

TEENS DON'T COVET POSSESSIONS ANYMORE: BEING BUSY AT THE WORKPLACE IS THE NEW LONGING



These days young teens on the threshold of their careers do not boast or preen about their luxury possessions, their cars or their fancy mobiles – the new status symbol to flaunt is having a job, bringing money home and using time meaningfully and not wasting it in idle pursuits. Being busy is the new symbol of worth and societal acceptance. No longer do friends who meet, talk about their dates and social lives, the questions more likely to be asked, “Who amongst us is the busiest?” The guy who slept in the office because his work kept him there late into the night, scores over the others, who partied with friends, because he has a job and is automatically elevated to a privileged class. Being busy means you are appreciated, you are required and valued. A job today outscores the fancy car, the designer clothes and everything else. If you can say you are busy, have no time, you have arrived. Why this obsession with showing that you are busy? Is it something that affects only the young millennial or is it a phenomena arousing from lack of self-belief and the indignity of not having a job? Donald Lynch, a professor of psychology at Maine’s Unity College said, today’s youth feels the impulse and desire to achieve success as much and as fast as possible, it fuels this need to put in extra hours of work, be busy and appear busy. Lynch says another reason why teens prefer to remain busy is that there is always the pressure of being laid off as employers seek increased productivity from their workers. “Workers are experiencing an increase in the demand for productivity and output as a result of cost-cutting measures across industries,” he said. Robert Bornstein, a clinical psychologist and professor of psychological studies at Adelphi University says that being busy makes us feel nice and contented. He says that even though you may find it irritating if your co-worker calls you up late at night seeking some information, it makes you feel good to be needed. It raises your esteem. “When you get an email at 8pm, you have the choice whether to ignore it or to be annoyed by it, but there’s a part of you that’s pleased to be needed,” says Bornstein. It also pays to appear busy, is the new youth mantra. They really are not very busy, but just want their bosses and supervisors and friends to believe that they are. Moreover, kids believe that it is not right to blow your own trumpet and tell your friends how busy you are and how the company’s work would suffer if you took time off from the workplace. How much better to cloak their busyness in different language, by “bemoaning the fact that you haven’t seen daylight in weeks, you’re making the same statement in what seems to be a socially acceptable way,” says Lynch. Staying busy is also a hedge against being lonely; it is what feeds the emptiness inside. Increased focus on careers has led to delayed marriages and a job fills the void where a partner could be. The fear of being alone makes them fill their hours with work and more work. For today’s youth a job means more than the money it brings, more than the direction it will give to the worker, it is a means of telling the outside world, I matter, I am valuable, I am busy, and I have a full calendar.