4cyd CENTER FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

MONOGRAPH

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA Fall 2004

# Clarifying the World of Work for Our Youth: Vocations, Careers, and Jobs

Authors:

Brenda Bryant
*University of California, Davis*

Anisa Zvonkovic
*Oregon State University*

Juliana Raskauskas
*University of California, Davis*

Cheryl Peters
*Oregon State University*

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" This is a question often presented to children and youth. In reality the question is more than rhetorical as vocational development begins during childhood and continues in adolescence (Cook, Church, Ajanaku, Shadish, Kim, & Cohen,1996; Goldstein & Oldham, 1979; McGhee & Stockard, 1991; Seligman, Weinstock & Heflin, 1991; Trice, 1990; Vondracek, 2001). Some researchers have suggested that the early years of adolescence are especially crucial to the development of skills, knowledge, and values for the world of work (Jackson & Hornbeck, 1989).

Youth in our modern society are deprived of daily, firsthand knowledge of parents' means of earning a living, as only a small group of children observe their parents' work "at their side." We need to consider what our youth know about adult employment.

First, the following review will document the limitations of children's knowledge of their parents' employment and conceptualize the major meanings that adults give to their own employment choices. As we examine this, we suggest youth can have choice in what role adult work plays in contributing to a fulfilling life. Second, the review will consider direct experience with paid employment that youth have. In this matter, the empirical findings provide a cautionary tale to the popular views held by parents and teens regarding the value of teen employment since their common perceptions frequently collide with empirical findings. Research indicates that it is important to consider both the working conditions and number of hours youth spend working each week. Volunteer work will also be considered as a means of understanding the adult world of work.

Third, planned youth employment programs will be considered. These programs show particular promise for preparing youth for the world of adult work. They offer an array of benefits including exploration activities, an understanding of the link between school subjects and the world of work, and work-based mentoring.

Finally, in addition to understanding how the futures of our youth are linked to their early work experiences, this review will consider visions of employment offerings that our contemporary youth will need to negotiate. We'll argue that continued development of technology, changes in women's roles in society, and increases in diversity of the work force will be linked to changes in the future world of adult work. All these factors are making the boundaries between private life and work more permeable (Galinsky, 2000; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2001; Vondracek, 2001). Thus, the meaning and importance of one's vocational life must now, more than ever, be negotiated at home and at work.

In sum, in this review we consider the various meanings work can afford, the possibilities for conditions at work, and parent and teen employment experiences, to provide a basis for clarifying the work-related opportunities, challenges, and choices that our youth will face, thus preparing them for fulfilling adult employment options.

## Children's Understanding of the Meaning of Adult Work

Children and youth are clearly aware of the financial benefit that comes from their parents' employment. Based on intensive interviewing of 100 children and adolescents in the Families and Work Institute study,

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Galinsky (2000) found that 60% of children say that the best thing about their parents' work is the money earned. A mere 12% of children thought the best thing about their parents' work is that it helps people. Indeed, children are not fully aware that their parents actually like the work they do for pay. While Galinsky (2000) found that 61% of fathers and 69% of mothers reported that they liked their work "a lot," only 41% of their children thought their parents so liked their work. Thus, both the joy and the motivation or meaning attached to parents' work are not fully appreciated by our youth.

This suggests that parents and other adults invested in fostering the development of youth have the challenge to clarify more fully what role adult work can play in contributing to a fulfilling life. Such knowledge has the potential of leading our youth to make choices in adulthood that will provide more than a paycheck for basics and materialistic pleasures. Such a consideration focuses on issues that will allow our children's adult daily lives to be fulfilling.

There is choice in how people orient themselves to their work, and these orientations differentially influence how they experience life itself. Work can be a vocation, a career, or a job, and adults–even in the most restricted and routine jobs—can exert some influence on how they frame the essence and meaning of their work (Keyes & Haidt, 2003; Wrzesniewski, Rozin, & Bennet, 2003). A *vocation* is a calling, and in modern times this means that one perceives one's work as contributing to making the world a better place (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). It is the worker who defines whether or not his/her work is a calling, since no kind of external social or economic status is required for this point of view. Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) provide a clear illustration of how a vocation is not linked to status: A garbage collector who sees the work as making the world a cleaner, healthier place and works with this in mind has a calling. Callings are valuable because people who frame their work as such are maximally engaged and passionate about it. Furthermore, people with callings report higher job and life satisfaction than those who frame their work as careers or jobs (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Self-realization, intrinsic value, and social fulfillment all play a major role in a calling (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). However, there are alternative common orientations to work.

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Adults with *careers* work for the rewards that come with advancement through a particular organization or an occupational hierarchy that can cross particular organizations. The dominant sources of attention for those with a career are increased pay, prestige, or status through promotions and advancement in title (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). The major consequences desired by individuals with careers are higher self-esteem, increased power, and higher social standing (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). Extending our earlier illustration, a garbage collector could see the work as a career, moving from sorting trash at a facility to managing a small city garbage collection unit, to managing a waste management unit of which garbage collection is just one function, and moving to increasingly powerful management divisions as a result of past experience and, perhaps, furthering education accrued through community college programs and beyond. People in careers can be deeply engaged in their work, because the work is a source of desired or needed public rewards.

Finally, work can be simply a *job*, which means that the meaning of the work is the paycheck itself. Thus, a job is focused on the work as an instrument to "pay the bills," frequently so that a hobby or interest outside of work can be pursued (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Again using our illustration of a garbage collector, when garbage collecting is a *job*, this worker may be an avid sculptor whose employment supports basic food, clothing, and shelter requirements, and provides time outside of contracted work hours and financial resources to pursue a passion. A second example emphasizes that the particular field does not dictate the way the individual worker frames the work. Physicians may view their own work as neither a vocation nor a career, even though others might. A physician can see his or her work as a job with excellent financial rewards that allows pursuing a passion outside of the job.

Being clear that one has a choice in how one frames work is an important step in understanding the power and purpose one can have in adult work life. While there is no right or wrong orientation to work, it behooves us to know some likely outcomes from the choices we make in this arena.

While feeling competent to obtain high earnings or other highly valued external rewards has been conceptualized as promoting better work adjustment (Bandura, 1989), other research indicates that an exaggerated focus on financial success often has a deleterious effect on experiences of self-actualization (Kasser & Ryan, 1993).

In sum, the goals of employment are not as simple as "making money," since the ways people find meaning in their lives and work include more than a paycheck. Youth are clearer about the financial benefits of work than they are about other benefits. Preparing our youth for adulthood must include an exploration of both the benefits and limitations of employment in producing a rich, fulfilling life. This is a useful backdrop for considering the many decisions that need to be made in framing employment (e.g., vocation, career, or job) in relation to personal goals.

## Young People's Direct Experiences With Employment

Youth learn not only from parents and other adults in their lives, but also from their own direct experiences. Seventy-five percent of high school seniors in the United States are gainfully employed while attending school (Bachman & Schulenberg, 1993). During early adolescence, the typical American youngster is a full-time student without any work experience. During middle adolescence, American youth typically enter into a period of combined full-time school and part-time work, and this pattern continues until the end of formal schooling (Steinberg & Greenberger, 1980). Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, & McAuliffe (1982) found that the average working adolescent in their sample of 10th and 11th graders reported working 10 to 24 hours per week.

Approximately 20% of sophomores and more than 50% of seniors who are employed work at least 20 hours each week (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1995). Roughly 15% of employed seniors appear to work more than 30 hours each week (Bachman & Schulenberg, 1993; Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986; Manning, 1990; Steinberg & Cauffman, 1995). Furthermore, working many hours each week is slightly more common among youth in middle class families than among youth in less well-to-do families (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1995). There is evidence that working in excess of 15-20 hours weekly during the school year is more than a young person can tolerate without work taking an undesirable toll on his or her psychological well-being and future life in terms of education and employment options (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, & Vaux, 1982). Steinberg and Cauffman suggest that adolescents can obtain all the benefits of employment and avoid many of the potential costs by limiting the weekly hours of employment to 10 or fewer.

### Physical Risks of Jobs Often Available to Young People

In addition to number of hours worked each week, working conditions of jobs are also important considerations. Greenberger, Steinberg, and Ruggiero (1982) documented that the most common paid jobs held by teens were: (a) food service work; (b) retail sales and cashier work; (c) clerical work; (d) manual labor; (e) operative and skilled labor; and (f) cleaning. The National Consumers League (2002) and the Child Labor Coalition (2002) have analyzed data from the Department of Labor (2002) and have identified the jobs in which adolescents encounter the most physical harm, including death (see http://www.stopchildlabor.org/USchildlabor/childlaborUS.htm).

The most dangerous jobs are those that involve delivery and driving. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of deaths among 16-17 year old workers. Federal laws, though not always followed, have been designed to prevent some of this kind of hazard. Federal law prohibits use of motorized equipment (e.g., forklifts, loaders, and pavers) by those under the age of 18, and occupational driving among minors younger than 17 years old. Seventeen-year-olds are legally allowed to do *occasional* driving, defined as no more than one-third of their work time. In addition, delivery jobs and service calls that require driving to the homes of customers are prohibited for anyone under age 18.

The next most dangerous jobs are characterized by working alone in cash-based businesses and late-night work; cooking, with exposure to hot oil and grease, hot water and steam, and hot cooking surfaces; construction work; working at heights (e.g., painting ceilings); and traveling youth crews

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(e.g., magazine and book sales programs). This last job type is particularly troubling because children as young as 10 are recruited to sell candy, magazine subscriptions, and other items in neighborhoods or on street corners after dark, under dangerous conditions that are not supervised by adults. Dangers include motor vehicle accidents involving the child as either a pedestrian or passenger, vulnerability to assaults and abductions, and false claims about the rewards for this work. These data emphasize the importance for parents to be alert to the job requirements and the conditions under which youth are most at risk, and to be aware of federal laws designed to protect their children.

## "Naturally Occurring" Work Experience

"Naturally occurring" jobs in relation to youth development have been empirically scrutinized far more than the other types of teen work experiences. It is primarily white, suburban or urban high school juniors or seniors from working- or middle-class families who are employed (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1995). Children from the poorest families are not well represented among employed youth. Ethnic minorities, including children with parents who were foreign-born, are also less likely to be employed during the high school years (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1995). All this suggests that unequal access to employment experiences due to family financial status and cultural/ethnic heritage is part of the developmental context of youth today.

For those adolescents who do get paid work, parents generally attribute positive outcomes resulting from their children's employment (Mortimer & Johnson, 1998). These positive outcomes include development of a greater sense of responsibility, a good work ethic, money management skills, and development of friendships in the workplace. Is this what the empirical research findings lead us to conclude as well?

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### *Opportunities for Learning and Responsibility*

Greenberger et al. (1982) evaluated the paid work experiences of youth by making systematic observations within the most common teen work settings noted above. They took into account three kinds of opportunities a work setting can provide: (a) opportunities for learning, both formal and informal, from supervisors; (b) opportunities for exercising responsibility through initiative or autonomy; and (c) opportunities for social interaction with adults and peers.

Based on their data, collected through actual on-the-job observations of these most common youth jobs, only in clerical jobs do young people spend a substantial portion of their work time engaged in activities that involve the use of reading, writing, or arithmetic skills (Greenberger et al., 1982). In none of these types of jobs did young workers receive any marked, ongoing, formal training. Moreover, in no job setting did workers spend, on average, more than 20 percent of their time with a work supervisor.

Although none of these common jobs provided substantial opportunity in any of the dimensions noted above, retail jobs scored above the median on all three dimensions. Cleaning jobs were the poorest when considering all three types of opportunities. Cleaning jobs offered fewer than average opportunities for learning and ranked lowest in opportunities for initiative and autonomy, as well as opportunities for social interaction. Retail jobs provided the most opportunity for interaction with adults, while food service jobs provided the greatest amount of interaction with peers. While there is evidence that the development of responsibility is fostered by experiences involving the exercise of responsibility (Hill & Steinberg, as cited in Greenberger et al., 1982), the data generated in the Greenberger et al. (1982) study suggest that teens typically lack jobs that offer much opportunity for autonomy and initiative. Taken together, the jobs most readily available to youth were found to offer relatively little opportunity for learning, autonomy, or social interaction.

Nonetheless, based on self-report measures, paid employment experiences brought youth gains in their work orientation, which includes the ability to work with persistence, resistance to distraction, and competence (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, and Vaux, 1982). In this study, girls with paid employment experiences also reported that they gained in self-reliance whereas boys, especially those who worked many hours each week, reported a decline in their self-reliance. Given the objective assessment of what occurs in the work settings reported

above, further behavioral assessment of work orientation and self-reliance is warranted to confirm and understand the bases for these self-reports.

### *Quality of Environmental Conditions of Teen Work Settings*

What do teens learn about the adult workplace when we consider the environmental conditions in which their work occurs? High levels of noise, time pressure, temperature extremes, heavy lifting, and contact with dangerous equipment are examples of conditions that youth often encounter on their jobs (Ruggiero, Greenberger, & Steinberg, 1982). These poor environmental conditions cause physiological or psychological discomfort and contribute to job stress as well as psychological and health costs for employed teens (Ruggiero et al., 1982).

"Meaninglessness" of a job is also a form of job stress (Ruggiero et al., 1982). According to Ruggiero and colleagues, meaninglessness is characterized by work that is routine, repetitive and boring, and that affects no one, requires little skill, produces nothing of value, and offers little opportunity for learning. In addition, perceiving work as meaningless is linked to poor environmental conditions, autocratic supervision, negative social environment, and low wage structure (Ruggiero et al., 1982). Teen employment settings often have these poor conditions, even though parent and teen retrospective reports do not typically reflect this (Mortimer, Finch, Dennehy, Lee, & Beebe, 1994; Mortimer & Johnson, 1998).

### *Workplace Ethics*

Again, contrary to what one would expect in light of the parent and teen reports of the benefits of teen employment, there is disturbing evidence that poor ethical standards are frequently developed in the work settings of youth. Greenberger and Steinberg (1981) found that over half of employed youth report "shirking" job responsibilities when the opportunity to do so was available. Because of the menial nature of their jobs, employed teenagers tend to become cynical about work, and many admit to having stolen from their employers (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986; Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991).

A study of 212 working teens, for example, found that after an average of nine months on the job, more than 60 percent of first-time high-school-aged workers had committed at least one deviant, unethical act at work (Ruggiero et al., 1982). The two most prevalent forms of deviance reported were working while intoxicated on alcohol or other drugs, and giving away goods/employee theft. Lack of adult supervision is one factor that increases both of these deviant acts (Ruggiero et al., 1982). By their own report, only 38 percent of youth in the study did not engage in deviant, unethical behavior in their workplace. Forty-one percent of the teen workers had engaged in theft at work. The clear implications of these data are that work attitudes and concomitant behavior being learned in these jobs need to be monitored, and that clearly present, ongoing adult supervision is important for employed youth at their workplaces. While parents may think that working in the "real world" is a sign of their teen's maturity and healthy development, youth are at high risk for engaging in deviant behavior at the typical teen workplaces.

These disquieting findings with respect to cynicism and attitudes toward unethical practices of workers do not affect all youth equally (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, & Vaux, 1982). Steinberg and colleagues, in a longitudinal study, found that socioeconomic status is related to acceptance of unethical practices over time in a complex way. Among youth from white-collar families, those with work experience were more accepting of unethical practices than their non-employed counterparts over the same time period. Among youth from blue-collar families, Steinberg and colleagues found that work experience had no effect on their acceptance of unethical practices. Finally, employed youth from professional families were less accepting of unethical practices when they work. The risk of accepting unethical practices among workers, then, is clearest among youth from white-collar families. Having parents with jobs requiring professional training may buffer youth from becoming cynical, in ways that are not understood but are consistent with the advantage that parental education brings to childhood achievement in other domains.

Personal characteristics such as cynicism and materialism, coupled with certain workplace conditions, help to predict who will engage in deviant behavior at work (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero,

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& Vaux, 1982). Given the importance of ethical behavior, parents may want to examine their own materialistic attitudes, behavior, and cynicism with respect to ethical standards in the workplace and monitor those of their children. Environmental stresses at work, as well as the opportunity to engage in theft, were factors related to increased deviant behavior among youth at the workplace (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, & Vaux, 1982). In addition, Steinberg and colleagues found that a positive peer social environment was related to increased deviant behavior. It appears that positive peer relationships at work, coupled with low levels of adult supervision, prime the pump for deviant behavior. Thus, workplace conditions are again shown to be critical factors for parents to consider when sanctioning the employment of their minor children.

All this provides a reason why open communication between parents and teens is so important, providing the most effective and beneficial form of parental monitoring (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Children's developing attitudes toward materialism, the meaning of work, cynicism about work, and ethical standards at work are four aspects of their vocational development that merit parental monitoring. Parents can consider these important aspects of development in their evaluation of their children's readiness for available, naturally occurring paid work.

### *Money Management Skills*

Despite parental and youth views that responsibility and money management skills are learned through teen employment (Mortimer & Johnson, 1998), money earned from the employment of youth rarely goes to support the family or into savings. Instead, the money is spent on self-indulgent purchases such as designer clothing, expensive stereo equipment, movies, and eating out (Greenberger, Steinberg, Vaux, & McAuliffe, 1980). Financially, the employment of youth supports the enhancement of consumer materialism.

Generally, parents continue to exercise control over "big" item spending and, for the few youth who do save, parents influence the saving decisions regarding their children's earned money (Greenberger et al., 1980). Parents, on the whole, support their children's consumer habits and monitor the purchase of very expensive products. Among most parents, there is little guidance toward developing a long-term savings plan or habit.

Greenberger and her colleagues further note that parental control over money matters is correlated with parental control over other aspects of the adolescent's life, such as time spent on studies, social activities, and household responsibilities. Parenting, then, even among youth who work, remains central to children's development of money management skills, and parental control and monitoring continue to be relevant throughout adolescence, with gradual increase of adolescent autonomy over time. Employment provides financial resources, but it is clear that parents still have an important role in financial guidance with respect to materialism and savings.

### *Practical Business Knowledge and Later Employability*

Practical knowledge about business operations, economic concepts, informed consumer practices, and consumer arithmetic increases when academically low-achieving students engage in work, especially if the type of employment provides practice in these skills (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, & McAuliffe, 1982). It is not the number of hours that these students work that is associated with an increase in practical knowledge but, rather, merely working. Steinberg and colleagues also report that academically high-achieving students who are employed do not share this benefit of increased practical knowledge of business concepts, when compared to their nonworking, high-achieving peers. It appears, then, that "on-the-job" experiential support is more effective than traditional schooling alone in teaching basic business-related concepts and academic skills to those students who perform poorly at school.

Employment among high-risk, out-of-school 16-19-year-olds also appears to provide some benefit. Those out-of school youth who are employed appear to increase their prospects for future employment. They are more likely to be employed as young adults than their out-of-school peers who did not work during their teen years (Steinberg & Greenberger, 1980). This employment, however, does not substitute for formal education in advancing employment options

during young adulthood (Steinberg & Greenberger, 1980).

In fact, Mortimer and Johnson (1998) found that working fewer than 20 hours per week for more than a year and a half is related to achieving more education for boys, thus enhancing the possibility of postsecondary education and better jobs in the long-term. Girls also appear to raise their educational expectations when they have some paid work experience (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, 1982). However, there appears to be a problem of "too much" of a good thing, since less postsecondary education is found among youth who work more than 20 hours per week, compared to youth who do not work at all or work fewer than 20 hours per week (Steinberg & Avenevoli, 1998). All of this suggests that the impact of teen employment on educational expectations and future employment requires monitoring tailored to the personal characteristics and life circumstances of the individual teenagers.

### *Social Responsibility*

Youth do not appear to develop a greater sense of responsibility for others as a consequence of working. Most employed youth studied by Greenberger et al. (1980) (i.e., 81 percent of 10th- and 11th-graders) did not contribute money directly to their families. Other aspects of social responsibility do not benefit from employment either; specifically, social tolerance and social commitment have not been found to differ when comparing employed and nonemployed youth (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, & Vaux, 1982). Finally, the high prevalence among youth of unethical behavior at the workplace has been previously discussed. These findings underscore the importance for parents to carefully assess their children's work experiences in relation to development.

### *Balancing Work, Family, and Friendships When Teens are Employed*

*Family Time*. Balancing work and close personal relationships appears to be as much a challenge to teens as to adults. As with adults, the first area of concern is how paid work hours might take away from time spent with family members. The results are mixed. Greenberger (1983) found that the more hours a teenager works, the less frequently the teen shares dinner with the family, does things for fun with family members, and helps out at home, in comparison to such behavior prior to employment. However, it is possible that typical developmental changes in youths' social worlds, toward spending less time with family members, accounts for this finding. Other studies have found that working does not significantly affect the time youth spend in family activities (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, & Vaux, 1982), and that, over time, employed adolescents report no difference in the amount of time spent with families when compared to non-employed adolescents, although specific family activities were not assessed (Mortimer & Johnson, 1998). One can conclude that employment, especially when it does not entail many hours each week, does not need to negatively impact time spent with family.

*Family Conflict and Emotional Closeness*. Family conflict and emotional closeness are important aspects of family life. The findings pertaining to these aspects of family in relation to teen employment are mixed. Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, and Vaux (1982) found that the amount of time spent working is critical to the family closeness experienced, although this relationship differs for boys and girls. In their study, working a limited number of hours each week was related to emotional closeness with the family. When youth spend a great deal of time in the workplace, however, Steinberg and colleagues found that family closeness greatly declined among girls but increased a bit among boys. It appears that boys are more at ease in the family when they work many hours each week whereas girls are not. Both boys and girls who work are more emotionally independent of their parents than those who do not perform paid work at all (Shanahan, Finch, Mortimer, & Ryu, 1991).

With respect to family conflict, working many hours each week has been linked to increased arguments and fights at home (Bachman & Schulenberg, 1993; Manning, 1990). Consistent with this, working for pay many hours each week has been linked to a weakening of parental authority (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986; Manning, 1990; Steinberg, Fegley, & Dornbusch, 1993). In other words, youth refuse to accept parental authority, a source of family conflict.

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However, family conflict does not always increase.When teen boys had jobs that enabled them to learn new skills, the quality of their relationships with both parents improved over time (Mortimer & Johnson, 1998). Family dynamics change as a result of youth engaging in paid employment.

Thus, parental monitoring of work schedules and, for sons, skills being learned and practiced at the teen's place of work are relevant to youth maintaining a balance between work and family. Teen girls apparently need a generous amount of time to maintain family closeness whereas teen boys feel better in their family relationships when they spend time away from family earning money and learning adult work skills.

*Balancing Work and Friendships.* Youth in naturally occurring jobs do not often gain close personal relationships in their part-time jobs, but their peer relationships outside of work remain intact as long as work hours are limited. Work does not appear to affect the amount of time spent with these peers, at least in the short run (Greenberger et al., 1980). The findings are mixed regarding the relation between working and the emotional closeness with these peers. The quality of these peer relationships is not affected in the short term (Greenberger et al., 1980), but Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, and Vaux (1982) found that over time, emotional closeness with peers outside of work decreased among those teens who had been working for a year.

Close peer relationships at the workplace do not seem to develop (Greenberger et al., 1980). Greenberger and colleagues documented that a large amount of time spent working alone or spent in erratic work schedules interfere with the development of close peer relationships at work. As noted earlier, however, casual, positive relationships at the workplace, when they do occur, appear to contribute to deviant, unethical behavior at work.

## Volunteer Work

Volunteer jobs have been linked to a particular set of developmental outcomes, and this route to work experience shows promise, with some important benefits and fewer risks than are found for naturally occurring teen employment. Volunteer work typically involves helping others. Furthermore, volunteer organizations usually offer training for their volunteers that can enhance marketable skills useful for obtaining future employment (Ilsley, 1990). In a four-year longitudinal study of 9th graders followed through 12th grade, Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, and Snyder (1998) found that those ninth-grade adolescents who chose to become involved in volunteer activities, compared to those who did not volunteer, had higher educational aspirations and plans, higher grade point averages, higher academic self-esteem, and higher intrinsic motivation toward schoolwork. Unlike naturally occurring employment, volunteering at any point during grades 9-12 was not related to gender, race or ethnicity, nor to family factors of parental education, family income, or family composition. Over time, volunteering appeared to strengthen youths' views of the intrinsic value of work, increase their anticipated importance of community involvement, and decrease their anticipated importance of career (Johnson et al., 1998). In other words, these youth were shown a rich, multi-faceted life that translated into adolescent plans for an adult life that includes employment and community involvement. Intervention and research programs are needed to be confident that volunteer experience can produce these positive results with academically low-achieving youth.

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Given that self-selection into volunteerism may be a factor in these findings, we need studies of randomly selected groups of youth who participate in volunteer activities, with a thorough analysis of the volunteer workplace conditions and other areas of functioning (e.g., ethical behavior). We cautiously conclude that volunteering during adolescence provides youth with the opportunity to see that there is more to vital engagement in the world than what is provided in the workplace.

In sum, volunteer work often involves helping others, via work activities that are perceived as meaningful. Teens who volunteer anticipate a balance between the importance of employment and community service during adulthood. Teen volunteers report that gaining work experience and marketable skills are the central rewards they accrue through their volunteer work. Youth, then, look to volunteer work to help them

advance this agenda, and, in the process, gain more than they expected.

### Planned Youth Employment Programs

Planned youth employment programs also appear to be a promising avenue for clarifying the possibilities of employment. These programs are designed with adolescents' education in mind (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, and McAuliffe, 1982). They provide students with exploration activities such as job-shadowing, internships, and realistic job previews that help young people clarify their interests, values, and skills in relation to particular occupational fields and work tasks (Lent et al., 2002). In job-shadowing, the student stays with the worker for a specified time observing what the worker does. Usually, students have opportunities to talk with the worker to deepen their knowledge of the job, its work requirements, and work settings. Consequently, this kind of experience allows students to learn how school subjects relate to the world of work, to learn the advantages and disadvantages of the work, and to see for themselves how communication, teamwork, and critical thinking are essential skills in the work setting (Arrington, 2000).

Compared to job-shadowing, work-based mentoring programs provide more extensive and intensive involvement with employers and the work setting. In these programs, students are far more active, actually contributing work output. Typically, students are assigned adult mentors who have agreed to provide employment opportunities and guidance (Linnehan, 2001).

Well-developed vocational training programs provide examples of the design and benefits of planned youth employment. For instance, Germany has the most successful apprenticeship program in the world, enabling youth who do not attend college to enter well-paid careers at around age 18. In their vocational classes, academic skills are integrated with practical activities, ensuring that students become competent at both (Hamilton, 1990). A second example is a pilot program in the United States that focused on African-American high school students in a large urban public school (Linnehan, 2001). This program required mentors to develop a detailed plan for integrating the work experience of the student with the student's academic curriculum. Students in the work-based mentoring program improved their grades and school attendance when they remained in the program one and two years (Linnehan, 2001), demonstrating the promise of planned work experiences for a group of students who face a host of obstacles in their transitions from school to work (Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1997).

Work-study programs allow students to work as part of their academic program. Participation in work-study programs has been linked to positive school and work attitudes, improved achievement, and lower dropout rates among teenagers whose low-income backgrounds and weak academic skills make them especially vulnerable to unemployment (Owens, 1982; Steinberg, 1984). By receiving mentoring in the work-study programs, youth enhance their practical knowledge, increase their school attendance (particularly among potential dropouts), and develop higher education aspirations regardless of their academic achievement levels (Mangum & Walsh, 1977).

In sum, planned youth employment programs provide teens with exposure to a wider range of jobs in the arena of adult paid employment than they find in naturally occurring employment settings, extensive and intensive opportunities to explore vocations, a strong likelihood of an experience with a mentor, assurance as to the safety in learning a trade, and promising outcomes.

*...Germany has the most successful apprenticeship program in the world, enabling youth who do not attend college to enter well-paid careers at around age 18.*

## Continuing Changes in the World of Work

Youth leaders can play an important role in encouraging more extensive thinking about future vocational possibilities and constraints. Three significant elements of change will continue to influence future job demands: new developments in technology, the view of women's role in society, and diversity of employees (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1997).

### Technology

Computers, the Internet, and cellular phones are among the most prevalent new technologies impacting modern life. The use of new technology in the workplace has

created increased opportunities as well as cultural divides. Urban households and those with higher income levels are more likely to have access to the Internet than rural households and those with lower income levels (NTIA, 1999). Unfortunately, unequal access to computer hardware and software, as well as unequal opportunities for receiving training in the use of new computer technology, threaten to further divide affluent youth from the less affluent, with the latter group including more youth of color. In addition, a Morino Institute (2001) report found that people in low-income communities fear and distrust the capabilities of technology. Therefore, both access to new information technology and education in its use are especially critical areas to be addressed by youth programs.

Working at home and abroad are both increasing. Having a workplace at home is not a new trend, but it is gaining visibility, in part due to telecommuting. Travel for work has increased dramatically as technology has increased the ability to work globally. There have always been occupational sectors that have required work travel (e.g., flight attendants, energy production workers, engineering project workers, etc.), but travel has become a job requirement for an ever-expanding array of occupations (Fisher & Stoneman, 1998; Presser & Hermsen, 1996).

*A significant challenge for dual-earner families is to carefully consider how they will structure the boundaries between work and personal lives, to incorporate the interests of all family members and multiple employers.*

## Changing Views of Women's Role in Society (Both at Work and at Home)

As has been the case for the last 20 years, families are increasingly likely to have more than one wage earner in the family (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2001). Understanding how to manage multiple roles, both in the family and place of employment, is a necessary life skill. Garey (1999) and Hattery (2001) provide models for how workers can combine work and family, beyond an attempt to balance their lives, in patterns that work best for their families.

Nontraditional work schedules include such arrangements as night shifts, on-call shifts, and swing shifts; these comprise an ever-increasing proportion of jobs (Presser, 1994; 1999). For example, some spouses may work opposite shifts so that at least one can be at home for young children, and save weekends for shared quality time. Parents may choose to be self-employed so that they can take their children to work with them. An employee caring for an elderly relative, again an increasing phenomenon, may prefer a split shift to accommodate the needs of the family. Adults can mix their work and family from a balance orientation, by dedicating separate and fairly equal attention to work and family, or from a weaving orientation, in which work and family experiences are integrated together in people's daily lives (Garey, 1999; Hattery, 2001). Adults can also choose to pace or sequence their paid work commitments to correspond to parenting demands. To what extent are parents and other adults discussing these issues, modeling solutions, and making explicit expectations for the next generation of workers? A significant challenge for dual-earner families is to carefully consider how they will structure the boundaries between work and personal lives, to incorporate the interests of all family members and multiple employers.

A larger smorgasbord of benefits, including child care benefits, is becoming available, which also reflects the impact of women in the workplace. As of 1997, 74—84% of employers offered traditional fringe benefits such as health insurance and paid vacation or holidays (Bond et al., 1997). *Fortune* magazine has an annual ranking of the *Best Companies to Work For*, in which the companies' benefit options are examined (Levering & Moskowitz, 2004). *Working Woman* magazine also annually publishes a ranking of the top 100 companies for women, primarily utilizing criteria related to family benefits. Being informed about this increasing variety of available benefits will prepare our youth to consider their options in this regard, indirectly advocating for the desired benefit options.

## Diversity of Employees

The youngest subgroup of today's workforce, the Gen Xers (who are roughly ages 18-32), can provide some picture of what future workforces will look like. Gen Xers are more educated, more racially and ethnically diverse, and more likely to be balanced in terms of gender than employees of previous generations (Bond et al., 1997). Also, young workers are increasingly likely to be working alongside other workers whose ages range from their own to over 70. This differs from the early employment experiences of workers in the baby boomer age group (Bond et al., 1997). Youth today

will need to prepare themselves to work with a highly diverse group of people, and indeed, they may be supervising this diverse group. Programs that provide access to collaborative experiences with a diversity of ages, races, and ethnicities cannot be overstated.

In sum, thinking about future employment trends and possible benefit options can help identify options youth will have that their parents did not. Actual training opportunities using new technology are a still better method of exposing youth to the work arena of the future. Finally, collaborative experiences which provide constructive exposure to diverse groups of people will build skills and attitudes that are increasingly important in the workplace.

## Conclusions

By explicitly clarifying how parents and other adults frame their work, sharing with youth information about the personal meaning of their work experiences, and expressing regrets as well as gratitude for how they have defined work over their lifetime, youth can be encouraged to think about their futures with a rich complexity of choices. The goal is for children and adolescents to be aware that they have choices in how they can find fulfillment in their adult work lives.

In addition, adolescents are influenced by their own early work experiences in naturally occurring paid employment, volunteer work, and planned youth employment programs. Programs designed to explore the risks and benefits of particular youth employment options represent an area where active education of parents and youth can be beneficial. Strong adult supervision and mentoring practices include maintaining vigilance concerning ethical behavior and monitoring work schedules, workplace safety, and skill development opportunities. Those who work with youth must also be aware of the role that gender, socioeconomic status, and the students' academic background may play in successful teen work outcomes.

How youth come to see that their adult work life can be experienced as a calling, a vehicle for acquiring status, or a "paycheck" requires self-knowledge. Additional employment satisfaction will require the ability to prioritize costs and benefits of different employment opportunities and a thoughtful evaluation of how work can coordinate with family lives and personal choices. Considering the employment experiences of youth, their parents, and others who make themselves available to youth can help to engage our youth in productive consideration of their futures. Our duty as caretakers of the next generation of workers is to make sure they know the choices they have for framing their adult work lives and why they might choose *vocation*, *career*, and/or *job*.

Note: Research has focused on employment during the academic school year, so caution should be taken when trying to translate the reported findings to summer employment experiences.

*The goal is for children and adolescents to be aware that they have choices in how they can find fulfillment in their adult work lives.*

Acknowledgments: This literature review was made in conjunction with the Multi-State Project W-167, Family and Work Identities during Times of Transition. We are grateful to the contributions of Sandy Bailey at Montana State University and Cynthia Schmiege at University of Idaho to our thinking along the way.

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### About the Authors

Brenda Bryant is a Professor of Human Development in the Department of Human and Community Development at UC Davis.
Anisa M. Zvonkovic is an Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Sciences at Oregon State University.
Juliana Raskauskas is a Ph.D. Candidate in Education at the University of California, Davis.
Cheryl L. Peters is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at Oregon State University.

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- Marc T. Braverman, Ph.D., Director
- Colin Perez, Publications Coordinator

4-H Center for Youth Development
Dept. of Human and Community Development
University of California
One Shields Avenue/3325 Hart Hall
Davis, CA 95616-8523

Phone (530) 754-8433
Fax (530) 754-8440
CYDdirector@ucdavis.edu
http://fourhcyd.ucdavis.edu