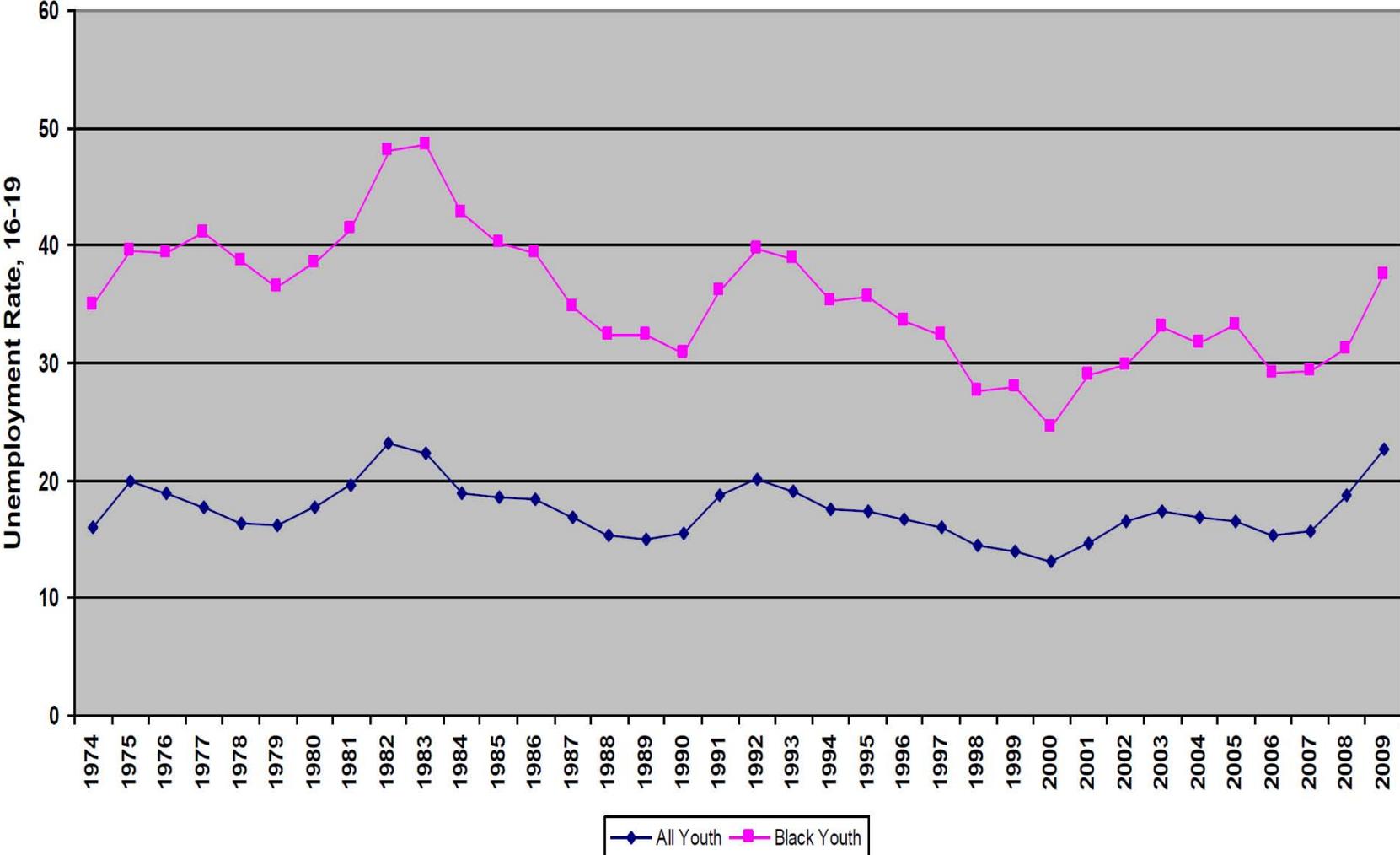


Career-Focused Training For Youth

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High and Rising Teenage Unemployment Rates



Skills in the Context of High Unemployment

- With dramatic drop in jobs, hard to concentrate on skill development
- But, skill development can be especially appropriate when jobs are unavailable
- Questions—What kind of skills and which institutional settings? How can we use job programs to sustain young people in productive careers? What are the potential contributions of career-focused approaches?

Critique of US Approach to Training Workers Goes Back A Long Way

- Employer complaints about US system relative to German and other country systems go back at least to early 1900s
- Focus in the 1960s was on poor youth and the high black youth unemployment
- In the 1980s, three commissions frame the problem not as one affecting only minorities and unemployment but rather the broad spectrum of youth and their careers
- Less emphasis on youth unemployment despite little change in joblessness

Common Perceptions About the Problems (not necessarily incorrect)

- Complexity of jobs is increasing
- Capabilities of US students in math and verbal skill are not improving and are low in international comparisons
- Schools and/or families and/or kids themselves are all partly at fault
- Insufficient resources or no incentives for schools to do a good job
- Jobs and careers change too often to emphasize career-focused approaches, especially for students of high school age

The Academic Standards and “College for All” Policies

- Since the late 1990s, twin focus on
 - Raising academic requirements and using external tests for all education levels and for completing high school
 - Encourage all students to attend college, even when the prospects of completion are very low
 - “Academic drift” common in other countries
 - Little attention paid to career-focused programs, including those with a good track record

Measuring Skills & Qualifications

- Primary indicator of skill in the US is the level of educational attainment of the work force
 - Measures of this simple indicator are uncertain
- Secondary indicators are scores on tests of students and occasional tests of the work force
- Missing are measures of skills that employers require, including motivation & other non-academic skills, such as communication, working well in teams, planning, and reliability—noted in SCANS and 21st century skills
- Also missing are broad measures of occupational skill
- Cannot manage what we do not measure

Figure 4

Importance of Applicant Characteristics for Hiring Front-Line Workers

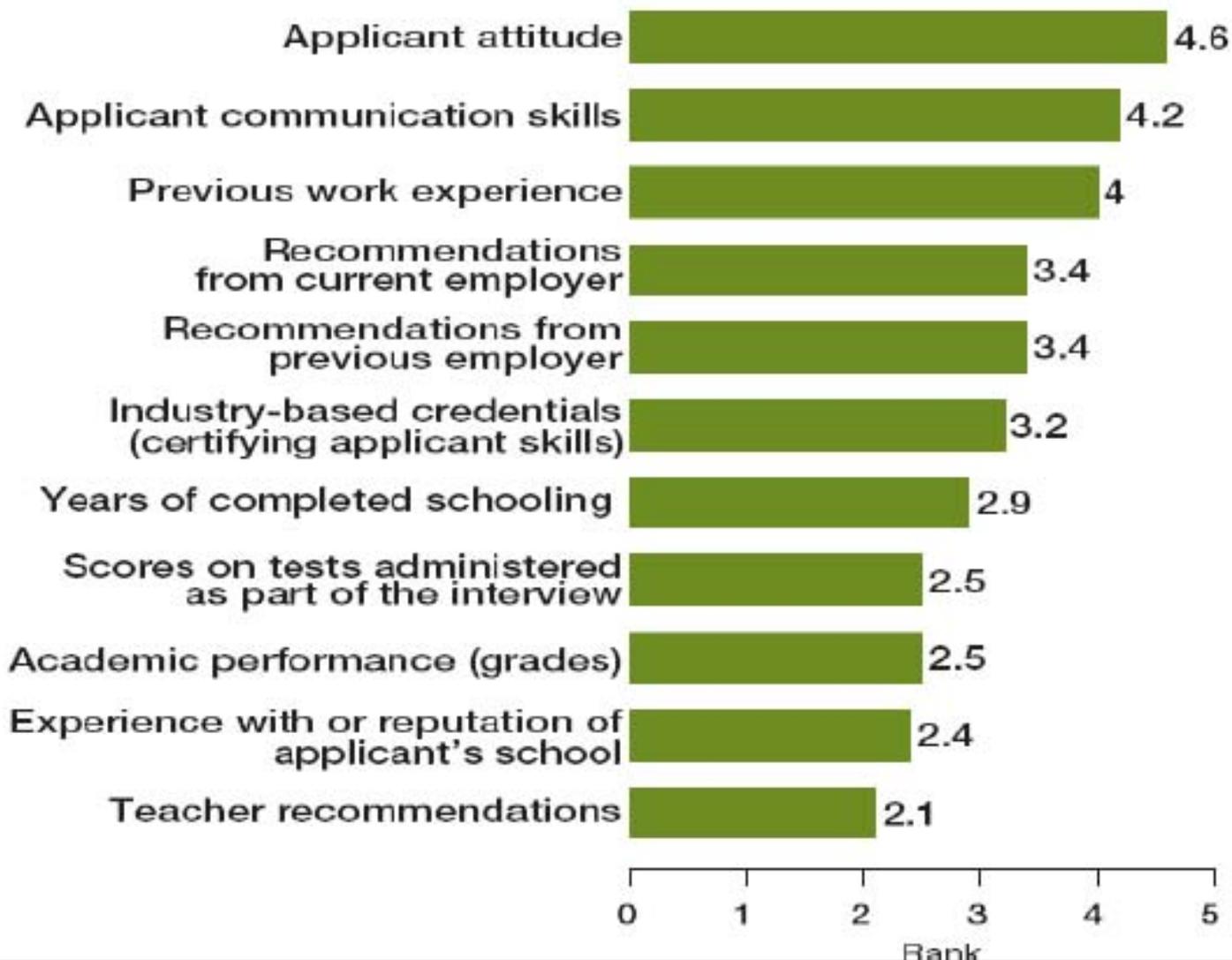
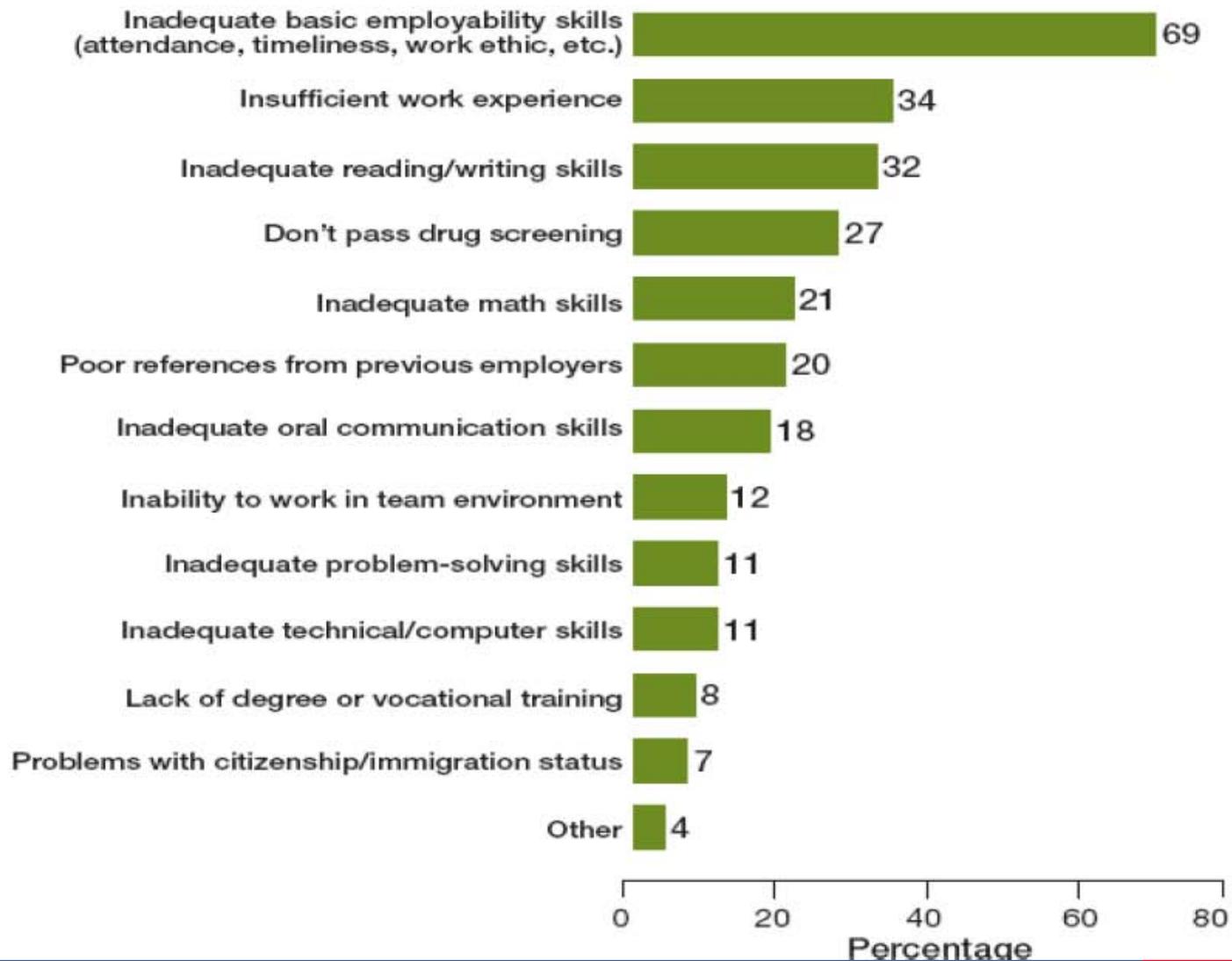


Figure 3

Most Common Reasons Companies Reject Applicants as Hourly Production Workers



	All	Upper WC
Math ($\alpha=0.81$)		
1. Any math	0.94	0.95
2. Add/subtract	0.86	0.93
3. Multiply/divide	0.78	0.89
4. Fractions	0.68	0.82
<i>More advanced</i>	0.22	0.35
5. Algebra I	0.19	0.30
6. Geometry/trig	0.14	0.20
7. Statistics	0.11	0.22
8. Algebra II	0.09	0.14
9. Calculus	0.05	0.08
<i>Mean Level</i>	4.11	4.9

	All	Upper WC
Reading ($\alpha=0.80$)		
1. Any reading	0.96	0.99
2. One page	0.82	0.96
3. Five pages	0.54	0.81
4. News articles	0.42	0.64
5. Prof'l articles	0.38	0.65
6. Books	0.53	0.76
<i>Mean Level</i>	3.8	5.0
Writing ($\alpha=0.64$)		
1. Any writing	0.91	0.99
2. One page	0.61	0.86
3. Five pages	0.24	0.47
4. News articles	0.09	0.20
5. Books/prof'l arts	0.03	0.07
<i>Mean Level</i>	1.9	2.7

21st Century Skill Listing

Digital-Age Literacy

Basic, scientific, economic, and technological literacy
Visual and information literacy
Multicultural literacy and global awareness

Inventive Thinking

Adaptability and managing complexity
Self-direction
Curiosity, creativity, and risk taking
Higher-order thinking and sound reasoning

Effective Communication

Teaming, collaboration, and interpersonal skills
Personal, social, and civic responsibility
Interactive communication

High Productivity

Prioritizing, planning, and managing for results
Effective use of real-world tools
Ability to produce relevant, high-quality products

Skill Development, Youth Development, and Work-Based Learning

- Young people reap developmental benefits from engaging in apprenticeships and internships
- They work with natural adult mentors who can guide them but allow them to make their own mistakes
- Youth see themselves judged by the established standards of a discipline, including deadlines and the genuine constraints and unexpected difficulties that arise in the profession
- Young people learn through observation, imitation, trial and error, and reiteration, through force of experience
- Professionalism and care are expected, perfection is not
- Adult mentors hold the discipline for the apprentice, sequencing and controlling task demands to keep them on the constructive side of difficulty.

Career-Focused Learning Particularly Relevant to Minorities and Young Men

- They see relevance and gain immediate rewards from doing and earning
- Does not require sitting in class all day
- Involves young people in constructive adult atmosphere, including natural adult mentor
- Focus is on achieving skills, not grades
- Offers a sense of occupational pride and identity

What are the US patterns and scale of career-focused education and training?

- At the secondary level
 - Modest decline in number of career and technical education (CTE) courses, but more academic courses
 - Proportion with strong career concentration is down from 24% to 14% between 1982 and 1998; substantial coop education remains
 - Several initiatives in career-focused programs
 - High Schools That Work
 - Tech Prep
 - Career Academies
 - School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA)

Second Chance Programs Continue But At Modest Scale

- Late 1970s saw major initiatives, including entitlement demonstration, for jobs and high school completion
- Not clear at all how many youth are high school graduates
- Poor results in JTPA youth experiment leads to limited response
- Job Corps remains, but covers a small share even of disadvantaged youth

Community College, Proprietary Schools, & Four Year Colleges

- Half of community college students are in career-focused programs
- About 40 percent of BA students also in career-focused programs
- Implies nearly 5 million undergrads in career-focused programs
- Substantial number in proprietary schools but figures are uncertain

Apprenticeships

- Intensive combination of work-based (3-4 years) and classroom training (2+ years)
- No foregone earnings while in program
- Evidence of largest gains, exceeds benefits from community college
- Not involving enough young people
- Primarily in construction and manufacturing, apprenticeship numbers are not trivial in the US
- DOL data suggest order of magnitude of approximately 500,000; education household survey provides a much larger figure, 1.5 million

How Well Does Career-Focused Education and Training Work?

- Surprisingly well, even in high school
- National Assessment of Voc Ed review suggest a 4 CTE courses can raise wages by 8-12 percent, 8 years after high school
- Career Academies offer experimental evidence of career-focused education
 - For a high risk group, earnings gain exceeds \$240 per month
- Tech-Prep stimulates community college attendance, but less four year attendance
- Most STW programs help, with gains mainly among young men; limited system change

Postsecondary Career-Focused Programs Raise Earnings

- Studies suggest earnings gains from career-focused community college, especially for men with low test scores
- Earnings gains of 30 percent from career-focused programs for young men
- Women see gains as much in academic CC programs as in career-focused programs
- Little good evidence on proprietary school impacts; perhaps this is too general a category; mixed evidence, modest gains

Evidence for Second Chance Programs and Apprenticeships

- Job Corps shows gains of 12 percent in earnings persisting after 4 years; effects vary widely by subgroup
- JOBSTART, replication of Job Corps, shows no significant gain
- Replication of promising local program (CET) yields little gain in earnings
- Apprenticeships not studied in experimental context, but gains are very substantial in estimate in Washington state; relative to a comparison group, earnings gains amounted to \$4,300 per quarter

Implications for High School Reforms and Realities

- Mistake to put all eggs in academic standards basket; though justified on helping people do better in the job market, no attention paid to standards linked to success in careers (SCANS)
- Still substantial amount of career-focused education taking place and CTE shows earnings gains
- Evidence shows from earnings gains from career well-structured programs and from regular CTE
- Recognize heterogeneity of the job market, not clear existing academic courses are appropriate
- Little evidence that national policymakers learning any lessons from Career Academies and STW

Other Recommendations

- Make existing work places into better learning environments; take advantage of current job holding, over 50% work in high school
- Use employer-verified certifications of employability
- Expand employers internships
- Develop major demonstration with selected industries to promote structured work-based, school-based learning leading to certifications
 - Choose occupation/industry in demand
 - Insure industry leadership in program design
 - National, regional accrediting body
 - Link with schools, community colleges

Still Other Recommendations

- Expand, coordinate apprenticeships—currently low level of effort, but some promising initiatives are under way
 - Have let apprenticeship funding decline
 - Too little stimulus to develop work-based learning
 - Washington study—effective, underutilized
- Develop new second-chance programs linked to employers and jobs
 - National Guard Academies
 - Use community service to link training, SCANS and relationship skills to jobs

Youth often disengaged

- Ivry and Doolittle point to low enrollment and high rates of dropping out
- Inability to offer stipends, weak marketing, intrusive eligibility determination hurt
- Programs too limited in scope and too insensitive to needs of employers
- Youth have too little positive reinforcement from friends and family

Lessons from GAO & Other Department of Labor studies

- Make sure participants are committed
- Improve the skills required of all workers, including dependability, discipline, teamwork
- Link occupational skills with the job market
- Integrate basic skills with occupational training to promote learning in context
- Use case management and mentoring to help youth deal with problems not linked to jobs

Project 1: Employer-led training in high wage careers

- Demonstration would have these components
 - Emphasis on an occupation or industry area in high demand, good wages, and no BA required
 - Industry leadership in program design, try-out employment, and long-term work-site training
 - Linking the training to a solid credential, ideally involving a national or regional association
 - Using institutions able to recruit, teach SCANS
 - Having enough places to justify research

Implementing the demonstration

- DOL would solicit bids and choose three industries with national or regional bodies
- The projects would involve in-depth planning
- Local partners would recruit, train in SCANS
- Industry groups would insure member firms are able to deliver work-based training part
- Test sites would debug problems before scaling up
- Long-term training but operated, financed by firms
- Public contribution for recruitment, initial training, and part of try-out employment expenses

Project 2: Second chance armed forces training & employment

- Youth with no high school diploma would be able to enter the army in a special program
- Special basic training would involve small groups, remedial education, and life skills training
- Structure training in short steps, give tasks that youth can complete quickly and gain confidence
- Effort to mainstream entrants after basic training
- Build on successful models used by the Israeli army and by the National Guard Challenge Academy

Advantages of approach

- Employer-led training with big flow of openings
- Operates at large scale with professional management and operations, natural mentors
- Completers have a good job with fringes
- Chance to succeed in military with steady, prestigious jobs will attract many youth
- Gives options to train in many occupations
- Provides natural place for at-risk youth to learn discipline, SCANS skills, working in teams
- Integrated military should appeal to minority youth

Project 3: Civilian service and job market linkage demonstration

- Give youth initial training leading to 1-2 year positions in community-oriented jobs
- Builds on Youth Conservation Corps experience
- Extensive recruitment component, initial training with some work-site activity, mentoring, relationship skills
- Leads to 1-2 year commitment to (placement in) AmeriCorps or an alternative community service job
- While holding jobs, youth still receive services such as financial education, family counseling
- Build resume, establish links with employers during the 1-2 year work component

Concluding comments

- All demonstration proposals involve long-term training, work components, and incentives that should motivate youth to apply and stay
- Involve incentives for participating employers
- All should provide resources for serious planning, recruitment, and initial testing
- All have professional management, significant scale to make a dent in youth problem
- All can be tested with random assignment