Adolescent and Child Workers

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Objectives

- To describe the demographic characteristics of working youth
- To discuss safety and health hazards for young workers
- To review the age-related determinants of state and federal child labor laws
- To identify the role of the employer, parents, the school, and the adolescent in protecting safety and health
Section A

Why Focus on Working Teens?
Definitions

- Youth—individuals between the ages of 16 and 24

- Problems—no official statistics collected on children under 15 (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
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- In 2008, 21 million 16- to 24-year-olds employed in the U.S.
  - Men: 11 million
  - Women: 10 million
  - White: 17 million
  - Black: 2 million
  - Hispanic: 3 million
  - Asian: Less than 1 million
Youth Employment in the U.S.

1. 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97): 14-17-year-olds reported whether they were employed at some time during the past year (1996)

2. National sample of 9,000 young men and women—annual interview

3. Employed positions with a boss/freelance (babysitting, mowing lawns)

4. Age 14-15
   - 57% held a job at 14, the majority were freelance jobs
   - Females were more likely to hold freelance jobs than males
Why Focus on Working Teens?

- Majority are employed at part-time, temporary, low-paying jobs
- Retail trades; service sector
- Child labor laws are not current and are often unenforced
- As new workers, they are inexperienced, unfamiliar with tasks, lack knowledge of workplace hazards, and are unaware of their rights as workers
Why Focus on Working Teens?

- Improve information—employers, parents, and school personnel
- Consider early exposures—diseases with long latency
- Traumatic injuries—research focus
- Health risks—exposure to chemicals, noise, extreme temperatures, and infectious agents; work-related musculoskeletal disorders
Why Focus on Working Teens?

- Inadequate occupational health or safety training for teens either in school or on the job
- Training materials not geared for youth
- APHA, NIOSH have recommended better training and education on issues related to health and safety of teen workers
- OSHA teen worker site
Physical Characteristics of Teens

- Growth spurts occur between 14 and 17—implications for tasks, especially for boys
- Risk of back injuries
- Large boys given adult tasks without regard to experience or maturity
Psychosocial Characteristics

- Sense of invulnerability
- Enthusiasm
- Undeveloped communication skills—social competency
Benefits of Adolescent Labor

- Self-reliance, self-esteem, self-discipline
- Knowledge—organizational skills, communication skills
- Responsibility, teamwork, exposure to occupational choices
Risks of Adolescent Labor

- Threats to completion of developmental tasks and education—identity development, striving for autonomy and achievement

Source: Greenberg and Steinberg.
Risks of Adolescent Labor

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- Working more than 20 hours per week is associated with negative behaviors and decreases in mental health
  - Lack of participation in afterschool activities and interaction with peers and family activities
  - Fatigue/inadequate time to complete homework
  - Elect less rigorous school subjects/absenteeism
  - ETOH/drug use/cigarettes

Source: Greenberg and Steinberg.
Summary

- Demographics of working adolescents
  - Age
  - Race
  - Gender

- Youth employment—risks and benefits
Section B

Trends in Youth Employment
57 percent of all youths engage in employment at ages 14 and 15

Employment greater among whites (64 percent) than among blacks (43 percent) or Hispanics (41 percent)

Youths in households with low income were less likely to work (reduced economic opportunity/transportation)

One-parent household—reduced opportunity

Freelance jobs—babysitting and yard work

Summer employment—highest frequency
Projected Labor Force, 2050 (BLS)

- 16 to 19 years
  - 53.7 percent in 1990
  - 52.0 percent in 2000
  - 43.7 percent in 2005
  - 34.5 percent in 2050

- 20 to 24 years
  - 77.8 percent in 1990, 2000
  - 74.6 percent in 2005
  - 73.1 percent in 2050

- School attendance in a major contributor to decline
The Fair Labor Standards Act (1938)

- Labor laws are age specific and employers must maintain proof of age for minor employees

- Young workers provide state-issued age documentation—work permits from school/state DOL certificate

- U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division enforce FLSA
  - Enforcement declined—working adolescents are illegally employed and exposed to safety risks
Work Permit

- Varies by state

- Employment certification is age related—in Maryland (under 18) issued by DOL or school

- Age certification is issued by school
Minimum Wage

- $6.55 per hour effective July 24, 2008
- $7.25 per hour effective July 24, 2009
- Overtime pay—not less than 1.5 times the regular rate of pay after 40 hours of work in a workweek
FLSA: 14 to 15 Years

- School hours: no
- Before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m.
- ≤3 hours per day (school days)
- <18 hours per week
- ≤8 hours per day on nonschool days
- ≤40 hours per week (nonschool weeks)

- Retail service: food, gasoline
- Exceptions: machine maintenance repair, ladders/scaffolds; cooking/baking; electric machines—grinders, choppers, cutter, freezers/meat coolers; loading/unloading in warehouses
FLSA: 16 to 17 Years

- Basic minimum age for employment
- Any nonhazardous occupation
FLSA: 18 Years

- Minimum age for employment in hazardous occupations
- Any hazardous/nonhazardous occupation
### Hazardous Occupations (DOL 1990)

- Manufacturing and storage of explosives
- Motor vehicle driving
- Mining, logging, sawmilling
- Power-driven machines
- Exposure to radioactive substances
- Slaughtering/meatpacking, processing, rendering
- Manufacturing brick, tile, or kindred products
- Wrecking, demolition
- Roofing, excavation

Approximately 70 adolescents die as a result of injuries
Exception to FLSA

- Children/adolescents on family farms
  - Sources of injury
    - Animals
    - Pesticides
    - Heavy equipment
Common Injury Situations

- Operating a motor vehicle
- Working late at night or alone
- Operating tractors
- Handling hot liquids and grease
- Using cutting tools
- Using nonpowered hand tools
- Lifting heavy objects
Additional Concerns for Working Adolescents

- Emotional labor
- Job stress
- Violence
Emotional Labor

- Origins—decline in manufacturing jobs and increase in service sector/retail jobs

- Emotional labor—the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display (Hochschild, 1983)

- Direct contact with customers requires effort, and the management of emotion may be detrimental to the employee
Emotional Labor

- Face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with public
- Requirement to produce an emotional state in another person (e.g., customer/client)
- Allow employer, through training and supervision, to exercise control over workers’ emotional activities
Emotional Labor

- Performed through
  - “Surface acting”
    - Pretending or regulating one’s emotional expressions
  - “Deep acting”
    - Consciously modifying one’s emotions to express a desired emotion
Why Is Emotional Labor “Harmful”? 

- Occupational demand, source of job stress
- Interactions with customers can be hostile
- Create sense of “inauthenticity”
- Management of emotions are “commoditized”
The Karasek Job Strain Model is a framework that relates job demands to job decision latitude, with implications for employee well-being and health outcomes. The model suggests that high job demands combined with low job decision latitude correlate with high strain and the risk of psychological strain and physical illness (path A). Conversely, low job demands combined with high job decision latitude correlate with low strain and active behavior patterns (path B). This model is adapted from Schnall, P. L., Landsbergis, P. A., and Baker, D. (1994). *Job strain and cardiovascular disease*. Annual Review of Public Health, 15, 381-411.
Workplace Violence

- Growing problem in the U.S.—most research on adults
- Retail trade—risky industry—cash, working alone, interacting with customers
- Anecdotal evidence—high levels of customer aggression
- Bullying—depression, decreased self-esteem, anxiety
Cross-sectional Survey

  - 1,430 9th-11th graders—formally employed
  - Self-administered questionnaire
  - Physical attacks (10 percent); more in males*
  - Verbal threats (25 percent)
  - Sexual harassment (10 percent); more in females*
  - Whites report more verbal threats*

*p<.001
Perpetrator

- Customer and co-workers—physical attacks
- Customers—verbal attacks
- Co-workers, including supervisors—sexual harassment

Non-significant
Adolescence—highly formative and precarious period of psychological development

Consider potential for injury and psychological trauma (e.g., depression, anxiety, stress)

Prevention strategies/training/research
Resources for Teen Worker Safety

Section C

U.S. Child Labor Violations
U.S. child labor violations in the retail and service sectors (Runyon, 2008)

- National cross-sectional representative telephone survey—ages 14-18
- 858 adolescents—retail (68 percent), service (32 percent)
- 87 percent worked during school year
- Categories of violations
  - Hazardous orders violations—use of prohibited equipment (MV, forklifts), food slicers, dough mixing
  - Work permit violations
  - Hour violations
1.3 percent reported violation of hour limits during school year

11 percent worked beyond the latest hour allowed on a school night

15 percent reported working off the clock (unrecorded or uncompensated)—retail industry

33 percent reported no work permit
33 percent reported at least one hazardous orders violation
  − Power-driven equipment or motor vehicles—most common
  − Adolescent boys
    ▶ Report all three categories of violations
    ▶ Multiple hazardous violations
Study Findings

- Low-income teens were less likely to be employed than higher-income teens—less economic opportunity; lack of transportation

- Lack of permits of concern—previous research shows less training in workplace safety and greater injury

- Self-report a limitation
More exposures among males than females

Exposure increases with age

Common sources—cleaning compounds, paints, solvents and glues, caustics, alkaline corrosives, hydrocarbons, acids, bleaches
Inhalation, skin absorption, ocular splashes

Acute exposures limited, chronic exposure?

Retail settings—more cuts than burns (hot grease, slipping on floor, cleaning grill, splashes)
Exposures and PPE (Runyan, 2008)

- Cross-sectional telephone survey—nationally representative sample of working teens ages 14 to 17

- Males (438)

- Females (428)

- Hazardous exposures—chemical, noise, biologic, thermal
Exposures and PPE (Runyan, 2008)

- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
  - Yes/no
  - Type

- Safety training on use of PPE
Results

- 67 percent reported noise exposure
- 55 percent—thermal
- 54 percent—chemical
- 8 percent—biologic
Results

- 0.5 to 42.2 percent reported use of PPE after training

- Older and male are more likely to report exposure

- Use of PPE reduces injury and illness
  - What is missing—availability of PPE
  - Supervision and training (need both)

- Construction (18%)
- Agriculture, forestry, and fishing (41%)
- Retail trade (13%)
- Services (12%)
- Manufacturing (6%)
- Government (6%)
- Transportation and public utilities (2%)
- Other or unspecified industry (2%)

N=304

Non-fatal Injuries to Young Workers, U.S.

- Estimated 77,000 teens treated in emergency departments per year
- Rates 70 percent higher than rates for all workers
- Job-specific comparisons not available

Strategies to Protect Adolescent Workers

- Parent involvement
  - Know the federal and state child labor laws
  - Realize that teens are entitled to safe and healthful work environments (OSHA)
Parent involvement

- Know the federal and state child labor laws
- Realize that teens are entitled to safe and healthful work environments (OSHA)
- Take an active role and discuss work
- Watch for warning signs—mental/physical toll, loss of interest in school, fatigue, depression, use of alcohol or drugs
- Support teen to report hazards
The Role of School/Educators

- Know federal and state child labor laws—work permits
- Keep record of jobs—limits teen from working multiple jobs
- Teaching teens their rights and safety information
  - Integrate work safety into curriculum
- OSHA.gov
Employers Role

- Post-FLSA requirements
- OSH Act
  - Assess hazards, appropriate PPE
- Provide training—safe work practices
- Assign supervisors
- Stress safety
- Implement a mentoring or buddy system
- Encourage questions
Summary

- Characteristics of young workers
- Fair Labor Standards Act
- Shared research