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* UEMPLOYMENT, APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINING *
* - DOES IT PAY TO STAY ON AT SCHOOL? *
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by

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Summary

Data from the National Child Development Study are used to compare the progress up to age 23 of young people who reached 16 in March 1974 and who left full time education at 16, 17 or 18. Later leavers had higher unemployment rates on first entering the labour market because of rising national unemployment, but in the long term had a clear advantage. More significantly, those who left at 17 or 18 with qualifications no better than those of minimum age leavers suffered no long term disadvantage in comparison with the latter, despite their loss of potential work experience, and some groups had lower unemployment rates in the long term than minimum age leavers with equally good qualifications. Apprenticeships were more common among later leavers than expected, and later leavers compared favourably with early leavers in terms of other forms of in-work training. It is concluded that the "non-academic sixth" could have a useful role alongside YTS.

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There is ample evidence that young people who gain CSE's, GCE's or their Scottish equivalents during their time at school have a much better chance both of avoiding unemployment and of obtaining the kind of work they want (see, for example, Raffe 1984, Payne 1985a, Lynch 1986, Main 1986, Courtenay 1986). There is also evidence that as youth unemployment and overall levels of certification have grown, so has the difference between the job chances of the qualified and unqualified (Payne and Payne 1985). There is thus a strong incentive for young people to stay on in full time education after the minimum leaving age to improve their qualifications before entering the labour market, and the Department of Education and Science estimates that while in 1974 25% of 16 to 18 year olds were in full time education, by 1984 the proportion had risen to 31% (Department of Education and Science 1985). It remains to be seen how the introduction of the two year Youth Training Scheme (YTS) which now dominates the youth labour market will affect this trend.

However staying on in full time education is not without costs for young people or their families. Financially there is the loss of potential earnings or of the YTS allowance or social security benefits payable to unemployed young people. Although small, these

sums can be significant in the budgets of low income families, and for young people they represent at least a step towards independence. Staying on in full time education may also reduce the chances of getting certain types of jobs: for example those apprenticeships for which there are age limits on entry. It also entails a loss of potential work experience, and there is evidence that work experience improves the likelihood of a young person securing a further job (Breen 1986). This problem is particularly acute for young people who are eligible for adult rates of pay but have no work experience to offer in return. If, furthermore, unemployment rates rise substantially during the time that young people are continuing their education (as they did during the mid seventies or early eighties) there may be fewer jobs available to them when they eventually leave than if they had left as soon as they were legally permitted. This was very clearly apparent in a study of 16 to 19 year olds in the labour market in 1980 and 1981 which found that when qualifications and a wide variety of other factors were controlled, each extra year of education beyond the minimum leaving age significantly increased the odds of unemployment (Payne forthcoming 1987).

In most cases we assume that the advantages conferred by improved qualifications substantially outweigh the disadvantages of a prolonged education. It is worth asking however whether the balance of advantage is immediately apparent on entering the labour market, or whether it emerges only after a period of time. If the latter is the case, this may affect young people's perceptions of the value of staying on at school or college, and in advising young people we need to know how long it takes for the balance of advantage to emerge.

we should also pay attention to those young people who stay on in full time education beyond the minimum leaving age but do not succeed in improving their qualifications, or who gain only more O Level GCE's, rather than qualifications of a higher standard than people who leave school at 16 normally possess. The last few years have seen the growth of the 'non-academic' sixth form in schools. Among boys who reached their seventeenth birthday between September 1st 1979 and August 31st 1980 and who left school in England during the following academic year, the proportion who had not gained any A Level GCE passes was 16.0%, but by the academic year 1983-1984 it had risen to 18.4%. The corresponding increase among girls was from 20.3% to 21.2% (Department of Education and Science 1982, Table 4, and Department of Education and Science 1986, Table 5). There is also now a wide range of courses below A Level standard at colleges of further education and tertiary colleges, and an estimated 60% of young people who reached 16 during the academic year 1983-1984 and stayed on in full time education into the following academic year were taking non-A Level courses (Courtenay *ibid*). Courtenay states that, according to the reports of the young people themselves, the Careers Service and teachers were twice as likely to advise staying on to young people reaching minimum leaving age in 1983-1984 as to advise leaving, but that this advice was only rarely given to those with poor qualifications. The recent development of YTS offering training, albeit of varying standards, to all school leavers, and, unlike its predecessor the Youth Opportunities Programme, requiring no qualifying period of unemployment for entry, has made the issue of whether to stay or leave a real dilemma where young people with

modest or poor scholastic achievements are involved.

The mechanisms which link school qualifications to jobs are not wholly clear, and there is some argument about whether they directly measure relevant job skills or are used by employers as proxies for other personal characteristics which are more difficult to quantify, or indeed whether their primary effect is via young people's job seeking behaviour rather than employers' selection procedures (Jones 1985). In the present paper these questions are left aside and all that is assumed is that qualifications are important determinants of job success, whatever the processes by which they operate.

Data

Although cross-sectional data can throw some light on the questions which have been outlined above, much more illuminating are longitudinal studies which trace young people's careers for several years following their departure from full time education, so that any short term advantages or disadvantages can be set in the context of longer term gains or losses. The England and Wales Youth Cohort Study, funded by a consortium of government departments, with its Scottish counterpart, should in due course supply most useful data about present generations of school leavers (Courtenav *ibid*). It will however be several years before these data become available. If we wish to discover how young people who have adopted different strategies are faring now we must turn to other sources of information.

One study able to supply such data is the National Children's Bureau's National Child Development Study (NCDS). This has tracked the progress of all young people living in Great Britain who were born between March 3rd and 9th 1958, including those who were born abroad and who settled in Great Britain before the age of 16. Major surveys of this cohort were conducted at birth (the Perinatal Mortality Study carried out by the National Birthday Trust Fund), and thereafter at ages 7, 11 and 16 (NCDS Sweeps I to III). The most recent major survey, NCDS IV, took place in 1981 when respondents were 23. At this date interviews were obtained with 12,537 cohort members, representing 76% of the original cohort excluding those known to have died or have emigrated. The data are described in Shepherd (1985), and the representativeness of those interviewed at NCDS IV in relation to previous sweeps of the cohort is examined in Iyer (1984), where it is concluded that there is little serious bias.

The work reported in this paper arises from an ESRC funded research project currently in progress which is using NCDS data to examine various aspects of employment history between the ages of 16 and 23 (1). At NCDS IV respondents gave a retrospective history of their education courses, jobs, spells of unemployment and spells out of the labour force since the age of 16, dated to one month intervals. Although there were some gaps in the data (2), it was possible to construct from this account a month by month record of what each respondent did between the ages of 16 and 23. In fact 75% of the cohort had information about activities for all of the 90 months between June 1974 and December 1981, a further 16% had information

for all but one or two months, and another 7% had information for all but three to six months. In addition to information about the main activity in each month, data were incorporated on apprenticeships, in-work training courses and part time education courses undertaken at the same time. These economic activity histories are an invaluable source of information on the early careers of a truly national sample of young adults.

The present article describes some of the main differences in the post-education experience of young people who left continuous full time education at 16, 17 or 18 with different levels of qualifications. Those who left at a later date than this are not discussed here: relatively few left at 19 or 20, and those who left at 21 or older had been in the labour market for at most two years by the time of NCDS IV and thus not enough time had elapsed for any very clear statement to be made about their employment patterns. The kinds of choices available to men and women who have received higher education are in any case very different from those which can be made by young people whose education stops with school.

An attractive feature of this cohort study is that because all the respondents were born during the same week, both age and time are automatically controlled. Thus for example, when we compare the economic positions of 16 year old leavers and 18 year old leavers in any given month or any given year we are comparing people of exactly the same age. Conversely, those who left full time education at the same age all did so at the same date and thus they faced the same national economic conditions and policies towards youth training (although of course local labour market conditions would have

differed substantially) (3).

Continuous full time education is defined here to ignore gaps of less than six months between full time courses, but someone who had a gap of six months or more between two courses is regarded as having left full time education at the end of the first course and having re-entered it at the start of the second. All full time education courses are counted, no matter whether they took place in school, sixth form college, college of further education, or elsewhere. The NCDS cohort belonged to the first age group affected by the raising of the school leaving age, and because their birthdays fell in March they were not legally entitled to leave before the end of the academic year 1973-1974. For the sake of conciseness of expression, '16 year old leavers' are defined here as those who left full time education before September 1974, though some in practice left illegally before the summer term. Similarly, '17 year old leavers' are defined as those leaving at any time during the academic year September 1974 to August 1975 even if they had not yet reached their 17th birthday at the time they left, and '18 year old leavers' are those leaving between September 1975 and August 1976.

TABLE I
ABOUT
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Table I gives the distribution of leaving ages for males and females in the full NCDS cohort (for 37 members of the cohort there was no information on leaving age). Three fifths left at the minimum legal age, though boys were significantly more likely to leave at 16 than girls. Girls in turn were over-represented in both the 17 and 18 year old leaving groups, and roughly equal proportions of males and females continued their education without a break beyond the age of 18.

A number of those shown in Table I as leaving full time education at 16, 17 or 18 returned to full time education at a later date, after a gap of six months or more. The figures are given in Table II. The proportion of 16 year old leavers who later returned was quite small, but approaching one in ten of 17 year old leavers resumed their education after a break, as did more than a fifth of 18 year old leavers. This type of break appeared to be more popular among young men than among young women: 27.8% of men first leaving at 18 later returned to full time education compared to 15.1% of women. For many of these young people this meant in practice a 'year off' between school and college or university, and they did not enter the labour market in earnest at this date. When the numbers later returning to full time education are taken out, the proportions of the cohort leaving full time education at different ages are as shown in Table

TABLE II
ABOUT
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TABLE III
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III. It is the people who left full time education at 18 or younger and who did not later return (at least by the age of 23) who form the basis of the rest of the paper, as it is misleading to compare someone who is seeking only temporary work before going on to college with someone who has left full time education, as far as they are aware, for good.

Participation in the labour market

In comparing groups of people in terms of their success in the job market we are likely to get a different picture if we look at the whole age group, including those who had withdrawn from the labour market for one reason or another, from the picture we would get if we looked only at those who were economically active at the time of the comparison (that is, in employment or unemployed but seeking work)

(4). For the men in the cohort this in fact makes very little difference to the comparisons. Among 16 year old male leavers there were at most 1.5% in any month between September 1974 and August 1981 who were not economically active. For 17 and 18 year old male leavers the figure was a little bigger: a peak of 3.1% and 6.5% respectively in the months immediately after they left full time education, but rapidly falling thereafter to hover around the 1% or 2% mark. Nevertheless for the sake of strict accuracy all the comparisons between male leaving groups in this paper refer to those who were economically active in any given month. As a result, the numbers on which the comparisons are based fluctuate slightly from month to month, both for this reason and because of variable amounts of missing information in different months.

For women, the picture is very different. At the age of 23 26.5% were out of the labour force, the very large majority of these because they had a baby. (Others of course had already returned to work after a spell out of the labour force for this reason.) The

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE three leaving groups differed a good deal. Figure 1 shows that among 16 year old leavers the proportion who were economically inactive

increased very steadily from 3.8% in September 1974 to 35.6% in August 1981. For 17 year old leavers the proportion was initially more stable, but by May 1976 - approximately 10 months after the end of the academic year in which they left full time education - it had begun to rise, and it grew at an increasing rate from then on, reaching 22.2% in August 1981. Among women who left full time education at 18 there were rather more out of the labour force immediately after leaving full time education than a few months later, presumably because a number took extended holidays. As with the 17 year old leavers, the proportion out of the labour force did not start to rise until around April or May of the following year, and although the rate of increase accelerated with time, in August 1981 only 14.7% were economically inactive.

The ways in which women mix childrearing with employment are changing (Martin and Roberts 1984), and the strategies adopted by the NCDS women will be examined during the course of the current research project. For present purposes it is enough to emphasise only that the older a woman was when she left full time education, the longer she was likely to spend in the labour market before withdrawing in order to care for a child. Of course, as the data are cut short at age 23, it is not possible to conclude from this that the women who left school early will spend less of their total adult years in the labour market than women who prolonged their education. It does mean, however, that the women who stayed on in full time education for one or two years after the minimum leaving age gained more years of work experience before they had their first child than women who left at 16, despite the extra time given up to education. They were thus likely to be in a stronger position if they wished to return to

the labour market when their family commitments permitted (5).

As with the men, all the following comparisons between leaving groups refer to women who were economically active in each month only. The base numbers are thus smaller at August 1981 than at September 1974.

Unemployment

Between 1974 and 1981 adult unemployment in Great Britain mushroomed. Standing at 2.8% of the working population in September 1974, it grew with only a brief respite in 1978 and 1979 to reach 12.2% in September 1981; this is graphed in Figure 2. During this time there were two periods when the increase was particularly fast, between 1974 and 1976 and again between 1979 and 1981. The effects of both of these periods show up in the labour market histories of the NCDS cohort.

FIGURE 2
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FIGURE 3
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Figure 3 shows how the unemployment rate for men and women in the NCDS cohort who left full time education at different ages varied during the years from their entry to the labour market up until August 1981. For both sexes certain features are clear. Those who prolonged their education for one year beyond the minimum leaving age had considerably more difficulty in finding work on first entering the labour market than did those who left at 16, and those who stayed on for two years found it even more difficult. This was very largely due to the way that national unemployment rates rose during these two years. However the initially high rates of unemployment among the later leavers fell very rapidly, so that within a few months of leaving full time education they had lower unemployment rates than their peers who had left full time education earlier. The time taken

for unemployment rates to drop below the corresponding rate for 16 year old leavers of the same sex was 4 months for women who left at 17, six months for both men and women who left at 13, and just over nine months for men who left at 17. From then on unemployment among the later leavers was always substantially less than unemployment among those who had left at the minimum age.

From the end of 1977 up until around September 1979 unemployment rates were relatively stable, with approximately equal rates for 17 and 18 year old leavers and rates around three or four percentage points higher for 16 year old leavers. From September 1979 however unemployment rates in all three groups began to rise, again reflecting national trends. For men, the rates for 17 and 18 year old leavers rose together, but the gap between them and the 16 year old leavers widened. For women, the unemployment rate for 17 year old leavers rose more steeply than the rate for 18 year old leavers, but the gap between the 18 and the 16 year old leavers widened. Overall, the rate of increase was lower for women than for men. This may have been connected with the large number of women in the cohort who were withdrawing from the labour force during these years, as those with poor job prospects were most likely to have a baby relatively young.

These findings give clear evidence that in terms of avoiding unemployment, once initial problems due to rising national unemployment rates had been overcome, staying on in full time education paid off, and did so within a relatively short period of time. There is a rider to this, namely that men who stayed on for two years had by age 23 no very obvious advantage over those who had

prolonged their education for one year only, though they did do better than those who left at 16. However the advantage of the later leavers was likely to be due very largely to their improved qualifications. Within each leaving group, those with better qualifications had consistently lower unemployment rates throughout the period studied, and the longer someone stayed on in full time education, the better their qualifications were likely to be (6). These qualifications are likely to have given them access to jobs which were less severely affected by the collapse in manufacturing industry which the country suffered in 1980 and 1981. What then of those who left full time education at 17 or 18 with no better qualifications than those who had left one or two years previously? Were they able to recover from their initially greater difficulties in finding a job, or did they miss the boat and remain at a permanent disadvantage?

FIGURES
4 & 5
ABOUT
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Figures 4 and 5 plot unemployment rates up until age 23 for males and females in the three leaving groups who held different levels of qualifications. For men and women with no CCE passes and men with one to four O Levels but no A Levels 16 and 17 year old leavers only are compared, as the numbers in the 18 year old leaving group were too small to give smooth plots (21, 55 and 69 respectively in September 1976). In the other groups numbers were large enough to permit reliable comparisons. Making the comparisons in this way ignores the fact that, for example, a 17 year old leaver with one to four O Levels may have had none if he had left school at 16, and thus in comparing this person with a 16 year old leaver who also has one to four O Levels we are making a very stringent test of the value of staying on (7).

Looking first at those with five or more O Level passes but no A Levels (Figures 4a and 5a), we see once again the effect of the general increase in unemployment that took place between 1974 and 1976 (the effects being rather more marked for women who left at 18 than for men). However unemployment among the later leavers fell back rapidly to the same level as for those who had left one or, for 13 year old leavers, two years previously, and having once reached this level, unemployment rates became indistinguishable among the three leaving groups from then on.

For those with one to four O Levels but no A Levels (Figures 4b and 5b) the findings are not quite the same. Once more the effects of rising unemployment between 1974 and 1976 are apparent in the higher unemployment rates of the later leavers, but during the second period of rapidly worsening unemployment from 1979 onwards the later leavers appear to have fared rather better. Similarly, among those with no GCE passes at either level (Figures 4c and 5c), those who stayed on at school for an extra year appeared to have more success in avoiding unemployment as they got older than the men and women who left as soon as they were legally entitled to do so.

It is probable that the later advantage of 17 and 18 year old leavers among men and women with poor qualifications is due to other differences between the leaving groups which are not measured here. In particular, the later leavers may have had CSE passes below Grade 1, or have obtained better marks in their O Level examinations, and they are also likely to have been well motivated towards their school work. Among the early leavers there is also likely to have been a

higher proportion of persistent truants and young people with other problems - for example an early pregnancy or family difficulties - factors which could have had a bearing on their competitiveness in the labour market. Young people who had already gained five or more O Levels were possibly less differentiated in these ways, or perhaps other factors weighed less heavily with employers if they had the evidence of good school attainment. It is impossible to say what the results would be were all these factors controlled. Nevertheless as far as the analysis reported here goes, the findings for all three qualification groups are reassuring, in that, once their immediate problems in obtaining a job were resolved, the later leavers apparently suffered no higher rates of unemployment in the long term despite the fact that they had less work experience than their age peers with similar qualifications.

Apprenticeships

One field in which 16 year old leavers are traditionally thought to have the edge is in securing an apprenticeship. Apprenticeship training is still largely closed to women, and only 6% of women 16 year old leavers in the NCDS cohort entered an apprenticeship (virtually all in hairdressing) compared to over two fifths of men who left at the same age. The following account therefore deals only with the men in the cohort.

Despite the received wisdom, a surprisingly large proportion of men who stayed on an extra year in full time education succeeded in obtaining an apprenticeship. In the September following the academic year in which they left, 22% of 17 year old leavers were apprenticed. Although this is only a little over half the figure for 16 year old leavers, it is nevertheless much more than might have been expected. In addition 8% of 18 year old leavers were apprenticed in September of the following year. Their apprenticeships tended to be different in character from those entered by 16 or 17 year old leavers - half were in professional and managerial fields or in literary, artistic or sports occupations. Among them were for example solicitors clerks and architectural assistants. Nevertheless a substantial number were in traditional trade apprenticeships, including nearly two fifths in the making and repairing of metal and electrical products (Cook 1983). These fields were therefore not wholly closed even to the 16 year old school leaver.

TABLE IV
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The relationship between qualifications and entry to apprenticeship was different in the three leaving groups. As Table IV shows, among 16 year old leavers those with one to four O Levels were most likely and those with no O Levels were least likely to enter an apprenticeship, with boys with five or more passes intermediate between the two. For 17 year old leavers there were no significant differences between the qualification groups. Among 18 year old leavers numbers were not really large enough to permit proper comparison, but if anything, the better qualified were less likely than others to enter apprenticeship training. Sixteen year old leavers, even those with no qualifications at all, were more likely

to enter an apprenticeship than anyone who had stayed on in full time education for an extra year or two, no matter how good the qualifications which the later leavers had gained.

However apprenticeships vary a good deal in the standard of training which they offer. A quarter of males who completed an apprenticeship which they entered in their first job under the age 18 did not actually sign articles. Of these, 15% received no off-the-job training and 19% completed their apprenticeship without gaining any formal qualification other than that of having served their time (Cook *ibid*). Staying on in full time education may have reduced a young man's chances of getting an apprenticeship, but if during that time he gained more examination passes, he may have improved his chances of getting a good apprenticeship. Cook points out that male apprentices who got O Levels at school were more likely than other apprentices to go on to gain high level qualifications such as HNC or HND rather than the more usual craft grades of the City and Guilds examinations. Hutchison has also shown that, after controlling for a wide variety of relevant factors, male apprentices in the NCDS cohort who had O Levels were significantly less likely to drop out early (Hutchison *forthcoming*).

One reason of course why fewer 17 and 18 year old leavers enter apprenticeships may be of course that other forms of training are more likely to be open to them. This we turn now to consider.

Non-apprenticeship training

Cohort members were asked for details of up to three training courses - that is, courses which involved at least 14 days or 100 hours attendance either at a college, training centre or skill centre - which they went on during any of their jobs but not as part of an apprenticeship. This is a fairly rigorous definition of training and would exclude brief induction training and being put with a more experienced worker to be shown the job. Only training courses done in full time jobs are included here: training courses accompanying a part time job were relatively rare. In addition cohort members were asked about up to four education courses, an education course being defined as one leading to a qualification (whether or not the qualification was actually obtained), but not done in work time. 'Non-apprenticeship training' is taken here to include both training courses and part time education courses. The reason for treating them together is that part time education courses were very often done with a specific vocational purpose and with the encouragement of employers. It is possible that some part time education courses undertaken purely for leisure have been included, but as part time education courses by definition led to qualifications, these were likely to be few in number - a supposition that is supported by the fact that there was no discernible tendency for the proportion of total non-apprenticeship training formed by part time education courses to be greater among cohort members who left full time education later or among those who had more GCE passes (8).

FIGURE 6
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Figures 6a and b show the proportion of young men and women leaving full time education at 16, 17 or 18 who were in non-apprenticeship training in each month from the September after the end of the academic year in which they left up until August 1981. It should be stressed that the figures refer to training actually undertaken during each month, not to whether they were in a job which involved training at some time; thus someone who started a job in March 1978 and went on a training course during May and June would contribute to the figures for the latter two months only. For both men and women, the longer their full time education, the more likely they were to undergo non-apprenticeship training, though in the early years the difference between 17 and 18 year old leavers was more marked for men than for women. Training was most common during the first two years after leaving full time education, but for both sexes the advantage of the later leavers persisted right up until age 23.

Within each leaving group the differences between the sexes were not large, but there was a clear tendency for men who left at 18 to be more likely to receive training than women except in the very last few months for which we have data. Similarly, men who left at 17 were more likely to be undergoing training in their early twenties than women who left at the same age. Among the 16 year old leavers the slightly higher proportion of women who received training in the early years by no means compensated for the very much greater number of men who got an apprenticeship.

FIGURE 7
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If now we add the proportion in an apprenticeship in each month we get an overall picture of the chances of getting training of any kind. This is done in Figures 7a and b. For women, because so few enter apprenticeships, this hardly alters the trends already noted in Figure 6b, apart from narrowing the gap between 16 year old leavers and the rest during the first few months after leaving full time education. For men, however, the picture changes radically. When both apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship training are taken into account, the position in the first year or two after leaving full time education was the reverse of that which obtained at age 23. Sixteen year old leavers started with a very high level of training - nearly 50% - but by their early twenties, when the bulk of apprenticeships had been completed, very few were still getting training. Eighteen year old leavers on the other hand started with a lower level of training, but the rate of decline was much shallower so that at the age of 23 more than one in ten were still being trained. Seventeen year old leavers fell somewhere between these two extremes.

Apprenticeship training therefore dominates comparisons between the sexes and between leaving groups. When all forms of training are taken into account, young men who left at the minimum age had more opportunities in their first few years in employment than than their classmates who stayed on for one or two years. The latter however had a better chance of continuing their training after they had made the transition from the youth to the adult labour market. In contrast women who prolonged their education beyond the minimum

leaving age were more likely than early leavers to receive training, both in the first few years after leaving and on into their twenties, though the value of staying on for two years rather than only one did not emerge until after a few years. The reader will not fail to remark that for the bulk of the time for which we have data even women who stayed on for a full two years were much less likely to receive training than men who left at 18, 17 or 16.

TABLE V
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Returning now to consider non-apprenticeship training specifically, Table V shows that for all leaving groups and for both sexes, the chances of receiving such training were greater, the better the qualifications that were held. The figures in Table V should not of course be taken to represent the total extent of non-apprenticeship training in the different subgroups: they show the number in training in the September following leaving full time education, and a number of young people may not have embarked on their first training course until a later date. A separate analysis has shown that the training courses followed by men and women with poor school qualifications tended to be shorter than those done by trainees with good school qualifications, and that they were less likely to lead to a recognised vocational qualification (Payne 1985).

Given that opportunities for non-apprenticeship training increased with qualifications, the obvious strategy for someone who wanted to get a job with training was to stay on at school or college and improve their qualifications. However we might again ask, what of those who prolonged their education but emerged with no better qualifications than their former classmates who left one or two years

previously? Figures 8 and 9 give some answers.
ABOUT HERE

For men, the results on the whole once more are reassuring. Men who stayed on were more likely to receive training in the first couple of years after leaving than men who left at the minimum age even if their qualifications were no better, and men who left at 18 with five or more O Levels but no A Levels were more likely to be given training in the first few months after leaving than men who left at 17 with the same qualifications. These differences between leaving groups tended to concentrate in the first few years after leaving full time education. By the age of 20 there was not much to choose between 16 and 17 year old leavers with one to four O Levels, while men with five or more O Levels but no A Levels were equally likely to be receiving training after their 21st birthday no matter whether they left at 16, 17 or 18. There was however a slight tendency for men with no O Levels still to be receiving training in their twenties if they left at 17 rather than 16.

As with unemployment, some of the differences between men in different leaving groups may be explained by other factors not measured here, for example some of those leaving at 16 with no O Levels may have had a record of truancy, and 17 year old leavers may hold more CSE's below grade 1. However it is also possible that for some kinds of jobs employers prefer to recruit more mature applicants - the Police for instance have a minimum entry age of 18 - and if they offer their own training programme it may not matter much to them whether the previous one or two years have been spent in school or out. Indeed the fact of having stayed on at school may be taken by employers to demonstrate a willingness to study which would count in their favour. In addition someone entering a job in a training

grade would not normally be eligible for adult rates of pay even if they were 18 at the time, and so would not be less attractive than a younger recruit for this reason.

FIGURE 9
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The findings for women with no O Levels are like those for men (Figure 9c). 17 year old leavers were a little more likely to get non-apprenticeship training both immediately after leaving full time education and on into their twenties. For those with one to four or five or more O Levels the picture was rather different (Figures 9b and 9a): each succeeding leaving group was a little less likely than the previous one to get training immediately after leaving full time education, though after a few months the numbers in training picked up. However for eighteen year old leavers with five or more O Levels but no A Levels the increase was not sufficient to bring them up to the level of women who had left one or two years previously. As with the men, come the early twenties women with one to four O Levels but no A Levels appeared equally likely to be getting training no matter what age they left full time education. For women with five or more O Levels the trends were less stable, but there is a suggestion that the 18 year old leavers may have made up some lost ground at the ages of 22 and 23.

For women, therefore, with the possible exception of those with no O Levels, staying on in full time education did not increase their chances of getting training in their job unless they improved their qualifications at the same time. In the long term staying on did not damage their chances either, though they had to wait a while before they caught up with the earlier leavers.

Discussion

The experience of the NCDS cohort shows that staying on in full time education for one or two years beyond the minimum leaving age in general paid off, despite the severe increase in unemployment that took place between 1974 and 1976. Although the later leavers suffered higher rates of unemployment when they first entered the labour market, their position rapidly improved, and when unemployment rates shot up again between 1979 and 1981 they were much less badly affected than their peers who had left school at 16. Although craft apprenticeships were easiest to obtain at the age of 16, they were by no means closed to 17 or even 18 year olds, and someone seeking an apprenticeship offering high quality training leading to good qualifications may have benefitted from staying on in order to improve their GCE results. Older leavers also had a better chance of getting a job with non-apprenticeship training, and they continued to be more likely than early leavers to be given training even in their twenties.

With some exceptions, young people who stayed on in full time education also compared relatively favourably with young people who left earlier with equally good qualifications. In particular those with no GCE passes who had stayed an extra year both had a lower unemployment rate and were more likely to get training in their job than unqualified young people who left at 16, though this may have been due to factors other than the extra year of education. Young men who left at 17 or 18 with no more GCE passes than men who left one or two years earlier were more likely to get training than the early leavers, and both men and women who stayed on one or two years had in the long run, despite their initial problems due to the way

that unemployment had risen in the meantime, no worse a level of unemployment than men or women who had left earlier with the same number of O Levels. Only women who left at 18 with five or more O Levels but no A Levels appeared to get less training in their first two years in the labour market than women who left earlier with the same qualifications.

What advice, then, should be given to young people approaching school leaving age today? Circumstances have changed a good deal since 1974, and now only a minority of 16 year old leavers find full time permanent work. There has also been a dramatic decline in the number of apprenticeships available. For 16 year olds in some parts of the country the choice in effect is between more education, YTS or nothing, and those who stay on in school or college despite poor examination results are probably less well motivated on average than their counterparts in 1974, when jobs could be found by most minimum age leavers. They may as a result gain fewer benefits from their prolonged education.

At the time of writing nobody has yet completed the new two year YTS, and a lot will depend on how successful YTS graduates are in securing permanent jobs and on how seriously employers take the training that YTS can offer. The fact that YTS pays a training allowance and staying on at school pays nothing must influence some young people, and is seen by many as anomalous. Yet on the evidence of this paper continuing full time education can offer benefits even to those of relatively low academic potential, and perhaps more attention should be paid to the role that school and college can play in the vocational education of a generation for whom there are very few jobs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

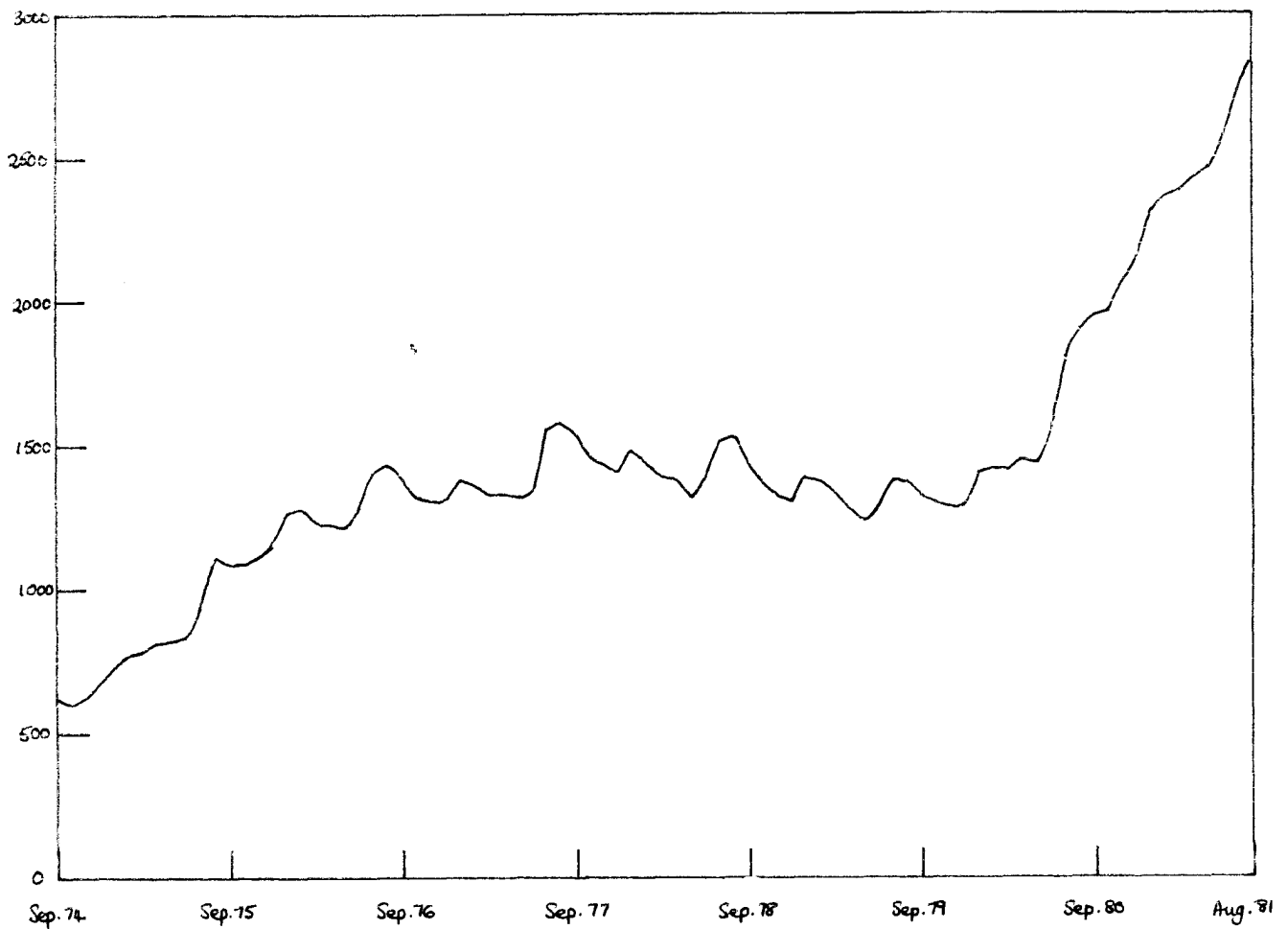
The author gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the ESRC for this work, and the help provided by Ken Fogelman, Peter Shepherd and Bob Weiburn of the NCDS Support Unit at City University. I would also like to thank my colleague George Smith for advice and insights on a number of points, and Martin Range of the Computing and Research Support Unit of the Social Studies Faculty, Oxford University, who undertook the more complex programming required to manipulate the data. Pauline Jones, Lucy Kinsman, John Micklewright and David Raffe made helpful comments on an earlier draft.

NOTES

(1) J.Micklewright, S.Nickell and J.Payne: Young People's Early Careers: an Analysis of Employment History Data from NCDS IV. ESRC grant no. F00232294.

(2) In particular, the start and end dates of up to four jobs only were recorded, and similarly of up to four spells of unemployment or time out of the labour force and of up to four full time education courses. Also time was not recorded if it was spent in a succession of short jobs, each lasting less than one month, and holiday jobs were excluded. Additional coding of the original interview documents undertaken by Peter Elias at the Institute for Employment Research has subsequently

Figure 2: Total unemployment Great Britain, 1974-1981 (thousands).



Source: Employment Gazette (Department of Employment); various issues.

supplied much of this missing data, but at the time of writing was not yet available.

(3) At the time of writing data on unemployment rates in the travel-to-work areas in which the respondents lived was being added to the NCDS data base, but was not yet available for analysis.

(4) The Youth Opportunities Programme was not launched until 1978, and prior to that government schemes for the young unemployed were on a very small scale. The few respondents who did a FOPS course or other government special scheme for the unemployed are counted here as unemployed for the duration of the course.

(5) The aggregate figures reported in Figure 1 are of course compatible with the hypothesis that women who prolonged their education were more likely to have babies at a young age than early leavers, but returned to work very quickly afterwards. Further analysis of the data not reported in this paper shows this (implausible) hypothesis to be false.

(6) The figures are not given here but may be obtained from the author on request.

(7) Throughout the paper the term 'O and A Level GCE' is taken to encompass the Scottish equivalents. O and A Level GCE passes are those which were reported to be held at age 23, and they may therefore include a small number which were obtained on part time courses after leaving full time education. The question which was used to obtain information on O Level passes was as follows: 'How

many O Level passes, Scottish O grades, or CSE grade 1's have you got in total, including O Level passes at A Level?' Thus O Level grades A-C are not distinguished from grades D and E, and it is unclear whether respondents would have counted the latter as passes or not. However although the grade system was introduced in Scotland in 1973 (but not until 1975 in England and Wales), it is likely that most Scottish respondents reported only A-C 'passes'. It will be noted also that there is no information on CSE passes below grade 1. More complete information about the examination passes of the NCDS cohort was collected from their schools and other places of education, but it was not accessible to the present author at the time that this paper was being written.

(3) It is probable that the amount of time spent in nursing training is underestimated in these data. Student nurses were treated as employees, and the periods of time which they spent full time in the classroom were counted as separate training courses. In 1976, when the majority of student nurses in NCDS would have begun their training, the general pattern (with some variations between health authorities) was for six weeks to be spent in the classroom initially followed by a further 18 weeks of classroom time split into separate one or two week blocks. As NCDS IV recorded details of up to three training courses each lasting a minimum of two weeks, it follows that 10 weeks training were recorded out of the full 24 weeks required for qualification. This is a significant omission, as 21% of the first training courses followed by all women in the NCDS cohort were in medical nursing, and unless there are areas where training in male-dominated fields has been similarly underestimated, it may mean that the training received by women has been underestimated relative to

that received by men.

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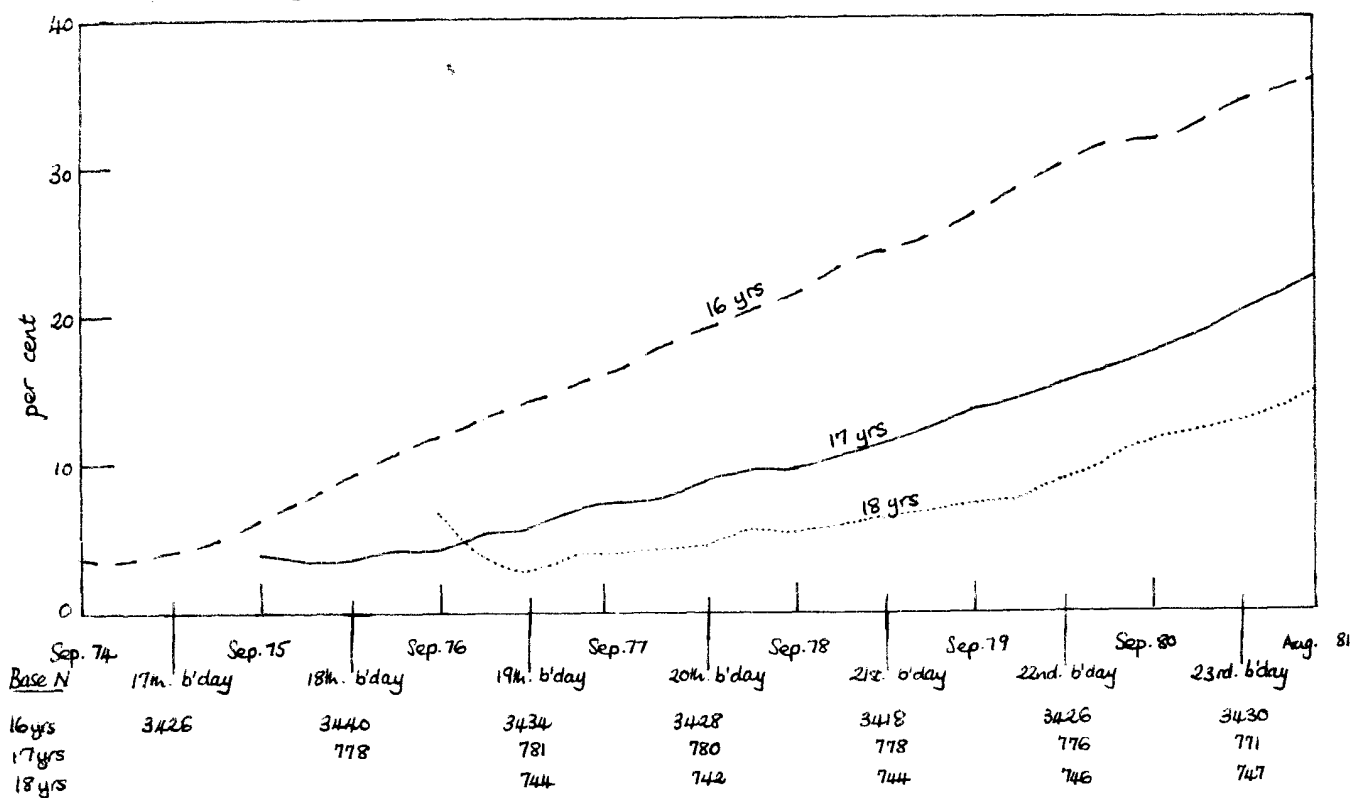
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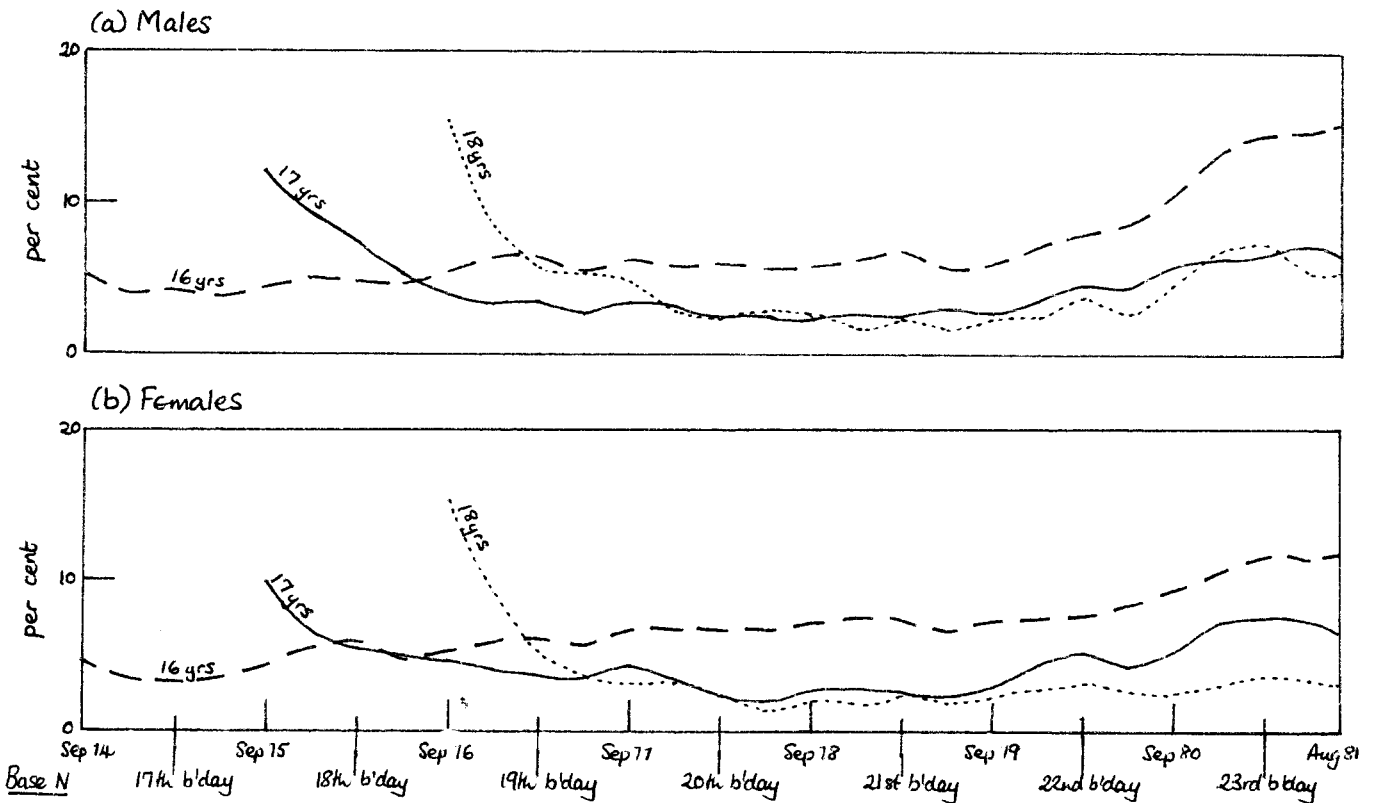
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Figure 1: Proportion of females in the cohort out of the labour force, by age at leaving full time education



Note Data in this and all succeeding figures (apart from Figure 2) are plotted at three month intervals.

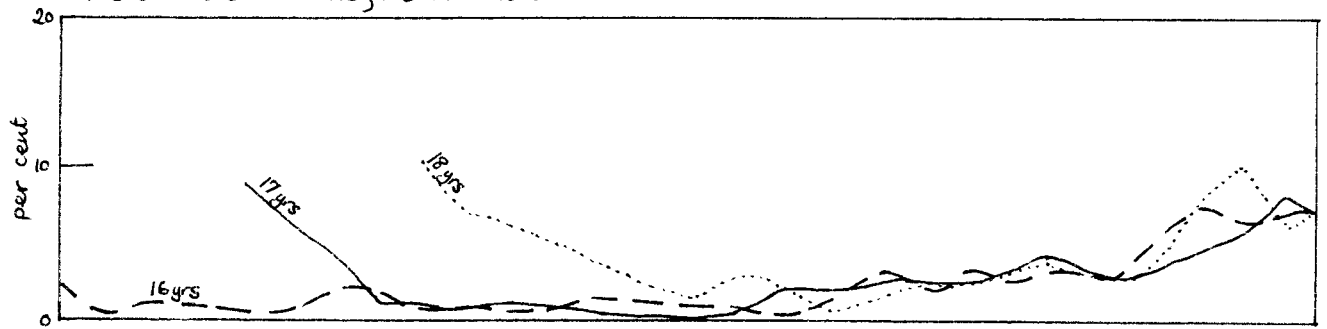
Figure 3: Proportion of the economically active who were unemployed, by age of leaving full time education and sex.



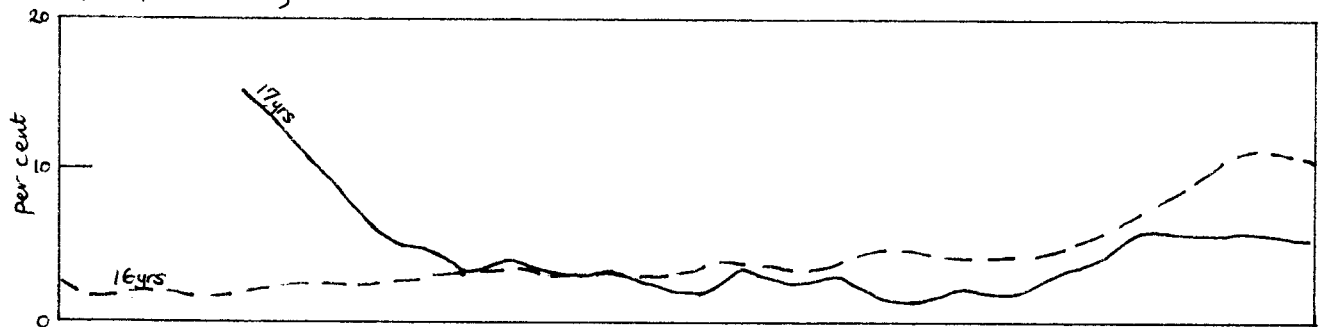
Base N	Sep 14	Sep 15	Sep 16	Sep 17	Sep 18	Sep 19	Sep 20	Aug 81
(a)								
16 yrs	3857	3853	3841	3842	3830	3822	3828	
17 yrs		557	557	558	557	558	555	
18 yrs			442	449	450	448	450	
(b)								
16 yrs	3287	3125	2949	2776	2593	2398	2251	
17 yrs		747	734	709	690	658	617	
18 yrs			718	705	695	678	651	

Figure 4: Proportion of the economically active who were unemployed, by age of leaving full time education and qualifications: males only.

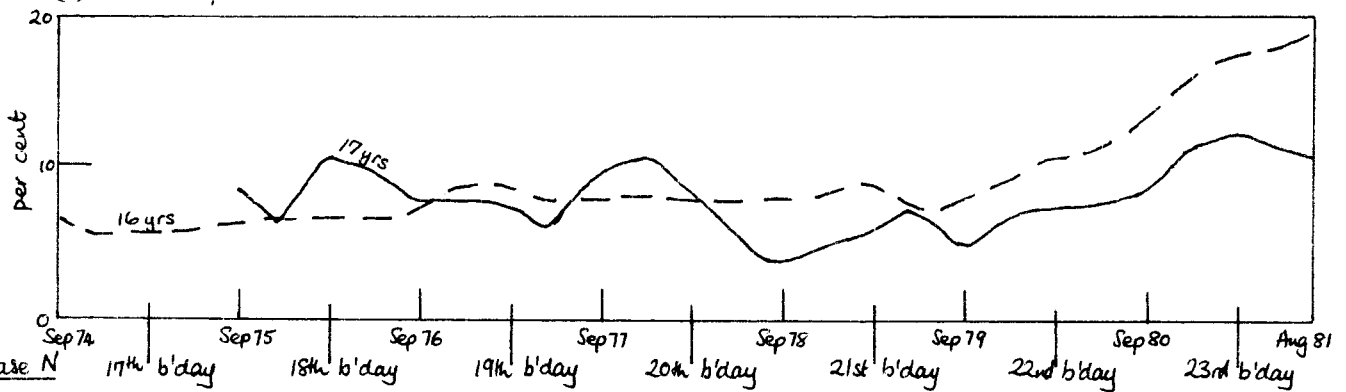
(a) 5 or more O levels; no A levels



(b) 1-4 O levels; no A levels



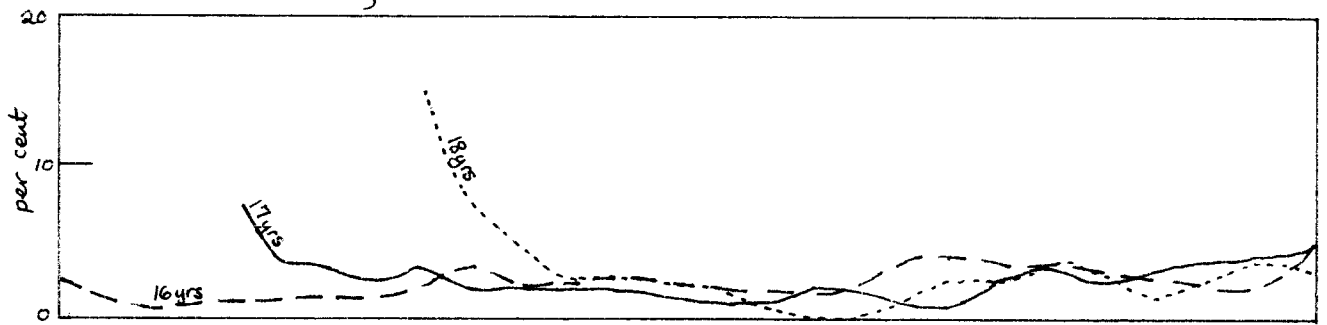
(c) no GCE passes



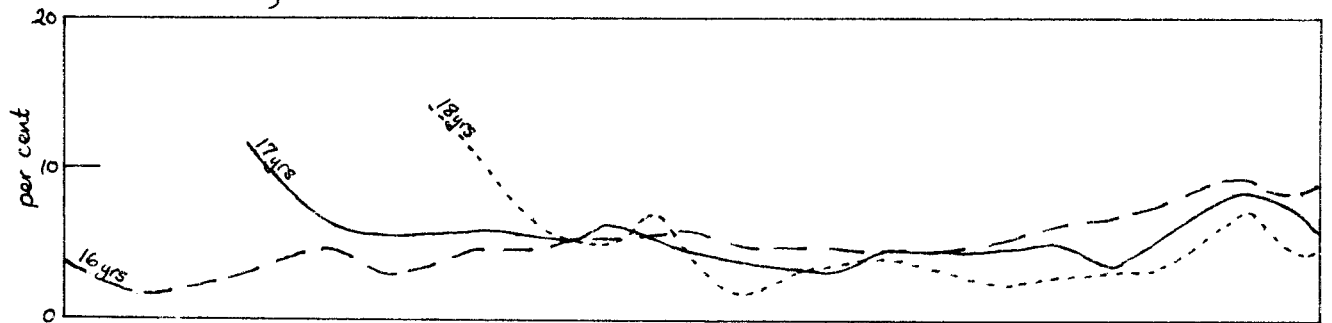
Base N	Sep 74	17th b'day	Sep 75	18th b'day	Sep 76	19th b'day	Sep 77	20th b'day	Sep 78	21st b'day	Sep 79	22nd b'day	Sep 80	23rd b'day	Aug 81
(a) 16 yrs	314		316		315		316		316		315		317		
17 yrs		182		181		184		183		184		184		184	
18 yrs				125		127		128		127		127		127	
(b) 16 yrs	1114		1119		1116		1116		1112		1112		1112		1107
17 yrs		226		226		223		225		224		224		220	
(c) 16 yrs	2429		2418		2410		2410		2402		2395		2404		2404
17 yrs		105		105		106		105		106		106		106	

Figure 5: Proportion of the economically active who were unemployed, by age of leaving full time education and qualifications: females only.

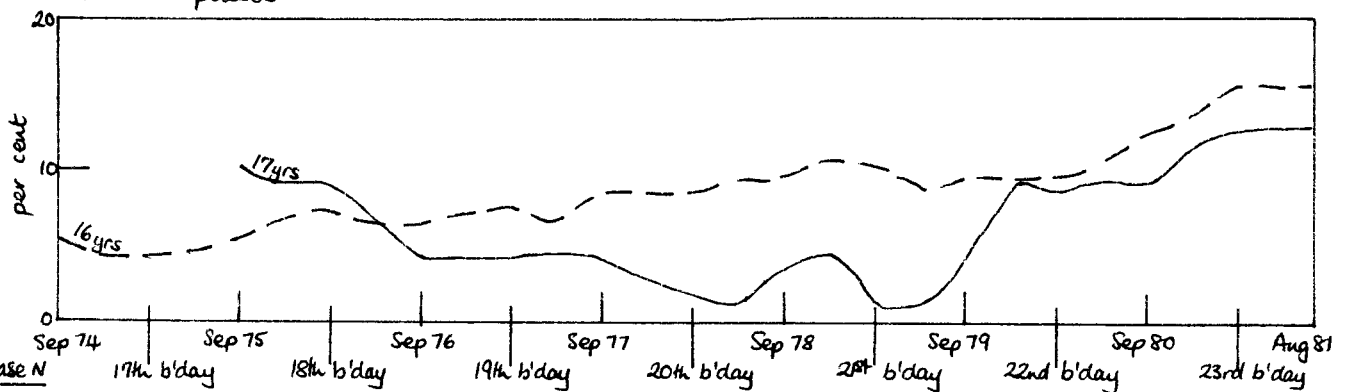
(a) 5 or more O levels; no A levels



(b) 1-4 O levels; no A levels

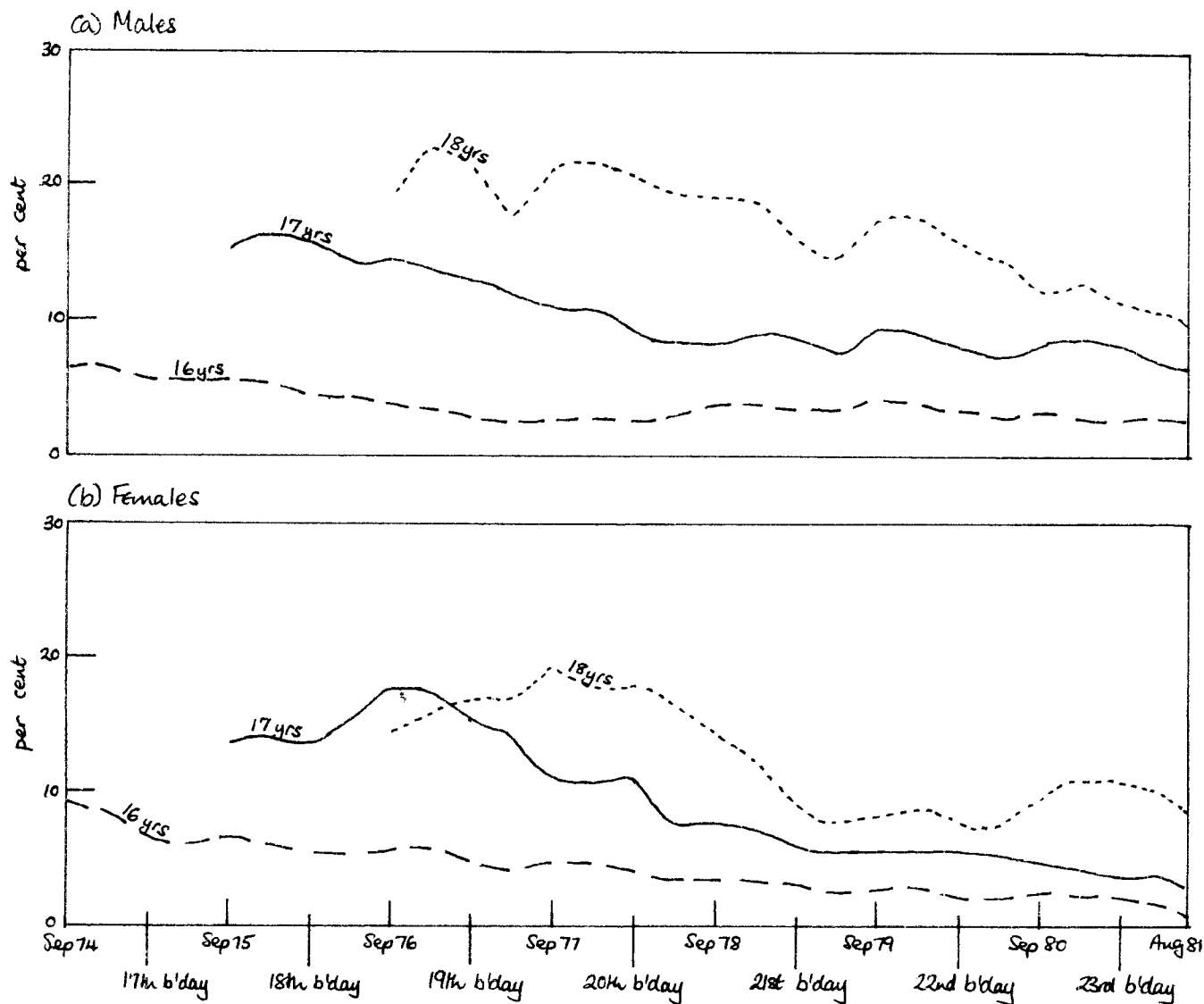


(c) no GCE passes



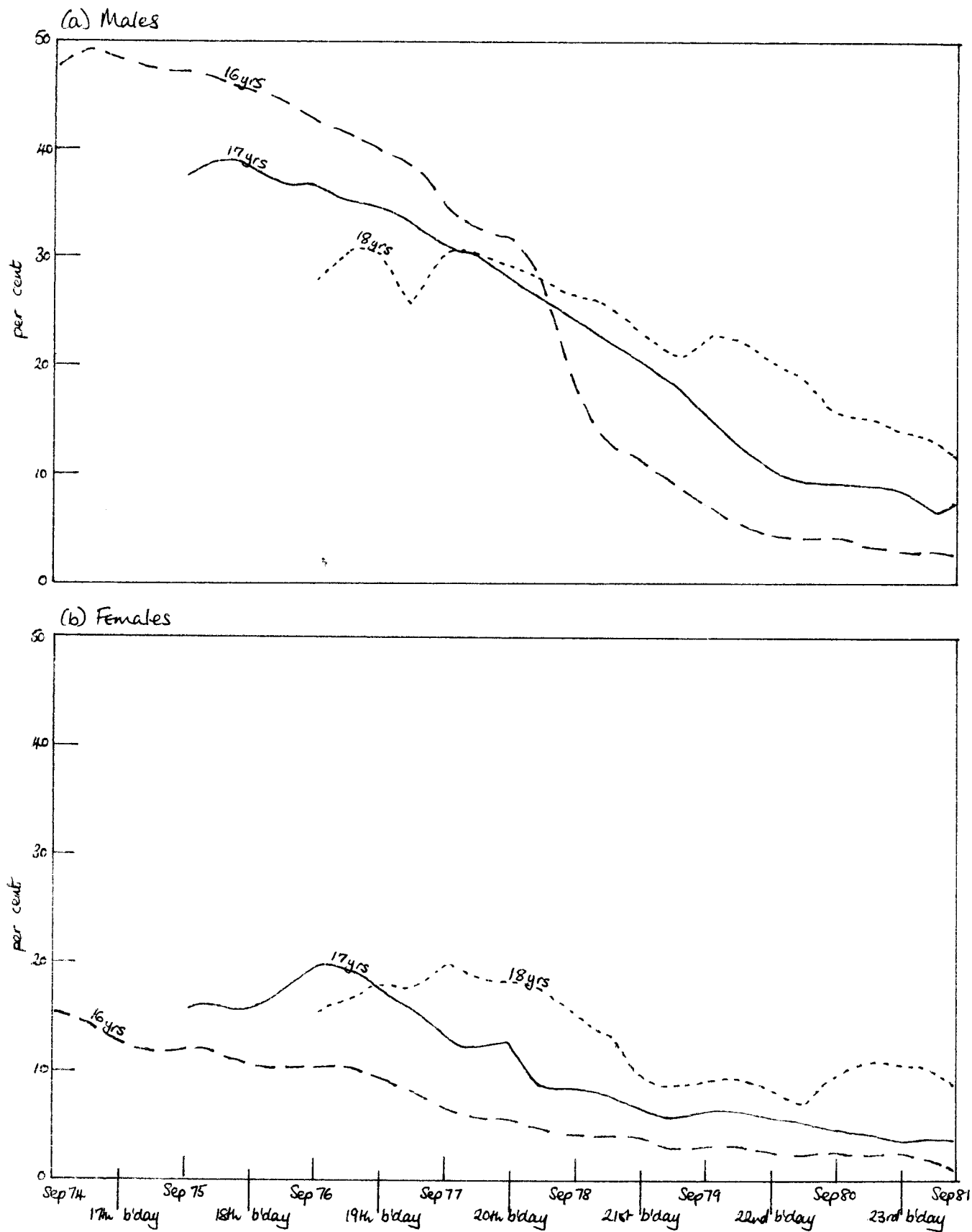
Base N	Sep 74	17th b'day	Sep 75	18th b'day	Sep 76	19th b'day	Sep 77	20th b'day	Sep 78	21st b'day	Sep 79	22nd b'day	Sep 80	23rd b'day	Aug 81
(a) 16yrs	298		296		295		290		273		268		263		
17yrs		261		257		246		247		237		223		223	
18yrs			208		208		206		198		186		186		
(b) 16yrs	1122		1087		1041		1003		951		895		850		
17yrs		309		306		294		285		268		250		250	
18yrs			181		176		171		166		162		162		
(c) 16yrs	1867		1742		1613		1483		1369		1235		1138		
17yrs		116		109		109		101		97		94		94	

Figure 6: Proportion of the economically active who were in non-apprenticeship training in a full time job, by age of leaving full time education and sex.



Note Base N's as in Figure 3.

Figure 7: Proportion of the economically active who were either apprenticed or in non-apprenticeship training in a full time job, by age of leaving full time education and sex.



Note Base N's as in Figure 3.

Figure 8: Proportion of the economically active who were in non-apprenticeship training in a full time job, by age of leaving full time education and qualifications: males only.

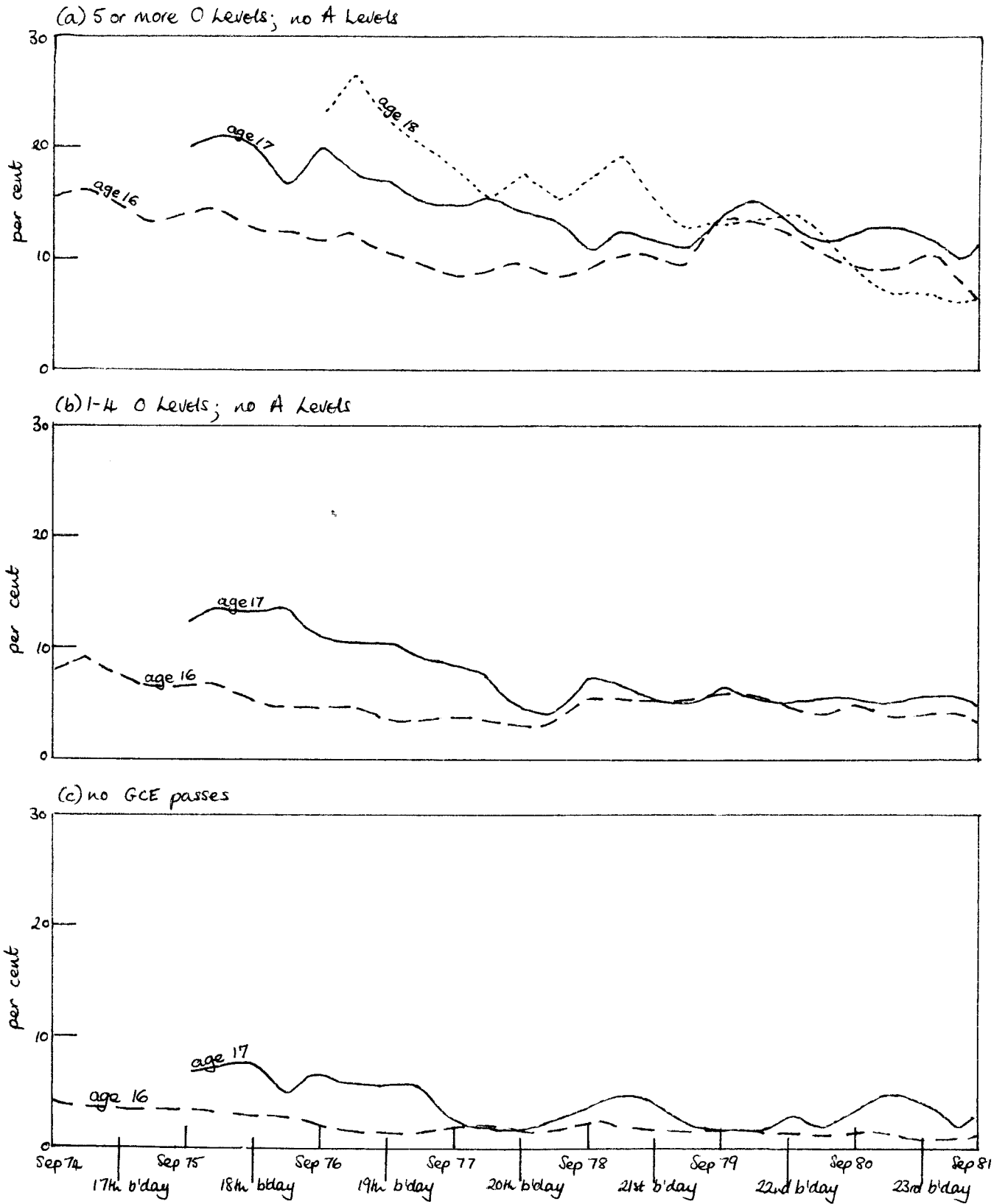
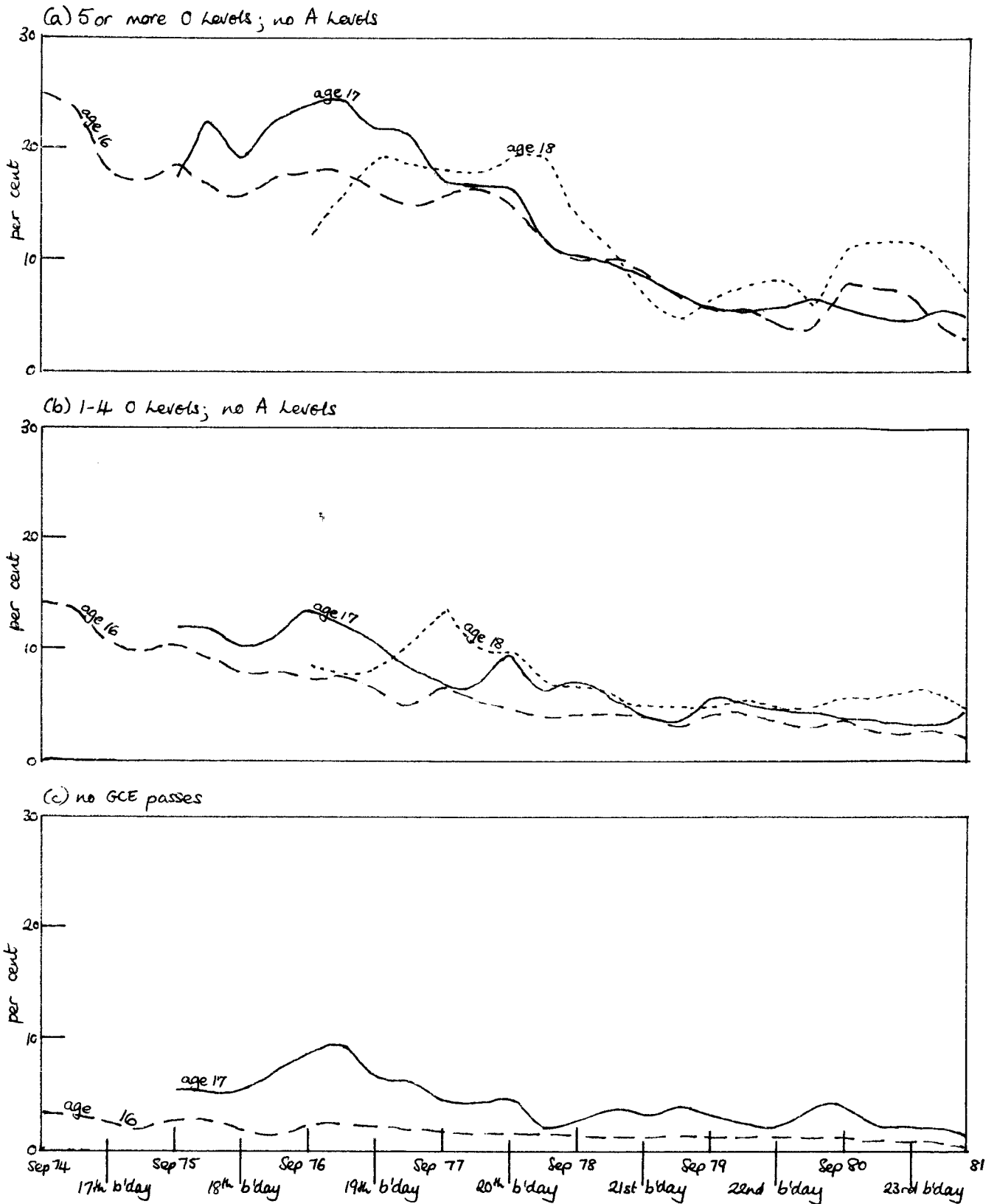


Figure 9: Proportion of the economically active who were in non-apprenticeship training in a full time job, by age of leaving full time education and qualifications: females only.



Note Base N's as in Figure 5

Table I Age of first leaving continuous full time education, by sex

	men %	women %	all %
before Sept. 1974 (age 16)	64.1	56.9	60.5
Sept. 1974 - Aug. 1975 (age 17)	10.0	13.7	11.9
Sept. 1975 - Aug. 1976 (age 18)	10.2	14.1	12.1
Sept. 1976 or later (age 19+) ¹	15.7	15.3	15.5
Total (N)	100.0 (6243)	100.0 (6257)	100.0 (12500)

¹ Including those still in full time education at age 23.

Table II Proportion of the cohort in each leaving group who later returned to full time education, by sex

	men	women	all
16 year old leavers (Base N)	2.6% (4001)	3.1% (3561)	2.9% (7562)
17 year old leavers (Base N)	9.7% (627)	8.9% (858)	9.2% (1485)
18 year old leavers (Base N)	27.8% (636)	15.1% (882)	20.4% (1518)

Table III Proportion of the cohort who first left full time education at various ages and had not returned to full time education by the age of 23, by sex

	men %	women %	all %
left "for good" at:			
16	62.4	55.1	58.8
17	9.1	12.5	10.8
18	7.4	12.0	9.7
19+ ¹	13.4	13.9	13.6
left but returned later	7.8	6.6	7.2
Total (N)	100.0 (6243)	100.0 (6257)	100.0 (12500)

¹ Including those still in full time education at age 23.

Table IV Proportion of economically active males who were in an apprenticeship in the September after leaving full time education, by number of O Level GCE passes and leaving group

	Number of O Level GCE's			
	none	1-4	5+	all
16 year old leavers (Base N)	35% (2399)	53% (1098)	46% (309)	41% (3806)
17 year old leavers (Base N)	24% (103)	23% (226)	21% (209)	22% (538)
18 year old leavers (Base N)	10% (21)	13% (82)	7% (300)	8% (403)

Table 3. Proportion of economically active young people who were getting non-apprenticeship training in the September after leaving full time education, by qualifications, sex and leaving group

	16 year old leavers	17 year old leavers	18 year old leavers
<u>Men</u>			
no O or A Level GCE's (Base N)	4% (2399)	7% (103)	0% (21)
1-4 O Level GCE's; no A levels (Base N)	8% (1098)	13% (220)	4% (69)
5+ O Level GCE's; no A Levels (Base N)	16% (309)	20% (173)	23% (114)
A Level GCE (Base N)	- -	27% (41)	24% (199)
<u>Women</u>			
no O or A Level GCE's (Base N)	4% (1880)	5% (114)	2% (55)
1-4 O Level GCE's; no A Levels (Base N)	14% (1116)	12% (313)	8% (172)
5+ O Level GCE's; no A Levels (Base N)	25% (292)	17% (253)	12% (193)
A Level GCE (Base N)	- -	27% (56)	22% (246)

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NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY

The National Child Development Study (NCDS) is a continuing longitudinal study which is seeking to follow the lives of all those living in Great Britain who were born between 3 and 9 March, 1958.

It has its origins in the Perinatal Mortality Survey (PMS). This was sponsored by the National Birthday Trust Fund and designed to examine the social and obstetric factors associated with the early death or abnormality among the 17,000 children born in England, Scotland and Wales in that one week.

To date there have been four attempts to trace all members of the birth cohort in order to monitor their physical, educational and social development. These were carried out by the National Children's Bureau in 1965 (when they were aged 7), in 1969 (when they were aged 11), in 1974 (when they were aged 16) and in 1981 (when they were aged 23). In addition, in 1978, details of public examination entry and performance were obtained from the schools, sixth-form colleges and FE colleges.

For the birth survey information was obtained from the mother and from medical records by the midwife. For the purposes of the first three NCDS surveys, information was obtained from parents (who were interviewed by health visitors), head teachers and class teachers (who completed questionnaires), the schools health service (who carried out medical examinations) and the subjects themselves (who completed tests of ability and, latterly, questionnaires). In addition the birth cohort was augmented by including immigrants born in the relevant week in the target sample for NCDS1-3.

The 1981 survey differs in that information was obtained from the subject (who was interviewed by a professional survey research interviewer) and from the 1971 and 1981 Censuses (from which variables describing area of residence were taken). Similarly, during the collection of exam data in 1978 information was obtained (by post) only from the schools attended at the time of the third follow-up in 1974 (and from sixth-form and FE colleges, when these were identified by schools). On these last two occasions case no attempt was made to include new immigrants in the survey.

All NCDS data from the surveys identified above are held by the ESRC Data Archive at the University of Essex and are available for secondary analysis by researchers in universities and elsewhere. The Archive also holds a number of NCDS-related files (for example, of data collected in the course of a special study of handicapped school-leavers, at age 18; and the data from the 5% feasibility study, conducted at age 20, which preceded the 1981 follow-up), which are similarly available for secondary analysis.

Further details about the National Child Development Study can be obtained from the NCDS User Support Group.