

## 6 Family income and male unemployment

### Introduction

When studying low income, a principal issue is the definition of poverty. Should the criterion be the lowest 10 per cent of income levels irrespective of material and marital circumstances and the number of children in the family? Or should there be a series of defined levels which specify a minimum subsistence for a particular family unit? We have used the latter concept of 'persons and families whose incomes fall below certain levels' (Brown and Madge, 1982). This raised two issues: first, to what extent was deprivation in 1980 associated with poverty as then defined? Second, did deprivation in the family of origin predict poverty in the family of formation?

### Method

At first, each adult interviewed was shown a card with 13 bands of gross family income and asked to indicate which most closely reflected the family's gross weekly income. This was not successful. Some people considered the bands too narrow and were unwilling to select too precise an account of income. The bands were thereupon reduced to seven (Table 6.1).

### Findings

*The income of second generation families in 1980 according to deprivation in their family of origin in 1952*

Table 6.1 shows that the main differences are at the extremes. For instance, when summing categories A and B, C, D and E, F and G, Red Spots reared in non-deprived families had 36 per cent in the top band, 51 per cent in the middle and 8 per cent in the lowest. In contrast, the reverse occurred in those reared in multiply deprived families with percentages of

Table 6.1

Income Bands 1979-80	
A	£2,340 or
B	£2,341-£3
C	£3,380-£4
D	£4,372-£5
E	£5,720-£7
F	£7,280-£8
G	£8,320 or
	Not classified
Total	

Table 6.2

Income Bands 1979-80	
A/B	up to £3,380
C/D/E	£3,380-
F/G	over £7,280
	Not classified
Total	

Table 6.3

Minimal Subsistence Levels	
Single Adult	No children
	One/two children
	Three children
Couple	No children
	One/two children
	Three children
Total	
Percentage	

Table 6.1 Relationship of deprivation in first-generation families to categories of gross annual income of the second-generation families in 1980

Income Bands 1979-80	Deprivation in Family of Origin					
	Non-Deprived Group 1952		Deprived Group 1952		Multiply Deprived Group 1952	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
A £2,340 or less	0	0	8	5.0	9	13.0
B £2,341-£3,379	5	8.2	25	15.5	15	21.7
C £3,380-£4,371	10	16.4	25	15.5	13	18.8
D £4,372-£5,719	9	14.8	37	23.0	8	11.6
E £5,720-£7,279	12	19.7	26	16.1	11	15.9
F £7,280-£8,319	8	13.1	13	8.1	4	5.8
G £8,320 or more	14	23.0	22	13.7	7	10.1
Not classified	3	4.9	5	3.1	2	2.9
Total	61		161		69	

Table 6.2 Family income and deprivation 1979-80

Income Bands 1979-80	Non-Deprived Group 1979-80		Deprived Group 1979-80		Multiply Deprived Group 1979-80	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
A/B up to £3,379	0	0	49	25.9	27	45.0
C/D/E £3,380-£7,279	48	64.0	93	49.2	24	40.0
F/G over £7,280	25	33.3	41	21.7	8	13.4
Not classified	2	2.7	6	3.2	1	1.7
Total	75		189		60	

Table 6.3 Families and subsistence levels 1979-80

Minimal Subsistence Levels	Non-Deprived Group 1979-80		Mildly Deprived Group 1979-80		Multiply Deprived Group 1979-80	
	Below	Above	Score 1 or 2		Score 3 or more	
			Below	Above	Below	Above
Single Adult						
No children	0	7	0	9	0	2
One/two children	0	0	1	4	0	1
Three children	0	0	0	0	3	2
Couple						
No children	0	11	0	9	1	2
One/two children	0	46	10	68	7	14
Three children	0	9	5	18	14	13
Total	0	73	16	108	25	34
Percentage	0	100	13	87	42	58

16.5, 46 and 35 respectively. The Red Spots coming from deprived families proved intermediate. Thus, four times more of the multiply deprived, as compared to non-deprived, fall into the lowest income band and less than half in the highest band. This emphasizes that to come from a family without deprivation carries the likelihood of having a higher rather than a lower total family income in adulthood.

*Current deprivation and current income, taking into consideration theoretical poverty levels*

For this analysis we were assisted by Mr Graham Charles (a clinical and social science research colleague at the Fleming Nuffield Unit), who calculated poverty lines based on supplementary benefit levels for the period November 1979 to November 1980. He also produced tables derived from the formula proposed by Abel-Smith and Townsend (1965): the amount of supplementary benefit multiplied by 140 per cent plus average housing allowance. These were calculated both for single householders according to the number of children and repeated for couples and their children.

Table 6.2 shows family income in relation to deprivation in 1979-80. There were clear-cut associations at the extremes: 20 per cent of non-deprived families had incomes in the bottom three bands (all in the highest of these) but 55 per cent were in the top three bands. Of the multiply deprived, almost 60 per cent were in the bottom three bands but there were 25 per cent with 'higher' incomes. We then applied the defined poverty levels to the stated incomes and found that, in families of formation about which we had data, 8 per cent (5/61) of those who were non-deprived in 1980, 8 per cent (13/161) of those who were deprived and 33 per cent (23/69) of those who were multiply deprived in 1980 were living below the 'poverty line'. By recreating the original population it was possible to estimate that in 1980 about 12 per cent of the Red Spots were living at or below the poverty level of which about half were from families who had been multiply deprived in 1952.

*Income in relation to nature and size of the family: family of formation*

Table 6.2 does however obscure the extent to which single-parent or large families were living on minimal subsistence

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levels. These levels have been defined, and the numbers of families living below subsistence level are shown in Table 6.3. All the non-deprived were above that level, even those with two or three children. We estimate that, of the original 847 families, the non-deprived in the family of formation consisted of about 300 family units with more than 500 children and all of these units had incomes above 'poverty' levels.

Some 20 per cent of deprived and multiply deprived families were at or below subsistence levels and most of these were multiply deprived, particularly if the family was large. Indeed, more than 50 per cent of the 27 families who were multiply deprived and who had three children were at or below subsistence level.

We estimate that, in 1980, the deprived group (with one or two criteria) contained over 400 families with more than 900 children and about 100 of these children were living at the margin of, or in, poverty. Of the 100 multiply deprived families with about 300 children, about one-third were living at the margins of, or in, poverty. It will be remembered that half of the 14 per cent of the multiply deprived Red Spots were themselves multiply deprived as adults and therefore must have contributed their full share of families with incomes below the subsistence level.

To summarize, our data relate to an income at or below 140 per cent of the supplementary benefit level. This is not an official poverty level but is a widely accepted definition. Those with incomes below the 100 per cent level are regarded as being in poverty whereas those between 100 and 140 per cent are on the margins of poverty. Using these definitions, the Family Expenditure Survey (DOE, 1978) showed that 5 per cent of all families were eligible for, but did not receive, supplementary benefit; 10 per cent received benefit; another 8 per cent were within 20 per cent of this standard. This suggests that approximately 15 per cent of families were in poverty and, overall, that nearly 25 per cent were in or near the range of poverty levels. From our Newcastle figures about 12 per cent of the second generation, as adults, were living in 1979-80 at or on the margins of poverty.

## Male unemployment

### *Employment and unemployment*

We had data relating to the employment of the parents of the Red Spot children when they were five years of age and had noted how the situation changed from 1952 to 1962 as two-thirds more mothers worked at some time outside the home. During the same period 82 (9 per cent) fathers were unemployed for between one and two years and 38 (5 per cent) for more than five years (Miller *et al.*, 1974).

Using data collected in 1979-80 on the employment experience of the Red Spots or male spouses for the previous five years, we then examined unemployment from 1975-80. We did this by a study of 80 families where there was male unemployment, of which 35 had experienced short-term and 45 long-term unemployment. We used 72 non-deprived families as a control group.

### *Changing patterns of unemployment 1952-82*

In 1981, Moss estimated that, nationally, over 16 per cent of children had unemployed fathers. We could not provide a precisely comparable estimate for the Newcastle cohort but data were available both for sporadic, short-term unemployment — defined as three or more months in the preceding five years — and for long-term unemployment — defined as cumulative unemployment of one or more years in the preceding five years. Table 6.4 gives the unemployment figures for the fathers of the Red Spots in 1952, 1957 and 1962 and the estimated rates for the Red Spots as adults. In 1952 the rate for short-term unemployment was 15 per cent and by 1957 it had dropped to below 11 per cent. However, in the next generation in 1980 it had risen to over 27 per cent. This criterion is not a rigorous one, being merely three months' unemployment in the previous five years — the same criterion as was used in 1952.

When we look at long-term unemployment we see that the rate in 1980 was 50 per cent higher than in 1962. This finding has to be interpreted in relation to national and local economic circumstances. The 1950s and 1960s were times of economic expansion and it is not surprising that the short-term rate had dropped. The figure for the second generation as adults represents the harsher economic era of world

economic recessions  
rate for 1957.

Table 6.4 Unemployment

A. Short-term or Sporadic (At least 3 months)
Fathers of Red Spots
Fathers of Red Spots Men 1979-80
B. Long-term (Cumulative: one or more years)
Fathers of Red Spots
Men 1979-80

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Table 6.4 Unemployment in 847 families

	Generation	Year	Rate
<b>A. Short-term or Sporadic</b> (At least 3 months in previous five years)			
Fathers of Red Spots	I	1952	14.9%
Fathers of Red Spots	II	1957	10.7%
Men 1979-80	II	1979-80	27.3% (estimate)
<b>B. Long-term</b> (Cumulative: one or more years in previous five years)			
Fathers of Red Spots	I	1962	14.2%
Men 1979-80	II	1979-80	21.5% (estimate)

*Duration and history of unemployment (Table 6.4)*

In the long-term group the mean duration of unemployment was two and a half years. Only two men had held their current post for more than three years, half had lost two or more jobs, and one-third had had as many as seven changes since leaving school. In contrast, few of the controls had lost two or more jobs or had had seven or more changes since leaving school, and more than two-thirds had held their current post for more than three years.

*Unemployment in 1952 and 1980*

We can compare previous unemployment in the three groups of second-generation families. Of the 80 unemployed in the study group, 35 per cent came from families where the father had been unemployed, compared to only 12 per cent of the controls. Current short-term unemployment (29 per cent) was associated with twice the rate, and long-term unemployment (40 per cent) with three times the rates in the controls (Table 6.5).

Table 6.5 *Incidence of unemployment 1979-80*

	Non-Deprived Controls n = 72	Unemployment	
		Short-term n = 35	Long-term n = 45
Two or more jobs lost/redundant	11%	29%	53%
Seven or more job changes since leaving school	17%	48%	33%
Holding current post for more than three years	68%	32%	4%
Mean months unemployed in previous five years	0.9	5.4	29.5

*Relationship of long-term unemployment to types of deprivation*

In 1952 parental illness (51 per cent) and overcrowding (41 per cent) were both frequently associated with long-term unemployment, whereas in 1980 the former was rare (16 per cent) and overcrowding, as defined in the Housing Act 1936, had virtually disappeared. In 1980 by far the strongest association was with educational insufficiency (68 per cent), associations with the remaining criteria all being weaker (16-33 per cent).

*Recollections of parental care by Generation II*

In 1980 the wives of 45 per cent of the long-term and 26 per cent of the short-term unemployed had recollections of 'poor' childhood care, compared with 17 per cent of the women in the control families, suggesting a link between poor care in one generation and unemployment in the next. The mechanism by which this occurs is not clear.

These findings demonstrate the difficulties of disentangling the effects of unemployment and other social and family deprivations. They also demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between short and chronic unemployment.

*Social perceptions (Generation II) (Table 6.6)*

Surprisingly, three-quarters of the men in the long-term unemployed group considered that society had been fair to

them, and only percentage also had a fair chance perception of the twice as many lost to the controls authority did ins

Table 6.6 *Social perceptions in families*

- a. Is society fair to you?
- Very fair
  - Fair
  - Unfair
  - Not sure
- b. Chance of improvement for people in poor circumstances:
- Yes
  - Almost none
  - Don't know
- c. Chance of improvement for their children:
- Yes
  - Almost none
  - Don't know
- d. The amount of authority do for them:
- Too much
  - About right
  - Too little
  - Other

*The home and home environment of currently unemployed men*  
Table 6.7 shows that in all the aspects of occupied homes,

them, and only one-quarter unfair. Again a surprisingly high percentage also thought that people in poor circumstances had a fair chance of improving themselves – a magnanimous perception of the fairness of contemporary society. However, twice as many long-term unemployed (62 per cent) compared to the controls (32 per cent) considered that those in authority did insufficient for the poor.

Table 6.6 *Social perceptions of men in families of formation*

	Controls n=72 %	Short-term Unemployment n=35 %	Longer Unemployment n=45 %
a. Is society fair to you?			
Very fair	39	17	0
Fair	54	74	71
Unfair	5	9	24
Not sure	1	0	4
b. Chance of improvement of people in poor circumstances:			
Yes	76	63	58
Almost none	21	34	42
Don't know	3	3	—
c. Chance of improvement for their children:			
Yes	72	57	62
Almost none	25	43	36
Don't know	3	—	2
d. The amount those in authority do for the poor:			
Too much	10	11	7
About right	29	34	22
Too little	32	43	62
Other	29	12	9

*The home and housing circumstances of the currently unemployed (1980)*

Table 6.7 shows that the unemployed were at a disadvantage in all the aspects examined. Few were living in owner-occupied homes, compared with most of the controls. They



were less satisfied with their current accommodation and living circumstances and there were great differences in the adequacy of furnishing and tidiness of the homes.

*Table 6.7 Housing and unemployment: families of formation*

	Controls n=75 %	Short-term Unemployment n=35 %	Longer Unemployment n=45 %
Owner-occupied (i.e. mortgaged etc.)	72	34	7
Total persons in household (mean)	3.5	3.7	4.3
Satisfaction (expressed) in housing	91	77	64
Furniture			
Good quality	65	36	9
Untidy home	0	20	29

*School and career: Generation II (Table 6.8)*

The strong association between previous educational insufficiency and unemployment has already been mentioned. While school achievements or work training qualifications provide opportunities for upward occupational mobility, lack

*Table 6.8 School experience, career training, verbal IQ and unemployment: families of formation*

School	Controls n=72	Short-term Unemployment n=35	Long-term Unemployment n=45
Attended grammar school or equivalent	31%	9%	7%
Left school at earliest age: males	62%	86%	96%
Took exams at school	56%	26%	18%
Further career training	82%	63%	53%
Mean Vocabulary Quotient (at age 33)	102	97	96

of these unemployed men was fewer examinations and had suggests the experience in order to increases provided mean voca

*Psychological adults Generation II Unemployment: psychological especially in way of assessment or o*

*Table 6.9*

Phobic/anxiety: males females  
Lack energy: males females  
Sleep disturbance: males females  
Depression: males females  
Emotional disturbance: males females  
Physical: Recent physi

of these increase the likelihood of unemployment. The unemployed had a poorer experience of school, had taken fewer exams, had been less successful at public examinations and had had less career training than the controls. This suggests that inadequate scholastic and career training experience increased the risk of subsequent unemployment. A rider to this hypothesis is that lower intellectual ability increases the risk of unemployment, but a vocabulary test provided no evidence in support of this hypothesis as the mean vocabulary quotients were rather similar.

*Psychological and physical malaise: adults Generation II (Table 6.9)*

Unemployment was associated with a significant excess of psychological disturbance and feelings of depression especially in the long-term unemployed group, but we had no way of ascertaining whether this was caused by unemployment or other associated social and family deprivations. It

Table 6.9 *Psychological and physical illness and unemployment: families of formation 1979-80*

	Controls n=72 %	Short-term Unemployment n=35 %	Long-term Unemployment n=45 %
Phobic/anxiety attacks:			
males	3	9	0
females	9	24	17
Lack energy:			
males	11	23	27
females	16	29	37
Sleep disturbance:			
males	9	14	27
females	13	12	32
Depression:			
males	3	9	31
females	10	21	34
Emotional disturbance:			
males	5	18	29
females	7	38	32
Physical:			
Recent physical illness	17	31	40

may well be that long-term unemployment interacts with deprivation to give rise to high rates of depression, and it was notable that 10 per cent of these men and women had had serious thoughts of suicide, whereas this was a non-existent occurrence in other groups. Short-term unemployment appeared to be associated with phobias and anxieties in women. Although recent illness in the family was two and a half times as frequent in the long-term unemployed and almost twice as great in the short-term unemployed as in the controls we could not tell how much was caused by, or resulted from, unemployment.

*Family relationships (Table 6.10)*

A number of interesting patterns emerged. First, unemployment was associated with a high rate of irritability and open rows between the spouses in both unemployed groups, these being four times more frequent than in the controls.

Despite unemployment, over half of the husbands went out to clubs or other regular social activities and there was little difference in this respect between the unemployed and the controls. Wives in all groups went on social outings less often than their husbands, and the wives in families suffering long-term unemployment appeared to spend much less in social clubs. It appears that, in such families, more money for social activities outside the home was available for husband than wife.

*Table 6.10 Family relationships in 1979-80: family of formation*

	Controls n=72 %	Short-term Unemployment n=35 %	Longer-term Unemployment n=45 %
Spouse irritability: Once weekly	7	33	30
Spouse rows: Monthly	8	21	26
Wife attends club etc.	49	38	27
Husband attends club etc.	67	66	54

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*The first-born children of the unemployed  
(Generation III) (Table 6.11)*

We thought that the children of unemployed parents might be adversely affected in respect of behaviour, social relationships and scholastic activities. Antisocial behaviour was the only trait in which this seemed apparent and we recorded, from the unemployed parents, rates of 32 per cent and 40 per cent of antisocial behaviour in children in comparison with 13 per cent in the controls. Support to this was given by information from the school (Rutter B Scale) where there were significant differences of antisocial, but not of neurotic, behaviour. This was particularly so in the children of the short-term unemployment group (24 per cent), suggesting that recent unemployment was a particular hazard for them.

Lower levels of intelligence scores and achievement were related to parental unemployment but it is difficult to know how much was due to genetic factors. Differences in vocabulary quotient proved twice as great in the grandchildren (Generation III) as in the parents themselves (Generation II), and these findings suggest that environmental factors are crucial in influencing and exaggerating differences.

*Table 6.11 Families of formation and unemployment:  
behaviour and cognition of first-born children*

	Control n=46	Short-term Unemployment n=22	Longer-term Unemployment n=37
<b>Behaviour</b>			
Parental interview:			
Antisocial behaviour	13%	32%	40%
Teacher Scale (Rutter B):			
Antisocial score (Newcastle version cut off 4)	2%	24%	11%
<b>Cognition</b>			
Vocabulary quotient (mean)	113	101	96
Reading quotient (mean)	109	98	92

*Precursors of unemployment in 1979-80*

Substantial data concerning precursors of unemployment are available from the authors. These, together with data already reported, provide a profile of the statistically significant antecedents of current unemployment. They are listed in Table 6.12 according to whether they were identified in the preceding generation or the current generation.

Table 6.12 *Precursors of unemployment*

Adverse Factors in Family of Origin	Adverse Factors in Family of Formation
<p>A. Mothers (of Red Spots)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Poor mothering</li> <li>2. Poor care of the child and the home</li> </ol> <p>B. Fathers (of Red Spots)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lower occupational status</li> <li>2. Lesser participation in domestic tasks</li> <li>3. Frequent job dismissal</li> </ol> <p>C. Both Parents Poor Providers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parents show poor interest in child during school years</li> <li>2. Marital breakdown</li> <li>3. Dependence on social welfare</li> <li>4. Poor housing circumstances</li> </ol>	<p>A. Teenage children</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Poor interest in family activities</li> <li>2. Eager to leave school</li> <li>3. Disturbed behaviour (antisocial)</li> <li>4. Poorer measured IQ</li> <li>5. Poorer scholastic attainment</li> <li>6. Not selected for grammar school</li> </ol> <p>B. Adults</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educational disadvantage</li> </ol>

**Unemployment: discussion**

Rising levels of unemployment affected both the young and the middle-aged. Much of the modern work on unemployment concerns the young unemployed — those recent school-leavers who fail to attract employment. That particular sub-group should be distinguished from older persons who have both shorter and longer periods out of work.

*Duration of unemployment*

It would be natural to expect that prolonged unemployment would be associated with diminished psychological well-being and reduced self-esteem (Warr *et al.*, 1982) but cross-section research on men has not always supported this hypothesis. Goodchilds and Smith (1963) studying a cohort

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in their mid-twenties found a lack of correlation between duration of unemployment (up to five months) and self-confidence scores, and Little (1976), studying older unemployed professional people, found no correlation between attitudes and duration of unemployment. Yet Hepworth (1980) found that longer-term unemployment in men with a median age of 34.5 years had a low, but significant, correlation (0.22) with minor psychiatric morbidity.

School-leavers are different, never having been in work. If they fail to get work, they may be expected to become increasingly demoralized. Contrary to expectation, recent cross-section research has failed to demonstrate a correlation between longer unemployment in the young and lowered psychological well-being. Surprisingly, some unemployed young women, perhaps because of a stronger personal involvement in family matters, actually exhibit a greater sense of well-being (Warr *et al.*, 1982).

*The effects of unemployment:  
minor psychiatric morbidity*

When unemployment has been studied without regard to the effects of its duration, adverse consequences have undoubtedly been demonstrated. For instance, Banks and Jackson (1982), studying poorly qualified school-leavers in Leeds, found evidence of a close association between unemployment and elevated General Health Questionnaire scores used as a measure of minor psychiatric morbidity. They also showed a significant decrease in scores in those who left school and found work, suggesting that work had a protective effect (Brown and Harris, 1978).

*Risk of unemployment*

A number of factors may accentuate or moderate the risk of unemployment. These include poorer qualifications, a family history of unemployment, low work motivation, membership of an ethnic minority and feminality (Allen and Smith, 1975).

Our study provided useful information about a number of factors which appeared to be predictors of unemployment in 1979-80. Chiefly implicated was a deprived childhood in association with a poor quality of personal care, social

dependence and parental unemployment. But we identified associations, not causal mechanisms. In order to bridge the gap, we needed to postulate the basis of such associations in psychosocial terms. Our data suggest that one important family process may be a combination of poor care and understimulation, causing poor motivation and lack of interest in success and achievement. This in turn is translated into poor interest in scholastic and vocational activities and forms the basis of educational disadvantage in the post-school years. This set of processes may be heightened in individuals who experience parental unemployment during childhood.

When attempting to identify explanatory factors and the effects of unemployment it is important to specify the nature of that unemployment. For instance, the effects of short-term unemployment may be different from those of long-term; unemployment due to illness may be different from that due to redundancy; and older persons long unemployed will differ from school-leavers never employed (Warr *et al.*, 1982). Furthermore, as our data show, there may be variations over time: there was a much closer relationship of illness to unemployment in the 1950s than in the 1980s.

#### *Short-term versus chronic unemployment*

In 1980 our group of wage-earners with only short-term unemployment stood in contrast to those with a longer period of cumulative unemployment who experienced a variety of social and family deprivations. However, our data did not support the notion that this long-term unemployment was entirely due to contemporary economic factors. Indeed, unemployment in 1979-80 correlated with many factors in the preceding generation, particularly with regard to long-term unemployment. Other significant factors include childhood exposure to poor parenting, low parental regard for children, marital breakdown, low occupational status and poor work record of father, and overcrowding. On average, these children had poor scholastic achievements and were eager to leave school at the earliest opportunity. After school they were less likely to have had vocational training.

Another question is the extent to which recent unemployment was directly related to redundancies. Our research suggests that, while the relationship may be simple in some

circumstances, chronic unemployment is a disadvantage which interacts with other factors.

The impact of family variables is significant, although a number of behavioral and school reports of the children are long-term, and employment has not had a significant effect.

Long-term unemployment is associated with lower educational attainment and intellectual development. Unemployment is difficult to measure from educational conclusions at the level of

*Social circumstances*  
Unemployment with greater duration is associated with lower educational attainment in the 1980s. This is now much more evident for those employed in the 1980s (Sinfield, 1980). Partners in the 1980s.

*Family relationships*  
Our work suggests that additional studies are unable to all which may be

circumstances, it may be more complex in the case of chronic unemployment where longstanding social and family disadvantages may have intensified the effects of, or even interacted with, recent unemployment.

The impact of unemployment on the first child in the family varied according to its duration. For instance, although antisocial behaviour was apparently the child's only behavioural manifestation of long-term unemployment, school reports indicated a higher rate of such disturbance in the children whose parents had short-term, rather than long-term, unemployment. Perhaps recent short-term unemployment constitutes a greater stress because the family has not had time to adapt.

Long-term unemployment of the breadwinner was associated with poorer performance of the child in cognitive and educational tests. Thus the antecedents of unemployment proved to be social, familial, educational and intellectual, were particularly associated with longer-term unemployment, and both determine the risk of becoming unemployed and contribute to its effects. Nevertheless, it is difficult to tease out specific adverse effects of unemployment from the range of associated socio-cultural and educational factors. We must emphasize therefore that any conclusions drawn from the current analysis must remain at the level of hypotheses.

*Social circumstances of unemployment, 1950-80*

Unemployment in the 1950s seems to have been associated with greater economic and material hardship for children in terms of poorer care and housing conditions than in the 1980s. This was to be expected, as standards of living are now much higher (Madge, 1983b). Nevertheless, the unemployed tend to come from the lower income groups (Sinfield, 1981), and unemployment frequently affects both partners in a marriage simultaneously (Moylan and Davis, 1980).

*Family relationships*

Our work supports the notion that unemployment places additional strain on family relationships, but we have been unable to allow for other social and family disadvantages which may precede or accompany unemployment. We did



not set out to study unemployment specifically and therefore did not look at the associated changes in status and family relationships which suggest that fathers who become unemployed lose their sense of self-esteem and their authority in the family (Elder, 1974). On the other hand, it should not be assumed that unemployment always has adverse family effects, for it is known that strengthening or 'steeling' effects may occur, whereby certain families draw closer together following adverse experiences.

*Impact on parents*

Our data suggest that the long-term unemployed in particular often show characteristics reflecting depression, which accords with the literature (Jahoda, 1979; Fagin, 1981). Wives particularly may show an excess of phobic-anxiety states following their husbands' short-term unemployment, and depression following their long-term unemployment. We see that 10 per cent of both husbands and wives had serious thoughts of suicide during long unemployment, and the important conclusion is that the families of the unemployed have a higher risk of psychological ill-health, which endorses the findings of Banks and Jackson (1982) and Hepworth (1980). There is also evidence that return to work is associated with reduction in minor psychiatric morbidity, which suggests that work has a positive and protective influence.

*Children of the unemployed*

We did not find any excess of neurotic symptoms in the children of families where there was unemployment. This experience is contrary to the findings of Brennan and Stoten (1976) and Fagin (1981).

*Scholastic progress and cognitive functioning*

Essen and Wedge in 1982 demonstrated a relationship between income levels and scholastic progress, and Brown and Madge (1982) suggested, therefore, that children of the unemployed are likely to do less well at school than their contemporaries since their families are usually relatively poor even when in work. The National Survey of Health and Development also described a cognitive relationship with unemployment, with lower mean test scores for non-verbal and

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verbal IQ at 11 years and mathematics and reading test scores at 15 years (Douglas, 1964; Douglas *et al.*, 1968). Our work showed the same trend, but poor progress could not be linked directly to unemployment in the presence of coexisting criteria of deprivation or possible genetic factors. One may speculate that the poor in one generation are those who are less intelligent and therefore less likely to maintain their way in work in the next generation. However, while it is not easy to exclude a significant genetic component, our data show that the discrepancy on mean verbal quotients between the unemployed fathers and controls is almost half that of the children and their controls, which suggests an important environmental influence. These findings emphasize the importance of a longitudinal design when attempting to explain poor scholastic progress and cognitive functioning.