

Youth Know What They Want

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Blume surveyed youth, some of whom were 4-Hers in Virginia, to find out what they considered important relative to their vocational preferences. He found "remarkable consistency in the job choice factor rankings" among both boys and girls for ages 13 to 22. If career attitudes and patterns are, in fact, developed by age 13, is some sort of career exploration activity in order for younger junior 4-H members? What's your opinion?

Career development educators generally agree that vocational development begins at an early age. Super, a prominent researcher, conscious of the early-age career interest, notes that by the ninth grade youth not only have a vocational preference in mind, but also know something about the vocational requirements, duties, conditions of work, and career opportunities.¹

To reach this vocational stage youth must have done some job factor evaluation and arrived at an initial role model of their vocational choice. This implies that the ranking process of job choice factors, traits, work values, or however they're defined, is an important learning exper-

ience in the total youth career development process.²

While current evidence doesn't confirm or predict career success based on a single grouping of work values, it does provide youth with a logical approach in selecting a career based on their recognized needs.

This article reports the rankings of 12 selected job choice factors by youth, ages 13 to 22 years. The factors were taken from an earlier 14-factor study of college men conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation.³ The 12 factors used in the study were:

1. Chance for advancement.
2. Interesting work.
3. People you work with.

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4. Interest company shows.
5. Working conditions.
6. Training opportunities.
7. Security of the job.
8. Immediate boss.
9. Company reputation.
10. Pay offered.
11. Kind of community.
12. Benefits program.

All were rated as very important by at least 25 percent of the college respondents.

The factors are similar to those of Steffire (Vocational Values Inventory), Super (Work Values Inventory), Weiss *et al.* (Minnesota Importance Questionnaire), and Schwaizwaller (Value Orientation). Each views the inventory of work value as a significant approach in career methods research.⁴ The original study involved only college men, but this study included 4-H and non-4-H young men and women, who were in either high school or college.

The data were collected from June, 1969, to June, 1970, from 1,039 youth. Of this number, 684 rankings were obtained from 2 rural senior high schools located in different areas of Virginia. Another 109 were collected from college youth enrolled in an undergraduate sociology course, and another 158 from 4-H youth who went to the State 4-H Club Congress. The remaining 88 were from 4-H All-Star youth, 16-19 years old—outstanding 4-H members recognized for their 4-H achievements.

Of course, a number of approaches were available for reporting the ranking results. However, an

analysis of age and sex seemed the most meaningful. Even though the rankings couldn't be considered as a sample in the true sense, the findings from such a wide audience tends to indicate the trend of thinking for a high proportion of middle income rural youth.

Youth had no problem ranking "interesting work" first. The majority considered it the primary factor in the career development process. All realized the importance of finding satisfaction in the working world. Their initial concern was finding a career that first matched their interests and abilities (see Tables 1 & 2).

With the present emphasis on a money-oriented economy, it wasn't too surprising to find the "pay offered" factor ranked second. The "I-have-a-product-to-sell" work concept, it seems, has surpassed the "opportunity-to-work" concept and for a sizable majority, youth expect a fair return for their product. Those less than 17 years old placed a higher value on income than older youth. This probably reflects a greater in-depth thinking on the part of the older youth as they evaluated the relative importance of all 12 factors.

The difference in overall responses to the "chance for advancement" factor ranked third by boys and fourth by girls possibly shows a sex attitudinal difference that may carry into later life. It's apparent from the overall rankings shown in the tables that sex difference wouldn't be statistically significant.

Nevertheless, the older boys ranked "advancement" second, the

Table 1. Ranking of job factors by age for all boys.

Job factors	Overall ranking	Specific age and ranking*									
		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Interesting work	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pay offered	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	5	4	3	5
Chance for advancement	3	4	3	6	4	4	3	6	2	2	2
Working conditions	4	3	4	3	3	2	4	2	3	5	4
People you work with	5	8	7	7	6	5	7	3	5	4	3
Security of job	6	6	6	5	5	6	5	11	6	8	6
Training opportunities	7	5	5	4	7	7	6	8	8	7	9
Interest company shows	8	7	8	11	9	9	8	7	10	6	7
Benefits program	9	12	9	12	8	11	9	12	7	10	10
Kind of community	10	9	10	10	11	8	10	4	9	9	8
Company reputation	11	10	11	8	10	10	11	10	12	11	12
Immediate boss	12	11	12	9	12	12	12	9	11	12	11
N = 466		18	54	58	77	110	85	6	14	23	21

*Over-under age respondents and incomplete schedules not included in the totals.

Table 2. Ranking of job factors by age for all girls.

Job factors	Overall ranking	Specific age and ranking*					
		13	14	15	16	17	18-22
Interesting work	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pay offered	2	2	2	3	2	3	2
Working conditions	3	3	3	5	3	2	5
Chance for advancement	4	8	5	4	5	5	4
People you work with	5	4	6	7	4	4	3
Security of job	6	6	4	2	6	6	7
Training opportunities	7	5	7	6	7	7	6
Interest company shows	8	10	11	8	8	8	9
Kind of community	9	9	10	10	10	10	8
Company reputation	10	7	8	9	9	9	11
Benefits program	11	12	9	11	11	12	12
Immediate boss	12	11	12	12	12	11	10
N = 464		19	48	64	118	131	84

*Over-under age respondents and incomplete schedules not included in the totals.

older girls fourth. This may imply two things: (1) the boys equated career advancement with an increase in pay and (2) the girls viewed their future role as a homemaker rather than as a full-time career person, thus lowering their value of this factor. As both boys and girls neared the working world, however, their concern and interest for this important factor was revealed by higher rankings.

Youth apparently found no difficulty in separately evaluating "working conditions" and "people you work with." Girls ranked "working conditions" in third place, boys ranked it fourth. "People you work with" was ranked fifth by both sexes. Older boys place a much higher value on this factor than younger boys.

The "security of job" factor ranked midway among the 12 for both boys and girls, and remained relatively constant for the majority of ages. While youth are sometimes chided for their lack of concern about their working world future, such a high ranking for "security" at this time in their lives might reflect their own evaluation of the current unemployment rate or conservative attitude toward the working world.

The factors of "training opportunities" and "interest company shows" ranked seventh and eighth, respectively, for both boys and girls. In both instances the factors showed little change from the younger to the more advanced working world entry ages.

Boys ranked "benefits program," "kind of community," and

"company reputation," 9, 10, and 11. Girls ranked "kind of community" ninth, "company reputation" tenth, and "benefits program" eleventh. Both ranked the "immediate boss" factor as number 12—the least important of all factors.

Since a high proportion of the study's respondents were 4-H members or former members at the junior member level, what conclusions can be drawn from the job choice rankings? How can they help 4-H leaders better understand the youth's total career exploration process? How can this help leaders establish better learning situations to facilitate the exploration process?

In general, the job choice factors selected were similar to those used by other researchers in the vocational work value field. They were judged as factors young people sooner or later would have to individually rank and incorporate into their own career value orientation. They were also judged as relevant factors necessary to assure success in the working world.

More specifically the factor rankings revealed a very close age and sex relationship. There were, of course, observed age differences, as witnessed by the way 13-year olds ranked the factors compared to the 22-year olds about to face their first job.

As the boys got older they downgraded the "pay offered," "training opportunities," and "company reputation" factors. They upgraded "chance for advancement," "people you work with," and "bene-

fits program" factors. Girls downgraded "working conditions" and "company reputation" and upgraded the "chance for advancement" factor.

However, the overall rankings stayed about the same. When viewed in terms of sex differences, since most girls now expect to spend a few years in the working world, it wasn't surprising to find their work attitudes close to those held by boys.

It seems that from ages 13 to 22 for both boys and girls, there's a remarkable consistency in the job choice factor rankings. This consistency may point towards an early age interest in career exploration. It also suggests that career attitudes developed at the younger ages are those carried into the working world. This, of course, is important for 4-H leaders, who already know the value of supplemental career evaluation activity at the senior 4-H Club members level.⁵

But, the findings go beyond the needs of senior members. They also indicate a strong need to develop career exploration materials for junior 4-H members, since career patterns are apparently taking shape below the 13-year-old age level and since many will leave the 4-H program before reaching the senior level.

The concern youth have about their future is still one of the most pressing problems they face today. And yet, working with youth to help them plan their career is an area still largely untouched by 4-H agents and leaders. The plea now is for more career involvement on the part of

agents and leaders, and more career exploration research in all areas and dimensions—racially, ethnically, residentially, and at every socioeconomic level.

Footnotes

1. Donald Super, *Vocational Development Career Pattern Study I* (New York, New York: Columbia University, Horace Mann Lincoln Institute of School Environment, Bureau of Publications, 1957); George T. Blume, *Highlights of Vocational and Educational Goals of Rural Youth in Virginia*, Circular No. 1030 (Blacksburg, Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Cooperative Extension Service, 1966); Lee G. Burchinal, *Career Choices of Rural Youth in a Changing Society*, Bulletin No. 458 (St. Paul, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1962); J. R. Christensen, J. D. Cowhig, and J. W. Payne, *Educational and Occupational Aspirations of High School Seniors in Three Central Utah Counties*, Science Bulletin 1 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1962); A. O. Haller, Lee G. Burchinal, and M. J. Taves, *Rural Youth Need Help in Choosing Occupations*, Bulletin 235 (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1963); and Eli Ginzberg *et al.*, *Occupational Choice* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1951).
2. Warren D. Gribbons and Paul R. Lohnes, "Shifts in Adolescents"

- Vocational Values," *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, XLIV (November, 1965), 248-52.
3. *How Companies Can Improve Their College Recruitment Program* (Princeton, New Jersey: Opinion Research Corporation, 1954).
4. Donald G. Zytowski, "The Concept of Work Value," *Vocational Guidance Quarterly*, XVIII (March, 1970), 176-86.
5. George T. Blume and E. J. Niederrank, "Virginia Youth Explore Careers," *Extension Service Review*, XLII (May, 1971), 14-15.