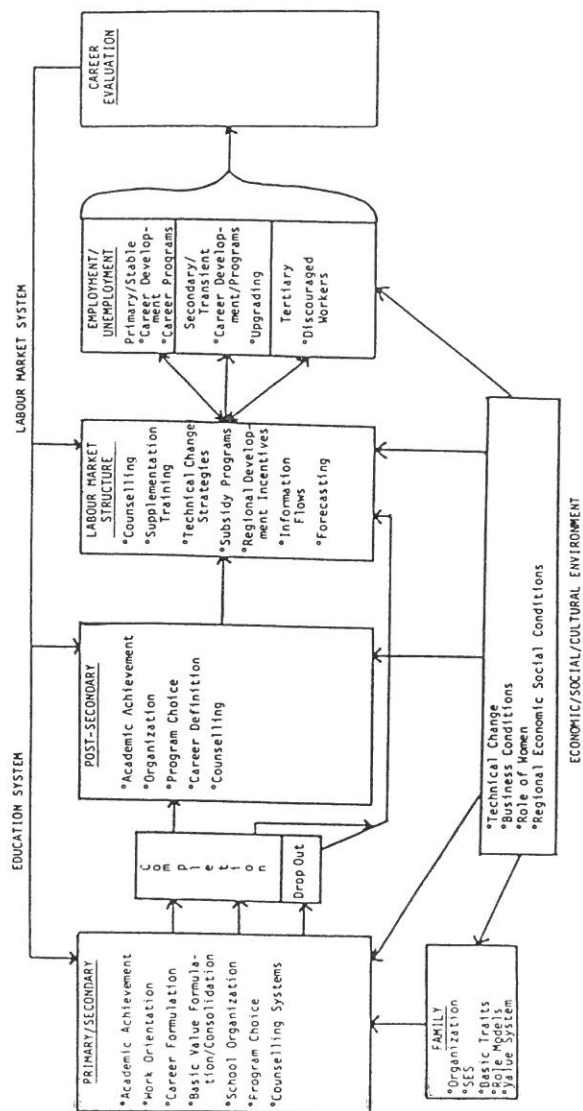
Several data "pivots" were employed to triangulate on facts. Interviews, participant observation, document review, and other administrative data were used in combination to distill a complete picture of program value and success (or lack thereof).

Four specific programs are evaluated - academic credit for work experience, expanded private sector involvement, career awareness, and job creation through youth-oriented projects. Rather than substantive contributions to the body of knowledge on school-to-work transitions, this work should be viewed as a serious methodological contribution in the evaluation of education and work programs among disadvantaged youth. Most of the initiatives, when viewed against the somewhat simplistic goals inherent to the economic objectives (i.e., does the program increase lifetime wages) do not demonstrate marked success, certainly within the limited time frame allowed most evaluation research. But

as Rist points out, "A fundamental 'rational' goal) is that it presumes problem with categorical research a logical and linear mode of program (i.e., evaluation against a single

Figure 1

Transitions to Work: An Evaluation and Research Framework



implementation." Inherent in this method is the contradiction between the need of the sponsor (the federal government) for accountability within a national accounting framework, and the perceptions of local participants about the value of the program. Rist argues for a multidimensional and longitudinal evaluation framework, encompassing a number of goals.

In general terms, Rist finds that programs worked best in the context of "enlightened self-interest and reciprocity" and that the greater number of program organizations involved, the less likely that goals would be achieved. Delays in implementation compounded program success, and necessitated technical assistance which often was not forthcoming, further attenuating outcomes. In essence this study, while shedding no substantive light on school-to-work transitions, is an invaluable source of insight into evaluation methodologies required for programs among disadvantaged youth.

The above are representative of an emergent literature, in large measure relying on survey data. Also, the use of longitudinal analysis is featured. Other notable studies in this area are Roberts, 1971; the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973; Thomas and Wetherell, 1974; Nolfi, 1978; and West and Newton, 1983.

2.4 RECENT AND CURRENT WORK IN CANADA IN RELATION TO TRANSITIONS TO WORK

In 1978-79, Employment and Immigration Canada undertook a comprehensive study of youth in the labour force. A questionnaire was administered to some 2,900 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 with a view to determining differences in

labour market experience and attitudes toward work and careers by sex, age, and region. Broadly speaking, the results indicated that:

- A majority of youth were able to maintain attachment to the labour force.
- Various personal and environmental factors influence experience with unemployment. It is difficult to identify those most likely to experience joblessness.
- Education is the single most significant factor in explaining job market success.
- Pre-entry job market preparation also appears to be related to eventual success.
- Most youth are optimistic about eventual success.
- There are regional variations, and rural/urban differences in job entry success.

In a related development, Statistics Canada has conducted a new series of educational surveys, the most relevant being:

- Post-Secondary Student Survey;
- National Graduates Survey.

Both of these initiatives (Employment and Immigration Canada and Statistics Canada surveys) provide valuable glimpses of the youth labour market and educational activities. They are weak in a number of directions, namely:

- Single cross-sectional surveys do not shed much light on processes, causal relationships, or trends.
- Surveys without theories or models of the transition to work explicitly underlying the data collection will be attenuated in the ability to answer the issues posed in the second section above.

- c. A panel design, randomized at the outset, provides a powerful methodology for evaluating programs, discovering trends, and testing hypotheses concerning transitions to work.
- d. Finally, the proposed study provides a continuing and flexible framework for designing and implementing education and labour market policies.

2.5 A FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSITIONS TO WORK

The transition from school to work occurs over several years, usually commencing in the early teenage years with part-time, casual employment, through a period where education and training are combined, eventually leading to more or less stable employment. The process varies with the individual, and for some the transition is relatively easy; they emerge from high school, pursue post-secondary training, and then proceed to a well-defined and stable career in the early twenties. Others follow a more peripetatic course, and may interrupt their secondary and post-secondary education with part-time jobs and periods of idleness until eventually settling down. Still others, and some fear this may be a growing number, never secure stable employment.

Overall and in general terms, it is possible to unify the occupation choice literature, the educational planning process, the youth labour market, and the eventual stable career situation in the following schematic. The most important aspect of this transition is that while the overall progression is linear from school to work, increasingly the pathways to permanent, primary employment take several directions, and further, that

processes feature feedback and reversals. Consider some of the important linkages in detail.

- a. Family and Primary/Secondary:
Emerging from the occupational choice literature, especially the social class and training paradigms, is quite conclusive evidence to suggest that the family, especially socioeconomic status and early child development, are important determinants for eventual success in life. The first transition undertaken by the individual is the movement from family to school, and while this is not of direct concern for this research, it must be recognized that much of the groundwork for the successful movement into the work place is set in the early years.
- b. Primary/Secondary and Beyond:
Within the educational system the individual further refines self-concept, knowledge of the world, and undertakes preliminary formulations of general life-strategies. Aside from intrinsic abilities and heritage and continuing support from the family, the education system has the critical mediating influence on attitudes toward work. Of particular importance at this stage are the organizational features of the school (for example, whether "streaming" is employed, the role models provided by teachers, and the functioning of career counselling) in determining directions upon exit. Generally three streams emerge from the secondary school system. Some students proceed immediately to post-secondary training consisting of vocational colleges, technical school, community colleges, and various degree-granting institutions. A second

stream enters the labour force, while a third does not immediately complete (and may never) secondary school (some may not even complete primary education), and they too enter the labour force.

c. Labour Market Structures:

A key element in the transition to work is a complex of labour market structures consisting of both public and private sector interventions. For example, a major yet undervalued labour market intervention consists of the media. Prominent features on youth unemployment, technological displacement and discouraged workers, which now appear to be the most frequently presented items in the news and editorials, probably have a profound effect upon aspirations, plans and expectations of youth, yet there appears to be no research on this. More formally, there are the various public policy interventions which are introduced and withdrawn. For example, Johnson (1982) has identified five periods of U.S. labour market policy in the past decade, ranging from the interventionist CETA program to a recent perspective which appears to view excessive government interference in markets as prejudicial to proper functioning of labour markets.

d. Labour Market/Employment:

In many ways this forms the heart of short-run policy and basic research questions relating to the transition to work. Emerging from the labour market structures, individuals move into primary, secondary, or tertiary sectors. Some accomplish this very simply and do not require much in the way of formal intervention; indeed, for many professions the labour market functions almost

automatically, where certification and initial employment are coincidental (for example, law; medicine). For others, a vast repertoire of interventions is required for placement even in the secondary sector.

e. Labour System / Education System Feedbacks:

There is growing evidence that career change, additional training, and adult education is becoming an important feature of the modern economy. For this reason, a feedback from employment to the previous stages is indicated, moving through career evaluation. This final stage, not usually considered part of the transition to work, reflects the life-cycle perspective of career theory, where transitions from school to work to school become the norm. Although a worker may never formally withdraw from the labour force, there is strong evidence to suggest that many are now supplementing their education and work experience with short courses to upgrade in specific areas. It is also common for those contemplating a shift to management to undertake specific training in this area prior to promotion. Much of this training occurs within the work place, and is frequently missed in evaluation and policy formulation for labour markets.

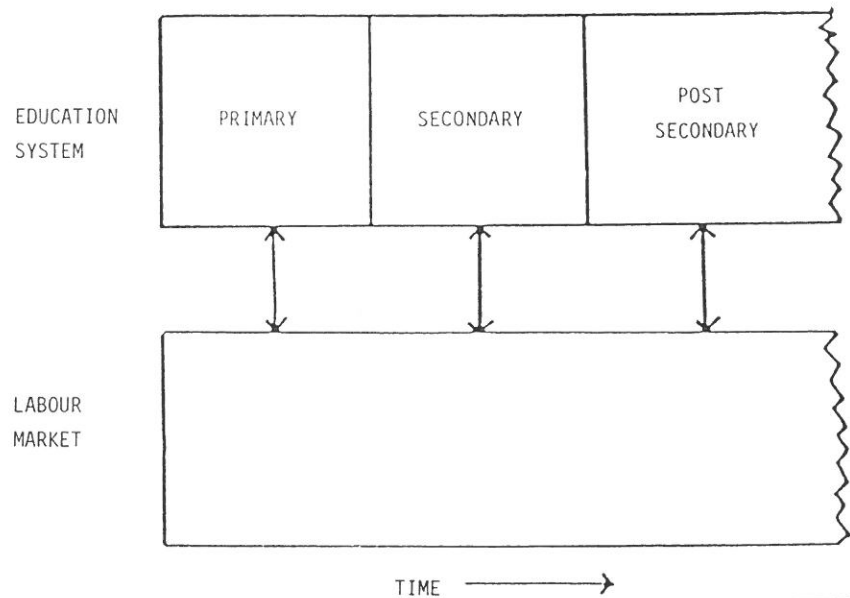
- f. The Social and Economic Context:
Underlying the entire structure is the social and economic context, influencing in identifiable ways each element of the framework. For example, societal norms on the role of women influence childhood perceptions, and provide important initial clues into appropriate careers, especially for females. Perceptions

about technical change and overall business conditions influence the formation of career choice and program selection in the secondary school system. This carries over into the post-secondary system. Demand and supply conditions influence the introduction of training policy as well as moderating the demand for training in various occupations. Overall business conditions influence the relationship between primary and secondary employment.

One aspect of the transition to work is not well captured by the above schematic. The process from

school to work is not immutable and linear as suggested. Many people begin contact with the labour market even in primary school years through part-time work (for example, paper routes, odd jobs, and babysitting). In fact, simultaneous with the education system is a continuous interaction with the labour market, that grows as one matures. Even if one does not have odd jobs while in primary and secondary school, there are frequent role models afforded by older siblings and friends. The process in this case resembles the model below where there is continuous interaction between the education and labour market systems.

Figure 2



This diagram portrays the emerging perception in the entire field. As a recent addendum to the labour

force survey clearly indicates, life-long learning is on the increase[25]. Many adults are engaged

in career change, extra classes and on-the-job training. Increasingly the perception is growing that career, job, and life skills are acquired throughout life. Accordingly, many adults are engaged in evening courses, or outright career changes in which considerable risks are taken by ceasing one career, and engaging in substantial retraining (for example, obtaining a degree) and then seeking employment in the new field.

The existing empirical efforts to examine the relationship between work and learning are inadequate to provide the basis for policy development and the subsequent evaluation. Aside from the problem of youth unemployment, which may well be relatively short-run (i.e., by 1990 the unemployment rate of those 15 to 24 could well decline to below that of the general population), the basic question remains. Is there a basic structural shift occurring in the economy, similar in scope to the shift from agriculture to manufacturing of the early twentieth century? The outcome of that transition appears to have been made with ease, yet the statistical record is murky. It may simply be that the media and government were much less attentive to problems in adjustment which were undoubtedly a common feature of everyday life. Also, the welfare state has dramatically widened the concept of social entitlement, and we are assuredly more sensitive to these issues.

The question of technical displacement within the labour market is fundamental, and politically crucial. Some call for massive intervention, while others argue that a larger segment of society will be superfluous to the production of "necessities." Some also argue that the relative decline in the competitiveness of the Canadian economy is

basic to the structural employment issue. Finally, some futurists argue that we are on the edge of a society of leisure in which culture and other pursuits can flourish.

These matters aside, it seems as though the irritation that many feel toward the academic research reflects a basic challenge to provide credible policy directions. But researchers are stymied by a commitment from government which can only be described as peripatetic at best. Indeed, many current social issues beg for a consistent longitudinal treatment, extending beyond the lifespan of the typical government. Most research is confined to short-term, cross-sectional analyses which are of limited value in understanding complex relationships characteristic of the transitions between school to work and back.

Until a commitment is made to longitudinal research, it is unlikely that social policy in general, and in regard to transitions to work, will be very informed. Much of the recent insight into the dynamics of labour markets, especially with respect to unemployment in the United States, has been obtained from information gathered in the various longitudinal studies which have been initiated in the last decade or so. Until a similar commitment is made in Canada, we are unlikely to achieve much insight into complex causal processes.

One final barrier to achieving greater understanding in school-to-work transitions is the jurisdictional division between the provinces and federal government. Provinces retain control over education, while employment policy resides with the federal government. This constitutional division of the responsibility simply makes both systematic research and ultimately coordinated policy very unlikely.

NOTES

- [1] Sorrentina, 1981.
- [2] cf. Ginsberg, 1982.
- [3] Denton, et al., 1980.
- [4] Denton et al., 1980, p. 203.
- [5] cf. Swidinsky, 1980; Ragan, 1978; Moore, 1971; Goldfarb, 1974.
- [6] Brown, Gilroy and Kohen, 1983.
- [7] cf. Kaliski, 1975 and Lazar, 1978.
- [8] Stability is defined to be the holding of the same job, or a job in the same industry group, or the same occupation, through time.
- [9] Sen's discussion does portray the high correlation between education and employment, but unfortunately the statistical testing is not sufficiently precise to allow evaluation of the most important hypotheses. For example, it is important to know whether the proportion of unemployed youth has changed despite increasing education levels. Also, education may be an imperfect substitute for employment as discussed below.
- [10] Mallar, 1976; McDonald and Stephenson, 1979.
- [11] Here quality is associated with the length of the program, and the status associated with the diploma or degree.
- [12] Although as noted, there are important antecedents.
- [13] cf. Clarke and Clarke, 1976.
- [14] Young, 1983.
- [15] See Colligan, Osborne, Swenson, and Offord (1983) for details of this process.
- [16] Page 5.
- [17] Career indecisions have recently received considerable attention with the development of a number of scales (cf. Rogers and Westbrook (1983) and Cochran (1983)).
- [18] That source of the data is a stratified sample of provinces and schools within Canada. Additional secondary strata include size of community and size of school (enrollment). 373 schools and 145,817 students were included in the study, with the administration of the questionnaire undertaken by the classroom teacher.
- [19] Downes, 1966.
- [20] Unemployment refers to the idleness of university graduates, while underemployment refers to the fact that highly skilled people are not utilized to their full capacity.
- [21] Dwyer, 1983, p. 327.
- [22] Here class refers to the high school or university graduating class, or some other benchmark.
- [23] Rist, 1981.
- [24] cf. Valentine, 1968.
- [25] See the recent statistical summary published by the Canadian Association for Adult Education (1985).

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