

The following is an excerpt with references from:

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Increasing the use of science and mathematics knowledge: Student views on technical careers and the role of academics

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Do educational and career aspirations change? It may be that a large number of high school graduates are not aware of the level of preparation needed for college and do not have clear or realistic career goals. In the Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development researchers asked “What are the images and expectations that teenagers have about their future careers?” (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). From 1992 to 1997, they followed the progress of 1214 students from thirteen school districts across the US. They attempted to achieve a sample of adolescents whose racial and ethnic composition would be representative of the US population from ages 12 to 18. Of this group, 91% expected to finish high school and 83% expected to go to college. These numbers are similar to Berkner & Chavez (1997). Nearly 80% held the view that they would have well paying and enjoyable jobs. There was very little gender difference despite the current inequities in the labor market. Therefore, overall these teenagers had quite positive educational, and occupational, and life style expectations.

Their career choices were heavily weighted toward professions such as doctor (10%), business (7%), lawyer (7%), and teacher (7%). These expectations are similar to a survey of college freshmen conducted by Astin (1997). However, there are some notable changes in career choices. There was some stereotyping with girls mentioning nursing, secretarial, and social work while boys mentioned athlete, engineer, and police officer. Although frequently mentioned by high school students, college freshmen no longer mentioned athlete and psychologist. Not mentioned by high school students but now included by college students were skilled trades and computer programmer. This suggests that with age and knowledge of a wider array of career choices comes realism in occupational expectations and educational requirements (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000).

Selected References

Astin, A. (1977). *The American Freshman: Thirty-Year Trends 1966-1996*. University of California Los Angeles: Los Angeles Higher Education Research Institute.

Berkner, L. & Chavez, L. (October 1997). *Postsecondary education descriptive analysis reports: Access to postsecondary education for the 1992 high school graduates*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics NCES 98-105.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Schneider, B. (2000). *Becoming adult: How teenagers prepare for the world of work*. New York, NY: Basic Books. Chapter 3, Envisioning the Future, p. 45, Table 3.2 Frequently Mentioned Occupations.