

Young workers' work values, attitudes, and behaviours

Catherine Loughlin* and Julian Barling

University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada and Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

Young workers represent the workforce of the future. We discuss research on two major influences on young people's work-related values, attitudes, and behaviours, namely family influences and work experiences. Particular emphasis is given to the role of young people's work experiences in shaping their future work-related attitudes, values, and behaviours (an under-researched area in occupational/organizational psychology). To begin outlining a research agenda based on young workers, changes in the world of work and emerging areas of importance for the future generation of workers and their organizations are also highlighted (i.e. the rise in non-standard employment, leadership, workplace health and safety and unions).

This article considers today's young workers, who represent the workforce of the future. What will shape their work values, attitudes, and behaviours? How will they be similar to, or different from, individuals currently in the workforce? How will changes in the workplace influence these young workers? While predicting the future behaviour of a generation of workers is not a straightforward task, this task is aided by the fact that many of these future workers are already in the workforce, where their attitudes and behaviours can be studied. In Europe and North America, youth employment has become the norm. For example, in Austria, 67% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are employed, and between the ages of 16 and 24, 75% of young people in Denmark and 63% of those in Sweden are employed (United Nations, 1996). Further, because many young people in the UK have completed formal schooling by the age of 16 (Green & Montgomery, 1988), it is not surprising that a large portion of them are involved in the paid labour force. In North America, almost 80% of high-school students work part-time for pay before they graduate from high school (Barling & Kelloway, 1999), and by 12th grade, 70% of students are employed more than 20 hours a week during the summer (Runyan & Zakocs, 2000). This growth in supply has been paralleled by a growth in demand for young workers because of the increased opportunities in the service sector of the economy and the need for more disposable income to support the higher cost of typical teenage purchases (Barling & Kelloway, 1999). Parents

*Requests for reprints should be addressed to Dr Catherine Loughlin, Management, University of Toronto, 1265 Military Trail, Toronto, ON M1C 1A4, Canada (e-mail: loughlin@mgmt.utoronto.ca).

and teachers have supported this employment, believing that it would decrease teenage alienation, reduce age segregation, foster the development of personal and social responsibility, and ease the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986).

At least two factors have contributed to a lack of focus on young workers in the literature. First, the tendency for mainstream industrial/organizational psychology to study full-time workers in large organizations can obscure the need to study young workers who are often employed on a part-time basis. Second, research in developmental and industrial/organizational psychology has primarily recognized family influences on young people's work attitudes and behaviours and not the influence of their own work experiences (Barling, 1990). However, just as early childhood experiences affect how personalities are formed, early workplace experiences shape workers' subsequent work-related attitudes, values, and behaviours. This is important, given that young workers' contact with the world of work occurs during the 'impressionable years' (Kronsnick & Alwin, 1989), a critical period for subsequent development. By studying these young workers, we can learn a great deal about what to expect in the workforce of the future.

Overview of young workers

The distinguishing features of young workers have been outlined elsewhere (e.g. Barling & Kelloway, 1999). These workers are between the ages of 15 and 24 and are a heterogeneous group, including students working part-time, evenings, weekends, and/or in the summer while attending school, and those working full time in the paid labour force and attempting to establish themselves in the adult world of work. Some authors neatly compartmentalize them into their older (ages 20–24) and younger (ages 15–19) counterparts; the older group falls into the tail end of 'Generation X' (including individuals born up to 1980–1981; Corley, 1999; Jurkiewicz, 2000; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). The younger group has been referred to as 'Generation Y', the 'Echo boomers', 'nexters', and/or 'Millennials'. This group includes individuals born after 1980 (Zemke *et al.*, 2000). For the most part, occupational research has not separated these younger and older sub-groups. This is an important omission, because the different demands and experiences of these two groups may well have different implications and provide different lessons: the younger of these groups tend to be high-school students who work on a part-time basis, while the older of the two groups are more likely to contain a greater proportion of youths engaged in their first full-time job.

Family influences on young workers

Having seen first-hand what work has done to their parents, the new generation of employees is insisting on a better balance (Galt, 2000).

We will consider two streams of research focusing on how family experiences are likely to affect the newest generation of workers. First, developmental and industrial/organizational research since the late 1980s sheds light on how young

people's work attitudes, beliefs, and values are typically affected by their families. Second, generational research (studying this age cohort in particular) offers insight into how this generation of young workers may be uniquely affected by their family experiences.

Children's understanding of work and employment is influenced by their parents' employment and economic circumstances (Dickinson & Emler, 1992). Between the ages of 4 and 11, children's understanding of the world of work steadily increases (Berti & Bombi, 1988). From the age of about 7 or 8 years, children can accurately report on their parents' job satisfaction (Abramovitch & Johnson, 1992). Further, although not universally supported (e.g. Dowling & O'Brien, 1981), there seems to be strong evidence that children's perceptions of parental work attitudes and experiences shape the development of their own work beliefs and attitudes (Barling, Dupre, & Hepburn, 1998), including attitudes to unions (Barling, Kelloway, & Bremermann, 1991; Dekker, Greenberg, & Barling, 1998; Kelloway & Newton, 1996; Kelloway & Watts, 1994).

Given that young people are influenced by their parents' experiences on the job, generational research is beginning to ask what this particular cohort of young workers has learned from their parents' experiences. During the 1980s and 1990s, many young workers saw their parents and others around them 'rightsized', 'downsized', or otherwise dismissed from their jobs by companies who no longer required their labour. These young workers' work attitudes and behaviour are now said to convey this sense of betrayal (Zemke *et al.*, 2000). Because of the experiences of their parents, they are said to be skeptical, unimpressed by authority, and self-reliant in their orientation towards work (e.g. Jurkiewicz, 2000). Further, although they are pleased with the current strength of the job market, they do not trust it to last. Because work is not seen as an investment in their future with a company, they are said to want immediate payoffs from the workplace (e.g. independence, flexible hours, casual dress, and actually having fun at work; Jurkiewicz, 2000; Maccoby, 1995; Zemke *et al.*, 2000). Recent empirical psychological research would support these accounts: Barling *et al.* (1998) showed that parental experiences of layoffs and job insecurity significantly predicted late adolescents' perceptions of parental job insecurity, which in turn, predicted their own work beliefs and work attitudes such as alienation and cynicism.

All of the above has interesting practical implications for motivation and work/non-work balance in the years to come. Because this new cohort of young workers saw their parents making great sacrifices for their work with no direct or immediate benefits, they may be less willing to make sacrifices for the sake of their jobs (i.e. in terms of their own work/life balance). Some authors have already pointed out that these young workers seem to have an attitude of 'working to live' versus one of 'living to work' (Maccoby, 1995; Zemke *et al.*, 2000). Comments such as: 'We have seen our fathers old and tired at 50 because they worked too hard . . . Don't expect us to wear ourselves out' (p. 231) and 'I can always get another job, but I only have one family' (p. 182) are increasingly being heard in the workplace (Maccoby, 1995). A major challenge facing organizations will be how to attract, motivate and retain these young workers who, because of

their own family experiences, may or may not be motivated by the same factors that motivated their parents.

Two final points should be made before leaving this section. First, although, at first glance, the effects of parents' experiences on this generation of workers may seem negative, we cannot rule out the possibility that in the long run, they will actually act as an inoculation leading to better functioning later in life. In the 1970s, researchers found some support for a 'downward extension hypothesis', whereby adolescents whose fathers became unemployed, although suffering initially, actually exhibited significantly better adjustment later in life (Filder, 1974). This would suggest that this generation of young workers may actually end up benefiting from these early family employment experiences. Although more longitudinal data are needed to support this hypothesis, it is worth considering. Second, it is important to bear in mind that this is not the first cohort of workers to see their parents undergo difficult situations in the workplace (e.g. children living through the great depression). Although the experiences of this cohort may be quite different from their parents, interestingly, they may not be so different from their grandparents. In contrast, what is unique about this generation of young workers, is the degree to which they are currently participating in the paid labour force themselves.

Work experiences of young workers

Over the past 30 years, young people have increasingly encountered the world of work directly through their own job-related experiences (see Loughlin & Barling, 1999a for a review of the nature of youth employment). As stated earlier, it is now common for young people to work part-time in the paid labour market in the evenings, on weekends, and/or in the summer while still full-time students. To date, researchers have tended to underestimate the potential long-term influences of young people's early work experiences, and research has only recently begun to explore the extent to which young workers are affected by the quality of their work experiences (Frone, 1999). We will now discuss research to date in this area.

Employment quantity

The fundamental assumption underlying research in this area is that exposure to work for more than 20 hours per week for young, part-time employees is harmful. Basically, research has yielded a positive correlation between the number of hours worked during the school year and lower investment and performance in school, greater psychological and somatic distress, increased drug and alcohol use, and increased delinquency (e.g. Bachman & Schulenburg, 1993; Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986; Mortimer & Finch, 1986; Steinberg, 1982; Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, Fegley, & Dornbusch, 1993; Tanner & Krahn, 1991). Greenberger and Steinberg (1986) attributed the increases in such activities as alcohol and marijuana use among young workers as likely due to the provision of increased incomes as well as job stress. Tanner and Krahn (1991) attributed the increased delinquency to the fact that employed teenagers are more likely to have friends who

engage in illegal activity. Regardless of the causes, by 1993, researchers had reached a consensus that although employment per se may not be bad for young people, long hours of employment (more than 20 hours per week) were detrimental to students' development and school performance (Steinberg *et al.*, 1993; see Frone, 1999, for a complete review of prior research on the developmental outcomes of adolescent employment).

Interestingly, these findings about work quantity are now being questioned by researchers arguing that the adverse effects of youth employment on academic and personal outcomes are attributable to pre-existing differences among youth who elect to work at various intensities (e.g. Schoenhals, Tienda, & Schneider, 1998). What is noteworthy is that the focus in the literature has remained on the quantity of part-time employment (versus its quality) and on personal and school-related outcomes. As we have argued elsewhere (e.g. Barling & Kelloway, 1999; Barling, Rogers, & Kelloway, 1995; Loughlin & Barling, 1998, 1999a), limiting our attention to the quantity of part-time work severely restricts our exploration of the nature and consequences of young people's employment, and implies that work is an homogeneous experience for this group.

Employment quality

In the industrial/organizational psychology literature on adults, it is recognized that the subjective experience of work is most significant in influencing the consequences of employment, certainly more significant than employment quantity (Barling, 1990). It is the individual experience of work that is focal in job design theories (e.g. Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Warr, 1987), adult development (Mortimer, Lorence, & Kumka, 1986) and family and personal functioning (Barling, 1990). As early as 1982, Greenberger, Steinberg, and Ruggiero suggested that the quality of adolescent jobs could be compared along three dimensions (opportunities for learning or skill use; social interaction; and exercising initiative or autonomy). However, it was not until the 1990s that research began to focus on whether the findings from research on adult employment quality could be generalized to adolescents' part-time employment. This research also began to move beyond developmental and school outcomes to explore relationships between part-time employment experiences and young people's work attitudes and behaviours.

Skill use appears to be critical in teenage employment, and psychological benefits are most pronounced when jobs provide skills that will be useful in the future (Green & Montgomery, 1998; Mortimer, Finch, Ryu, & Shanahan, 1991; Mortimer, Finch, Shanahan, & Ryu, 1992; Mortimer, Pimentel, Ryu, Nash, & Lee, 1996; O'Brien & Feather, 1990). Further, recent research cautions us about the standards by which we judge young workers' skill use: Entwisle, Alexander, Steffel, and Ross (1999) point out that youths as young as 13 years of age do surprisingly complex work in areas such as carpentry, roofing, and plumbing. They also work in nursing homes, greenhouses, or kindergartens, and although their jobs may be unskilled by adult standards, they may well demand the learning of new skills for adolescents. In terms of *opportunities for social interaction* with adults and/or peers, as early as 1980,

Greenberger, Steinberg, Vaux, and McAuliffe found that the workplace was not necessarily a source of close personal relationships for young workers. This is interesting because one of the hypothesized benefits of teenage employment was a reduction in age segregation. One possibility is that the amount of time that teenagers work alone, under time pressure, or on irregular shifts interferes with the development and maintenance of close personal relationships in the workplace. Interestingly, there may be an interaction between skill use and social interaction, because jobs requiring more skills have been related to the development of closer relationships at work (Mortimer & Shanahan, 1991). While *opportunities for exercising initiative or autonomy* have been a major focus of research on adults' work experiences (Karasek & Theorell, 1990), much less research has focused on young workers. Garson (1988) suggests that teenage work is largely routine and alienating, because most youth jobs occur in the lower level service industries (e.g. cashiers, sales clerks, food and beverage services, and janitorial jobs).

Krahn and Lowe (1988) found that young workers are less satisfied with their jobs in general than are older workers, and research concerning the relationship between young people's employment quality and their work-related attitudes and behaviours is beginning to accumulate. Young workers in 'poor quality' employment, for example with few opportunities for skill use or learning, are more cynical and less motivated to do good work (Stern, Stone, Hopkins, & McMillon, 1990), have higher depressive affect, and lower work values (O'Brien & Feather, 1990) than workers in 'good quality' employment. Role stressors in young people's jobs have also been related to their motivation to do good work, their cynicism, and their career maturity, and their satisfaction with interpersonal relationships at work predicts their work-related cynicism (Loughlin & Barling, 1998). Dooley and Prause (1997) found that the correlates of poor-quality work (insecure, low paying, part-time jobs) were more like those of unemployment than adequate employment. These findings are important, given that teenagers seem to be more influenced by their work environments than adults (Lorence & Mortimer, 1985) and that these attitudes and aspirations are stable once established during the teenage years (Gottfredson, 1981; Krosnick & Alwin, 1989; Staw & Ross, 1985).

In addition to these empirical findings, there is much speculation about the next generation of workers. Economists are predicting dramatic increases in the productivity of young workers (Zemke *et al.*, 2000), who are said to have the confidence of knowing they are wanted both by their parents and the job market. They are well educated and comfortable with technology, and multi-culturalism in their schools has made them the most tolerant and open-minded of all generations; they view the world as global and connected 24 hours a day. They are also said to be proactive, possessing positive expectations and a willingness to fight for social justice in the workplace. In this regard, they gain power by virtue of their numbers. This group is as large as the 'Baby Boomer' contingent, and in the United States, for example, they will soon comprise one-third of the total population (Zemke *et al.*, 2000). If teenagers' jobs are primarily comprised of low-quality service sector work, and if research thus far is correct, and lower quality jobs are related to young workers being more cynical and alienated, less motivated to do good work, with higher depressive affect, and lower general work values, this could lead to an

interesting interaction between the needs of these workers and the workplace, raising important research and practical questions in the years to come.

Practical applications

In coping with the potential conflicts described above in the workplace, practitioners are cautioned about not promising young workers job conditions that cannot be attained, which would only lead to disappointment and feelings of betrayal. As Zemke *et al.* (2000) suggest:

... They are not naïve kids; they learned self-sufficiency early and never expected the world to be a bowl of cherries. As long as you don't pretend that some meaningless task is really important, they will respect you for your frankness and honesty (p. 117)

According to these authors, findings in the food-services industry suggest that it is not the actual kind of work being done or the pay that alienates young workers but the behaviour of management toward them. This leads to many interesting research and practical questions that will need to be addressed in the near future, particularly related to the importance of high-quality leadership in the workplace and participation in decision-making.

Some companies have found novel ways to motivate young workers and make service sector work more attractive. For example, Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream has been successful in selling itself as the employer of choice to young workers not because of the intrinsic quality of the jobs they offer, but because they give individuals a chance to contribute to the greater good, by working for a company committed to social justice. TGI Friday's restaurants in the USA has implemented a passport system that allows employees to combine their work with travel to any city with a TGI Friday's location where they can earn an income while experiencing a new city (Zemke *et al.*, 2000). Some authors describe this cohort of young workers as brutally honest in the workplace, despising politics, and prone to 'telling it like it is'; If they are correct, this may provide managers with the most valuable source of insight into ways to motivate young workers, young workers themselves (Maccoby, 1995; Zemke *et al.*, 2000).

Emerging issues for the next generation of workers

We believe that several changes in the workplace and emerging issues of importance to young workers need to be highlighted, because they will shape our research agenda as well as management and organizational practices in the near future. These issues include non-standard employment, leadership, occupational health and safety, and unions.

Non-standard work and work quality

Globally, the proportion of 'non-standard' jobs (temporary, part-time, or contract positions) to standard jobs has continued to rise. In North America and Europe,

approximately 30% of the workforce are now employed in 'non-standard' positions (Pfeiffer, 1999; Rodgers, 2000; Wells & Doyle-Driedger, 1996). This trend has affected young workers in particular; 45% of those employed now hold part-time jobs, although some of this can be accounted for by employed students, there is also a large contingent of involuntary workers in this group. Further, the degree to which this work is marginalized and treated as though it is not 'real work' but rather transitional work on the way to full-time employment is problematic. Given changes in the economy, many young workers are unable to exit this employment, and it can become their life's work. Research addressing the impact of such changes on young workers from a psychological perspective will be particularly important in the years to come. In terms of the role of non-standard work in shaping young workers' future attitudes and behaviours, our literature is only beginning to address the complexity of this question, and of attempting to understand temporary work arrangements in general. We will discuss some findings to date.

Much like early psychological research focusing on the presumed negative effects of maternal employment (see Barling, 1990), there is a tendency to look for the ill effects of 'non-standard' work and to treat these workers as though they are fundamentally different from their counterparts working in jobs of a more traditional nature (e.g. permanent and full-time; McBey & Karakowsky, 2000; Werbel, 1985). The empirical validity of this assumption is now being questioned, and individuals working voluntarily on a part-time/contract basis who enjoy interesting work (i.e. high intrinsic quality) may experience their work as positively as their full-time counterparts (Loughlin & Barling, 1999*b*; Rodgers, 2000). Further, the assumption that permanent jobs are always 'better' jobs in general may increasingly be called into question. For example, it cannot be assumed that full-time jobs in the service sector of the new economy will necessarily offer young people better prospects than part-time work in the knowledge-based economy. Rifkin (1995) reminds us that 75% of the labour force in most industrial countries engage in work that is little more than simple repetitive tasks and that the proportion of skilled jobs available is still inadequate in comparison to the skill level of the population. By the same token, it cannot be assumed that all work in the knowledge-based economy will necessarily be qualitatively superior to service-sector work.

Lessard and Baldwin's (2000) discussion of the high-tech world is a powerful example of the complexity of this topic. Although early writers viewed the information highway as one source of high-quality jobs for young people, books like *Net slaves: True tales of working the web* (Lessard & Baldwin, 2000) offer an alternative view. Their book points to the countless labourers of the technological revolution. They talk about the coders, programmers, and support workers who keep things running on the information highway, often putting up with extremely repetitive work, getting paid subsistence wages, and with no access to health benefits or job security. They talk about 'perma-temps', those contractors with no chance of ever becoming permanent employees in the 'electronic sweatshops' of the wired world. However, they also talk about technology workers who voluntarily choose temporary assignments for fear of the 'mindless repetition' of full-time work: '... burnout was becoming a more and more common occurrence,

plaguing full-timers who were forced to do HTML and nothing but HTML for months without a break' (p. 88). Regardless of whether they are working on a part-time/contract or a full-time basis, enduring work of low intrinsic quality (particularly in an industry believed to be on the cutting edge) will be a bitter pill to swallow for many young people who have been groomed by the education system to think for themselves and to expect stimulating work. Some practical evidence of this may be the unionization drives faced by Amazon.com at the end of 2000 (Bernstein & Hof, 2000), an exemplar of a new economy organization facing an old economy issue.

In summary, simply knowing that someone is employed on a full-time or a part-time/contract basis tells us little about the intrinsic quality of that person's work. To date, however, this has been the presumption in the literature in terms of non-standard work. Non-standard employment is a complex and multi-faceted mix of good and bad jobs, and research must now capture the complexity of this type of work and its effects on young people's future workforce behaviour. One recent study on the quality of adult employment (Loughlin & Barling, 1999b) shows that it is the quality of the job, rather than the individual's employment status, that predicts employee and organizational well-being.

Leadership

The days of male-dominated blue-collar management have ended (former UAW leader, cited in Towery, 1998).

The information age, intense global competition and the need to manage an increasingly diverse workforce are all placing new demands on leadership in organizations (Maccoby, 1995; Wachs-Book, 2000). Young people may be ideally placed to move into these positions given their comfort with the state-of-the-art technology and diversity. However, this will create unique challenges in organizations as young leaders are forced to cope with managing individuals older than themselves (Leger, 2000). Young women in particular will be in a double bind in overcoming age- and gender-based stereotypes (Austin, 2000). It is worth noting that evidence from outside of the employment context suggests that teenagers are already manifesting leadership skills (Zacharatos, Barling, & Kelloway, 2000). However, the full development of these skills will take investment on the part of organizations. Although the new generation rejects older models of authority and leadership, they have not yet filled this void with new models of leadership (Maccoby, 1995). Having the opportunity to use their skills in the workplace may play an important role in the development of further leadership skills. Young workers must view the workplace as a context that allows for skill development. Organizations may well be wasting considerable potential if they ignore the leadership skills that young men and women can bring to the workplace, given the opportunity.

Managers in the new economy will face several challenges in preparing young workers to move into positions of leadership in the future. Many young workers do not attach the same status to authority as previous generations, and there is now

pervasive cynicism about leadership and leaders. Further, young workers may be less interested in progressing into leadership positions and more concerned about achieving a healthy balance between work and non-work activities (Maccoby, 1995; Zemke *et al.*, 2000). Interestingly, while women are becoming less tolerant of family undermining their career possibilities, men are becoming less tolerant of work separating them from their families (Maccoby, 1995). These changing attitudes on the part of the future workforce will have significant implications for organizations and affect the kind of research questions asked in occupational and organizational psychology.

The issue of gender and leadership is also likely to be an important issue in the near future. Many young women are poised to step into positions of leadership and are increasingly participating in areas that were once reserved for males. For example, women are currently responsible for more than 80% of consumer spending in the USA, and the number of women in undergraduate programmes now outweighs the number of men annually by an ever-widening gap (Towery, 1998). Young women are also more willing to engage in open competition at younger ages (Rimm, 2000). For example, while one in 27 girls participated in high-school team sports in the 1970s, the number was one in three in 1998 (Dafoe-Whitehead, 1998). As more young women engage in open competition, they may be better prepared for leadership positions in organizations as they arise. However, because many young women who are successfully climbing the corporate ladder or operating their own businesses are breaking away from traditional male models of leadership (Wachs-Book, 2000), the extent to which these experiences will factor into the development of young female leaders in the future is an empirical question that remains to be addressed. Regardless of the model adopted, change is inevitable as these women move through the organizational ranks.

Young women will face at least two barriers in moving into positions of leadership in the workplace of the future. First, organizations' willingness to accommodate and train non-traditional leaders will be an issue. Second, young women still need to overcome considerable barriers in their personal lives. As Hochschild and Machung (1997) argue, while many women made the historic shift into the paid economy in the last century, men have not made a 'second historic shift—into work at home' (p. 238). Each year since 1987, a majority of new mothers have gone back to work before their child's first birthday (Towery, 1998), yet employed mothers are still spending an average of 15 more hours a week performing housework and childcare than their husbands. Even when women contributed as much or more income to the family, they still did the lion's share of housework. Husbands with wives in the paid labour force do not do much more at home than those with wives who are homemakers, younger men do not contribute more than their older counterparts, and men who work fewer hours do not do any more work at home than those working longer hours (Hochschild & Machung, 1997). Even at higher socio-economic levels where women are able to purchase domestic services (e.g. childcare and cleaning services), they remain responsible for managing the home (e.g. shopping, paying bills, making dentist appointments). Given that nearly one-third of all births in the 1990s were to unmarried women,

this will become an even more acute problem for 'Generation Y' mothers with jobs away from home and potentially no support at home (Zemke *et al.*, 2000). Previous models of leadership in organizations have assumed a stay-at-home spouse to manage domestic responsibilities while a person threw himself into work (some authors argue that even men without stay-at-home wives are at a disadvantage in organizations; Rogers, 2000). The new generation of workers have different domestic responsibilities, and for women in particular, how they balance work and family will be an increasingly important consideration in their ability to move into positions of leadership.

Workplace safety and health, and labour unions

(Nexters) will use their collective numbers to change legislation that affects the workplace—minimum wage, union issues, and workplace safety . . . Their consensus on these sorts of topics is yet to be tested and determined and will surely be shaped by their early workplace experiences . . . (Zemke *et al.*, 2000, p. 145)

Although workplace injuries have declined over time, in the mid to late 1990s, European workers were still nine times more likely to be injured at work than in commuting accidents (Dupre, 2000). In Canada, individuals were three times as likely to be injured at work than in traffic accidents (Human Resources Development Canada, 2000). Among individuals injured at work, young workers (age 18–24 in Europe and age 15–24 in Canada) are consistently found to be at the highest risk of lost-time injuries (Dupre, 2000; Human Resources Development Canada, 2000). In Canada, approximately 60,000 young workers are involved in lost-time injuries on the job each year (Human Resources Development Canada, 2000; International Accident Prevention Association, 2000). Most young workers are not injured in jobs that appear 'dangerous'. The food-service industry in the USA provides a good example of this: in the early 1990s, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics labeled the restaurant industry a 'high impact' industry (Personick, 1991), and nearly 40% of youth work injuries occur in restaurants (Castillo, 1999). Food and beverage establishments have between 300,000 and 400,000 injuries and illnesses a year in the US. The situation is predicted to worsen in North America as considerable growth is anticipated in the low-skill, low-wage service sector of the economy. Further, given the chronic underreporting in this area, this probably under-represents the problem. Typical injuries include heat and grease burns, sprains and strains, contusions and fractures, cuts, and back injuries. Two fifths of those injured must miss work or work with restrictions (average loss of 15 days away from regular work). These young people are inexperienced and eager to please, they are typically given little or no on-the-job training, and they are vulnerable (Castillo, 1999).

How will the new generation of young workers cope with this reality given their desire for safe, high-quality work? Will they be willing to fight for changes, or will they be discouraged by the workplace reality with which they are confronted? There are already some data suggesting that their interest in unions may be increasing (Gallagher, 1999), and whether unions are in a position to satisfy their demands will

become increasingly important. These are the kinds of research questions that await consideration. Zemke *et al.* (2000) talk about this group of young workers fueling 'a new class-based politics and a new unionism' (p. 145) in their fight for such things as pay equity, fair labour standards, and/or lower executive salaries. Pfeiffer (1999) talks about these young workers 'creating a third wave of unionism' (p. 64) in years to come, particularly in the service sector of the economy.

Only considering occupational safety, however, would be shortsighted; we also need to begin studying the relationship between youth work experiences and health. While much is known about the consequences of workplace experiences for adults' physical health (see Kahn, 1981) and young people's psychological well-being (see Frone, 1999, 2000), very little is known about young workers' physical health, perhaps because of lingering assumptions that only excessive quantities of employment are problematic. Investigating the paths through which any effects of employment on physical health are transmitted will also be important. For example, factors such as job involvement could buffer or exacerbate effects, given that some young workers may be much more involved in their work than others. If young workers are involved with their jobs, the effects of poor-quality work may be very similar to what we see in adults (where a clear link has been demonstrated between poor-quality work and health, particularly in cases of high involvement, e.g. Frone, Russell, and Cooper, 1995). These types of questions will need to be addressed in future research in this area.

Conclusion

Socialization into the world of work does not begin when individuals assume their first full-time job. For most people in North America and Europe, the first contact with work is vicarious; as children watch and listen to their parents, they learn about the world of paid employment. The second contact with work occurs for many teenagers during the 'impressionable years', when they take on a variety of part-time jobs. Critical lessons are learned during these two phases that have lasting effects. We must begin to explore more fully the whole spectrum of work experiences in our research. Further, we must consider the impact of the emerging issues identified above (i.e. non-standard employment, leadership, occupational health and safety and unions) on young workers if we are to understand the workforce of the future.

To suggest that research needs to investigate the impact of these workplace changes on young workers does not deny a long-term perspective on workplace changes. For example, we discussed the move toward non-standard employment and its impact on young workers. Cappelli (1999) would remind us that the 'traditional employment contract' in the USA was actually very 'non-standard' (i.e. a contractor system) prior to recent history. Further, Rogers (2000) would add that many workers have never experienced the employment security of which everyone bemoans the loss (e.g. white women, people of colour, and the poor have always worked on the margins). In fact, in the early 1930s, more than half of American industry (e.g. companies like Kellogg's, Sears, and Standard Oil) had reduced the

number of hours worked by everyone to distribute work more evenly. In 1933, the US Senate passed a bill mandating a 30-hour week for all businesses engaged in interstate and foreign commerce (Rifkin, 1995). Although the bill was later stopped by Roosevelt and the nation's business leaders, the point is that this idea is by no means recent¹.

Books written on the new generation of workers (e.g. Zemke *et al.*, 2000) offer us useful insights into the current cohort of workers. However, in this regard it is critical to note that there are two separate literatures. Frone (1999), for example, provides a comprehensive review of the empirical research. A second literature exists as well, and this generational research tends to incorporate more anecdotal evidence and speculations about the future (e.g. Zemke *et al.*, 1999). In building a knowledge base about the future generation of workers, the quality of the available data needs to be considered carefully. Other methodological issues will emerge in any research agenda on young workers. First and foremost, longitudinal study is critical. While it may not be feasible to collect data over a period of decades, it is noteworthy that such studies enabled Elder (1974) to discern how parental employment experiences may be negative in the short term, but exerted positive effects in the medium and long term. Second, while organizational psychologists have typically eschewed the use of ethnographic research, high-quality ethnographic research should not be confused with anecdotal data. Consistent with research addressing new issues, ethnographic data could play an important role in developing an appropriate research agenda on the development of young workers' attitudes beliefs, expectations and aspirations.

In conclusion, there can be little doubt that today's young workers will soon constitute the workforce of tomorrow. Understanding how their future work attitudes and behaviours will be shaped is too important a question to be ignored. In the same way that organizational psychologists have turned their attention to issues that were critical to organizations and their members, it is now incumbent upon organizational psychologists to direct their energies to understanding today's young workers, and how their current family and work experiences shape their future work attitudes and behaviours.

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¹Ironically, while many countries around the world are finally moving to shorter work weeks to deal with the unequal distribution of work (e.g. Germany and France), in parts of North America (e.g. Ontario, Canada), governments are actually moving to pass legislation for longer work weeks (e.g. moving to approve a 60-hour work week). They claim that they need this flexibility in order to keep up with global competitive pressures.

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