

# THE HARD-CORE IN TRAINING — WHO MAKES IT?

*a study report from  
3M indicating importance  
of motivation*

Early definitions of "hard-core" unemployable in the labor market centered around demographic variables. "Hard-core" tended to be defined as older persons, less well-educated, usually part of some minority ethnic group. For example, Fine<sup>1</sup> uses this basic kind of definition. In other words, these were persons most likely *not* to have jobs and therefore, the hard-core of the labor market in terms of employability.

In the last few years, however, many training programs aimed at the so-called hard-core have been set up throughout the United States with encouraging results. Individuals labeled hard-core have, through training, been able to obtain regular jobs. Unfortunately little data are available on who succeeds in these programs and few programs have been set up to take in a wide range of the hard-core group. Most programs have tended to specialize in particular age or ethnic groups. For example, Gurin<sup>2</sup> has summarized a job training project for youths, 19-22, nearly all black. Hodgson and Brenner<sup>3</sup> review Lockheed's success in two programs, one dealing with younger unemployed in Atlanta (mostly Negro) and the other aimed at older Mexican-Americans in California. The Department of Labor<sup>4</sup> has published a report on the Concentrated Employment Programs (CEP) which outlines how to conduct such training programs in general but does not give any success data.

This article, however, presents some data on success of various groups in a hard-core training program that is literally open to all comers. From the data available, there is some need to re-define the concept of hard-core in motivational rather than demographic terms.

## METHOD

Demographic data and test information were collected for the first 128 male participants or trainees in 3M Company's Factory Training Center Program. This program, funded partially by the Department of Labor, was aimed at helping the so-called "hard-core" unem-

ployed in the Twin Cities area to train for regular production and other jobs in a "halfway house" atmosphere. Trainees worked at various kinds of jobs in separate training center location until considered ready for transfer to regular jobs in the main plant. The intent, of course, was to help individuals learn how to do jobs but also to help create regular work habits, such as good attendance.

Preliminary screening was minimal. Individuals had to meet the "poverty" criterion which meant simply a limited income. No testing was done in advance in hiring; individuals with any kind of problem were accepted (i.e. financial, criminal, alcoholism, drugs, etc.). The test information collected consisted of achievement test data given during the first week of employment to determine if an individual should be referred for remedial education which also was part of the center program. Persons scoring at the sixth grade level or above did *not* enter remedial education; any one below that level could volunteer to join.

Compared to other hard-core programs, this one was relatively unique in two ways. First, the center itself was *not* part of the regular factory so was a "halfway house" approach. Second, the almost complete lack of screening insured a highly heterogeneous sample, truly cutting across the "hard-core" population, whether minority or white.

Demographic data were collected over a period of approximately one year on 128 male trainees and comparisons were made between those who transferred to regular jobs and those who terminated (usually those who quit or left). It should be noted that females did participate in the program but the number was small. Females, as is known, are more employable and hence, less likely to seek out such hard-core programs.

## RESULTS

Table I shows the ethnic make-up of the total group and their various success ratios. Overall, 25 per cent were success-

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**Table I**  
**PER CENT SUCCESSFUL OF VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS**  
**AT FACTORY TRAINING CENTER TOGETHER WITH**  
**SUCCESS RATIO FOR EACH GROUP**

Ethnic Group	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ethnic Group	Number	% of Total Group	Successful (Number Transferred)	% Successful of Total Group (3÷1)	% Successful of Total Transferred Group*	Success Ratio (5÷2)
American Indian	14	10.9	3	21.4	9.4	.86
Spanish-American	12	9.4	4	33.3	12.5	1.33
White	26	20.3	3	11.5	9.4	.46
Black	76	59.4	22	28.9	68.7	1.16
Total	128	100.0	32	25.0	100.0	1.00

\*Chi-Square for Transfers vs. Total Group = 8.54; Significant at .05 level.

ful (32 to 128 transferred to regular jobs). The large black group and the small Spanish-American group had the best success ratios (1.16 and 1.33, respectively).

The white group, by far, was the worst of the four ethnic groups in question. Only three out of 26 (11.5 per cent) whites transferred even though whites made up 20.3 per cent of the total group. Whites accounted for only 9.4 per cent (3 of 32) of the total group transferred. Minority groups then did much better relatively in terms of "making it" or being transferred to regular jobs than did whites. The chi-square for this is significant ( $\chi=8.54$ ) at the .05 level.

Table II shows the major demographic data comparisons. From this table come these results:

1. *Age*. Transfers in all groups (black, whites, etc.) are *older*, on the average, than terminees (31.1 vs.

23.7 years). This is most pronounced in the largest sub-group, black, but the trend is strong for all four groups. The mean difference between the total terminee group and the total transfer group of 7.4 years is highly significant (.001 level of probability).

2. *Marital Status*. As would be expected from the age findings, terminees were more likely to be single overall. However, when the four groups are looked at separately only the black group shows this trend, however. In the three other smaller groups, transfers are more likely to be single.

3. *Education*. The primary result here is that in the larger, black group, a much higher percentage of transfers have eighth grade or less education (22.7 per cent vs. 9.3 per cent). For whites, the opposite is true, however, (0 per cent vs. 17.4 per cent). In general,

the white group is less well-educated than the black group. Close to half of the black group are high school grads. Numbers are quite small in the various categories, of course.

4. *Length of Time at Center*. As would be expected, transfers tended to stay longer at the center (113.0 vs. 57.4 days, on the average). The mean difference of 55.6 days is statistically significant at the .001 level. Within groups, blacks were more likely to transfer more quickly.

In general, however, one main factor emerged to separate transfers (successful) from terminees (unsuccessful) — age. Older trainees were more likely to succeed.

#### YOUNG HARD-CORE?

Table III shows comparisons of achievement test scores for the various groups. As is seen, in nearly every group, ter-

Table II  
COMPARISON OF FOUR ETHNIC GROUPS DIVIDED ON  
TRANSFER-TERMINEE BASIS ON VARIOUS DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Variable	AMERICAN INDIAN			SPANISH-AMERICAN			WHITE			BLACK			TOTAL GROUP								
	Terminees	Transfers	Mean	Terminees	Transfers	Mean	Terminees	Transfers	Mean	Terminees	Transfers	Mean	Terminees	Transfers	Mean						
1. Age	11	22.9	3	25.0	8	22.5	4	27.8	23	24.4	3	27.7	54	23.8	19	33.4	96	23.7	29	31.3**	
a. (Range)		(18-29)		(19-30)		(18-27)		(19-36)		(18-45)		(21-40)		(17-48)		(18-50)					
2. Marital Status	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
a. Single	6	54.5	2	66.7	1	12.5	2	50.0	13	56.5	2	66.7	31	57.4	9	40.9	51	53.1	15	46.9	
b. Married	5	45.5	1	33.3	5	62.5	2	50.0	5	21.7	1	33.3	15	27.8	6	27.3	30	31.2	10	31.2	
c. Other	0	0	0	0	2	25.0	0	0	5	21.7	0	0	8	14.8	7	31.8	15	15.6	7	21.9	
3. Education (highest year completed)	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
a. 12	3	27.3	0	0	3	37.5	0	0	7	30.4	2	66.7	23	42.6	10	45.4	36	37.5	12	37.5	
b. 11	1	9.1	0	0	1	12.5	1	25.0	4	17.4	0	0	10	18.5	2	9.1	16	16.7	3	9.4	
c. 10	2	18.2	1	33.3	2	25.0	1	25.0	5	21.7	1	33.3	9	16.7	3	13.6	18	18.7	6	18.8	
d. 9	5	45.5	2	66.7	1	12.5	0	0	3	13.0	0	0	1	1.8	0	0	10	10.4	2	6.3	
e. 8 or less	0	0	0	0	1	12.5	2	50.0	4	17.4	0	0	5	9.3	5	22.7	10	10.4	7	21.9	
f. Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	11.1	2	9.1	6	6.2	2	6.3	
4. Length of Time at Center	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	
a. Number of Days	12*	41.6	3	148.7	9*	115.8	4	133.5	24*	50.3	3	134.7	60*	54.7	21	102.2	105*	57.4	31	113.9	

\* Includes terminees who received a "second chance" at the Center.

\*\* Mean difference - Age - t=4.77 Significant at .001 level.

\*\*\* Mean difference - Length of Time - t = 4.89 Significant at .001 level.

Table III  
COMPARISON OF ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES FOR VARIOUS  
ETHNIC GROUPS DIVIDED ON TERMINEE-TRANSFER BASIS

Variable	AMERICAN INDIAN			SPANISH-AMERICAN			WHITE			BLACK			TOTAL GROUP							
	Terminees	Transfers	Mean	Terminees	Transfers	Mean	Terminees	Transfers	Mean	Terminees	Transfers	Mean	Terminees	Transfers	Mean					
*1. Word Meaning	8	8.1	3	6.9	5	6.2	3	5.4	20	8.0	3	8.8	41	6.3	23	5.4	74	6.9	32	5.9***
*2. Paragraph Meaning	8	8.3	3	6.2	5	6.5	3	5.0	20	7.4	3	6.8	41	6.1	23	4.7	74	6.7	32	5.1†
**3. Arithmetic	8	6.7	2	5.8	8	4.4	3	4.1	20	6.1	3	5.4	43	4.7	23	4.3	79	5.3	31	4.5††

\* Stanford Achievement Test - Reading

\*\* Stanford Achievement Test - Arithmetic

\*\*\* Mean difference - Word Meaning t = 1.85 Not Significant

† Mean difference - Paragraph Meaning t = 2.89 Significant at .01 level.

†† Mean difference - Arithmetic t = 1.77 Not Significant

minees score better on tests than transfers. Overall, only one mean difference, on the test of Paragraph Meaning, is statistically significant, however. But the trend is strong, indicating that the person less likely to obtain a job is better on the tests and, one suspects, more intelligent.

This fact coupled with the age differences found suggests the hypothesis that older, less smart individuals are better bets to succeed in this program. The true "hard-core" then may not be the older person with few skills, but the younger, brighter individual. And this does reflect some trends in modern society. As one of the young heroes in "Hair," the popular rock musical, says — "I don't want to be a lawyer or a doctor or a bum — I just want lots of money."

All of this, of course, ties in with motivation, and the data in Table IV shows a possible difference in this area as well.

Terminees did *not* participate as much in the remedial education program. Part of this is due to the fact that more terminees were at the sixth-grade level of ability or higher and were not eligible for remedial help. However, it is still reasonably certain that more of the transfer group had more motivation to help themselves in terms of furthering their education. Presumably, this motivation also carries over into all aspects of the training program including the major one of learning proper work habits.

Other reasons besides motivation could account for these differences, of course.

The program itself could be looked at more critically by the younger, brighter individual. The white participants in the program may well have been worse to start with and probably were than the minority group. Yet, these speculations could tie back also to lack of motivation.

#### IMPLICATIONS

This study, at least, suggests that older individuals who do worse on achievement tests are better bets to come through a hard-core training program than younger, seemingly more brighter persons. Similarly, this older group appears to be more motivated to help themselves in terms of utilizing remedial education programs than does the younger trainee and presumably also to do well in the whole training program.

In addition, minority trainees (black, American Indian, and Spanish-American) all have appreciably higher success rates (i.e. more transferred to regular jobs) than do whites.

All of this suggests that defining the hard-core as persons who have trouble finding jobs is outmoded. Apparently, older, less intelligent minority individuals who are last to get jobs, if given the opportunity, can succeed to an appreciable degree.

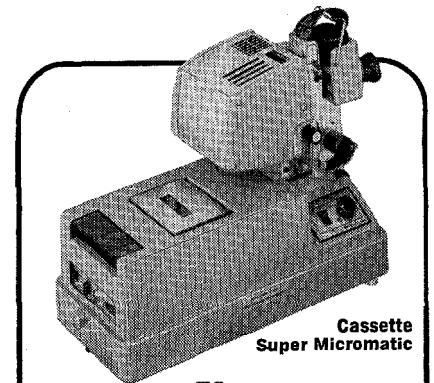
Hard-core now should be used more exclusively as a term for the non-motivated individual who, as is in this study, can be reasonably well-educated and young, but who, doesn't "make it." An obvious key to the hard-core problem, then, is motivation or lack of it.

#### REFERENCES

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3. Hodgson, J.D. and Brenner, M.H., "Successful Experience: Training Hard-core Unemployed," *Harvard Business Review*, 1968, 46, pp. 148-156.
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Table IV  
PARTICIPATION RATE

Group	Participation Rate In Educational Program	Mean (Average) Number of Hours in Program
Terminees	30 of 96 (31.2%)	29.9
Transfers	15 of 32 (46.8%)	68.3



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