

Research Note **Teenagers' part-time employment and their work-related attitudes and aspirations**

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Summary

We assessed the relationship between the quality (i.e., job characteristics, role stressors, and interpersonal relationships) and quantity of part-time employment, and work-related attitudes and aspirations among 349 students. Neither the linear nor the quadratic components of employment quantity predicted any of the outcome variables. Motivation to do good work was predicted both by role stressors and by family achievement orientation. Career maturity was predicted by role stressors at work, and cynicism by role stressors and satisfaction with interpersonal relationships. In contrast, job involvement was significantly related to family achievement orientation but not to any perceived job factors. These findings question the assumption that only intensive work during high school exerts negative effects for teenagers, and support the importance of employment quality for teenagers as well as adults. © 1998 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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Introduction

This study focuses on teenagers' part-time employment and their work-related attitudes and aspirations. Part-time employment during the high school years is now routine: in the United States, approximately 50 per cent of full-time high school students are also employed on a part-time basis. By graduation, 80 per cent of teenagers have held a part-time job at some point during their high school years (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986). The number of hours worked in part-time employment can be substantial: these high school students work an average of 20 hours per week, and 10 per cent work the equivalent of a full time job (≥ 35 hours per week). In a Canadian sample, 25 per cent of 17–19-year-olds worked more than 20 hours per week (Sunter, 1992).

In general, parents and educators do not oppose this employment among students because of a belief that employment 'builds character' (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986) and fosters similar behaviors to those required for success in school settings (e.g. reliability and perseverance; Bowles

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and Gintis, 1976). Thus, part-time employment among students is likely to continue unabated, and together with the family, school, and peer group, work is a major socialization agent in adolescent development (Greenberger, Steinberg, Vaux and McAuliffe, 1980). This is critical, because attitudes are most impressionable during the teenage years (Krosnick and Alwin, 1989), and students typically form their work values, identity, and career aspirations during this time (e.g. Erikson, 1963; Gottfredson, 1981).

Studies contrasting employed and non-employed students typically find few differences (e.g. Greenberger *et al.*, 1980; Gottfredson, 1985). However, with some exceptions (e.g. Barling, Rogers and Kelloway, 1995), studies focusing on differences within groups of part-time students generally show negative outcomes associated with the *quantity* of part-time employment (e.g. Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986; Steinberg and Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, Fegley and Dornbusch, 1993). Twenty hours a week is considered the threshold beyond which negative outcomes ensue (e.g. D'Amico, 1984; Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986; Steinberg and Dornbusch, 1991). Logically, therefore, the quantity of teenage employment exerts a curvilinear effect: employment quantity is benign up to 20 hours per week, and only becomes detrimental to students' development and school performance beyond this level (Barling *et al.*, 1995). Nonetheless, studies will examine the *linear* effects of employment quantity only; the curvilinear effects of employment quantity have been largely ignored. Consequently, the first aim of this study is to consider both the linear and curvilinear aspects of employment quantity.

Because focusing exclusively on the quantity of part-time employment implies that teenage work is an homogeneous experience, the next aim of this study is to move beyond a focus on students' employment quantity. Findings on adults' employment (e.g. Hackman and Oldham, 1980) show that the perceived *quality* of employment is associated with productivity (Wall, Corbett, Martin, Clegg and Jackson, 1990), adult development (Mortimer, Lorence and Kumka, 1986) and family functioning (Barling, 1990). Although Greenberger, Steinberg and Ruggiero (1982) acknowledged some time ago that not all teenage jobs are equivalent in terms of their quality, this realization has not been operationalized in subsequent research. Few studies have addressed students' employment quality (e.g. Barling *et al.*, 1995; Mortimer and Finch, 1986; Stern, Stone, Hopkins and McMillion, 1990). Yet, this may be an important variable to consider, for example, initial findings suggest that teenagers' employment quality is associated with students' personal well-being and their school performance (Barling *et al.*, 1995). Consistent with the psychological literature on adults, we will consider whether the subjective quality of teenagers' jobs is associated with their work-related attitudes, goals, and career maturity.

Sauter, Murphy and Hurrell (1990) identified six factors most likely to affect workers' mental and physical health: autonomy or job decision-latitude; job content (e.g. skill variety); role stressors; interpersonal relationships; work scheduling; and career security issues. Some of these factors have been considered among teenage workers. *Skill variety* appears to be critical to young workers, with psychological benefits accruing from jobs using skills that will be relevant in the future (Mortimer, Finch and Shanahan, 1992; O'Brien and Feather, 1990). *Interpersonal relationships at work* have also been considered and Greenberger *et al.* (1980) found that the workplace is not necessarily a source of close relationships for teenagers. Further, jobs offering students positive experiences (i.e. those using job skills and eliciting high job involvement) lead to the development of closer relationships with work associates (Mortimer and Shanahan, 1991). We will consider both of these variables.

We will also consider two factors from Sauter *et al.* (1990) which have been shown to be important for adults (i.e. autonomy and role stressors). Job-related *autonomy* is associated with well-being (e.g. emotional distress, anxiety, depression, self-esteem), psychosomatic complaints, and work outcomes (e.g. job dissatisfaction, alienation, work motivation, performance, and

turnover; Nord, 1977; Sauter *et al.*, 1990; Wall and Clegg, 1981; Wall *et al.*, 1990). Autonomy may even be associated with coronary heart disease (Marmot, Shipley and Rose, 1984) and increased mortality (Astrand, Hanson and Isacson, 1989). Three *role stressors* (ambiguity, conflict and overload) are consistently associated with symptoms of psychological and physiological strain among adults (e.g. Fisher and Gitelson, 1983; Jackson and Schuler, 1985).

Instead of knowledge and skills, which are often lacking in teenage jobs (Garson, 1988), what students seem to learn from employment is work-related attitudes and appropriate work behaviour (Stern *et al.*, 1990). However, most previous research on teenagers' part-time employment has focused primarily on personal outcomes (e.g. self-esteem, use of drugs) or school performance (e.g. grades, cutting class). We suggest that students' work hours and work experiences may also influence their work attitudes and aspirations. If work-related attitudes are most impressionable during the teenage years and then relatively stable thereafter (Gottfredson, 1981; Krosnick and Alwin, 1989), with so many students working at paid jobs while forming these attitudes, we predict a relationship between their employment experiences and work-related attitudes and aspirations. Further, given that teenagers are more influenced by their work environments than adults (Lorence and Mortimer, 1985), any positive or negative influences are likely to be exaggerated if they do exist. We anticipate that high quality teenage employment may leave students feeling more positive about work in general, and have a beneficial effect on their occupational development. In contrast, low quality teenage employment may leave students negatively disposed to their work, which would be manifest in negative work-related attitudes (e.g. lower job involvement).

Some data support our contention that the quantity and quality of teenage employment are associated with work attitudes. Greenberger and Steinberg (1986) found that employed high school students were more cynical than those without jobs, and those working long hours were the most cynical of all. Stern *et al.* (1990) found that employment quality (i.e. opportunities to learn on the job, skill use and physical challenge) was significantly correlated with teenagers' cynicism and motivation to do good work. O'Brien and Feather (1990) found young workers in 'poor quality' full-time employment had more negative work values than workers in 'good quality' employment; indeed, there were no differences in psychological well-being between those in poor quality employment and an unemployed contrast group. In this study we will consider students' work involvement, their cynicism, and their motivation to do good work as outcome variables.

We will also explore the relationship between teenagers' part-time employment and their educational and occupational aspirations. In their longitudinal study, Mortimer and Finch (1986) found that students employed part-time manifested lower educational and occupational aspirations than their non-employed counterparts. It seems reasonable that students willing to work longer hours may also have lower occupational goals. In this study we will test whether students who perceive their employment to be of a poor quality also tend to have lower future career goals. This could occur if one comes to expect little from the world of work given low quality employment experiences. Among adult workers, occupational aspirations are lowest among employees in low quality jobs (Kanter, 1977). Further, laboratory studies controlling for self-selection show that perceived job quality precedes lowered aspirations in adults (Kanter, 1977). Thus, despite the lack of research on adolescents, we hypothesize that among students poor quality jobs may be related to lower occupational aspirations. This relationship seems worthy of attention for at least two reasons. First, occupational aspirations may remain stable through adolescence and predict subsequent career choice (Gottfredson, 1981). Second, a high school education alone is no longer sufficient to be competitive in today's labour market. Without the desire to obtain post-secondary education, employment opportunities will likely be

limited. As a gauge of how developed students occupational aspirations are, we will also consider their career maturity (i.e. how far students have progressed with their vocational planning, or how realistic their career goals are; Super, 1983). With increased hours of work, students may have less time to explore their career options, and in terms of employment quality, contact with high quality jobs may stimulate students to think more seriously about their future careers (particularly if these experiences are related to higher aspirations).

Although this research is concerned with the role of the quantity and quality of students' part-time employment experiences, we assume that other variables also influence work-related attitudes and aspirations. For example, Barling (1990) points out that parents' (particularly fathers') work values influence childrens' (particularly sons') attitudes. Family values also affect the formation of adolescents' educational and occupational aspirations and expectations. For example, Parsons, Adler and Kaczala (1982) found that parents' occupational aspirations for their children appear to define the acceptable range of occupations for these youth. Further, family socio-economic status (SES) also affects the development of adolescents' occupational aspirations and expectations, with higher SES youth expecting to reach far higher educational and occupational levels (Gottfredson, 1981). Consequently, in considering the predictors of students' work-related attitudes and aspirations, we will also take into account family work-related values and SES.

Method

Subjects and procedure

With the permission of the school board and the three principals, questionnaires were distributed to students in each of 26 grade 10, 11, and 12 classes in three urban high schools in different quadrants of the same Canadian city. In addition, prior to questionnaire completion, a letter was sent to the students' parents informing them of the school's participation in this study, and requiring their passive consent (i.e. they were to reply only if they objected to their child participating). All responses were confidential and anonymous. Almost 97 per cent of those contacted agreed to participate, and filled out usable questionnaires during a regular class period.

There were 349 employed students (52 per cent male) among the 756 respondents; 81 per cent of the employed students were in retail sales, food and beverage, and entertainment services, the other 19 per cent were in clerical work or manual labour. On average, the employed students earned \$6.15 per hour (*S.D.* = 1.98); 48 per cent of the students had worked for 11 months or less, 38 per cent between 12–24 months, and 14 per cent had worked between 25–60 months.

Measures

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and intercorrelations of all study variables appear in Table 1.

We measured employment *quantity* by asking employed students how many hours they usually work in a week. Employment *quality* was reflected by skill variety (e.g. 'My job requires me to use a number of complex or high-level skills') and autonomy (e.g. 'My job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my work'), and both were measured with three items from Hackman and Oldham's (1980) Job Characteristics Survey. Because of concerns that these scales may not be independent (Cook, Hepworth, Wall and Warr, 1989), they were

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of all study variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	Range	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Job characteristics	21.00	5.41	6–34	0.61										
2. Role comfort	123.70	20.39	63–168	0.87	0.27*									
3. Interpersonal relations	74.66	21.59	7–108	0.90	0.34*	0.60*								
4. Employment quantity	17.00	8.00	1–48	—	0.22*	0.17*	–0.03							
5. Family SES	16.93	4.71	5–28	—	–0.00	0.02	–0.07	–0.06						
6. Family achievement	15.95	1.40	10–18	0.73	–0.01	0.03	0.07	–0.07	–0.05					
7. Motivation	26.22	4.45	8–32	0.75	0.17*	0.37*	0.22*	–0.02	–0.07	0.21*				
8. Involvement	20.93	5.15	6–36	0.70	–0.12†	–0.01	–0.09	–0.14†	0.14†	–0.17*	–0.01			
9. Cynicism	15.21	4.28	7–28	0.72	–0.29*	–0.36*	–0.37*	–0.02	0.08	–0.02	–0.48*	0.04		
10. Goals	5.69	1.06	1–7	—	0.01	0.01	0.11	–0.04	0.14†	0.20*	0.10	0.03	–0.11	
11. Maturity	61.52	9.43	12–84	0.80	0.14	0.28*	0.25*	–0.09	–0.03	0.22*	0.31*	–0.09	–0.32*	0.11

* $p < 0.01$; † $p < 0.05$.

combined to form a *job characteristics* scale. Role ambiguity (e.g. 'I know exactly what is expected of me') and role conflict (e.g. 'I receive incompatible requests from two or more people') were measured using Rizzo, House and Lirtzman's (1970) six- and eight-item scales respectively. Quantitative and qualitative role overload were measured using 10 items from Dekker and Barling (1995) (e.g. 'I am given enough time to do what is expected of me on my job'). These 24 items were combined to form a *role comfort scale*; higher scores reflect fewer perceived role stressors. The *interpersonal relationships* measure assessed the degree of satisfaction with relationships involved in one's job, and was measured using the supervision and coworkers sections (18 items each) of Smith, Kendall and Hulin's (1969) Job Descriptive Index. Students' reported levels of job characteristics, role stressors, and satisfaction with interpersonal relationships were considered to reflect the quality of their jobs.

The *achievement orientation* scale from the Family Environment Scale (Moos and Moos, 1986) was used to measure families' work-related values (e.g. 'we feel it is important to be the best at whatever you do'). This scale contains nine true/false items. In addition, Hollingshead's Two-Factor Index of Social Position was used to measure *families' socioeconomic status* (i.e. SES; Miller, 1991). This scale was composed of an occupational scale (ranging from 7 = professional, to 1 = unskilled employee) and an educational scale (ranging from 7 = graduate school completion, to 1 = less than 7 years of schooling). Family SES was a single value obtained by adding both parents' combined occupational and educational scores.

Motivation to do good work was measured using eight items (e.g. 'doing a good job should mean as much to a worker as a good paycheck') from Stern *et al.* (1990). The seven items for the *cynicism* scale ('there's no such thing as a company that cares about its employees') were also taken from Stern *et al.* (1990). *Work involvement* was measured using Kanungo's (1982) six-item scale (e.g. 'work should be considered central to life').

Work-related aspirations were obtained by averaging the values from students' educational and vocational goals (ranging from 1 = less than 7 years of schooling/unskilled employee to 7 = graduate school completion/professional). The measure of career maturity was developed for this study based on Super (1983). This 12-item career maturity scale included three items on autonomy (e.g. 'are you free to pursue your educational/occupational goals'), two items each on exploration and information (e.g. 'how much do you know about what a person in your chosen occupation actually does in an average day'), three on decision making, and two on reality orientation (e.g. 'How realistic are your educational/occupational goals—e.g. do you know how you would pay for tuition if you plan on attending school after high school?').

Results and Discussion

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test the linear and curvilinear effects of employment quantity on work-related attitudes, aspirations, and career maturity. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were satisfied, and no multivariate outliers with undue influence were identified. Because students' age was correlated with the number of hours worked, work involvement, and career goals, we controlled for age on the first step of the regression analysis. If the effects of employment quantity are indeed curvilinear, the prediction of the outcome variables will be improved by taking into account the power term for employment quantity. This is determined using hierarchical analysis, where the linear component of employment quantity is entered on the second step of the regression equation, and the quadratic component is entered on

the third step. A significant improvement in R^2 would indicate the presence of a curvilinear effect on adolescents' work-related attitudes, aspirations, and/or career maturity. Neither the linear nor the quadratic components of employment quantity were significant in predicting any of the outcome variables.

The first question in this study was whether employment *quantity* was negatively associated with teenagers' work-related attitudes, aspirations, and career maturity. This question was stimulated by research indicating that there are deleterious outcomes associated with increasing numbers of hours that students are employed while going to school (especially when they exceed 20 hours per week). However, although we tested directly for both linear and curvilinear effects of employment quantity, no significant results emerged on any of the outcome variables. These and other findings (e.g. Barling *et al.*, 1995) give us reason to question the 'consensus' about the negative effects of employment quantity. Indeed, the failure to find any negative effects of employment quantity also challenges policy initiatives designed to protect teenage students who are employed part-time by limiting the quantity of employment legally allowed (Lantos, 1992; Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986; Steinberg and Dornbusch, 1991). Limiting the focus of research to employment quantity may well be premature and shortsighted.

Our second goal was to consider the relationship between perceived employment quality and students' work-related motivation, work involvement, cynicism, goals, and career maturity. Because some of the outcome variables were correlated (e.g. motivation with cynicism and career maturity; see Table 1) we used multivariate multiple regression to analyze our data (e.g. Dwyer, 1983). The multivariate test determines whether there is a significant relationship between the five outcome variables and the five predictors (standardized scores for job characteristics, role comfort, interpersonal relationships, family SES, and family achievement orientation). All assumptions were satisfied, and the multivariate $F = 3.87$, $p < 0.01$, indicated that there was a significant relationship between the outcome and predictor variables.

Because some of the outcome variables were significantly correlated, stepdown analysis was used to assess the impact of predictor variables on individual outcome variables (Tabachnik and Fidell, 1989). Motivation to do good work ($F = 6.29$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.16$), work involvement ($F = 2.94$, $p < 0.01$; $R^2 = 0.07$), cynicism ($F = 5.29$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.20$) and career maturity ($F = 3.57$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.15$) were all associated with the set of predictors; career goals was not. To understand these relationships more fully, we analyzed the univariate regression equations for each significant outcome variable, regressed separately on the set of predictors (see Table 2). The outcome variables seem to lie on a continuum ranging from those most related to family variables to those most related to perceived work experiences. Work involvement was predicted by family achievement orientation ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$, $sr = 0.14$) but not by any perceived job factors. Motivation to do good work was predicted by family achievement orientation ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$, $sr = 0.20$) and a perceived job factor (role comfort; $\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$, $sr = 0.25$). Career maturity was only associated with role comfort ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$, $sr = 0.20$). Cynicism was related to both role comfort ($\beta = -0.20$, $p < 0.05$, $sr = 0.16$) and satisfaction with interpersonal relationships ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.05$, $sr = -0.13$).

Thus, differential support emerged for each of the perceived quality predictors (i.e. role comfort, interpersonal relationships, and job characteristics). While role stressors predicted three of the outcome variables (motivation, career maturity, and cynicism), satisfaction with interpersonal relationships at work only predicted cynicism, and job characteristics did not predict any outcomes. Several explanations exist for these findings. The finding that role stressors (i.e. role comfort) seemed to emerge as the most important predictor of outcome variables for adolescents perhaps should not be surprising given the importance of this variable among adult workers. The three role stressors measured (ambiguity, conflict and overload) are consistently

Table 2. Univariate results for outcomes variables significant in the stepdown analysis

Outcome	Predictor	<i>sr</i>	<i>B</i>	Standardized beta	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i>
Motivation	Job characteristics	0.06	0.16	0.03	0.36	0.43	n.s.
	Role comfort	0.25	1.49	0.34	0.39	3.78	0.00*
	Interpersonal relations	-0.03	0.01	0.00	0.43	0.01	n.s.
	FamSES	-0.03	-0.02	-0.00	0.34	-0.05	n.s.
	FamAchievement	0.20	0.77	0.17	0.33	2.34	0.02†
Involvement	Job characteristics	0.09	-0.67	-0.14	0.39	-1.72	n.s.
	Role comfort	-0.08	0.09	0.02	0.42	0.21	n.s.
	Interpersonal relations	0.06	-0.23	-0.05	0.46	-0.50	n.s.
	FamSES	-0.12	0.67	0.14	0.37	1.84	n.s.
	FamAchievement	0.14	-0.73	-0.16	0.35	-2.06	0.04†
Cynicism	Job characteristics	-0.15	-0.62	-0.15	0.32	-1.92	n.s.
	Role comfort	-0.16	-0.79	-0.20	0.35	-2.23	0.03†
	Interpersonal relations	-0.13	-0.90	-0.22	0.38	-2.35	0.02†
	FamSES	0.05	-0.07	-0.02	0.30	-0.22	n.s.
	FamAchievement	-0.03	-0.12	-0.03	0.29	-0.41	n.s.
Maturity	Job characteristics	0.18	0.50	0.05	0.71	0.69	n.s.
	Role comfort	0.20	2.46	0.29	0.77	3.17	0.00*
	Interpersonal relations	0.01	0.68	0.08	0.84	0.81	n.s.
	FamSES	-0.01	1.25	0.14	0.67	1.86	n.s.
	FamAchievement	0.18	0.72	0.08	0.65	1.10	n.s.

* $p < 0.01$; † $p < 0.05$.

associated with symptoms of psychological and physiological strain among adults (e.g. Fisher and Gitelson, 1983; Jackson and Schuler, 1985). It would seem that these variables are also important to adolescents. In terms of satisfaction with interpersonal relationships at work, other authors have found that the workplace is not necessarily a source of close relationships for teenagers (Greenberger *et al.*, 1980). Thus, the possibility exists that this variable is simply less important for adolescents than adults (possibly because they have school as a primary source of their interpersonal relationships). Future research is necessary to determine if this is the case, or whether this finding is limited to this study. In terms of the lack of findings for job characteristics (i.e. autonomy and skill variety) perhaps the most parsimonious explanation is the relative unreliability of the job characteristics scale ($\alpha = 0.61$). Although previous reviews have questioned whether these scales are indeed distinct (e.g. Cook *et al.*, 1989), the strategy of combining them may have been questionable in the present study: while significantly correlated ($r = 0.29$), the magnitude of the relationship was modest. Related to this is the question of whether the job characteristics domain was sampled adequately, and therefore, whether an 'unfair comparison' was operating (Cooper and Richardson, 1986). Future research should assess whether different job characteristics (e.g. task significance, which may be important given the nature of part-time teenage jobs; Garson, 1988) exert differential effects on teenagers' work-related attitudes and aspirations, or whether such findings can be accounted for by unequal reliabilities and validities.

In terms of the outcome variables, both work involvement and motivation to do good work were associated with family achievement orientation. This was not surprising because previous authors have noted the effects of family work values on children's attitudes (e.g. Barling, 1990). This research supports that in addition to these family influences what students find on the job

may also be important; role comfort was twice as related to motivation to do good work ($\beta = 0.34$) as was family achievement orientation ($\beta = 0.17$). This would seem to extend Stern *et al.*'s (1990) findings concerning motivation to do good work and demonstrate that role stressors can also be important in this regard. In contrast, the finding that work involvement was only associated with family achievement orientation and not with any perceived job factors, was not anticipated. The reason for this finding may lie in an examination of the items on the work involvement questionnaire. The construct being assessed (e.g. 'work should be considered central to life' or 'the most important things that happen in life involve work') may reflect stable personality traits more than attitudes which would be affected by workplace factors. This scale assesses involvement with work in general (Kanungo, 1982) as opposed to involvement with a particular job or position (Jans, 1982). Thus, it seems reasonable in retrospect that family factors would be more associated with work involvement, whereas, perceived job quality would be more related to one's *job* involvement (which is based on one's current job perceptions). This question remains for future research to address.

These results suggest that teenagers' perceived employment quality is also significantly related to their work-related cynicism and their career maturity, but not to their career goals. The relationship of cynicism with role comfort and interpersonal relationships seems relatively straightforward. Stern *et al.* (1990) found that one aspect of employment quality (e.g. opportunities to learn on the job) was significantly correlated with teenagers' cynicism towards work. Our study extends these findings, and suggests that teenagers' cynicism towards work is also related to perceived role stressors and satisfaction with interpersonal relationships at work. In contrast, we also anticipated that the perceived quality of students' employment would be related to their career goals, but this hypothesis was not supported. Although Kanter (1977) found that poor job quality led to lowered aspirations among adults, this may simply not be the case for adolescents. Alternatively, this finding may be unique to this study (i.e. we are not tapping the appropriate work aspects such as the role of a mentor for example). The area of career maturity may also warrant further attention. The reason why career maturity is related to perceived role stressors is not readily apparent. Possibly with increasing role stressors one may seek to detach oneself from the work world, thus also avoiding any further job exploration. Future research is needed concerning both of these issues. Furthermore, even if perceived job quality does not affect career goals directly, it may affect how seriously students have thought about these goals and how fully they have explored their options, as reflected in the relationship with career maturity.

Some methodological comments are warranted. First, our study is based on self-report data. We suggest that this is a valid measurement strategy, and that supervisor or peer rankings of the same jobs would simply have been influenced by a different set of perceptions. Moreover, self-reports are appropriate when self-perceptions of job quality are being assessed. Further, 'there is substantial evidence to show that job perceptions are significantly determined by objective job attributes' (O'Brien, 1986, p. 4). In addition, subjective measures of job attributes are better predictors of organizational outcomes than objective measures (where such measures exist). For example, in studies of underemployment, perceived levels of over-qualification have been shown to be more related to job satisfaction than absolute levels of education or years of education beyond job requirements (Khan and Morrow, 1991). Still, future studies could extend these findings by obtaining supervisor or peer ratings as well as students' self-reports. A second methodological issue concerns causality. Although we assume causal direction (i.e. perceived job quality influences work-related attitudes), caution must be exercised in making causal assumptions because of the cross-sectional nature of our data. Importantly, recent findings (e.g. Bachman and Schulenberg, 1993; Steinberg *et al.*, 1993) suggest that reverse causality and third variable effects are unlikely to be able to adequately explain the present findings.

In conclusion, there may now be sufficient data to question the assumption that only intensive work during high school is related to negative effects for teenagers. The present study supports the notion that employment quality is important to teenagers as well as adults. This is troubling given that many authors have asserted that teenage jobs are often of low quality (Garson, 1988). Given that any effects of employment quality of students's work-related attitudes, aspirations, and career maturity may have long-lasting effects, understanding the nature and experiences of teenagers' part-time employment may now be an important challenge confronting researchers, managers and policy-makers.

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