In this study, the authors examined the facility-to-community transition experiences—focusing specifically on employment—of 531 incarcerated youth following their release from Oregon’s juvenile correctional system. They gathered data on the sample while these youth were still in custody and then every 6 months through phone interviews to describe the participants’ community work, educational, and living and social experiences of the study participants. The authors documented the participants’ return to the juvenile correctional system and entry into the adult correctional system from extant state databases. In this study, being employed at 6 months postexit was related in a marginally statistically significant manner ($p = .07$) to remaining in the community and out of the correctional system at that same point in time. Generally, young men, participants without special education disabilities, those youth committed to the juvenile correctional system for person-related crimes, and individuals who were not gang members exhibited better employment outcomes. Services provided by mental health agencies and other social service agencies were inversely related to employment rate, but substance abuse treatment and completion of career/vocational classes while in custody were positively related to selected employment outcomes. The results suggest that individualized job placement and support services should be offered to members of this population upon their parole to the community—with special attention paid to distinct subgroups, such as young women, juvenile offenders with special education disabilities, gang members, and those with a history of property crimes.

Securing and maintaining a meaningful job is one of the hallmarks of successful adult life in the United States (Crites, 1989). Consistent with this value, in the early 1980s the federal government articulated and implemented the “transition initiative,” with the goal of improving the postschool work experiences of students with disabilities (Will, 1984). Although transition now is considered in terms of a broader life and community adjustment focus (i.e., postsecondary education, independent living, and personal/social achievement; Halpern, 1993; 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), employment remains an important focus, with most local transition programs emphasizing work preparation and placements to students.

Largely overlooked in the nationwide effort to develop and provide transition services are youth who are incarcerated for criminal acts. According to Gallagher (1999), more than 100,000 youth are incarcerated yearly in the United States. The vast majority of these youth are male, a disproportionate number are from ethnic minority groups (Gallagher, 1999), and between 12% and 70% have a special education label (Wolford, 2000). Foley’s (2001) review of 20 publications on the academic characteristics of incarcerated youth indicated that a range of abilities exists among this population, but (a) most youth who are incarcerated perform between the fifth- and ninth-grade levels academically and (b) the youth with more significant academic deficits are more likely to return to the juvenile correctional system. Although employment data on this group are scarce (Ensminger & Juon, 1998), many professionals believe that these youth have difficulties in entering and succeeding in competitive work placements (Bullis & Cheney, 1999), which raises additional concerns because work programs have been identified as fostering positive community adjustment and preventing criminal behaviors (e.g., Kazdin, 1987, 1993). In a research synthesis, Lipsey and Wilson (1998) found that postrelease interventions focused on structured learning, school achievement, and job skills cut recidivism to the correctional system for juveniles and young adults from a few percentage points to almost half, depending on the study. Moreover, longitudinal studies of high-risk youth in their middle adulthood have
suggested that work experience can play a pivotal role in fostering positive life achievements (e.g., Werner & Smith, 1992).

We, and two other researchers, conducted the Transition Research on Antisocial Youth in Community Settings research project (TRACS; Bullis, Yovanoff, Havel, & Mueller, 2001), to examine the facility-to-community transition experiences of youth who were incarcerated in the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA), the state of Oregon's juvenile correctional system. We recruited a sample of youth with and without disabilities and gathered data on their educational, personal, and criminal histories and on the services they received while in the juvenile correctional system. After they exited OYA, we interviewed the youth and, if possible, a family member at 6-month intervals to profile their community adjustment experiences. We documented any participants who returned to OYA and were committed to the adult correctional system through a search of databases maintained by those two agencies.

In two earlier articles on TRACS (Bullis, Yovanoff, & Havel, 2004; Bullis, Yovanoff, Mueller, & Havel, 2002), we examined the relationship of various demographic and service delivery variables with engagement, which we defined as an outcome variable based on a combination of work, education, and remaining in the community and out of the juvenile or adult correctional systems at two points in time: 6 months postexit (Time 1) and 12 months postexit (Time 2) from OYA. We chose this time frame because 12 months postexit was the point in time after which “age-eligible” youth (i.e., youth who turn 18 years of age generally do not return to the juvenile system) did not return to the juvenile correctional system (Bullis & Yovanoff, 1997; Bullis et al., 2002). Stated differently, if a youth remained out of the correctional system for 12 months after parole, it was a virtually certainty that he or she would not return to the correctional system.

In both articles, we found that engagement status at 6 months after exit from OYA (Time 1) was critically important to adjustment at 12 months after exit (Time 2). Participants who were engaged at Time 1, compared to participants who were not engaged at Time 1, were 2.38 times less likely to return to OYA at Time 2 and 3.22 times more likely to be engaged at Time 2. We also found that young women and participants with disabilities fared poorly in their community transition. Compared to young men, young women were 3.85 times less likely to be engaged at Time 1. Compared to nondisabled participants, participants with a special education disability (almost 60% of the sample) were 2.22 times less likely to be engaged at Time 2, 2.80 times more likely to return to OYA at Time 1, and 1.83 times more likely to return to OYA at Time 2.

Despite the intense service needs of formerly incarcerated youth, surprisingly, TRACS participants received few services from community-based social service agencies (e.g., 9% received services from vocational rehabilitation and 24% received services from mental health), but those participants who did receive services performed better at Time 1 (Bullis et al., 2004). Specifically, (a) youth who received services from mental health were 2.25 times more likely to be engaged at Time 1 as compared to participants who did not receive such services and (b) youth who received services from community-based agencies other than mental health and parole services (which virtually all of the participants received upon release from OYA) were 1.96 times more likely to be engaged at Time 1 as compared to participants who did not receive such services. Because of the association of Time 1 status with Time 2 status (i.e., how well a youth is doing at Time 1 is highly related with his or her engagement at Time 2), these results point to the importance of service provision for young people immediately upon their release from OYA to the community.

In our previous articles we did not, however, specifically examine the employment experiences of the TRACS sample. In this study, we examined the sample’s employment from the point of release from OYA to 1 year postrelease by addressing four research questions:

1. What was the association between being employed and return to the correctional system?
2. What were the employment experiences of the participants during the 12-month period after leaving OYA?
3. What variables were associated with participants’ employment status (i.e., employment rate)?
4. What variables were associated with participants’ average hours worked per week and average hourly wages?

**Method**

The method followed in this study has been detailed in previous articles (i.e., Bullis, Yovanoff, et al., 2002; Bullis et al., 2004). As noted previously, we are focusing on employment in this article.

**Research Design**

The project utilized a prospective (Menhard, 1990) survey approach in which we identified and recruited participants prior to the time they left the OYA correctional facilities. We also gathered data on those individuals prior to their release from OYA and then at 6-month intervals upon their return to the community for a period of 1 to 4 years to describe their institution-to-community transition experiences. This approach (a) increased the accuracy of data gathered through interviews because questions were asked in close proximity to when an event occurred and (b) allowed for the relationship of experiences at an early data collection period to be examined in relation to experiences later on. For this study we looked only at two times after exit from OYA: Time 1 (6 months postexit from OYA) and Time 2 (12 months postexit from OYA). We arranged the interviews to ensure that we analyzed all Time 1 interviews together and all Time 2 interviews together.

**Research Sites**

Two large juvenile correctional programs and three correctional camps were involved in this project. Site 1 is a coeducational...
youth correctional facility; Site 2 is a large youth correctional facility serving only male offenders who are older on average than those male offenders in Site 1. Both sites had an on-site high school. The camps serve smaller numbers of youth than Sites 1 and 2 and offer similar types of educational, social, and work programs. Generally, less than half of the youth in custody at Sites 1 or 2 were transferred to a camp prior to being paroled into the community; the rest were paroled directly to the community to their home or other placement (e.g., halfway home, foster care).

**Recruitment of Participants**

To recruit participants, secure consent and assent, and complete selected data collection instruments, we hired, trained, and monitored retired teachers or part-time staff from the participating sites who were familiar with the nuances of each program and the specific facility’s files. At both sites, we used the residential units as the sampling frame because youth were placed in these units according to gender (Site 1 serves both genders), age, and—to a certain degree—type of criminal behavior (e.g., sex offenders were in one unit). We recruited one or two individuals per month from each residential unit at each of those programs. Because of their smaller populations, individuals leaving the camps were selected as they exited those facilities.

**Characteristics of the Sample**

We recruited approximately 620 individuals for the project. Due to sentencing or disciplinary actions taken during incarceration (e.g., a youth committed another crime while in OYA or did not respond positively to treatment and was retained in the correctional system for a longer sentence), only 531 individuals from the initial pool were paroled from OYA to the community; these persons made up the TRACS sample.

The major demographic characteristics of the 531 members of the TRACS sample are provided in Table 1. The sample was split almost evenly among youth committed to OYA for (a) person-related, (b) property-related, and (c) person- and property-related crimes, and the majority were young men and White. The median age at release from OYA for the sample was 16 years. More than half (57.7%) of the sample had a special education disability, with 29.9% labeled emotionally disturbed (ED), 22.4% labeled learning disabled (LD), and 5.4% labeled with other disabilities.

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**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Nonrespondents</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
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<td>52.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>69.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td><strong>Age at exit (yrs)</strong></td>
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<td>38</td>
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<td>16+</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>
Comparisons of the total TRACS sample to state databases indicated that the sample had a higher proportion of young women, was younger at the time of first commitment to the juvenile correctional system, and was composed of a higher proportion of individuals who had been committed to OYA for property-related offenses. Also, although the TRACS sample was similar in its proportion of youth with special education disabilities to youth in state databases, members of the TRACS sample with a disability included a lower percentage of individuals with ED and a higher percentage of individuals with LD. Because of the large number of participants involved in these analyses, these statistical results do not necessarily indicate practical differences (Cohen, 1988).

One of the difficulties encountered in conducting longitudinal studies with any population, especially the challenging and “mobile” participants in this project, relates to attrition. At Time 1, we interviewed 338 participants out of 531 possible respondents (a response rate of 64%), and at Time 2 we interviewed 284 participants out of 526 possible respondents (a response rate of 54%). (The possible number of respondents decreased slightly at Time 2 because five participants had their release dates delayed and were in the community for a shorter period of time.) In total, we interviewed 200 participants at both Time 1 and Time 2 and 421 participants at either Time 1 or Time 2. As we discuss in more detail later, our staff members made considerable efforts to interview these youth via phone calls, and we did have access to OYA’s correctional database. Due to privacy constraints, we did not have access to other state-level databases (e.g., employment) that could have expanded our knowledge of the community employment experiences of the study’s participants.

Table 1 presents data on major demographic variables for those participants we were able to interview at either Time 1 or Time 2 (respondents) and those we were not able to interview at Time 1 or 2 (nonrespondents). We conducted univariate comparisons on these variables (testing the null hypothesis, alpha = .05) between the respondent and nonrespondent groups. The right column of Table 1 presents these results. Respondents differed from nonrespondents in terms of (a) type of criminal charge (a lower proportion of respondents were committed for property offenses and a higher proportion were committed for both property- and person-related offenses); (b) ethnic minority composition (a lower proportion of respondents were from ethnic minority groups); and (c) age at release from OYA (a higher proportion of respondents were younger than 16 years of age at release).

Sample Considerations for This Study

Research Questions 1 and 2 related to those participants who were in the community and who had the potential to work competitively (some participants returned to the correctional system quickly—in a few days or weeks—and thereafter did not return to the community over the designated time period for the study). Consequently, we eliminated from our analyses those individuals who were reincarcerated at Time 1 and at Time 2, which resulted in a sample size of 243 at Time 1 and 197 at Time 2 for those analyses.

Research Question 3 related to competitive employment achievement for the total sample (i.e., employed–yes/no) and to characteristics of working (i.e., average hours worked per week, average hourly wage, job stability). For the first outcome (employed–yes/no) the sample size was the same as for Research Questions 1 and 2 (243 at Time 1 and 197 at Time 2). For the latter group of variables (i.e., average hours worked per week, average hourly wage, job stability), the sample size was smaller than for the previous variables because a participant had to have been employed to have been included in the analyses.

Data Collection Forms and Procedures

We grounded our data collection procedures within a theoretical model of the facility-to-community transition process that included a Prefacility phase (e.g., characteristics inherent in the individual and/or experienced prior to entry in the correctional setting), Facility phase (e.g., interventions offered to the youth while they were incarcerated), and Facility-to-community transition phase (e.g., employment, school, independent living, social, criminal experiences, and social services received upon reentering the community). The project’s advisory board and OYA staff reviewed and critiqued the instruments, which we then pilot-tested.

Referral Information. The site staff person completed forms for demographics and levels of services (i.e., the duration and types of services provided each individual while in custody) on each participant. This staff person reviewed the participant’s files and completed the project forms, which required yes/no responses or prescribed response options to closed-ended questions.

Interviews. Trained interviewers conducted structured interviews with the project participants both in person and via the phone. These same interviewers also interviewed family members via the phone. Responses from either the participants or a family member were used to profile each youth’s community adjustment in terms of his or her school enrollment and completion, employment (e.g., type of work, average hours of work/week, average hourly wage), and personal and social experiences (e.g., type of residence, number of friends, receipt of services from various community-based social service agencies).

We hired three to four part-time interviewers at a time to administer the interviews. Before administering interviews, all interviewers had to (a) complete a 15-hr training program and (b) achieve an agreement index of .95 (total number of items less total number of disagreements/total number of items) on a predeveloped interview. If necessary, project staff members...
were available to interview respondents in Spanish. We held bi-weekly meetings with the interviewers to address any questions and maintain interviewing continuity. Most questions required selecting from objective response alternatives. In all cases, if questions arose over coding a response, the project coordinator resolved the issue.

The interviewers conducted the initial youth interviews in person just before a youth was to be paroled from OYA. Following parole, interviewers would phone participants at 6-month intervals (e.g., 6 months after the time of parole, 12 months after the time of parole) to gather data on each participant’s transition experiences. Finally, we tried to interview a family member for each participant because (a) we were aware that the target population members would be difficult to locate after their release from OYA and (b) studies suggest that family members are accurate respondents regarding a youth’s status in terms of major transition outcomes (e.g., work, education, independent living; e.g., Levine & Edgar, 1994). During the initial youth interviews, respondents were asked if there was a family member or guardian with whom they would maintain contact after release and whom we could contact to interview. If the youth supplied a name and address, we contacted that person to complete a consent form and to be interviewed. Questions to parents were phrased to address their son or daughter’s current status and their previous experiences during the 6 months since the last interview (e.g., from Time 1 to Time 2).

At least 15 attempts were made to contact youth or family members before they were dropped from the general respondent pool. When we dropped potential respondents, they would be picked up by a “specialized” interviewer, who would attempt to track them at various hours and days. We formally dropped participants from the project upon their request.

**Extant Databases.** We collected data regarding return to the juvenile correctional system on all participants from OYA’s extant database at the end of the third project year and then again at the end of the project. We gathered similar data from Oregon’s Department of Corrections (the adult correctional system) to verify the entry of TRACS participants into that system. Because of database limitations, we were not able to verify the date at which a participant entered the adult correctional system, only that he or she had entered that system. It would have been useful to be able to verify respondent comments with other databases (e.g., employment office), but such cross-checking was not possible due to issues regarding the sharing of confidential information. Thus, in this project, as in most longitudinal transition studies, we relied on self-report data as the primary information source (e.g., DeStefano & Wagner, 1992).

**Variables**

In this section, we summarize the variables included for each research question. We also identify the predictor variables included in Research Questions 3 and 4.

**Research Question 1.** What was the association between being employed and return to the correctional system? For this question, Return to OYA at Time 1 or at Time 2 was the dependent, or outcome, variable. The independent, or predictor, variable was employment status (employed–yes/no) at Time 1 or at Time 2.

**Research Question 2.** What were the employment experiences of the participants during the 12-month period after leaving OYA? For this question, we examined employment-related variables at Time 1 (6 months after release) and Time 2 (12 months after release). Variables studied at Times 1 and 2 relative to employment status included:

- employed (yes/no),
- if not employed, currently looking for work (yes/no),
- type of job (by occupational “group” according to the coding scheme used by the Hollingshead socioeconomic index, Hollingshead, 1975),
- average hours worked per week,
- average hourly wage,
- average number of weeks worked within the 6-month period,
- happiness with the current employment (4-point Likert scale: 1 = low to 4 = high),
- help finding current job (yes/no),
- person/agency that helped in finding job (family/friend, school/work program, community-based agency employment services), and
- whether the respondent felt a “great deal” of pressure to work successfully.

We also examined two other variables related to previous employment experience in each 6-month period (i.e., from exit to OYA at Time 1, from Time 1 to Time 2):

- whether another job was held in the past 6 months (yes/no) and
- if a previous job was held, how that job ended (quit, seasonal/laid off, fired/released, reincarcerated).

**Research Question 3.** What variables were associated with participants’ employment status (i.e., employment rate)? For this question, we chose three outcome variables: employed at Time 1, employed at Time 2, and employment stability, which we defined as being employed at Time 1 and Time 2.

**Research Question 4.** What variables were associated with participants’ average hours worked per week and average hourly wages? For this question, we selected the following outcome variables: average hours worked per week at Time 1 and at Time 2 and average hourly wage at Time 1 and at Time 2.
**Research Question 1.** For this question, we calculated univariate chi-square statistics between employment status (the predictor variable) at Time 1 and at Time 2 with return to OYA at Time 1 and return to OYA at Time 2. We tested the null hypothesis ($\alpha = .05$) and calculated odds ratios—which are similar to effect sizes (Thompson, 1999; Wilkinson & Task Force on Statistical Inference, 1999)—from those 2 x 2 tables (Rudas, 1998). According to Hosmer and Lemeshow (2000) and Rudas (1998), odds ratios of 1.0 indicate little or no association between the predictor and outcome variables, and odds ratios of roughly 2.0 are suggestive of important associations. Depending on the way in which the predictor variables are coded, odd ratios can be either greater than 1.0 (e.g., 2.40) or less than 1.0 (e.g., .25). When odd ratios greater than 1.0 are calculated, the inference is that the event in question is “x times” more likely to occur. When odd ratios are less than 1.0, the inverse is calculated (e.g., 1.0/25 = 0.04), and the inference is that the event is “x times” less likely to occur.

**Research Question 2.** To address this question, we calculated descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages) to profile the sample’s employment experiences at Time 1 and Time 2.

**Research Question 3.** Because employment and employment stability were recorded dichotomously, we used logistic regression (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000) to examine the relationships between multiple predictor variables and each outcome variable. Similar to multiple linear regression (MLR; Cohen & Cohen, 1983), the goal of logistic regression is to find the optimal mathematical equation, or model, of a composite of predictor variables that best predicts the outcome variable, which for this statistical procedure is categorical (e.g., yes/no). Logistic regression is (a) robust to violations of assumptions pertaining to error distributions (O’Gorman & Woolson, 1991) and (b) allows for the computation of odd ratios that depict the strength of the association of the predictor variables retained within a final model and in concert with one another with the outcome variable (Rudas, 1998). The model-building process in logistic regression does not parallel that followed in MLR. We followed a four-step process recommended by Hosmer and Lemeshow (2000).

1. We calculated chi-square analyses between each predictor variable and each outcome variable, setting a lenient $p \leq .15$ for variables to be retained in this step.
2. We examined the statistical associations and odds ratios of the chosen variables when placed within the three logistic regression models (i.e., employment status at Time 1 and Time 2, and job stability across Time 1 and Time 2). Predictor variables that exhibited $p \leq .10$ with the outcome variable, in concert with other predictor variables for each model, were retained in each final model.
3. We computed the association of each final main effects model by calculating a chi-square statistic of the goodness of fit of that model, testing the statistical significance of that model at $p \leq .05$. 

Data Analyses

**Research Question 1.** We chose predictor (independent) variables to use with these two questions based on a review of the available research literature (e.g., Cheney & Bullis, 2004) and current interest on the part of state policymakers with whom we work. We recorded all of the predictor variables dichotomously and selected them from each of the three phases of our theoretical model (Prefacility, Facility, and Facility-to-community transition).

**Prefacility variables related to participant demographic and social characteristics.** These were as follows:

- gender;
- history of treatment for substance abuse;
- family members convicted of a felony;
- age at first adjudication (14 years was the median age for the TRACS sample);
- age at exit from the facility (16 years was the median age for the TRACS sample);
- known or suspected gang member;
- psychiatric diagnosis from the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994);
- cultural/ethnic minority status;
- special education disability; and
- the most serious type of crime for which each youth was committed to the juvenile justice system (person-related, property-related, both person- and property-related).

**In-facility variables.** These variables were completion of vocational/career training classes or program while in the facility, receipt of a school completion document (i.e., a GED, high school diploma, or modified diploma) prior to exit from OYA, and job placement experience while in the facility.

**Facility-to-community.** These variables consisted of receipt of services from Mental Health and receipt of services from any other community-based social services agency (an aggregate variable including Social Security, Public Welfare, Employment Office, Job Training and Partnership Act, and Children and Families Division). Because of our interest in studying the effect of services offered immediately upon leaving the facility, we included only services received from exit through Time 1 data collection (6 months postexit) in our analyses.

To predict outcome variables at Time 2, we included participant status at Time 1 on that variable in the Time 2 variable pool (e.g., for employment at Time 2, participants’ employment at Time 1 was included as a predictor). We made this choice based on our interest regarding the impact on later employment status of participants’ status immediately after exiting OYA.
4. Because of our interest in the effect of special education disability on employment, we examined the interaction of special education status with other variables included in the three logistic regression models (i.e., employment at Time 1, employment at Time 2, employment stability). To justify conducting the interaction analyses, we decided that the main effect for special education had to present at \( p \leq .10 \) within the respective model; if so, we would then examine the interaction of special education with each of the variables retained in each model. For example, participants with a special education disability and a cultural/ethnic minority background may exhibit disproportionate employment at either Time 1 or Time 2.

**Research Question 4.** Because average hours worked per week and average hourly wage were recorded on an interval scale, we used MLR to examine the association of the predictor variables with these two outcome variables at Times 1 and 2. We included only predictor variables that exhibited a univariate association of at least \( p \leq .15 \) with each outcome variable. Once we had identified potential predictor variables, we utilized a step-wise approach that entered predictor variables that explained the largest amount of variance on the outcome variables first into the MLR model. Because relatively few of the TRACS participants were employed, sample size precluded an examination of interactions, so we calculated a “main effects” MLR model for each outcome variable at Time 1 and Time 2. Only predictor variables that exhibited \( p \leq .05 \) in concert with one another were retained in the final MLR model. To correct for inflated correlations due to sample size, we calculated corrected \( R^2 \) values for each model through a “shrinkage” formula (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). We tested the adjusted \( R^2 \) values for each final MLR model for statistical significance at \( p \leq .05 \) and compared the adjusted \( R^2 \) values to Cohen’s (1988) guidelines for effect sizes. According to Cohen (1988), a “large” \( R^2 \) effect is .26 (26% of the variance of the outcome variable is explained by the MLR model), a “medium” effect is .13, and a “small” effect is .02.

**Results**

**Research Question 1**

The chi-square results and odds ratios for this question suggest that being employed at Time 1 was related in a *marginally statistically significant fashion* to return to the correctional system at Time 1, \( \chi^2(1, N = 286) = 3.23, p = .07 \), with an odds ratio = 1.67. Being employed at Time 1 was not statistically related to return to the correctional system at Time 2, \( \chi^2(1, N = 169) = 3.30, p = .08 \), with an odds ratio = .30. Being employed at Time 2 also was not statistically related to return to the correctional system at Time 2, \( \chi^2(1, N = 247) = 1.58, p = .21 \), with an odds ratio = 1.45.

**Research Question 2**

Table 2 summarizes the employment experiences of the TRACS sample at Time 1 and Time 2. Those results indicated that few participants—less than 30%—were employed at either time. At Time 2, participants who were working recorded a longer period of time in the same job. Between Time 1 and Time 2, however, the (a) average number of hours worked per week was consistent and (b) average hourly wage fell slightly. At both times, participants indicated that (a) they found their current and previous jobs through family or friends and not through school- or community-based services and (b) if they had left a job in the previous 6-month period, they did so by quitting the position, which might have been due to the fact that participants reported being less happy with their previous job than with their current job.

**Research Question 3**

The top half of Table 3 presents the final logistic regression model for employment at Time 1. We found the following results:

1. Young women in the sample were 2.94 (1.0/.34) times less likely to be employed than were young men.
2. Participants who were older than 16 years at the time of release from OYA were 2.13 times more likely to be employed than were participants younger than 16 at the time of release.
3. Participants who received services from community-based social service agencies other than mental health or parole were 2.43 times more likely to be employed than were participants who did not receive such services. Surprisingly, those participants who received services from mental health were 2.22 (1.0/.45) times less likely to be employed at Time 1.

The bottom half of Table 3 presents the final logistic regression model for employment at Time 2. At Time 2, we found the following results:

1. Participants who (a) had received treatment for substance abuse prior to commitment to OYA were 2.70 times more likely to be employed than participants who had not received such treatment.
2. Participants were older than 16 at the time of release from OYA were 3.05 times more likely to be employed than were participants younger than 16.
3. Participants who completed career/vocational classes while in OYA were 3.88 times more likely to be employed than those participants who did not complete such training.
4. Participants who were employed at Time 1 were 3.72 times more likely to be employed than those who were not employed at Time 1.
5. Participants with a special education disability were 2.50 (1.0/.40) times less likely to be employed than were participants without these types of disabilities.

Conversely, completion of career/vocational classes while in OYA custody was strongly associated with employment stability. Those participants who had completed such classes were 11.62 times more likely to be employed at Time 1 and at Time 2 than were participants who did not have such training. Participants who had been committed to OYA for a person-related crime were 8.69 times more likely to be employed at both Time 1 and Time 2 in comparison to participants committed for TABLE 2
Employment Experiences at Time 1 and Time 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Time 1⁴</th>
<th>Time 2⁴</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently employed</td>
<td>71 (29.2%)</td>
<td>56 (28.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of current employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm labor, menial service</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled work</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine operator, semiskilled</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours worked/week</td>
<td>Avg. = 33.8 (SD = 11.4)</td>
<td>Avg. = 33.6 (SD = 12.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly wage</td>
<td>Avg. = $6.01 (SD = $2.36)</td>
<td>Avg. = $5.82 (SD = $1.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks in current job</td>
<td>Avg. = 7.8 (SD = 6.0)</td>
<td>Avg. = 12.8 (SD = 10.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help finding current job</td>
<td>42 (59.2%)</td>
<td>26 (46.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who provided help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family or friend</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School program</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment service</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness with current job</td>
<td>Avg. = 3.2 (SD = 0.7)</td>
<td>Avg. = 3.3 (SD = 0.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently seeking work</td>
<td>89 (36.6%)</td>
<td>46 (23.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed previously in 6-mo period</td>
<td>60 (24.7%)</td>
<td>36 (18.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of previous employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm labor, menial service</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled work</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine operator, semiskilled</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for leaving previous job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quit</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal/laid off</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fired</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reincarcerated</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness with previous job</td>
<td>Avg. = 2.9 (SD = .9)</td>
<td>Avg. = 3.0 (SD = .9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Great deal” of pressure to work successfully</td>
<td>87 (35.8%)</td>
<td>56 (28.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴n = 243. ⁵n = 197. ⁶Calculated from n = 71. ⁷Calculated from n = 56.
There were no statistically significant interactions between special education and any predictor variables in these models.

**Research Question 4**

The top half of Table 5 presents the final MLR model for average hours worked/week at Time 1 for three variables: gender (being female was inversely related to the number of hours worked/week), receipt of substance abuse treatment before commitment to OYA (these services were positively related to working more hours/week), and age at exit (participants older than 16 at the point of exit from OYA tended to work more hours/week). The model was statistically significant \( (p < .00) \), and the adjusted \( R^2 \) for the model was .13, a moderate effect.

The lower half of Table 5 presents the final MLR model for average hours worked/week at Time 2 for two variables: services from other community-based agencies (receiving services from agencies other than mental health was negatively correlated with the average number of hours worked per week at Time 2) and average hours worked per week at Time 1 (the number of hours a participant worked at Time 1 was positively cor-
related to how many hours an individual would work weekly at Time 2. The model was statistically significant \( p = .01 \) and the adjusted \( R^2 \) for the model was .16, indicating a moderate effect.

The top half of Table 6 presents the final MLR model for average hourly wage at Time 1 for three variables: special education (participants with a special education disability made less per hour), commitment to OYA for both person and property offenses (participants committed to OYA for both person and property offenses tended to make more per hour), and completion of career/vocational classes while in OYA custody (participants who completed career/vocational classes while in custody tended to have a higher hourly wage). The model was statistically significant \( p = .01 \), but the adjusted \( R^2 \) for the model was .07, indicating a small effect. Given this latter result, the importance of these findings should be considered with caution.

The lower half of Table 6 presents the final MLR model for average hourly wage at Time 2 for two variables: gender (being female was inversely related to average hourly wage) and ethnicity (in this study, participants from minority groups tended to have higher hourly wages). The model was statistically significant \( p = .01 \), and the adjusted \( R^2 \) was .26, which was a large effect.

**DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to examine the employment experiences of the TRACS participants. There is a general sentiment among social scientists and corrections specialists that employment may serve as a powerful socialization agent for young people leaving the correctional system and returning to the community (e.g., Dryfoos, 1990, 1991; Kazdin, 1987, 1993). There is, however, little hard evidence for this position.

We therefore hoped to examine the employment experiences of this sample to add to the professional literature. Our results indicate that (a) few participants were employed and (b) those who were employed held low-wage positions. Before discussing the results, we want to note several limitations in the study.

First, this study analyzed a data set on a relatively small number of participants from Oregon, who may not be representative of youth incarcerated in other states or regions. Moreover, respondents and nonrespondents in the study differed statistically on type of crime for which they were committed to OYA, ethnicity, and age at exit from OYA. In previous studies (Bullis et al., 2002; Bullis et al., 2004), we found that youth who committed property crimes were more likely to return to the correctional system, but ethnicity was statistically unrelated to engagement and return to the correctional system. Because respondents for this study were younger than nonrespondents, the age of the overall sample would influence the type of employment they could secure (i.e., due to wage employment guidelines, persons of different ages may not be eligible to work longer hours, after a certain time of day, or in specific jobs). The respondents in this study, however, were of an “employable” age and similar to the age of youth in many other transition studies (DeStefano & Wagner, 1992).

Second, this was a longitudinal research study in which we did not directly manipulate the predictor variables, so the results should not be construed as providing evidence for cause-and-effect relationships between and among variables. In a similar vein, statistics were weakened by the low number of participants who worked and/or were included in some analyses.

Third, we did not measure the duration or intensity of the educational or social services the TRACS participants received while in the facilities or in the community—only that the participants received those services; thus, inferences regarding the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-8.24</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse treatment</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at exit</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>26.19</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services from other agencies</td>
<td>-7.49</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours at Time 1</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>26.42</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( F(3, 115) = 6.84, p < .00, R = .39, R^2 = .15, \) Adjusted \( R^2 = .13 \). \( F(2, 44) = 5.37, p = .01, R = .44, R^2 = .20, \) Adjusted \( R^2 = .16 \).
potential impact of those interventions must be tempered. In fact, because so few participants received community-based social services, we aggregated all other social services that participants received—other than mental health—which may obscure the relationship between social services and employment.

Despite these cautions, given the dearth of research on youth who are incarcerated and then return to the community, the results do offer unique perspectives concerning this high-risk population. We discuss the results of the study in regards to the four research questions and then discuss the implications of the findings for further research and practice.

**Research Question 1**

The chi-square analyses did not display statistically significant associations between employment and return to the juvenile correctional system. Employment at Time 1 and return to the correctional system at Time 1, however, did exhibit a result close to statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 286) = 3.23, p = .07$, and an odds ratio close to the practical criterion of 2.0 (1.67), suggesting that employment may be a deterrent to returning to OYA in first 6 months after leaving the system.

The lack of a statistically significant finding between employment and return to the correctional system may be an artifact of sample size, or it may be that it is unrealistic to expect youth in their mid-to-late teens to engage in meaningful, career-driven employment (DeStefano & Wagner, 1992). It follows that (a) securing a job alone may not be a sufficient deterrent to antisocial behavior for youth returning to the community from the correctional system and (b) transition services offered to youth who are leaving the correctional system should be comprehensive, including employment and educational supports.

**Research Question 2**

From Table 2 it may be seen that the sample participants exhibited a low rate of employment at Times 1 and 2 and tended to work in entry-level positions at both time points. In fact, the descriptive results of the employment experiences of this sample were far poorer than we had expected. In previous model demonstration projects in Oregon in which we provided transition support services (emphasizing vocational services) to high-risk youth—including youth from the correctional system—we were able to achieve employment rates from 65% to 75%, with the majority of those youth in similar types of entry-level positions (Bullis & Cheney, 1999; Bullis, Moran, Todis, Benz, & Johnson, 2002; Unruh, Bullis, Booth, & Pendergrass, 2004).

The other stark reality is that few of these young people received assistance from any employment-related social service agencies, such as vocational rehabilitation or the employment office. There is no doubt that the majority of these youth presented disabilities and other characteristics that would indicate their need for assistance in securing work in the community, but, at least for this sample, such services were not secured.

**Research Question 3**

At Time 1, young men, participants who were older than 16 years at the point of release from OYA and participants who received services from community-based social service agencies other than mental health or parole were more likely to be employed. These results suggest that young women with disabilities may be “doubly disabled” in terms of competitive employment (Fulton & Sabornie, 1994). Surprisingly, those participants who received services from mental health were more than twice as likely not to be employed at Time 1. There are two possible explanations for this result: (a) mental health services were not

---

**TABLE 6**

Final Multiple Regression Model: Average Hourly Wage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>-1.02</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person &amp; property crime</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career/vocational classes</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-2.00</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^aF(3, 124) = 3.98, p = .01, R = .30, R^2 = .09$, Adjusted $R^2 = .07$. $^bF(2, 48) = 9.61, p = .01, R = .53, R^2 = .29$, Adjusted $R^2 = .26$.
focused toward employment or (b) those participants who received services from mental health presented more extreme challenges in securing employment.

At Time 2, participants who (a) had received treatment for substance abuse prior to commitment to OYA, (b) were older than 16 at the point of release from OYA, (c) had completed career/vocational classes while in OYA, or (d) were employed at Time 1 were more likely to be employed. The findings substantiate the view that older participants are more likely to be employed. They also suggest that substance abuse treatment and career/vocational classes may foster competitive employment and that becoming employed in the first few months after leaving the correctional system may foster continued employment. Conversely, our results indicated that participants with a special education disability were more likely to be unemployed at Time 2.

For employment stability, youth with special education disabilities were less likely to be employed at Times 1 and 2, but completion of career/vocational classes while in OYA custody was strongly associated with employment stability. These results confirm the need to offer career/vocational classes and training in the correctional system and indicate that youth with special education disabilities will need focused services to support their transition.

Interestingly, participants who had been committed to OYA for a person-related crime were much more likely to be employed at both Times 1 and 2 in comparison to participants committed for a property-related crime. We speculate that youth who commit property crimes may be less likely to become successfully employed due to (a) the reinforcement of receiving monetary or material rewards from stealing (Bandura, 1973) and (b) employers’ being particularly intolerant of property-related incidents (e.g., theft) in the workplace (Bullis, Nishioka-Evans, Fredericks, & Davis, 1993). Thus, it may be necessary to offer different types of support to youth with histories of property-related offenses when they re-enter the community than the services given to person-related offenders. Similarly, participants identified as gang members at commitment to OYA were less likely to be employed at Times 1 and 2, indicating that this group also may need additional services to secure employment in the community.

Research Question 4

The results for average hours worked/week at Time 1 indicated that being female was inversely related to the number of hours worked/week, receipt of substance abuse treatment before commitment to OYA was positively related to working more hours/week, and participants older than 16 at the point of exit from OYA tended to work more hours/week. The final MLR model for average hours worked/week at Time 2 indicated that services from community-based agencies was negatively correlated with the average number of hours worked per week but the average hours worked per week at Time 1 was positively related to the number of hours worked per week at Time 2.

Young women seem to need focused employment-related services, and there appears to be a delayed, positive impact attributed to substance abuse treatment. The association of services from other community-based agencies with the average number of hours worked is similar to the earlier finding of a negative association between services from mental health being inversely related to employment; that is, persons who received services from mental health were less likely to be employed. It may be that the services provided by those agencies did assist in finding employment but not in working more hours. The results indicating that participants with special education disabilities made less money per hour is consistent with the results of (a) other studies in which the transition experiences of youth with disabilities was compared to those of youth without disabilities (e.g., Wagner, 1991) and (b) other studies we have completed on the general transition experiences of formerly incarcerated youth (Bullis et al., 2002; Bullis et al., 2004). The fact that youth who had been incarcerated for committing both property-related and person-related crimes tended to make more per hour than youth committed for only one type of crime (i.e., property-related crimes only or person-related crimes only) is puzzling and runs contrary to the notion that youth with more diverse criminal backgrounds will exhibit poorer overall adjustment (Loeber & Schmaling, 1985). Finally, the relationship between completion of career/vocational classes while in custody with higher hourly wages make intuitive sense, because young people who are trained to engage in competitive work should be better prepared to work than those who are not so trained. This finding is consistent with the results from transition studies of students with and without disabilities who receive such instruction (Wagner, 1991; Weber, 1987).

Implications for Future Research and Practice

These results suggest that focusing only on employment as a training and placement component when preparing youth to leave the correctional system and return to the community may be insufficient. Although employment should be considered as part of a comprehensive transition support model for this population, the age of these youth, their individual needs for re-entering society, and their developmental stage of life dictates that they receive educational and social support along with employment services (Bullis & Fredericks, 2002; Cheney & Bullis, 2004; Clark & Davis, 2000). This reality should not diminish the importance of employment as a therapeutic milieu for these young people or as a goal for adulthood.

In line with this last statement, the employment experiences of this sample were poor—exceedingly so, evidencing employment rates far below those achieved in model demonstration projects in Oregon with similar populations (Bullis & Cheney, 1999; Bullis et al., 2002; Unruh et al., 2004). This finding, coupled with the low rate of enrollment in educational programs upon returning to the community (Bullis et al., 2001), does not augur well for the long-term career achievements of this population. Clearly, more research should be done on the
employment experiences of this population, especially in the following areas.

First is a need to focus on the transition of young women and individuals with disabilities. In this study, better employment outcomes were seen for young men as compared to young women and for nondisabled participants as compared to participants with a special education disability. Young men had higher employment rates and worked longer hours. Participants without a special education disability were more likely to be employed at both Times 1 and 2 and to earn a higher hourly wage.

Second, these findings indicate that it is unwise to consider the group of youth who are incarcerated as homogeneous in terms of employment outcomes. For example, participants who had been committed to OYA for person-related crimes were more apt to be employed at both Times 1 and 2, and gang-involved participants were less likely to exhibit such employment stability. These results suggest that within this broad group, different subgroups may exhibit different types of employment achievements and may well need different types of transition supports and services. Specification of these subgroups and services could lead to more efficient and effective services.

Third, the inverse relationship between some aspects of employment and services from mental health agencies and other community-based social service agencies was puzzling, especially in light of the positive association of these services with the more global index of engagement that we had established in earlier studies (Bullis et al., 2002; Bullis et al., 2004). Participants who received such services might have presented extreme employment challenges or the type of services provided might not have focused on employment achievement. Also, for the other community-based social service variable, its effect might have been obscured due to its composite nature (i.e., because so few participants received social services from any community-based agency other than mental health, we combined all such services into one variable). Examination of the unique effect of employment-related agencies (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, employment office) should be conducted. In addition, more intense and precise study is needed on the exact manner in which social services are secured and the nature (e.g., type of services, duration, and fidelity of implementation) of these services.

Fourth, a strong finding was related to the effect of substance abuse treatment and completion of career/vocational classes on this sample’s employment experiences. Both of these services, which were provided prior to the participants’ leaving OYA, had a positive impact on employment. More study should be devoted to these two variables, as the literature presents a far from definitive picture of the best way to structure these interventions and their overall impact on adolescents (Bukstein & Van Hassel, 1995).

The results of this study clearly point to the necessity of improving the employment-related services afforded within a comprehensive transition model for youth leaving the correctional system and returning to the community, especially for individuals with disabilities and for young women. Based on our experiences in providing and studying these services (Bullis & Fredericks, 2002), however, we strongly believe that it is a grave error to oversimplify the ways in which employment placement and supports are offered. Placing a young person in a competitive job and then supporting him or her to be successful in that position requires careful examination of the individual’s career interests, abilities, and needs in combination with a precise understanding of the requirements of the workplace. Furthermore, it is entirely likely that young people’s job interests will change as a result of the different jobs experiences they are offered; thus, it is likely that they will—and should—be offered multiple, different job placements over a period of time that will lead to a meaningful and rewarding career (Bullis & Fredericks, 2002; Cheney, 2004; Clark & Davis, 2000).

A larger systemic issue also begs to be addressed. Two of the most striking findings of the TRACS study were (a) so few participants returned to school or entered postsecondary education upon returning to the community and (b) very few received any sort of social services upon returning to the community (Bullis et al., 2001). Because the vast majority of these young people do not enter a service system after leaving the correctional system, where and by whom should transition and employment services for this group be offered?

The correctional system does offer parole services for a period of time, but these end when parole is terminated. If the public education system is to provide educational and transition services to youth from the correctional system—especially to those individuals with a special education disability—extensive efforts will need to be made to encourage these young people to return to school. In our experience, however, few school districts and state agencies are enthusiastic about providing such services (Unruh et al., 2004). We believe that the establishment of such a service model holds the key to the successful community reintegration of these young people.

Will such a system be effective with every individual in this group? Probably not, but it is likely that a service delivery model of this type will increase the positive community adjustment of many youth, resulting in positive effects for those young people and for society at large in terms of reduction of funds directed to incarceration and increases in revenue paid in taxes. Such a service model and system should, of course, be carefully evaluated, but the logic of the approach is sound and has the potential to reap rewards for this most needy of populations and for society at large.

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Authors’ Notes

1. The study described in this article was funded through a field-initiated research grant from the Office of Special Education Programs. No endorsement of the views expressed in this manuscript by that agency should be inferred.

2. The authors acknowledge and thank the Oregon Youth Authority and its staff members for their assistance in completing this project.

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### Positive Behavior Support

*Critical Articles on Improving Practice for Individuals with Severe Disabilities*

Edited by Linda M. Bambara, Glen Dunlap, and Ilene S. Schwartz

This reference work, a cooperative venture between TASH and PRO-ED, is essential for anyone concerned with fundamental issues related to positive behavior support (PBS). The editors selected influential articles documenting the history, foundation, and critical features of PBS for people with severe disabilities from TASH’s journal, *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* (formerly JASH), and PRO-ED’s *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*.

The compilation is organized in six sections:

**Part I. Foundations of Positive Behavior Support**—provides the historical, conceptual, and ethical foundations of PBS.

**Part II. Assessment: Functional Assessment, Person-Centered Planning, and Meaningful Outcomes**—provides practical information on how to conduct functional assessments in everyday settings.

**Part III. Assessment-Based Interventions**—presents empirical and case illustrations of comprehensive, assessment-based intervention for children and adults with severe disabilities.

**Part IV. Families and Family Support**—emphasizes the family perspective of PBS.

**Part V. Capacity Building**—deals with supporting the people who are called upon to implement PBS.

**Part VI. Extended Applications: Focus on Systems Change**—focuses on the continuing evolution of PBS and highlights new directions.

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