

The Great American Dream has generated a success syndrome that the U.S. probably won't be able to maintain for much longer. The principle "my career is my life" is gradually becoming "my life is my career." The notion of a career as the very centerpiece of the good life is beginning to disappear, being replaced with the idea that a career is a supplement to the good life—a supplement that not all people will have access to or expect in the future.

That success in the future likely will be defined in relation to a broader interpretation of a "full life" poses a dilemma for today's career development professionals. Should we be preparing people *narrowly* for specific careers, or should we be preparing them *broadly* for life?

Change is in the air

It's a gross understatement that the world of work is changing. Discussed below are some of the factors that are redefining the fundamental nature of jobs, work, and careers.

The Future of Jobs, Work, and Careers

by John L. Leach and B.J. Chakiris

■ *Global competition.* It's been in the news for some time now that U.S. companies are competing in an increasingly global marketplace. Not only are we competing with Western Europe and Japan, but several other Far Eastern countries, Mexico, and some South American countries are entering the fray. These competitors are catching up technologically, taking markets and work away from the U.S. in industries such as textiles, electronics, and automobile manufacturing. What do these countries have that we don't? A growing, young, cheap, motivated, non-union workforce.

■ *Technology.* There is every reason to expect U.S. organizations to continue

leaner staffing. In fact, they will probably be investing more capital, not less, in labor-saving technology. It is simply more cost effective to "de-skill" jobs with computer-assisted technologies. This means fewer workers—including managers and professionals—will be needed, although new professions may well emerge.

■ *Productivity and the manufacturing economy.* Manufacturing is holding its own, accounting for 21 percent of our GNP in 1985, versus 20 percent of GNP in 1960, according to the *Chicago Sun-Times*. This is not to say that severe regional dislocations haven't occurred. For example, 20 percent of Chicago's jobs were in manufacturing in 1986, compared to 38 percent in 1956. Because of increased use of technology fewer people are involved in manufacturing even though manufacturing is not declining as a work activity.

According to books such as *Megatrends* and *Jobs for the Nation*, it will be the service industries, not manufacturing, that will generate perhaps nine out of ten new jobs by 1995. Service jobs will affect the economics surrounding the new careers, as well as the basic structure of traditional career paths as we know them today. Career ladders in the service sector tend to have fewer rungs to the top, thus compressing career opportunities.

■ *The baby boomers.* The baby-boom phenomenon yielded a total of 76 million people between the years of 1946 and 1964. This segment of the workforce now is competing for fewer jobs. And because this group is more educated than any generation before, they have higher expectations—of everything, including their careers. Not only will the U.S. find it difficult to find jobs for all these people, but society is going to have to grapple with their high aspirations.

■ *Labor force participation of women.* Perhaps the most significant demographic phenomenon is the larger number of women in the workforce today due to economic pressures, the women's movement, more highly educated women, and society's changing views of the role of women. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that by 1992 over 60 percent of the labor force will be women. Women are now the majority in college and university freshman classes, and they

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comprise about one-third of the enrollments in law, medicine, business, and architecture schools. Also, more women than men are starting small businesses, perhaps because they perceive fewer opportunities in large companies.

Absorbing women into the U.S. workforce is no longer an acculturation problem, but a numerical one.

There are simply more women than good jobs available.

■ *Immigration patterns.* By the year 2000, 80 percent of entry-level employees will be women and immigrants. This pluralistic surge of different values, expectations, and priorities will add language and communication complications to the problem of job competition.

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Another side of the immigration issue arises from the fact that approximately one-half of the engineers being trained in U.S. universities are from countries outside the U.S. On the one hand, the U.S. is helping to educate its global competitors; many of these people return to their homelands. But on the other hand, many of these people stay in the U.S. and compete with Americans for the best jobs in areas from engineering and R & D to mid and upper management.

■ *Functional illiteracy.* The functionally illiterate have little opportunity to participate effectively in the U.S. labor market. Fifty years ago, anyone who wanted to work could leave high school and get a job. But today our large urban public schools frequently are not preparing high school graduates adequately for the job market. Many graduates have limited reading and writing skills. And limited skills means limited career opportunities.

In light of the above changes, traditional career development models are beginning to lack relevance for many U.S. jobholders. We are seeing more people working in small businesses or as permanent part-time workers, home-based workers, temporary help, leased employees, freelancers, and consultants.

Traditional models also have limited use for the growing numbers of temporarily unemployed, underemployed, and permanently unemployed. In fact, as time goes on, traditional career development models will only be relevant to a small, elite group of corporate careerists. Obviously it's time for career development professionals to redirect their creative energies to better serve the new American workforce.

Understanding jobs and work

Jobs derive from the work of society, a nation's agenda, and its goals. How many jobs there are depends upon the economic well-being of a nation. And the types of jobs available are determined by what is important to the nation. For example, during World War II most jobs in the U.S. were defense-related.

Work, on the other hand, is any purposeful activity in which someone exerts physical or mental effort to perform a task, whether or not this activity generates wages or contributes to the GNP. Historically, of course, w:

associated "work" with an economic contract between employer and employee. But as work is defined here, it can relate to other, noneconomic-based roles. For example, work can refer to what one does as a student, parent, or volunteer; to what one does for a community development project; and to effort expended in a physical fitness program. People who focus on self-discovery or social benefit also look upon their activities as work.

The important thing to remember is that one can "work" very hard at any number of nonpaying activities that are neither recreational in nature nor include a job description and wages. These nonpaying roles can represent "jobs" if society deems them sufficiently important to pay for their enactment. But even if society does acknowledge these activities as work, they in no way contribute to the GNP.

Jobs flow from work, but not all the work of a nation has to be finalized into economic-based job contracts. This is why a nation can have a lot of work to

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complete but may have few jobs. Hence we see that all jobs imply work, but not all work implies jobs.

Understanding careers

Careers flow from jobs. As implied earlier, a job need not lead anywhere; it just is something a person gets paid for. Careers, on the other hand, are continuous behavioral episodes leading to a path or ladder that ends, optimally, in some kind of career capstone experience. The career path typically takes an individual through a sequence of increasingly complicated and responsible work. There were very few careers as we define them

before the turn of the 20th century, mainly because the world was largely agrarian in nature. Careers as a formal concept are primarily the invention of large corporations and government bureaucracies.

The number of paying jobs available in a society limits the number of careers available to citizens even though, as noted previously, the amount of work available to a society is almost limitless. A nation that can't generate enough careers for its population is not necessarily in economic trouble, but needs to think about redefining the meaning of "work" in relation to its vision, goals, and agenda. For example, people in advanced, postindustrial societies would be able to pursue "new" work activities relating to areas such as culture, world peace, justice, beautification, spirituality, leisure, citizenship, mental health, and life-long education.

Careers, for the most part, are based in sociopsychological concepts such as status, power, and influence and sec-

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only in economics. In a highly industrial society, a person's career traditionally makes a statement regarding his or her financial status and, more importantly, how important others view that person. Because of this, a person's career has greatly influenced his or her self-worth.

In an advanced, postindustrial society, however, perceived self-worth and the evaluation of others probably would be calculated along new criteria, such as a person's character, his or her companionability, renaissance-like knowledge, contribution to the community, or patience to enhance a pluralistic society. The "social good" and the roles citizens play in this world would constitute the basis for new criteria. In contrast, today's highly competitive, highly industrialized society rewards upward mobility as the major "social good."

New career forms

Portrayed visually, careers may take three forms: linear, free, and mixed.

The linear career form. This is the traditional corporate or government career ladder model. A career is composed of a planned sequence of activities, with each activity leading to another in an upward movement. Responsibility and pay increase as one goes up this ladder.

People who pursue the linear career generally take the following route:

- explore career path possibilities and get career education as preparation;
- enter the career, very likely in a large corporation;
- consume time and energy in getting established;
- move upward;
- ultimately reach a peak and attempt to maintain the peak;
- disengage and finally retire.

Some people pursue a second or third linear career, each of which follows the same type of career line.

Linear careers are based in economics. Moreover, the employer plays a decisive role regarding upward movement. Because business needs come first, self-actualization is largely accidental. Being competent, fitting in, and understanding the culture are key requisites to advancement. People pursuing this type of career exchange autonomy for career security and company-prescribed advancement.

Linear-form careers in large corporations very likely account for less than

one-third of all the careers in the U.S. Yet the majority of career development research and practice tends to focus on this career form and points to it as the classic career development model.

Free-form careers. This career form includes work for pay and work or activity for no pay. The pay-based activities include various forms of permanent or temporary part-time work, sub-contracted work when a person is "leased" for a specific period, small business activities, and start-up entrepreneurial efforts. Unpaid activities include those of students, full-time parents, volunteers, leisurites, and the like.

These activities are free form in nature because they aren't structured within a corporate organization chart. They need not necessarily lead anywhere, in any planned sequence. People can enter into free-form careers for limited or extended periods of time and can combine them to form novel, sometimes ingenious, combinations.

Traditional career development models are beginning to lack relevance for many U.S. jobholders

Personal autonomy is a marked characteristic of the free-form pattern. The individual initiates the setting of personal goals and limits and decides when and with whom to enter into activities. Interpersonal competition is absent from this career form. Cooperative or collegial relationships are more often the norm.

Small business activities seem to fit many of the above criteria, as do entrepreneurial activities. For example, entrepreneurs may create businesses that only later develop into money-making endeavors for many other people. Not that small-business people or entrepreneurs do not have economic drives; it is just that these drives are modulated by autonomy needs—especially concerning the form their career contracts will take, their desire to have colleagues, and the ability to interact only with people they genuinely like.

Paid free-form careerists presently account for at least 30 percent of workers, with this percentage expected to

increase significantly by the turn of the century. Including the unpaid free-form people, the total in this career group represents *at least half* the people working in the U.S. today. The career development field as we perceive it today allocates very little research or practitioner time to the special needs of people involved in free-form careers.

Mixed-form careers. The distinguishing characteristic of this career form is the notion of behavioral transitions. That is, mixed-form careerists are making significant changes in their repertoire of skills, knowledge, and attitude orientations as these bear upon their "work." These transitions can be planned or random oscillations between the linear and free-form career patterns or between economic- and noneconomic-based roles within the free-form career pattern. In each instance, the person is experiencing some significant changes in his or her life plan that involve planning, rehearsal, and emotional working-through.

The temporarily unemployed, underemployed, and permanently unemployed all fit the mixed-form career pattern if the people involved are in the midst of some transition, such as retraining. Students also can be included in this category. Even employed people, who are *emotionally disengaged* from either a linear or free-form career, could fall into the mixed category. Psychologically all these people are entering a period of transition, mentally oscillating until they make some fundamental decisions regarding new coping strategies.

Many Americans, by choice or otherwise, fit into the mixed-form category, although we are aware of no estimates of exactly how many people fall into this category. Numbers based on official national unemployment rates and outplacement rates are likely gross underestimates. With the possible exception of career development people who work in outplacement, the field as a whole has given scant attention to the problems of mixed-form careerists.

How we must change

If career development professionals will learn to separate *conceptually* the fundamental entities of jobs, work, and careers they can eliminate the career development field's dominating focus upon the linear career form. The my-

opic emphasis on linear careers limits the field insofar as its goals and accomplishments. We believe that if the career development field is to be visionary and functional in the future, professionals in this area must begin now to pay attention to the distinctions between jobs, work, and careers and the three forms of career patterns.

Based on the observations made above, the following are some goals and objectives we believe the career development field might want to redefine:

■ Professional fields tend to study what they deem valuable. In terms of career development, we believe the free- and mixed-form career patterns have as much value as linear careers and deserve to be studied more and incorporated into practice. A person can have a job and not a career or can function in a noneconomic-based role and still be of value to society's work. These people are still good citizens and have equal value in society to their linear-form counterparts.

■ Career development professionals need to develop new theory and practice to accommodate the needs of people working in small businesses and as entrepreneurs, for they will generate most new jobs in the future. The career development field has the technology to deal with people following linear careers but needs to develop alternative theory and practice for free-form careerists. Because free-form work isn't predominately organization-based or -controlled, it is *qualitatively* different from linear-form work. This is true for both economic- and noneconomic-based roles.

■ People pursuing linear-form careers will continue to need help in planning and executing their careers, particularly if, as we believe, their numbers will continue to dwindle.

Because these careers will be fewer, and because they probably will continue to be the better paying, two outcomes may occur. First, linear-form careerists may become our society's so-called elite and, second, people pursuing these careers will be overworked. Those in linear careers will continue to have significant career problems and stresses, particularly as their human development needs diverge from career development needs. In the corporate world, business needs frequently come before human development needs. It is psychological de-

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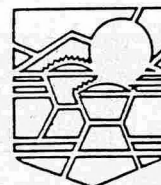
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pendency on the corporation that is the most damaging aspect of the linear career form.

■ In the immediate future, being periodically unemployed likely will represent an experience most of our working population will encounter. This mixed-form experience will make retraining even more important than it is today. The career development field has made a start here, but even more research is needed, particularly into the transition process itself.

Outplacement specialists are gathering a great deal of relevant data here, and career development professionals need to develop incentives to stimulate outplacement firms to share their transition and change insights, techniques, and results. The outplacement industry really has an ethical responsibility to subsidize career development research in these areas.

■ The cyclically and permanently unemployed need the attention of the career development field. As we've explained above, all citizens need their "work," even if this work may not represent economic-based jobs or corporate career ladders. Nevertheless, society's solution to the unemployed usually is either unemployment compensation or welfare. In the latter instance, if people are in the third generation of welfare, that is how they have learned to see their relationships with society.

The career development field needs to creatively rethink other options to cyclical or extended unemployment. There are any number of ways citizens can contribute to the work of society, without necessarily following linear-form careers. This means that career development leaders may have to alter perceptions of their professional roles. Currently the U.S. is responding to few of the occupational changes outlined above. The ability to affect the policy and power centers of our nation may be the most important new dimension of the career development professional's role in the 1990s.

■ It seems to us that noneconomic-based work roles are every bit as valuable to society as linear career work. While this category of free-form roles doesn't directly contribute to society's GNP, these roles *do* contribute measurably to our future and the quality of our lives. If it is to exercise leadership in the national debate, the career development field must communicate

The myopic emphasis on linear careers limits the career development field insofar as its goals and accomplishments

more forcefully that not all work is linear-career work. When people talk about strategic investments of an entire nation, they need to consider all three career models.

■ We predict there will be hot debates in the 1990s regarding job turf and employment security, what "getting ahead" and "success" will mean in an advanced society, how to deal with declining employee loyalty to corporations, and other issues that relate to expectations. This suggests a major opportunity for the career development field to exercise leadership. Through research and practitioner input, the career development field is very likely the best positioned, compared to other social science professional fields, to communicate new forms of human values as they bear on the expectation-setting process.

Career development should have one overriding mission as it progresses into the future: to contribute to *all* citizens, regardless of employment status, choice of career form, or presence of work and life role transitions. By applying its theories and practices to the society at large, the career development field will more fully live up to its humanistic mission and objectives.