ADOLESCENT PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER CONCERN AND
HOW THESE PERCEPTIONS CHANGE FROM GRADES 7 THROUGH 12

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Abstract

A qualitative approach was used to research adolescents' perceptions of career concern and how these concerns change from Grades 7 through 12. Recently, there has been increased involvement of students in adolescent needs assessment research. This is a recognition that including students' perceptions may increase the accuracy of results, as adolescents may be the best source for identifying their own needs. The students involved in the study attend schools throughout selected communities of Southern Alberta; 9,502 students in Grades 7 through 12 responded to the CCNS (Comprehensive Career Needs Survey) and comprised the total population of participants. Student responses to the research question, "What discourages you when you think about your career?" in the CCNS were randomly extracted from this population. Communities were separated into sample sizes with populations of under 1000, between 1000-10,000, and more than 10,000. Within each community category, twenty randomly selected responses were collected, analyzed and compared to generate broad themes from each grade level. Twenty-seven themes emerged from the participants' responses, which were then compared and reviewed as to their frequency relative to each theme. A grounded theory approach to data analysis was used and revealed that adolescents confront a system of core thematic issues that arise in response to their dealing with age-graded development tasks, social expectations, and personal projects. These core themes were discovered to stem from extrinsic and intrinsic forms of concern that adolescents consider to be problematic along their career paths. Those concerns include distinct issues related to (1) learning, (2) security, (3) satisfaction, (4) failing, and (5) commitment. The implications for career professionals are discussed and directions for future research are suggested.

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Look within,

within is the fountain of good,

and it will ever bubble up,

if thou wilt ever dig.

(Marcus Aurelius)

Thank you to my mentors for encouraging me to reach higher, to my family for their love and acceptance, to my editors and to my friends for sharing their tolerance, their humor, and their hearts, and to Sarah for reminding me that there is always substance behind appearance.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this project is to study adolescent career concerns and how these perceptions change from Grades 7-12. Thus, a literature review, a background to the topic, and the significance of the problem will be provided. Finally, an outline of the proposed method for this analysis, the results, and a discussion of the results will be offered in this project.

Hall (1904), the first person to scientifically investigate adolescent psychology theorized that adolescents could be characterized primarily by the German phrase *sturm und drang* (Berk, 1998; Kimmel, & Weiner, 1995; Rice, & Dolgin, 2002). Though media and society may share Hall's "storm and stress" view, this classical opinion of adolescence as a period of crisis lacks the more stable characterization associated with the empirical perspective (Bibby & Posterski, 1992; Violato & Holden, 1998). While the empirical perspective reveals a steady pattern to global adolescent growth and development, the classical perspective paints a picture of adolescence as a stage of mostly anxiety and confusion. The classical view may be the origin of the belief that adolescents are mainly in a state of developmental chaos and duress. However, despite this classical tradition, many career development researchers and theorists have begun to pay increased attention to the overall growth needs of adolescents. I agree with Gysbers, Heppner, and Johnston (1998), who state that "the broadened understanding of career development in life terms makes it clear that we must respond to the developmental needs of people as well as to their crisis needs" (p. 11).

Theorists have suggested that adolescents do face a number of adjustment concerns and developmental tasks (Erickson, 1963, 1968, 1974; Havinghurst, 1953).

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Similarly, some researchers have attempted to study what those concerns are (Hiebert, Collins, & Robinson, 2001; Hiebert, Kemeny, & Kurchak, 1998; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). However, instead of solely focusing on crisis needs from the classical perspective, researchers can also see development as a whole picture from a person's entire life. "Life career development is such an orientation, and thus is a lens through which individuals can view and understand work and family concerns" (Gysbers et al., 1998, p. 10). Thus, it is important to keep in mind that adolescent concerns occur in a larger context of advancement and ongoing growth.

At this point "career issues" have clearly been verified as an important concern among adolescents. "One of the most consistent findings in the study of adolescent concerns is that school and educational adjustment problems, and concerns about future schooling and career, rank most highly with adolescents" (Violato & Holden, 1998). Violato and Holden found that career and grade issues are of primary concern across grade differences and proposed that adolescent concerns in general emanated from four basic factors or themes: (1) future career; (2) health; (3) personal self; and (4) social self. However, despite this consistency in the findings, there is little mention about adolescent perceptions of career concerns and whether these perceptions undergo changes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In *Career Counselling*, Gysbers et al. (1998) discuss the expansion of career

psychology over the last 30 years which has resulted in a convergence of ideas stemming

from both career development theory and psychological theory. The stage of adolescence,

in particular, is often viewed as a time of significant changes in informational processing,

moral advancement, and emotional intelligence that can have an effect on career

development attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour (Alberta Advanced Education and

Career Development, 1995; Berk, 1998; Cohen, 1999; Elkind, 1967, 1971; Greenberg,

1993; Gottman & DeClaire, 1998; Harter, 1990; Jaffe, 1998; Kimmel, & Weiner, 1995;

Rice & Dolgin, 2002; Sharf, 1992; Trusty, 1996). Both Zunker (1994) and Gysbers

(1998) advocate a broad holistic perspective in the assessment of career and

psychological concerns. In their view, that approach recognizes that development is

embedded in a larger historical, cultural, and social context. As a result, they have termed

this approach the life-career development perspective.

Life-career development, then, is defined as "self-development over the life span

through the interaction and integration of the roles, settings, and events of a person's life.

The word 'life' in the term career development meant that the focus was on the total

person – the human career" (Gysbers et al., 1998, p.3). In contrast, the term "crisis needs"

has come into common use in association with adolescent career issues. Perhaps that term

exaggerates the concept of concerns and turns developmental changes into seeming

crises. Admittedly, real crises may very well occur if normal career tasks are not

appropriately faced and dealt with. Perhaps, by focusing too narrowly on career items

such as needs, concerns, and issues, we have overcautiously restricted our lens so that we

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view adolescence as an archetype; in doing so, we neglect the notion of developmental psychology across life-span and the notion of situational conditions that affect the life-space. Similarly, concerns that may initially appear as crisis needs may in fact be developmental or situational needs and therefore may be manageable life-career issues that can be addressed before they reach crisis proportions.

Thus, I suggest a return to adopting a life-career approach to adolescence, and apply this approach as rigorously to adolescents as we do to adulthood. It is this author's position belief that this view is better understood when inspected in relation to three general areas of psychological theory: adolescent development, motivation, and career development.

Adolescent Development

Childhood and adolescence are the foundations upon which adulthood is built, and failure to master early tasks may compromise the ability to prepare for and engage in career development. According to Erikson (1963), developmental stages rest upon the successful completion of stages prior to adolescence and the requirement that adolescents eventually separate from their family and create their own relationships. Erikson's first stages involve having a physical and emotional environment that can be trusted as well as having a sense of oneself as a separate individual from one's environment. In the next stages, children develop initiative and a sense of mastery that provide the cornerstones for further growth (Havinghurst, 1953, 1972; Saltoun, 1980; Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). Thus, it is conceivable that adolescents unacquainted to successful experiences early in their development could be also susceptible to a feeling of helplessness in meeting the more difficult career development tasks in high school.

As a result of their advancing capabilities, adolescent development is marked by the struggle between personal and social awareness as adolescents meet new development tasks. Junior and high school students may be preoccupied with concurrently managing several developmental tasks such as achieving independence, clarifying an identity, developing an ideology, feeling that they belong, and setting vocational goals (Havighurst, 1972). The extent to which adolescents master these tasks can partly determine their ability to cope with career developmental tasks at the junior high school and high school level (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). These developmental "strides toward independence, however, are often accompanied by feelings of insecurity, conflict, fear, and anxiety" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, p. 284), as these tasks present a vast amount of challenge during the adolescent period.

Erikson's (1959) theory of adolescence as a psychosocial moratorium views adolescence "a socially sanctioned period between childhood and adulthood during which an individual is free to experiment to find a socially acceptable identity role" (Rice & Dolgan, 2002, p. 31). The extent to which adolescents have found a socially acceptable identity and role at the junior and high school level can partly determine the extent to which they are able to cope with future career developmental tasks. Rice and Dolgan elaborate further:

> Adolescence becomes a period of analyzing and trying various roles without the responsibility for assuming any one . . . but . . . that near the end of adolescence, a failure to establish identity results in deep suffering for the adolescent because of the diffusion of roles . . . the adolescent who fails in search for an identity will experience self-doubt, role diffusion, and role confusion. (p. 31)

Adolescents often find themselves in a constant flux as they attempt to honour what is

personally salient for them and simultaneously meet social expectations of the roles they

encounter (Berk, 1988). Furthermore, it becomes difficult to trust that previous decisions

remain right amid a continuously changing identity (Rice & Dolgan, 2002). Thus, the

search for a sense of identity is the crucial issue during this moratorium phase and it is

essential to continuous development in adolescence.

Identity Development

Perhaps the central developmental task of adolescence, according to outcome or

status approaches (Erikson, 1963; Marcia, 1966), is the formation of a unified personal

identity. Adolescence itself is a normative phase of increased developmental intensity as

cognitive advances set the stage for exploring alternatives and committing to roles (Berk,

1988). For instance, identity formation is gradually established during adolescence by an

adolescent's attempts to synthesize a clearer configuration of her or his life (Havighurst,

1953, 1972). Both Erikson (1963) and Marcia (1966) suggested that there are different

categories and strategies that adolescents may experience when questioning or exploring

their physical, sexual, personal, ideological, social, or occupational identities.

In Erikson's (1963) fifth stage of development, exploration in adolescent life is

described mainly as a developmental search for a personal identity and identity

clarification. However, if identity clarification is not reached, then adolescents can

experience confusion and an inability to complete essential development tasks. Therefore,

the transition from childhood to adolescence presents many challenges and struggles in

which adolescents may experience uncertainty about their place in the world and feelings

of aimlessness regarding their present and future roles (Berk, 1998; Rice & Dolgan,

2002). "This struggle to make sense of self and a confusing world seems to be at the core of career indecision," according to Savickas (1997b, p. 173). Success in identity adjustment prepares adolescents for other, more difficult tasks and stages.

Establishing an acceptable "occupational identity," for instance, involves progressing through what Marcia (1968) described in the taxonomy of adolescent identity as the stages of identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity formation. These four identity statuses represent adolescents' attempts to master adolescent identity tasks and resolve a balance between the personal and social dimensions of their lives. Although many youth enter into these life stages with a relatively diffused identity, adolescents at this stage have yet to experience an identity conflict or exploration:

> Nor have they gone through the process of re-evaluating, searching and considering alternatives. . . . Adolescents who continue to express no interest in commitment may be masking an underlying insecurity about identity issues. Lacking self-confidence, they mask their feelings with an expression of apathy. (Rice & Dolgan, 2002, p. 182)

From a life-span perspective (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996), adolescents have likely only had a few experiences in regard to career challenges and identifying which career decisions to make. Thus, adolescents unaccustomed to stating "occupational preferences" early in career planning could conceivably be susceptible to feelings of helplessness in making further career decisions. Some know that they may soon have to leave high school, and that knowledge may only exasperate these feelings.

Cognitive Development

Views of cognitive development also suggest that adolescents are experiencing a developmental transition from concrete operational thought to formal operational thought (Piaget, 1959, 1967, 1981). According to Piaget, learners at the concrete stage are able to manipulate concrete elements, operations, and properties, while those with formal operational thought can construct ideas and project themselves abstractly into the future of possibilities more readily than those at the concrete operational level of thought.

Concrete and emergent learners tend to start with what they "know" first and so it is possible that accessing information in unfamiliar situations can tend to confuse and frustrate these types of learners. These concerns are important aspects to consider, especially if it is true that many adolescents and adults never truly reach the full capacity of the formal operational stage (Rice & Dolgin, 2002). As well, Piaget (1959, 1967, 1981) suggests that the substage of emergent formal operational thought corresponds to the emergence of early adolescence. Reasoning skills lack a systematic and rigorous method at this stage, so adolescent assertions may not be able to exhibit formal operations across all situations (Rice & Dolgin, 2002).

If one applies these concepts to career development, it would seem that concrete learners may have difficulty leaving the confines of their own experience in order to consider future occupational possibilities that they are unfamiliar with, while learners with formal operational thought have a greater ability to conceptualize career opportunities and make hypotheses regarding their future career paths (Rice & Dolgin, 2002). In consequence, adolescents without full formal operational thought may need to begin the career journey first from their own perspectives.

Alternatively, full formal operational thought is defined by the ability to construct and test theories about the world (Kimmel & Weiner, 1995; Piaget, 1959, 1967, 1981; Rice & Dolgin, 2002). Learners at the formal operations stage tend to be able to introspect, think abstractly and in combinatory patterns, and reason logically or hypothetically about numerous variables and ideas (Kimmel & Weiner, 1995). While this stage represents a substantial advancement in thinking, it can also bring disadvantages. When one considers these operations in relation to career development, for instance, it seems that older adolescents may begin to experience the reality of the world as a hindrance to their own career decisions and choices. Furthermore, they may begin to doubt their own perceptions and what they previously believed was possible. Career thinking and perceptions may look very different to adolescents at different stages of development.

The presence of formal operational thought can also have an important impact on personality and behaviour in adolescents (Berk, 1998). For example, some psychosocial theories suggest that adolescents' personalities begin to transform into new intellectual forms of egocentrism and identity development (Berk, 1998; Erickson, 1963, 1968, 1974; Elkind, 1967, 1971; Harter, 1990; Havinghurst, 1953; Kimmel & Weiner, 1995; Marcia, 1980; Neimeyer, 1992, Rice & Dolgan, 2002). A portion of this identity development involves adolescents' desire to try on new roles in order to establish their own identity (Harter, 1990; Marcia, 1980). Identity and self-concept formation, then, is an asset in encouraging the adolescent to explore future roles and career possibilities.

Self-Development

Conversely, some authors believe that this struggle for the identity of the self is the precise reason that adolescents are considered to experience states of heightened self-consciousness or self-absorption (Elkind, 1967, 1971; Jaffe, 1998; Piaget, 1959, 1967, 1981). A preoccupation with satisfying their own needs and desires can lead to insensitivity and a tendency to view life events only in terms of how these events affect them. Thus, idealistic thinking, feelings of invulnerability, and extreme forms of retaining a sense of privacy can result in a phenomenon Elkind coined "adolescent egocentrism" (Elkind, 1967, 1971). As a result, adolescents have an emerging preoccupation and concern for themselves within present and future contexts.

Two terms, the imaginary audience and the personal fable, are often used to describe the egocentrism phenomenon. Elkind believes that egocentrism stems from adolescents' tendency to over-differentiate their own thoughts and feelings from those of others. With the "imagined audience," adolescents' thoughts seem indistinguishable from their perceptions of what people expect of them (Elkind, 1967, 1971; Harter, 1990). Adolescent belief in the "personal fable" relates to simplistic thinking and an overly simplified belief within their own individualized uniqueness. These two beliefs often contribute to egocentrism in adolescence.

Either adolescents' belief that other people are overly attentive to their behaviour or their belief that they are invulnerable when compared to others in society can have the effect of exasperating their career concerns even further.

The adolescent who fails in the search for an identity . . . will likely be

preoccupied with the opinions of others or may turn to the other extreme of no

longer caring what others think. He or she may withdraw or turn to drugs or alcohol in order to relieve the anxiety that role diffusion creates. (Rice & Dolgan, 2002, pp. 31-32)

Adolescents who perceive the imaginary audience phenomenon will believe that their actions are being closely scrutinized. On the other hand, adolescents who perceive the world from the personal fable phenomenon may very well follow a sensation-seeking model in which novel and increasingly intense sensations are sought after as confirmatory experiences for their fabled beliefs (Jaffe, 1998). In either case, the tendency to be oversensitive in thought can establish possible deficiency or superiority perspectives in the social schemas under consideration. Thus, career planning, exploration, and decision making may become compromised by these distortions in adolescent perception.

Moral Development

Finally, the developments of moral understanding and cognitive thinking share similar processes in adolescent growth (Berk, 1998). In Kohlberg's (1981, 1984, 1987) levels of moral reasoning, for instance, he describes adolescence as a time of progression from the pre-conventional to the conventional level. According to his developmental sequence, obedience to social rules and consequences transforms beyond conformity to include perspectives that ensure positive human relationships and social order. Moral advances may also influence adolescents in making personal morality choices when these decisions attempt to maintain social harmony, uphold a societal law, or involve an ethic of care and concern for others (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1981, 1984, 1987).

In a similar vein Havighurst (1972) suggests that adolescence is a time when students acquire a set of values and an ethical system to use as a guide to their behaviour. This conception of moral understanding may be applied to career development. Adolescents may seek career opportunities that not only offer intrinsic rewards but also increase the likelihood of satisfying their moral beliefs. Personal variations in values and empathy may encourage adolescents to seek out career opportunities that will allow them to express their moral outlook on life (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Perry, 1970; Kohlberg, 1981, 1984, 1987). Pre-conventional adolescents may stress monetary rewards as the main factor determining career choice, but conventional or post-conventional adolescents may be more influenced by their sense of morality in regard to their career choices. Occupations that incorporate principles of care or justice, for example, may attract adolescents who share a similar orientation of concern for upholding these principles within their future occupations. The development of moral reasoning can have an impact on career exploration, as a person's occupational identity may be influenced by moral decisions.

These theories touch on the cognitive and psychosocial changes that shape adolescent development and therefore influence adolescent perceptions. As outlined below, a number of other factors may influence these perceptions.

Motivation

Motivational theories include biological, learning, and cognitive components on the topic of adolescence (Bandura, 1997; Deci, 1985; Dweck, 2000; Franken, 1994; Reeve, 1997; Jaffe, 1998; Vroom, 1964). The general consensus in the literature however, is that motivation is an internal state or condition, sometimes described as a

need, desire, or want (Reeve, 1997). Though a felt motive activates and energizes arousal in an individual, a number of separate factors may influence the direction, persistence, and efficiency of performance levels. Sources of motivation needs, then, seem to be internal states that can be biological, behavioural/external, cognitive, affective, social, and conative in domain. While action and inaction can be traced to each of these domains, it is likely that initiation of behaviour may be more related to basic biology or the affective area or both (Reeve, 1997). For example, in a biologically driven situation, an individual may seek to obtain desired, pleasant consequences (rewards) or escape and avoid undesired, unpleasant consequences. An affectively driven individual may attempt to increase security of self-esteem or decrease threats to it. Thus, individuals search for balance on the basis of the perceptions they have of the situation.

Personal Constructs and Conflict

As adolescents begin to assimilate and accommodate different personal constructs, such as values, into their lives, these constructs can increase the intensity and complexity of how they approach their career choices. As adolescents develop interests and values their movement becomes channeled into patterns. The social context interacts with personal values to produce occupational patterns and that provide the focus for adolescents' occupational identity and value commitments. "Thus, interests denote the subjective recognition of opportunities to enact constructs and implement one's self concept, thereby affirming values and manifesting destiny" (Savickas, 1997b, p. 153).

While personal construct themes are useful in framing career choices, inconsistent and inharmonious themes can prompt conflict in career thinking systems and life-roles (Neimeyer, 1988). According to personal construct approaches (Kelly, 1950) conflict

involves approaching a choice with opposing constructs and "these conflicts must be resolved through compromise to allow an integrative choice to emerge" (Savickas, 1997b, p. 154). Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory for instance, suggests that individuals initially seek a balance or homeostasis in their lives and, in some ways, will resist influences or expectations to change if it threatens to disrupt this equilibrium. If failure or difficulty occurs, the adolescent must quickly lower expectations in order to maintain self-esteem. However, if adolescents have an explanation based on internal motivation, effort, and high expectations for success, they will persevere and stay motivated in spite of temporary setbacks, because their self-esteem and self-efficacy are not tied only to immediate successes (Deci, 1985; Vroom, 1964).

Change, growth, and uncertainty occur as adolescents mature cognitively and attempt to rework their thinking and organizations of knowledge to reflect their understanding of the world more accurately (Piaget, 1967, 1981). In the same way, life transitions can prompt an interruption in movement that allows individuals to elaborate and expand upon these career systems. In the personal construct view, moments of choice incorporate the recursive cycles of differentiation and integration to help steer future behaviour. As is demonstrated in Neimeyer's (1988) developmental model, these career based systems develop new organizations in which to judge and evaluate a career choice. Thus, the motivational themes of cognitively held constructs that shape an adolescent's character and hierarchical structure can also motivate that adolescent's career choice.

These concepts can be applied to career development. Attribution and personal construct theories can partly account for the level of salience adolescents attribute to career planning, career choice, and career development. These theories include the

importance of understanding how people think about themselves and their environment; however, they seem incomplete in explaining the purposive and goal-directed nature of people. "One way to understand people and their actions better is to consider what is motivating them, what goals they are working toward" (Cantor & Zirkel, 1990, p. 138). In other words, how cognitions move people can be illuminated by understanding what they are attempting to do instead of investigating only what they are doing. "Life tasks are often initiated in this context of age and culture; they provide a common ground on which to compare people as to the unique meanings they give to these normative tasks" (Cantor & Zirkel, 1990, p. 139). What adolescents are attempting to do is navigate among the stage specific concerns and normative goals that are present in adolescence.

Career Adaptability

According to Super (1990), career readiness or adaptability is another integral motivational component that energizes adolescents to engage in appropriate career planning, exploration, and decision making, and to prepare for career development tasks across the life-span. "Adaptability means the quality of being able to change, without great difficulty, to fit new or changed circumstances" (Savickas, 1997a, p. 5). Super's (1988, p. 15) Model of Adult Career Adaptability illustrates dimensions that include attitudinal (foresight and curiosity), cognitive (fund of information and rational decision making), and behavioural variables (reality orientation) involved in the career development process. However, Savickas (1997a) has since suggested that individual adaptation may be a "single source of motivation" and that career adaptability is the "readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustment prompted by changes in work and

working conditions" (p. 5). Resources required for choosing and adapting to an occupation include career choice content such as knowledge of ability, interests, and values as well as the career choice process such as life role salience and career choice readiness. Focusing on career choice content alone will be insufficient for adolescents unless this traditional approach accompanies a firm understanding about these career choice processes.

Identity and value clarification are critical aspects that lead to the selection and pursuit of career options and are important tasks that help adolescents gain satisfaction in respect to their life role participation.

Life-span, life-space theory uses the construct of role salience to evaluate an individual's participation in, commitment to, and value expectations for . . . life roles . . . Each role calls for different motivational strivings (i.e., values and goals) and requires different competencies and skills. How these interrelate, and which roles are most salient, strongly shapes career development. (Savickas, 2001, pp. 308-309)

Values, on the other hand, are learned or may grow out of needs and are assumed to be a basic source of human motivation (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). People are assumed to either seek or move toward values that they perceive as positive in nature and away from those things that they view as negative in nature. How an individual will respond to and determine which roles and values will play a significant part in their lives will depend on the constellation of social positions they have available and are exposed to.

Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2002) define the five following dimensions of career choice readiness: a) having a "planful" attitude toward coping with career stages and

tasks; b) gathering information about educational and occupational opportunities; c) exploring the world-of-work; d) knowing how to make good career decisions; and e) being able to make realistic judgments about potential occupations. Students may need to become proficient in each of these five dimensions of career readiness; otherwise, they may be unprepared to process career choice content adequately.

Adolescents' interest in career planning is the degree to which they have developed an awareness of their own life-role salience and career readiness appropriate to the life-space they occupy. These aspects provide a sense of purpose and direction in the career planning process in addition to the development of individual goals. "When work-role salience is low . . . adolescents often lack motivation and career maturity" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, p. 298). Adolescents who acquire an ability to satisfy important values in their life roles gain accurate self-evaluations and develop career choice readiness (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). Thus, adolescents must sense the importance that all individual roles will play in their lives, and feel adequately prepared, before attempting career decisions. Anxiety can mobilize but it can also paralyze (Super, 1988). Adolescents may need to monitor their level of arousal so that they can be enthusiastic and optimistic about career planning, but readiness also needs to be balanced with self-confidence and a degree of "planfulness."

The above theories provide an essential framework of motivation and how adolescents potentially may perceive their own career thinking and areas of concern. Career development is the remaining facet to consider in an examination of what concerns youth from their own perspective and how these concerns may change with age.

Career Development

The theory and practice of career development relate primarily to vocational choice and adjustment and to the choice and function of individuals in major life roles from childhood to old age. Structural approaches suppose that individuals seek a structural link between aspects of self (i.e., RIASEC personality traits) and the demands encountered in the environment (Bordin, 1963, 1973; Holland, 1966, 1976, 1985; Parsons, 1909; Roe, 1979, 1991).

Conversely, process approaches attempt to account for the variability in career choice and development throughout an individual's lifetime. Contrary to the structural approach, which contends that traits are stable and consistent, the process approach considers occupational choice to be subject to change due to an individual's developmental stage and life role. Eclectic theorists such as Lent, Brown and Hackett (1996) and Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996) propose that learning, cognition, or decision-making can account for the process variables involved in career development.

Constructivism, in contrast, considers that the narrative construction of the subjective career is an implementation of a person's self-concept and that this view is an alternative to some of the more reductionist and empirically determined views described above (Peavy, 1997; Savickas, 1997a; Tiedeman, 1961; Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990). All of these orientations may have important aspects to consider regarding career choice and development. Career development theory encompasses structural, process, eclectic and constructivist perspectives (Crites, 1981; Peavy, 1997; Weinrach, 1979).

Levels of Personality and Career Development

Savickas's (2001) ambition to obtain convergence in career development theories

has resulted in a comprehensive theory utilizing McAdams's (1995) levels of personality

model. Holland's typology of vocational personalities and other structural approaches

that attempt to chart recurring uniformities in a person's social behaviour to

psychological variables comprise the first level according to McAdams's model.

Both the second level of McAdams's model and the process approach take

psychosocial variables into account. Those variables are influenced by the era, life-stage,

social role, and other situational conditions that locate an individual. Constructivist

approaches that focus on narrative constructions of meaning and the subjective

interpretation individuals use to interpret their lives are comparable to Level III.

However, Savickas (2001) argues that McAdams's model alone ignores critical process

variables that provide the motivational mechanisms for vocational development.

Mechanisms of Career Development

Views in life-span development operationally define adaptive process variables

such as identity, self-concept, and coping mechanisms that form an adolescent's

character. Eclectic theorists such as Lent, Brown and Hackett (1996) and Mitchell and

Krumboltz (1996) propose that learning and decision making can explain the sources for

these mechanisms of action. Furthermore, process theorists such as Super (1990) and

Savickas (2001) have proposed a set of secondary self-regulatory processes that are

believed to be the regulatory behaviours that mediate successful adaptations. Specifically,

these mechanisms include a system of developing a sense of career concern, control,

conviction, competence, and commitment that combines the effort, ability, and skill individuals bring to bear on monitoring their behaviour and experience.

More recently, however, Savickas has proposed that there is a more effective way to link developmental psychology and career development processes because of the shared view in advancing development and adaptation. Savickas (2001) suggests that developmental perspectives, such as the life-span theory, need to first address the issues of gain, loss, and resilience in order to be a comprehensive theory of career development:

Each life stage has some combination of all three and should be characterized by different proportions of growth, resilience, and loss. This means that in career development theory, the stages of growth and exploration could be characterized primarily by growth, yet some attention should be paid to loss and resilience. (p. 300)

These ideas can be applied to career choice and development. The model of selective optimization with compensation (SOC) developed by Baltes, Lindenberger and Staudinger (1996) has been put forth as able to specify the actual "processes and mechanisms of development for vocational personality types, career concerns, and career narratives" (Savickas, 2001, p. 315) across the life-span. Selective optimization involves goal-related means to achieve success by chosen goals or outcomes (growth). Compensation is defined as a response to loss in goal-related means in order to maintain success or desired levels of functioning (resilience) (Baltes et al., 1996). Thus, proportions of growth, loss, and resilience are conveyed in the SOC model in which "selection, optimization, and compensation can be internal or external, conscious or unconscious, and active or passive" (Savickas, 2001, p. 314).

As adolescents select a goal and begin to imagine the desired outcomes related to that end, they undoubtedly face the losses associated with the selection of that goal. These processes may not be employed deliberately to achieve goals, but they do "represent fundamental agentic processes of personality that actually constitute the processes for advancing development, operationally defined by improvements in adaptive fitness" (Savickas, 2001, p.313). Therefore, the central mechanism of development is inherently a process of selection and selective adaptation, while the process variables outlined in the SOC model are believed to be the Level IV motivational mechanisms for vocational development throughout the life-span.

Career concerns. Super (1988) devised the Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI) which was "designed to assess the planfulness and foresight in looking and thinking ahead about one's work and working life" (Super, 1988, p. 50). The ACCI assesses career concerns according to clusters of developmental tasks that make up the life stages and substages of Super's (1980) model. The ACCI was the result of studies such as The Career Pattern Study (Super et al., 1957) which concluded that "planning and preparation for future vocational choices by the acquisition of relevant educational and occupational information were essential for readiness in career development" (Super, 1988, p. 18). The prediction was that by assessing career concerns, one could also predict adult vocational adjustment in terms of job satisfaction and occupational success, and therefore evaluate the career development needs and degree of "planfulness" involved in addressing these concerns.

Career concerns can also be seen as Level II descriptors in ontogenetic (individual) development (McAdams, 1995), as was done by Savickas (2001) in his

method to integrate the life-span, life-space approach into a comprehensive theory of career development. In Savickas's (2001) approach, "career concerns are psychosocial considerations used to compare an individual to himself or herself across developmental eras, as well as to other people" (Savickas, 2001, p.308). From this perspective, career concerns are highly contingent on psychosocial contexts and can change and develop according to a particular life stage, cultural context, and distinctive historical era.

In the temporal and situational context of career concerns for example, the life-span, life-space is an aptly suited theory and approach for viewing the personal concerns during vocational development as well as the psychosocial variables that locate these concerns in a relevant time and place among adolescents. Savickas (2001) elaborates further:

> In the vocational realm, personal concern variables have been termed *career concerns*. These Level II descriptors of vocational behaviour and career development concentrate on issues of social integration and self-regulation. Career concerns involve the situated use of strategies for effective performance of a specific role in a particular place at a certain time. An individual's career concerns include contextualized strategies, motivational systems, and domain-specific skills for dealing with age-appropriate developmental tasks and social expectations and for pursuing personal projects. (p. 308)

While these contexts may change with the time and place adolescents find themselves, the development tasks that give form to adolescents' career concerns remain relatively predictable when viewed from a life-span, life-space perspective.

In sum, career concerns arise, occur in combination with all three process variables of the SOC model, and become the adaptive tasks or responses from having selected particular career goals or developmental tasks. Selective optimization is brought about by attempts at self-extension into vocational and educational environments, and those attempts necessitate the use of self-regulatory mechanisms in order to mediate successful adaptations to these environments.

Adolescent Career Development

Perhaps one of the most comprehensive career theories about adolescent career development and career concerns has been the life-span, life-space approach developed by Super (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). The theory and practice of career development put forward by Super relate primarily to individuals' vocational choices and adjustment and to the choices and function of individuals in major life roles, as found in Super's (1961) Career Pattern Study (CPS). Super (1957, 1980) postulated five stages of career development, characterized as types of developmental tasks with which people cope as they go through life. These stages are Growth, Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Disengagement. On the basis of the vocational situations and demands people typically encounter, this life-span approach depicts that people will experience similar needs and concerns as they progress from childhood to adulthood (Super, 1980). Among adolescents, career development generally encompasses such areas as career adaptability upon selecting, training for, and entering an occupation, as well as the adaptability in the handling of career development tasks involved in transitions after secondary school.

The growth that occurs in childhood progresses into the transitional stage of adolescence; at that stage, the goals, tasks, and challenges involve particular career development tasks. The stage of Exploration includes the developmental substages of crystallization, specification, and implementation. These include the vocational tasks: (a) to cultivate ideas of the level of work desired and of occupations that are appealing; (b) to choose an occupation based on self-preferences; and (c) to carry out plans and act on the choices made. Similarly, career and lifestyle development in the stage of Exploration is determined by adolescents' ability to do the following: (a) cultivate a realistic self-concept; (b) learn more about more possibilities; (c) get started in exploring a chosen field of interest; (d) verify a current occupational choice; (e) devote more time to other life-roles besides leisure pursuits (Super, 1990). The set of self-regulatory mechanisms used to adapt to these stages include career concern, control, conviction, competence, and commitment and are also the process variables believed to generate thematic sources of recursive career concern (Savickas, 2001).

According to Super (1990), the central process guiding career development is the "readiness" to adapt to the changing demands in the different roles and theatres experienced during this life stage of adolescence. "Researchers have characterized this process with developmental tasks of crystallizing and specifying; attitudes toward planning and exploring; beliefs about the work world and succeeding in it; competencies for decision making and problem solving; and coping behaviors" (Savickas, 2001, p.308). From a career development view, adolescence is an unfolding process of predictable development tasks; however, the outcome is rather unpredictable because of the number of these challenges and life-cycle transitions an individual experiences in adolescence.

Adolescents may find development and growth and acquire new resources that come with obtaining independence. However, resiliency only comes with the ability to adapt to vocational development tasks and without being overwhelmed by the emotional strain and stress associated with making successful transitions. Career adaptability is the concept that explains the ability that adolescents possess and that is required to cope with the changing demands and social expectations related to work.

Adolescent Career Concerns

Unlike Level I variables, Level II descriptors remain ill-defined and unorganized in the realm of vocational psychology (Savickas, 2001). The difficulty of moving Level II career concerns beyond the loosely organized accumulation of empirical knowledge may be due in part to variables that change and develop according to the life stage, cultural context, and distinctive historical era they occur in. Hence, Level II career concerns are complex and highly contingent on psychosocial contexts.

Instead of linking variables across the three levels of the existing model of personality, Savickas (2001) suggests further research among Level II concerns directly. For instance, he heeds the advice of McAdams and warns "that studying career concerns in disposition terms could be counter productive, and produce a hierarchy of knowledge that privileges RIASEC traits as explanations of career concerns" (p.315). Thus, researchers need to address the situational context of career concerns and concentrate on how the issues of society and self-concepts affect the vocational behaviour and career development of adolescents. When this theory is applied to adolescent,s we can approach an understanding about how Level II variables change over the course of adolescence.

To summarize, career concerns are the psychosocial considerations used by adolescents to compare themselves across developmental stages, as well as compare themselves to other people, when making educational and vocational choices. The life-space of adolescence is often categorized as one of growth and transition, during which the constant flux of various core and peripheral roles are continually being adopted, modified, and rearranged. Super et al., (1996) defends the theory that career concerns are contextualized in one's life-space:

> Role interactions can also be conflicting if they make inroads into time and energy needed elsewhere. Multiple roles can enrich life or overburden it. To understand an individual's career, it is important to know and appreciate the web of life roles that embeds that individual and her or his career concerns. Sometimes examination of the life structure will reveal that a career problem is not simply occasioned by a work-role transition...but that the problem is spun in another strand of the web. (p. 129)

In other words, the constellation and interaction of social positions occupied are the changing life structure elements in the life space of adolescence. The themes and patterns of this type of social meaning making should be seen as normative life adaptations embedded in a larger historical, cultural, and social context. Due consideration of adolescents' particular situation (cultural context and social roles) will need to be included in this analysis in order to successfully incorporate how these interpersonal statements of concerns about one's career change and develop among adolescents today.

Background to the problem. Needs assessments are often utilized as tools for understanding the type of support or services that a target population finds necessary (Altschuld, 2000). However, in the case of adolescent program design, adolescent needs are often being assessed by the adults involved, rather than considering the perspectives of adolescents themselves. Recently, there has been increased involvement of students within needs assessment research (Collins, 1993; Collins, 1998; Drefs, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Hiebert, Collins & Robinson, 2001; Hiebert, Kemeny & Kurchak, 1998; Kemeny, 1997; Roy, 1995). This addition of student responses is a result of the recognition that including students' perceptions could increase the accuracy of results, as adolescents may be the best source for identifying their own needs (Hiebert, Collins & Robinson, 2001).

Researchers have found that student perceptions often differ from those of parents and teachers, so the inclusion of student perceptions appears to be increasingly important (Collins, 1993; Collins, 1998; Drefs, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Hiebert, Collins & Robinson, 2001; Hiebert, Kemeny & Kurchak, 1998; Kemeny, 1997; Roy, 1995). Hiebert, Kemeny & Kurchak (1998), Collins (1998), Couture (2000), and Gordon (2000), examined and found significant differences between adult's perceptions of adolescent needs and students' perceptions. Overall, as a result of the popular "turbulent" view of adolescence as presented in the media, psychology, and education, these authors suggest that adult stakeholders more often prioritize problem-focused, reactive needs (e.g., crisis intervention), while the students themselves prioritize proactive, non-crisis needs (e.g., career planning and physical building environment) (Hiebert, Collins & Robinson, 2001). Thus, it seems clear that adolescents' opinions, concerns, and perspectives are worthy views to consider in needs based research.

As a result of the belief that students' views add an important contribution to program planning, the Comprehensive Career Needs Survey (CCNS) was designed. The CCNS is a collaborative initiative between the Southern Alberta Centre of Excellence for Career Development of the University of Lethbridge Faculty of Education, the Chinook Regional Career Transitions for Youth Project, and the South Western Rural Youth Career Development Project. Dr. Kris Magnusson and Dr. Kerry Bernes (2002) designed the CCNS in order to assess the career educational needs of junior high and senior high school students. Consulting the students, in addition to school personnel and parents, provided these researchers with valuable information regarding the needs of which only students are aware. As has been mentioned, limiting the survey to adult perceptions alone may result in a failure to accurately assess adolescent needs for program planning. For instance, preliminary analysis of the CCNS study has revealed that adults and students differed in their perceptions related to career preparedness (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). Conceivably, mistaking adolescent perspective and specific concerns may also lower student participation, access, or program use if services are perceived as unable to address issues students "feel" are meaningful. As Collins (1998) suggests:

> Perhaps as students feel listened to and included in program decisions, ironically many of the areas that adults feel are important will be addressed as feelings of confidence, respect, and competence are cultivated. (p. 162)

Overall, student responses in the CCNS indicated a sense of confidence in their future careers. The majority of students believed that they would find work doing something they loved to do and in their chosen occupation (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). However, despite this optimism and self-confidence for their futures, students also report

that they have concerns in regard to their career planning (Pyne & Bernes, 2002; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002).

Significance of the problem. The proposition for this project has been to investigate what adolescent career concerns are and how this perception evolves from Grades 7 through 12. Concerns may be defined by what youth worry about when they think about their present and future career plans. Adult stakeholders may consider some of these perceived concerns as "realistic" or "unrealistic" sources of motivation on the basis of adolescents' lack of experience; however, that does not negate the fact that these concerns feel "real" to the adolescent respondents. As Gordon (2000) states:

> The "realities" that are experienced by adolescents are quite different, yet equally valid, from the "realities" that adults experience. At best, adults can only guess at the challenges, fears, concerns, and needs, of adolescents today. Certainly one of the most valid and direct ways to discover this information is to recognize the unique experiences of adolescents, and to ask them directly. (p. 151)

An example of the importance of a career concern was highlighted in a study done by Saltoun (1980) and showed that vocational "planfulness" and vocational information gathering, in particular, are adversely affected by students' fear of failure. Her conclusion was that individuals with high levels of "fear of failure" might avoid tasks such as career planning or might possibly devalue the importance of career planning all together (Saltoun, 1980). In other words, behaviour that may appear to show disinterest for example, may really disguise a failure-avoidant coping strategy to reduce achievement-related anxiety. It is reasonable to assume that coping strategies such as this one interfere with vocational maturity growth and undermine career-planning efforts. Thus, it does

seem important to indicate what these fears and concerns are before we are able to make suggestions about how we should approach adolescent discouragement.

The things that excite, frustrate, or frighten youth in engaging in career thinking could have fundamental importance in how service programs are delivered. This knowledge could also aid in supplementing more targeted programs to specifically address the concerns felt by youth so they may benefit by even further encouragement and support in planning their careers. For example, career-related interventions and school programs implemented by guidance counsellors and curriculum administrators might directly profit from a knowledge of what adolescents are specifically concerned about when they think about their own careers. As Collins (1998) recommends:

> By understanding what students believe their needs are, schools can offer programs that address these needs. As a result, students will feel increasingly empowered and competent as they build on areas that they perceive were inadequate in the face of increasing challenge. A more confident student could then in turn lead to an adolescent less susceptible to crisis and years of turmoil. (p. 161)

A thorough appreciation and understanding for the concerns that adolescents experience as they move from the early to later grade levels could, accordingly enhance current research studies, interventions, programs, and services that attempt to address these concerns. Perhaps this knowledge would also aid in an increased collaboration between youth and service providers, to help all youth understand and manage their own sources of career concern. Thus, the nature of student concerns regarding career planning may interest the potential audiences that include career facilitators, para-professionals,

advisors, guidance counsellors, researchers, calm-teachers, curriculum administrators, parents and youth.

Summary

It is clear that there is an increasing recognition of the importance of including student perceptions within needs assessment research. This project aims to provide data that would be useful to both career researchers and practitioners. The results will help clarify what students find to be a concern from *their own perspective* when they think about their careers and whether those perceptions change across grade levels. As stated in Gysbers et al. (1998):

> Traditional career counseling practices emphasize the assessment of individuals' abilities, aptitudes, personality, values, and interests to aid in the selection of appropriate educational programs or making occupational choices. This emphasis, while important, is not sufficient. What is needed, in addition is attention to individuals' life career development so that goal achievement and problem resolution can be based on the broadest and most well informed perspective possible. (p. 11)

Thus, a qualitative method of inquiry will be a useful approach in gaining adolescent perspectives about their career concerns.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this research is to discover adolescents' perceptions of concern (*as they define it*) pertaining to career planning and to further explore how these perceptions change along grade levels. This chapter will outline the methodology used to examine the research question, "What discourages you when you think about your career?" in the Comprehensive Career Needs Survey (CCNS). How this perception evolves over time and through developmental stages is explored by a qualitative design approach. The qualitative approach of grounded theory will be discussed and its application to this research study will be outlined. Data collection and data analysis methods practiced in grounded theory research will be discussed relative to the research question at hand.

Needs Assessments

Needs assessments are often utilized as a means of understanding the type of support or services the target population finds necessary. The CCNS, in particular, was designed to assess the career needs of junior and senior high school students. The survey was developed in order to determine the perceptions of all who influence, and are involved with, students and their career needs. This strategy, implemented in questionnaire form, was chosen to utilize a greater understanding of all the stakeholders' perspectives rather than that of just one group. The purpose was primarily to survey the population or populations involved in service usage; however, there is often a significant difference between adult and adolescent perceptions. While there may be differences between what adults believe adolescents need, and what the adolescents themselves think they need, it is valuable to have an awareness of both perceptions. Although service gaps may be identified, the importance of gathering these perceptions is to gain a greater

understanding of adolescents' feelings and beliefs about career issues (Magnusson &

Bernes, 2000).

Sampling and Data Collection

This study examines the unanalyzed responses of adolescents when asked what

concerns they have when they think about the word "career." To retrieve this data, the

responses to the open-ended discouragement questionnaire question (i.e., "What

discourages you when you think about your career?") were collected. Of particular

interest were the descriptors (verbal descriptions and opinions) of concern expressed by

youth in the junior and senior high school population. Population participants, then,

included adolescents in Grades 7 through 12 attending schools throughout the selected

provincial communities of Southern Alberta who participated in the CCNS. A total

population of 9,502 students in grades 7 through 12 participated. Student responses from

schools located in each category were randomly extracted from each sample; community

sizes had already been separated by the following sample sizes: under 1000, from 1000 –

10,000, and more than 10,000. Within each community category, twenty randomly

selected responses were collected from each grade level. These responses were then

compared to other responses and reviewed as to their frequency relative to other themes

(Charles & Mertler, 2002). From here, qualitative analysis within grounded theory

procedures were used in coding the themes and categories found in these differentiated

response groups (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Glaser & Stauss, 1967; Glass & Hopkins,

1996; Neuman, 1997; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Grounded Theory Approach

Grounded theory was used to examine and categorize data into themes. The data analysis occurred in three steps; this procedure allowed the themes to emerge and develop with each corresponding level in the coding procedure. First, open or Level I coding involved gathering a significant number of unrelated statements to acquire as many themes as possible. Every written statement was then examined from the sample and initial themes were extracted during this coding procedure.

Next, axial or Level II coding involved re-examining the initial themes and then assigning the written statements into categorical codes. Additional codes also developed during this stage. Finally, selective coding or Level III coding consisted of scanning previous codes to compare and contrast the common themes that had emerged. The coding process ended when no new substantive or theoretical categories came from the data and when the majority of the data had been collected and analyzed. These themes and theoretical categories were then the basis for building a theoretical conceptualization. The data was examined at this point to verify that saturation had in fact been reached and that no new themes could be found for each particular grade. At this time of theoretical coding, the researcher was able to establish the theoretical links in relation to the compiled data.

Data Analysis

The data collection of the qualitative study did not occur in isolation from data analysis. The data was constantly being analyzed and examined through coding in order to bring a greater understanding and meaning to the information. In the coding of the data, every written statement was examined and then themes were extracted. Sometimes

two to three points were made in each statement reflecting two to three different thematic

codes or categories. The statements were recorded in the same words that the subjects

used. However, the eventual labels attributed to the themes did not always reflect the

subjects' word usage. For example, the theme "Away from home" might include the

statement "I would be away from homek" as well as statements such as "leaving home"

and "leaving family and friends." The codes developed were formed into categories. This

enabled a connection to be made between categories and the theory. Thus, the data was

analyzed according to the similarities and differences in the responses.

Summary

This chapter described the qualitative analysis and coding procedure used in the

grounded theory approach. The next chapter presents the results found as a result of

implementation of the data analysis procedure.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will describe the results generated from the grounded theory research. The common themes that emerged from the perceived career concerns will be listed, described, and evaluated according to their evolution from junior high to high school. Recorded student responses remain unaltered and they appear in the following tables and parenthesis as they were written. Thus, these statements have not been edited for grammatical or spelling errors. Instead, "[sic]" notations are used to indicate errors and square brackets are used to indicate revised corrections in students' written mistakes.

Qualitative Results

As outlined in the methodology section (Chapter 3), population participants included adolescents in Grades 7 through 12 attending schools throughout the selected provincial communities of Southern Alberta. A total population of 9,502 students in Grades 7 through 12 participated in the CCNS. Student responses from schools located in each grade category were randomly extracted from each sample. The communities had already been separated by population into the following sample sizes: under 1000; between 1000 and 10,000; and more than 10,000. Within each community category, twenty randomly selected responses were collected from each grade level. These responses were then compared to other responses and reviewed as to their frequency relative to other themes (Charles & Mertler, 2002). The grounded theory approach was used to generate the common themes in order to evaluate how adolescents perceive concerns and how perceptions evolve among grade levels. The terminology used in the coding procedure was derived by either using the words or terms directly from the

adolescents' responses or by assigning labels based on similarities in statements which constituted one theme.

Junior/Middle High School Responses

Grade 7, 8, and 9 students' ages ranged from approximately 12-14 years. Within these grade levels, few differences emerged in adolescents' career concerns: Grade 9 students perceived many of the same career themes that were reported in earlier grades. With each increasing grade, however, the responses became more sophisticated. Additionally, some themes did appear to emerge with increased frequency and were described in greater detail by Grade Nine students than by their younger counterparts.

Theme 1: Learning. Some students had concerns with the length, difficulty, and the amount of school. For example, the theme of learning was associated with "the long schooling," its "complexity," and "how much training" they would have to complete. Figure 1. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Learning" Theme

"Studies and training"

"Whether or not I can make it through University"

"Getting in the programs I'm interested in (i.e., vet medicine)"

"Finishing School (university) with good enough grades"

"Education for job"

Responses related to this theme would suggest that adolescents are considering the usefulness of additional "schooling" or "training." It is clear that adolescents appreciate the value of education and see it as an option; nevertheless, adolescents do not want to waste their time and money taking something that will not benefit them in the

future. In addition, adolescents may also be considering other alternatives such as whether they should take a year off after high school to work or to upgrade.

Theme 2: Away from home. Since obtaining the right kind of training is important, adolescents begin to consider where they may receive this training. Adolescents who are considering career alternatives also become aware that their career paths may lead them "away from home."

Figure 2. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Away From Home" Theme

"I would be away from home and I might get stressed out"

"That I might have to work a long way from home"

"leaving home and living in a strange land"

"leaving my parents and having to support myself"

"Leaving family and friends"

"Having to leave my comfort zones"

"I will be away from home and my husband and kids"

"If I do get married I would miss my family & friends"

"leaving home and living in a strange land"

The actual distance required by moving concerns adolescents; however, "leaving family and friends," and the support they provide, is equally distressing. Whether this training or education is close to home or not, the likelihood is that adolescents will no longer see their family and friends as much as before, and may find it difficult to connect with people in new and unfamiliar environments. Thus, adolescents believe they will

miss the sense of security, or the experience of safety that home provides, in order to pursue the training required by their chosen career paths.

The prominence of this theme may be influenced by the number of students who come from rural areas and is particularly evident in the small community schools sampled. Today, many youth from rural areas do leave home to go to school. However, this theme is just as prominent across all school sizes analyzed. Thus, youth recognize that the right training for them may not be offered in their own community or those nearest to them.

Theme 3: Locations. As with the away from home theme, distance is a source of concern, but adolescents also regard "location" as a specific discouragement related to educational, occupational, and career-related requirements.

Figure 3. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Locations" Theme

"being in a bad work environment"

"Where I could work"

"leaving home and living in a strange land"

"Not knowing if I want to work in the outdoors or in an office"

"Having to work in an office would be really unappealing"

"I might have to travel more than I like to"

"…there may not be enough opportunities in Canada, and I don't want to work in the States"

"leaving home and living in a strange land"

Responses referring to travel and sedentary related occupations imply different ranges of personal preference regarding where they want to be located. Thus, adolescents want to

choose where they work and go to school and are concerned that they "might not find a job in the area" of their choice.

Theme 4: Duration of school. The duration of school theme is most often associated with aspects of formal learning for those adolescents who are considering post-secondary education. Students are aware that they may, "have to go to school for a long time" and find the length of time required "discouraging."

Figure 4. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Duration of School" Theme

Duration of school is defined as a general concern:	Duration of school is defined by specific appraisals:
"School will take time . . ."	"I think that 4-5 years of college would be discouraging"
"Taking the time to go to school"	" about 4-5 years in Uni[sic]"
"The time it will take to study for it"	"longer if I want a master's or Ph.D."
"The amount of schooling needed..."	"I'll have to go to school for 7 years"

Students' responses may show that they are concerned in general about investing their time in studying and about the duration of school. However, students' responses may also represent more specific concerns about the actual number of years they expect to be in school.

Theme 5: Paying for school. Adolescents are also concerned about the cost of going to school. The knowledge that "school will . . . cost lots" is distressing to younger students, yet they may not be aware of the financial burden they can actually incur. The concern about cost and debt transforms into concern about the personal ability to pay for

school and whether they will be able "to afford" the difference between the cost of an education and their ability to pay for it.

Figure 5. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Paying for School" Theme

Paying for school is defined in terms of cost:	Paying for school is defined in terms of affordability:
"A University Degree costs a lot of money"	"Not being able to afford my education"
" cost for training for my career"	"Having to go to post-secondary and paying of[f] a student loan"

Thus, the paying for school theme is associated with receiving formal education but may also be related to adolescents who are considering other forms of training.

Theme 6: Security. Adolescents have a considerable amount of identifiable concerns about obtaining some semblance of security during their careers.

Figure 6. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Security" Theme

"I might not be able to support myself"

"Leaving my parents and having to support myself"

"If I can survive off my career, by myself"

"Not being able to move up in my field"

These responses refer to students' perceived ability to "support" themselves in the future. What is interesting is the persistence of this core desire now that people can no longer expect the hierarchical security provided by moving up a corporate ladder. Societal and occupational rates of change may have increased dramatically over the past few years, even if expectations regarding the organizational hierarchy have not.

Adolescents' concerns about stability can be divided into three highly related sub-themes that include financial, physical, and job security and the levels of anxiety adolescents' experience about their future.

Theme 7: Financial security. Future security comes with a price and adolescents are well aware of the potential sacrifices to expect. Adolescents are concerned about their ability to support themselves financially and, at the same time, are concerned about the amount of expense they will incur as they follow their career paths.

Figure 7. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Financial Security" Theme

Financial security is defined in terms of income:	Financial security is defined in terms of expenses:
"the pay," "low pay"	"have to pay your own bills"
"the wages (not very high)"	"lack of high paying jobs," "low salary"
"might not make money"	"It will cost me money"
"The money I need to get started"	"The fact that I think about...the cost of all these things I would like to do"

Tuition, debt, costs, and taxes worry adolescents, as does their ability to have enough income to afford these additional living expenses.

Theme 8: Physical security. Interestingly, adolescents are concerned about threats to their physical security and safety. They are concerned not only about enduring physical pain but about incurring possible impairments that would affect their physical well-being.

Figure 8. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Physical Security" Theme

"Working outside in the cold"

"My hands getting sore"

"Carpel tunnel syndrome"

"Risks of flying"

"Heavy objects falling on you"

"Getting hurt very badly" and incurring a disability may threaten occupational opportunities, financial independence and the ability to provide for one's own needs. Adolescents' reactions regarding physical security were so pervasive and prevalent throughout their responses that two ancillary themes concerning injury and even death needed to be established.

Theme 9: Injury. Some adolescents are concerned that different occupational roles may come with risks and hazards that can threaten a person's safety through "getting injured." The possibility of a physical injury can affect adolescents directly or indirectly. For example, those adolescents considering sport-related occupations are well aware of the impact that a physical injury has on ending the careers of a professional athlete. On the other hand, other adolescents acknowledge that different occupational roles also require that the people in those roles inflict or observe certain discomfort, pain, or even death, depending on the situation at hand. Adolescents sometimes overreact to an occupational role sensationalized by the media. It is true that a career in the military or in law enforcement, for example, may involve injuring another human being as a means of

protecting society's interests. Nonetheless, this occupational role is only one among many performed by police and soldiers.

Theme 10: Death. Another concept that adolescents are concerned about is the possibility of occupational injury leading to death, or their perceived inability to prevent such an event. Adolescents report concerns about witnessing death, causing death, and dying in their future work environments. Adolescents considering a career in health care, for example, wonder whether they will be able to handle "the possibility of death occurring" in their environment; as a doctor experiences the deaths of patients beyond recovery. Other adolescents wonder whether they will be able to induce death, as a veterinarian might do for a suffering; terminally ill animal.

Theme 1: Job security. Student responses reveal that they wonder whether they "will be able to find a job" and they are concerned about maintaining and improving the quality of their work once they have obtained it. Themes about job security are prevalent concerns among adolescents.

Figure 9. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Job Security" Theme

Job security is defined in terms of finding work:	Job security is defined in terms of maintaining and improving work:
"Will I find work?"	"job openings"
"I might not be able to get a job"	"losing my job"
"It may be very hard to get a job"	"Job cuts . . ."
"If I['m] going to find something for me"	"moving to different companies"
"If there are enough job[s] available"	"Not being able to move up in my field"

One student's expressive response summed up many adolescents' concerns about job security quite succinctly: "JOB OPPORTUNITY, JOB AVAILABILITY, JOB QUALITY" (emphasis is the student's own). Thus, many adolescents believe that job security is a precious commodity; however, they also perceive that obtaining and sustaining it is no easy task. Three ancillary themes concerning competition, difficult work, and stress were also demonstrated by adolescent responses in regard to job security.

Theme 12: Competition. Adolescents are aware of and are concerned about the theme of competition. This perceived ability to "find" and "get jobs" sometimes hinges on whether they see themselves as able to compare successfully against competitors. Some adolescents describe the existence of competition as "bothersome" or "annoying." A career may require "a lot of work, practice, & competition" in order to succeed since "few people are successful at it." Also, to keep from losing one's job or from "being traded," one may need to receive the proper employment training or an education in order to be employable, "to be the best," and thus to have an advantage over the competition.

Figure 10. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Competition" Theme

"It is a competitive business and takes time and money"

"may be to[o] many people for to[o] few jobs"

"Finding a job in today's job market"

"How many jobs there will be when I become a fish & wildlife officer"

Theme 13: Difficult work. Adolescents are aware that work may be difficult and are concerned about negative occupational tasks perceived to be inherent in the work

itself. Adolescents perceive two aspects as necessary components of work. The skill and ability to understand and do a job is one area of difficulty; another is effort needed to accomplish job tasks. The workload, the time invested, and the effort needed to sustain continuous motivation to perform efficiently are perceived as hindrances to job satisfaction. Lack of skill and effort conceivably threaten their job security. Although skill and effort are important aspects of the theme of difficult work, student responses are sometimes too obscure to distinguish the difference. Yet, when adolescents describe the troubles they have with the notion of work, it appears to be a combination of those two components.

Figure 11. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Difficult Work" Theme

"It will be really hard work"

"All the hard work & time I'd have to put into the job"

"I am most discouraged by the workload"

"To me it's gonna be hard getting there or a challenge"

"The lot of hard work requirement it takes to get there"

"a lot of work and responsibility"

"It will be hard and demanding"

Theme 14: Stress. Related to the themes of difficult work and dissatisfaction adolescents are concerned about the impact that stress will have on their lives. Again, the work load, the time involved, and the effort that work requires are emphasized as sources of work-related strain. Thus, the theme of stress often follows the theme of difficult work as an ancillary outcome. Besides specific perceptions connected to the theme of stress,

there is a noticeable tension that pervades adolescents' responses when asked to think about their career concerns. Not only do adolescents find thinking about their career difficult; they may also find engaging in the activity of career planning stressful.

Figure 12. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Stress" Theme

"You get frustrated"

"Full days, . . . maybe frustrating"

"Long hours, strenuous work tasks"

"Long, stressful days"

"It can be very tiring"

"Getting up every day"

"I will have to work hard and not slack off"

"All the deadlines"

"Too much thinking"

Theme 15: Long hours. "Long hours" can also be associated with the themes "difficult work" and "stress." Adolescents are aware that work is associated with appointed hours of the day with fixed periods related to performing work tasks. Thus, adolescents quantify their future career possibilities as taking up extensive and prolonged amounts of time. The long hours that may be involved with school or work are quantified in terms of hours in a day and most adolescents see these hours as a limited resource. Filling up these hours can be seen as undesirable, especially if their time could be spent on fulfilling other daily requirements such as rest, free time, family activities, community involvement, and leisure pursuits.

Figure 13. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Long Hours" Theme

"The long hours"

"Long hours, if it[']s not worth it"

"Working ma[n]y hours and always on my feet, (not as much free time)"

"the long hours, being on-call"

"Working late; getting up early"

"Long, stressful days"

Theme 16: Time. Adolescents in junior high may have no sense of urgency but their concern with time indicates that they see time as a limited resource. This perception is a source of concern and discouragement. Managing time and balancing life-roles necessitates having a certain amount of time available for different activities that will help them to achieve careers that they want. The more they become aware of competing life-roles the more they become aware that these roles will compete for their time. Thus, the theme of time encompasses concerns about long hours, but is also a more of a general application connected to all aspects of their lives and career.

Figure 14. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Time" Theme

"It takes a long time to study"

"The time it will take to study for it"

"The time that needs to be involved"

"All the . . . time I'd have to put into the job"

"That it will take a long time to achieve what I want to be"

"Have to work all the time and not have any leisure time"

"Working 9-5 every day"

"I'm discouraged about it because I would not have time for other activities"

Theme 17: Dissatisfaction. At first glance the theme of dissatisfaction appears to be a simple concept, but when inspected more closely this theme reveals a complexity of possible disappointments related to the career concerns of adolescents. To begin with, adolescents have specific concerns about the actual work tasks they may have to perform, but for different reasons. As was illustrated in the discussion of the Difficult Work theme, some adolescents perceive complicated and challenging work tasks as a source of discontent if that the work is long, arduous, and a precursor to stress. On the other hand, performing a job that is boring or repetitious may be another kind of unfavourable experience because of the nature of the work. Thus, different types of jobs are perceived to be unattractive to adolescents if the work tasks involved lie on either end of these two extremes. This circumstance becomes even more pronounced if adolescents perceive "getting stuck with a career" they "don't enjoy" especially if it becomes what they do for the rest of their life.

In addition to these potential problems, adolescents are beginning to perceive that their efforts may not necessarily guarantee a gratifying career. Adolescents, who may have already made a tentative choice of future career, are concerned about "not getting to do exactly that" and are "discouraged" when they think that they "may never have that job." Four other themes that may also contribute to a dissatisfying career for adolescents are difficult work, stress, long hours and time.

Figure 15. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Dissatisfaction" Theme

"Doing the same thing everyday"

"I might not totally like the job I am at"

"I just get discourage[d] when I think I may never have that job"

" . . .that I won't like it as much as I thought"

"... end up with a dead end job"

"doing the same thing all my life"

"Not getting the job I want"

"Not being able to get into the line of work I'd like to"

"Doing something that I won't be interested in"

"That I wont[sic] find a job in the field I want"

Theme 18: Inability to decide. Inability to decide is a prevalent theme for adolescents during junior high, but for two different reasons. Uncertainty and confusion for adolescents "trying to find the right one" may come from the effort of trying to choose between different career alternatives. Hence, adolescents are struggling to find a fit that seems right for them. Thus, these adolescents appear to be undecided. Even if adolescents have chosen between different career options, they wonder about the eventuality of this choice and whether it will actually become a reality. For example, one adolescent contemplates whether "if [that's] what I will really be when I grow up." Adolescents are aware, then, that making a career choice does not necessarily guarantee that the choice will be actualized within the future. Therefore, some adolescents are not certain about their career choices and do not see them as inevitable.

The other reason that adolescents have for being unable to decide is simply that they feel they have plenty of time available and perceive that they "don't have to think of it [now]." Furthermore, others are not "worried" or "discouraged" about their future career paths, or simply "don't know" what they would choose between different career alternatives. Some adolescents actually opt out of the decision-making process altogether, because they see themselves as unable to make a choice or think that it is unreasonable for them to have to make a choice at this time. Thus, while some adolescents appear to be undecided, other adolescents appear to be indecisive. Those adolescents who believe they do not need to make a present choice seem relatively relieved of the anxiety and doubt expressed by those attempting to make a choice.

Figure 16. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Inability to Decide" Theme

"I haven't heard about all of my options"

"So many choices, I don't really know what would suit me best"

"I can't decide what I want to do, paying for education, do I really want to do that for the rest of my life?"

Theme 19: Moral issues. As with the inability to decide theme, adolescents have questions regarding right and wrong conduct in relation to their choices. Generally, they are concerned that they may not have the confidence necessary to make good decisions within the work environment. Depending on the topic under consideration, adolescents perceive ethical issues and practical dilemmas arising from certain types of work. For example, an adolescent considering a career as a veterinarian might be concerned about the morality of "putting an animal to sleep" or, "seeing the animal in pain" and not

putting it to sleep. Adolescents considering an education-related occupation might be unsure about what they should do "when kids don't listen" to them. Adolescents are concerned about taking the proper courses of action to resolve these practical dilemmas, and about conducting themselves ethically appropriate in work-related situations.

Theme 20: Roles. Adolescents are becoming aware that leisure, family, school, and job roles are important personal components of value in their lives. The specific tasks or functions attached to those roles are often categorized into different sections concerning personal, academic, and occupational aspects which compete with adolescents' abilities to find a balance between them.

Figure 17. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Roles" Theme

"having to work at night and how I want to spend time with my family"

"That I wont[sic] be able to spend a lot of time with my kids, husband"

"you can't rlly[sic] settle down and have a family"

"Having to work all the time and not having any leisure time"

"I have to conform to be an adult"

"getting started at university, having to move far away (different country)"

"that it would be a job with a boss so I would not be in charge of what I do"

"The idea of not making it to owner of a shop"

"having to do everything on my own"

Thus, adolescents are concerned about the expectations, placed on them by the different roles of their lives, and about their ability to perform those roles.

Theme 21: Commitment. Adolescents are concerned about the level of personal responsibility that is needed in order to preserve a career that one wants.

Figure 18. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Commitment" Theme

"It is a comitment[sic]"

"I would not have time for other activities"

"It would probably mean more responsibility"

"The full time responsibility"

"a lot of work and responsibility"

Playing a number of different roles simultaneously can result in role conflict. Thus, adolescents perceive that making a commitment to one role may make it difficult to do justice to another.

Theme 22: Fear of job. Adolescents are concerned with difficult tasks that arise out of different work environments. They are hesitant about performing work tasks that they perceive as unpleasant, difficult, or scary.

Figure 19. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Fear of Job" Theme

"being in a bad work environment"

"I will be scared to play"

"be nervous to shoot and stuff"

"run out of ideas"

"If I am good enough for it"

"That I will not be able to reach expectations of employers"

Theme 23: Fear. Some adolescents seem to be extremely anxious with regard to their present and future career prospects. They report unspecified career concerns that reflect a general alarm and dread of their future possibilities.

Figure 20. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Fear" Theme

"Everything"

"Encouragement to drugs and alcohol"

"How am I going to get there [?]"

"I am somewhat shy, so having to talk to strangers"

"Having to leave my comfort zones"

Theme 24: Making mistakes. Nervousness and anxiety seem to pervade

adolescents' responses in regard to making mistakes or a perceived inability to perform

some future task adequately. For Grade 7 students, this concern is seen as a precursor to

or connected with receiving blame or punishment from others as a consequence of

making a mistake. This form of anxiety seems to transform throughout adolescence into

specific fears related to work tasks that are perceived as integral to specific occupational

roles. Thus, consequences are tied to the work environment.

Figure 21. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Making Mistakes"

Theme

"If I get into trouble or do something wrong"

"When I get put down or do something wrong"

"I will be scared to play and I'll be nervous to shoot & stuff"

"I will be afraid to talk when I'm an announcer"

"giving the wrong advice and screwing up someone's life"

"knowing to[o] little"

"messing up on the first day or being late"

"I doubt myself that I will be able to do that"

Theme 25: Failing. Adolescents are concerned about failing. In order to avoid this achievement-related anxiety, one alternative is to "be the best" and to always do a job well without making mistakes. The perception here is that failing is simply bad and a consequence of "not getting it" or of "doing something wrong." Of particular interest is how some adolescents make global comments that personalize failing as a circumstance that is the opposite of being "successful."

Figure 22. Individual Response Examples of Concern Related to the "Failing" Theme

"If people dislike me and my work I do"

"That I wont[sic] be succe[ss]ful . . ."

"Try to be the best and do it all myself"

"That I might be a failure"

"if I fail it will affect others"

"fa[i]ling my course"

"Not being able to move up in my field"

Summary of Junior/Middle High School and High School Themes

Although there appear to be little difference between junior and senior high school responses, there are some noticeable differences in the concerns expressed. The themes relating to fear of job and moral issues, for instance, change significantly from Grade 7 to Grade 9. General fears and concerns about right and wrong conduct connected to the work involved convert to more specific perceptions connected to occupational roles and requirements. Similarly, general monetary concerns transform into more detailed perceptions regarding career-related costs, earning money, and the associated ability to

pay for these expenses. Thus, these changes in responses reflect a greater ability to link more career-related aspects to specific concerns.

These changes may be the result of a greater effort made in completing the surveys by older students. Or these changes may be the result of an age-related increase in abilities to articulate concerns in more specific terms due to older students' improved critical thinking and analytical skills. In any case, these differences appear to be small and can be accounted for by different developmental capacities between the ages of respondents. Because high school students had analogous concerns (Appendix A), their responses were also included in each theme.

Figure 23. Summary of Junior High and High School Themes

Learning	Security	Competition	Inability to decide	Fear
Away from home	Financial security	Difficult work	Roles	Fear of job
Locations	Physical security	Stress	Moral issues	Making mistakes
Length of school	Injury	Long hours	Commitment	Failing
Paying for school	Death	Time		
	Job security	Dissatisfaction		

Senior High School Responses

Grade 10. Grade 10 students range from 15 to 16 years of age. Many of the same themes continue to be evident during this developmental stage; however students' concerns regarding the difficult work and stress themes seem to intensify in the tenth grade. These themes appeared to emerge with an increased frequency as students reported more difficulty with occupational tasks they see as negative and stressful. Moreover,

Grade ten students perceive an additional theme during this developmental stage and are increasingly concerned about making the wrong occupational choice.

Theme 26: Wrong occupational choice. As students in high school select possible occupations from the alternatives, they begin to wonder whether they will actually want, or like, their selection. Similar to the dissatisfaction theme, choice again is a concern but adolescents are specifically worried about making the wrong occupational choice. Actually, it appears from these responses that adolescents have indeed made a decision, or at least have a preference for a particular occupation, but they are concerned that it could be the wrong one for them. Thus, adolescents who have this concern foresee that their tentative choice may not fulfill their expectations.

Figure 24. Individual Examples of Concern Related to the "Wrong Occupational Choice" Theme

"That things may not work out and I'll have to find a different job"

"ending up with a dead end job"

"getting the minimum job"

" . . .do I really want to do that for the rest of my life"

"What if I don't like it"

Grade 11 and 12. Grade 11 and 12 students are approximately 16-18 years of age. Concern for themes associated with an inability to decide and time emerge as the most prominent within these grades. However, what continues to develop with each increasing grade is the concept that adolescents begin to feel like they are running out of time and have to decide quickly.

Theme 27: Having to decide – quickly. As students in higher grade levels contemplate their options after leaving high school, an increased amount of attention to make some type of commitment and the time left to make a decision becomes more pronounced. An inability to choose appears to be an area of difficulty for adolescents along two different degrees of decision making: neglect or incapacity. Some simply feel unable to state a preference, while others do not see a necessity in making a choice now. It is important to note that avoiding or deciding the importance of current career planning is in fact a choice that these adolescents do make, however, their inability to choose becomes complicated by a sense of urgency by the time adolescents reach Grade 12. Thus, whether undecided or indecisive, it is conceivable that adolescents unaccustomed to stating preferences early in career planning can result in a feeling of helplessness in making career decisions once they reach high school.

Figure 25. Individual Examples of Concern Related to the "Inability to Decide - Quickly" Theme

"Having to think about it now"

"That I don't know what I really want to do"

"I don't know what career to go into"

Figure 26. Summary of Junior High and Senior High School Themes

Learning	Security	Competition	Inability to decide	Fear
Away from home	Financial security	Difficult work	Roles	Fear of job
Locations	Physical security	Long hours	Moral issues	Making mistakes

Length of school	Injury	Time	Commitment	Failing
Paying for school	Death	Dissatisfaction	Having to decide quickly	Wrong occupational choice
	Job security			

Summary

The qualitative results suggest that junior and senior high populations view their concerns through similar themes (Appendix A). Qualitative results illustrated that adolescents' concerns do not appear to be significantly different when examined across themes nor are the themes significantly different across grade levels. With an increase in developmental stage, however, new concerns appear and seem to contain a combination of themes reported by individuals.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Results of this investigation suggest that adolescents have many career concerns and discouragers that relate to their career thinking. The themes that emerged through the qualitative analysis of what adolescents believed concerned them when they think about the word 'career' were reported in the middle/junior high sample and continued to be reported in the senior high sample (Appendix A). Although this investigation also attempted to explore how these perceptions changed among grade levels, only two additional themes could be found in the high school sample.

Individual Theme Discussion

As the nature of work is changing, shifts in work ethics and career concerns present particular career development tasks for workers (Niles et al., 2002; Savickas, 1993; Savickas, 2000) that will also apply to adolescents. Nevertheless, the particular developmental stages of adolescence and the contextual situation in which they must adapt can make adolescents' career concerns unique when compared to those of other populations. If these concerns are to be viewed as life-career development concerns, a broad holistic perspective of career and psychological concerns is important. As a result, it is necessary to review adolescents' concerns holistically, in light of both the developmental and the contextual impacts that can significantly influence perceptions in adolescence. All these factors will be taken into account as adolescents' concerns are explored in the discussion below.

Individual Themes

Learning. Training and formal education often require adolescents to relocate and to invest significant amounts of time and money. Adolescents considering university or

college are concerned about which option is better, whether they will get into the schools they apply to, and whether they will receive the marks that meet the minimum requirements. Those considering trades or apprenticeship programs, wonder how they can gain the skills and knowledge expected of certified journeymen and how to become registered apprentices. Adolescents may also be considering other alternatives such as taking a year off after high school to work or upgrade.

Adolescents seem to be unaware that learning is largely unavoidable even if they do not know what they want or which type of work to pursue. Since learning is continuous, adolescents may need additional encouragement to take advantage of every learning opportunity. Though education is certainly not the only route, adolescents can still attempt to place themselves in positions to learn.

Away from home. While it might be tempting to downplay this concern as insignificant, it seems necessary to underscore the importance it has for adolescents from a life-span perspective. While friends and family are clearly important, adolescents who are considering moving will also lose contact with those acquaintances that have served as important contacts and resources throughout their lives. Feelings of "rootlessness" and "culture shock" can occur for many adolescents, students, and workers who choose to leave the familiarity of what they call home. Thus, education and support systems may need to be altered in order to accommodate the growing numbers of these transitory adolescents as well as those who have concerns about being away from home.

Due to the growing global economy as well as regional competition, "more workers are likely to spend some part of their career working abroad, or in communication with persons in other nations with whom they conduct export-import,

financial, industrial or business transactions" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 10). Thus, adolescents will no longer have as much contact with those people and places that have served as significant personal and community resources. Even though they probably have more connections than they realize, adolescents may be uncertain how to access similar resources in communities unfamiliar to them.

Locations. Locations are largely a matter of personal preference. Some adolescents value job security, structure, and a regular schedule; others value flexibility, variety and independence. Again, feelings of "surprise" and "culture shock" may be experienced by adolescents who will eventually find themselves in future environments that are unfamiliar to them. Adolescents concerned about living and working in locations that are right for them will need to assess which values are most important. Locations that fit these values will be more satisfying than locations that do not. Informal assessment instruments such as work value lists may be useful tools for adolescents who have concerns about locations.

Duration of school/paying for school. Many adolescents who have concerns from this branch of themes undoubtedly have an interest in attending post-secondary education. Adolescents who are considering further education have moved forward from the learning theme, and most likely have a few options in mind, but now encounter concerns about the duration and cost involved of going to school. Adolescents who have decided generally what career work interests them are now ready to make learning decisions related to their post-secondary education.

Due to globalization and technological advancements, there has been an increase in the average educational requirements necessary for employment, and the higher

standards add to both time and cost for attending school. Adolescents realize that "people who have weak educational backgrounds are likely to be increasingly vulnerable to unemployment and to job opportunities that are uncertain" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 12). Daunted by these post-secondary concerns, students may feel caught between an uncertain job market and the desire to choose an alternative that requires less of an investment. No doubt these concerns are of importance, but they are often needs that can be met, and should not motivate adolescents against pursuing their career of choice.

Students who are excited by learning new ideas and concepts in their career sector of choice will find the time and financial investment, required by post-secondary education far easier to bear than students who do not like to take on new challenges. Whether it is applying for bursaries and loans, deciding to work, or choosing a temporarily cheaper alternative while attending school, many options are available to help adolescents' attend and pay for further education. Because adolescents may be unfamiliar with these options, post-secondary information needs to be made available and accessible for those considering this option. Such information can be found on the internet, but students frequently do not know how to evaluate and use it. Thus, the implication for adolescents considering post-secondary education need guidance in evaluating their options and in learning to make realistic judgments about potential occupations and occupational training.

Security. Adolescents with security concerns fear that they may lose control over the direction of their careers. Adolescents may perceive the changing nature of work as unstable and are likewise concerned with involuntary changes along their career paths that they may have little control over. It is interesting how persistent these core desires

are now that people can no longer expect the "hierarchical security" that organizations used to provide through moves up a corporate ladder. Societal and occupational rates of change may have increased dramatically over the past few years, even if expectations regarding the organizational hierarchy have not (Savickas, 1993; Savickas, 2000).

Still, adolescents desire a way to retain some sense of constancy and well-being during their lifetimes. Adolescents who are experiencing insecurity concerns will need to be encouraged with messages to help them acknowledge that the world inevitably changes, just as they do. Change is largely unavoidable; thus, they will need to focus on the journey instead. Since change is constant, adolescents will have to learn how to welcome and initiate change, as well as adapt to it.

Financial security. Adolescents have probably been privy to conversations about money concerns such as expenses, taxes, and other additional costs. The high cost of receiving a post-secondary education is increasing annually and is a real concern on the minds of youth today. On top of this, adolescents have most likely also heard about the financial strain of people who are carrying debt loads and have difficulty paying those debts back. Niles et al. (2002) paint a vivid picture for low income earners and people with low economic wealth:

> Frequently, the impoverished of the nation, whose institutional work is uncertain, who are frequently "laid off" or terminated, as unskilled jobs are replaced by outsourcing or other mechanisms, may spend much of their discretionary time seeking work and/or engaging in several part-time jobs. Many of these persons are on the edge of financial insolvency all of the time, trying to engage in multiple ways to obtain funds…. They are the persons for whom "life structure" issues

triangulate around financial strain and creating some sense of hope for a better

future. (p. 14)

Adolescents have some experience with managing their own money but may need

more practice with monetary life-skills. Responsive career services and programs must

also be made more relevant to people who have differing financial concerns from all

socioeconomic backgrounds.

Physical security. Interestingly, adolescents feel insecure about maintaining their

physical health. In terms of the personal fable phenomenon, an involuntary change that

occurs to a person's body can be especially threatening. Adolescent egocentrism may

accentuate their perceptions of danger in regard to their personal well-being. For

example, getting injured is a very personal concern that can result in a feeling of

helplessness for adolescents. Since the media sensationalize workplace injury, many

adolescents may get the impression that work can be dangerous, posing a threat to their

occupational health and safety. Some adolescents seem to fixate on occupation hazards

involved with high-risk work and their potential to result in injury and death. Thus,

adolescent egocentrism may account, in part, for many of the extreme responses

connected to adolescents' concerns about death.

As extreme as some of these responses can be, the student's concerns are not

without some foundation in reality. Youth are at a higher at-risk-rate for work-related

injuries than adults. Young workers between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four are one-

third more likely to be injured on the job than those over 25 (Alberta Human Resources

and Employment, 2001). Furthermore, provincial statistics in 1998 cited that 46% of

workers under the age of 25 and seriously injured on the job were injured in the first six

months (Workers Compensation Board, 2000). Career experts believe that the incidents

of injury are so high because youth feel uncertain as to how they should address unsafe

conditions when their health or safety is at risk (Alberta Human Resources and

Employment, 2001). Many adolescents are worried about losing their job by refusing

unsafe work, even though provincial laws (i.e. Occupational Health and Safety Act of

Alberta, 1999) in Canada state that they can not be fired legally for such a refusal.

However, adolescents are unsure how to address some of these concerns.

Job security. Workers today can no longer expect that employers will look after

their careers, as was often the case during the last century (Maccoby, 1981; Savickas,

1993; 2000). For instance:

> During the 20th century, or modern era, a "career ethic" predominated (Savickas
>
> [sic]). This ethic emphasised working for corporations and climbing up the
>
> corporate ladder…. There was the implicit assumption that employers would
>
> demonstrate loyalty to their employers. This "assumption of reciprocity"
>
> regarding loyalty was often powerful enough to cause workers to subjugate
>
> feelings of career dissatisfaction. *Job security*, [emphasis added] especially for
>
> post-depression era workers, was a precious commodity…. As adults attempt to
>
> smooth their career turbulence they realize that old solutions for increasing job
>
> security (e.g., being competent and working harder) often have little impact on
>
> new situations. (Niles et al., 2002, p. 12)

"Job security is history. Without the hierarchical, bureaucratic organisations that

gave form to careers, career paths themselves seem to be disappearing" (Savickas, 2000).

People today must now manage their own career paths and look to create their own

opportunities. "Because of the dynamic quality of work and work organization persons will likely engage in seven or more jobs in their work life, frequently engaging in retraining within a context of life long learning in order to manage their own career development" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 12).

Despite the amount of information and number of choices they will have to make, adolescents who choose to embrace a self-fulfillment ethic can still attempt to gain control over aspects that promote life satisfaction and self-expression in multiple life roles, while respecting that there are also things that they can not control (Niles et al., 2002; Savickas, 1993, 2000). Thus, even though these old ethics continue, workers seem to be turning toward more of a "development ethic" that focuses more on achieving personal and professional growth, rather than being solely focussed on work success and security (Savickas, 1993, 2000).

Competition. The "away from home" and "location" themes appear to be variations on this theme; however, adolescents' also perceive the world of work as a sometimes hostile and competitive environment.

Daily newspapers are replete with stories of "re-engineering organisations," "downsizing," "learning organisations," "dejobbing," and "contingent workers." Fewer and fewer companies promise life-time employment following a career path. Increasingly individuals working at overspecialised jobs that involve a single task are being replaced by employees who work in teams with each member performing many tasks. (Savickas, 2000, p. 56)

International economic competition and the changing social psychology of work require that today's individual workers "be able to keep their occupational skills and

competencies at a high level, constantly engaged in learning to sustain their marketability, and . . . be able to "sell" their competencies to employers" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 11). In the face of such a competitive environment, it is interesting to notice the seemingly negative attitude adolescents have towards "others" and people who make up the competition. Adolescents' perceived ability "to find" and "get a job" sometimes hinge on how they see themselves compared with other people. They may also view those other people as "bothersome" or "annoying." Thus, some adolescents have come to see their competitors as impediments and barriers to gainful employment.

In light of adolescents' stage of development and the related ideas of the personal fable, imaginary audience, and adolescent egocentrism, it becomes possible to see where these attitudes, in part, stem from. The personal fable phenomenon may influence adolescents' perceptions and comparisons with other people. Fuelled by a perception of invulnerability and a desire to obtain confirmatory experiences to support this perception, egocentrism and the personal fable sensitivities may influence tendencies in some adolescents to seek to control aspects of their career that they cannot directly control. What may ultimately be disturbing to adolescents influenced by "personal fable" perceptions is that other people may be more skilled, knowledgeable, and able to get jobs. Some adolescents may feel they have "to be the best" in order to secure a position above their competition. Other people are seen as obstacles to be overcome, rather than as allies and possible resources who can help further their career experience. Instead of enjoying the people they work with, adolescents can see them as competitors who may pose a threat to obtaining their job security. From a life-span perspective, adolescents may need additional assistance in acquiring work habits and attitudes to get along with others and to

balance cooperation with a competitive attitude aimed at being what they can be (Super, Savickas, Super, 1996).

Difficult work. Importantly, "The pressures for persons in dual-career or dual-income families to work harder, to push themselves to remain at a high level of skill competence is often indirectly changing the nature of childrearing" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 13). Some adolescents have observed many of these pressures that their parents have brought home from the workplace. Adolescents, who wish not to follow in their parents' footsteps, are concerned about difficult work and perceive that this type of work could leave them overly stressed, tired, frustrated, and possibly depressed. Therefore, the youth of today have become worried about having the necessary motivation to complete difficult work tasks and whether they have the ability to cope with the various types of pressure workers experience. If prolonged without resolution, the concern about difficult work may bring about job dissatisfaction and may be a threat to job security for adolescents unable to keep up.

"The key elements to successful school-to-work and school-to-school transitions involve being able to implement and adjust to career choice" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 291). Adolescents must acquire work force readiness to cope successfully with future occupational requirements and workplace expectations of an implemented choice. While readiness previously focused on training for a specific job, this term now includes academic, interpersonal, and lifelong learning skills necessary to successfully transition into the workforce (Niles et al., 2002). Comprehensive career development programs need to include interventions that focus on students' acquisitions of these skills, along with preparing adolescents for the transition from school to work. Since many students

end their formal education with high school, there is a need to help all students develop

and implement a career plan (Herr & Cramer, 1996).

Stress. "In families in which both parents work, parents frequently come to their

childrearing or other marital roles in a state of fatigue" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 13). Dual

career parents and single parents struggle to balance work and family responsibilities,

while children lament the lack of parental attention and guidance they receive. Niles et al.

(2002) elaborate further on the strain encountered by workers with families:

> The stress experienced by dual-career parents often manifests itself in increasing
>
> tension between couples, children feeling isolated from parents, and parents
>
> feeling as though they are living fragmented lives. Single parents in the workforce
>
> tend to fare no better when confronted with the task of managing work and family
>
> responsibilities—which in all likelihood the must [*sic*] do with fewer financial
>
> resources than dual-career parents. (p. 7)

The demands required to cope successfully with multiple life roles create

overwhelming stress levels for adults who are parents. It is reasonable to assume that this

strain ends up leaving an impression on today's adolescents.

Interestingly, many adolescents also have concerns related to exhaustion. For

example, many worried about their ability to get enough rest to get "out of bed" the next

day. Adolescents may have very well realized that sleep can be one of the coping

mechanisms to combat the symptoms of stress. Similarly, they also see exhaustion as one

of the warning signs of oncoming stress. Adolescents may need to acquire a number of

different strategies in order to successfully manage the presence of stress in their lives.

Long hours/time. Measured by hours in a day to the years in their life, time is seen to be a limited resource by adolescents who are concerned about the themes of "long hours" and "time." Advances in technology have made it easier for people to work more hours, and more hours, previously held for leisure-based activity, are now being filled by work activity. Maintaining a balance among various life-role commitments has become more difficult for today's workers in a society in which people are expected to work more hours more often. Dual and single earning families as well as people working from home have changed the nature of work and family roles. "In selected occupations, when parents are subjected to pressures to work significant amounts of overtime, because of skill shortages in their workplace, time for balancing non-work and other life roles becomes limited and problematic" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 13). Thus, today's workers are required to find time-saving solutions that allow for a better balance between their work and non-working roles.

These contextual factors have important implications for adolescents who are attempting to make career decisions. By Grades 11 and 12, adolescents may have not made a career choice, yet appear to be more seriously involved in the career planning process. They also, however, have a sense of urgency about coming to a decision about their career. Though making a rigid and unalterable decision is unadvisable, it would also appear that adolescents feel that it is better to focus on what they want to do sooner rather than later. Adolescents experiencing a sense of urgency about "long hours" and "time" indicate that they do not want to wait for time to run out. Students who are approaching the end of high school believe that they need to decide quickly and believe that they need to take action in regard to changing their situation. In their responses, adolescents reveal

in their perceptions that time and life-role management can be problematic issues during their careers and that they may need additional assistance in finding balance with these themes in their lives.

Wrong occupational choice. The strain of work often carries into the home, but parents might also be unaware of how these strains communicate career messages about the world of work (Niles et al., 2002). Specifically, adolescents believe that the world of work is an unsettling experience for those who make the wrong occupational choices. Apart or in unison, these themes related to "difficult work," "stress," "long hours," and "time," lead adolescents to the conclusion that career choices containing these elements may eventually lead to career dissatisfaction; thus; they fear making the wrong occupational choice. Occupational sectors that represent these themes may discourage adolescents from choosing them. Skill-building and exploratory exercises such as time and life-role management could increase the confidence of adolescents with these concerns. However, adolescents concerned with making the wrong occupational choice should also be encouraged to actively explore and investigate those options that interest them most before making an occupational choice.

Dissatisfaction. Unpleasant, low-paying, dead-end jobs become definite concerns for adolescents who are unable to see more fulfilling alternatives. These circumstances are believed to be even a greater source of dissatisfaction if adolescents end up disliking their occupation of choice but are unable to leave it. From a life-span perspective, adolescents have a limited amount of employment experience and seem to fixate on the notion that their career may only involve one job or occupational type instead of a stream of jobs and occupations that encompasses the actual definition of a career.

This change in the structure of work and its social organization means that the modern paradigm of matching people to positions needs to be expanded to address individuals as managers of their own careers, drawing meaning from the role of work in their lives not from an organizational culture. Careers must become more personal and self-directed to flourish in the postmodern, information age. (Savickas 1997b, p. 151)

Career is becoming a framework in shaping how work will fit into a life and contribute to personal meaning. An individual's ability to be an active agent in this process will be proportionate to the level of satisfaction he or she achieves.

The ability to make realistic judgments about potential occupations is an integral component in adolescents' development of career choice readiness (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). Becoming familiar with essential work skills and characteristics may help adolescents understand the number of ways open to them for managing themselves and coping with their work environment. Adolescents may not understand that most skills are adaptable and that they have acquired many of these skills already through school activities, work, sports, hobbies, social activities, volunteer work, and leisure activities. Thus, adolescents concerned about themes related to "difficult work," "stress," "long hours," and "time" need to respect the experience they have already gained and aim to develop those skills they feel they are lacking to obtain a more satisfying career. Developing the confidence that they can achieve in school and work will be a necessary condition for successfully transitioning into the workforce of today. Career programs and service providers can help adolescents become more familiar with their employability

skills and can promote the building of those skills that are both marketable and transferable to the work environment.

Inability to decide. An inability to decide appears to be a problem for adolescents when they are examining their choices. At a time where more workers are being encouraged to participate more fully in decision-making and problem solving, employees have more access to information and autonomy in making decisions. Advanced technology and streamlined organizations will require employees at all levels of the workplace to make work based decisions.

What is interesting about adolescents' inability to decide is its relationship with the decision-making process. Adolescents are often presented with a variety of opportunities to exercise their decision-making skills (i.e., moral issues and roles) and they want to commit to choices they feel good about. Yet, with many of the responses, many adolescents simply appear to be stuck and not able to make a decision. Perhaps adolescents' career struggles are not actually with the decision-making process at all, but with what they are basing their decisions upon. Adolescents are not required to know what they should do for the rest of their lives, but that should not prevent them from learning the career planning process. Maybe they do not have to make a final decision regarding their future; however, that does not exclude them from having to make everyday career decisions right now. Knowing how to make good decisions is an integral dimension to the development of career choice readiness (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

Additionally, adolescents' responses often seem to resemble two identity statuses in Marcia's taxonomy of adolescent identity: moratorium and identity diffusion. For

instance, identity-diffused or identity confused adolescents appear to not have experienced an exploratory period in relation to occupational choice. Adolescents at the identity diffusion stage have yet to experience an identity conflict or exploration:

> . . . nor have they gone through the process of re-evaluating, searching and considering alternatives . . . . Adolescents who continue to express no interest in commitment may be masking an underlying insecurity about identity issues. Lacking self-confidence, they mask their feelings with an expression of apathy. (Rice & Dolgan, 2002, p. 182)

Some individual responses lack clear direction or commitment to an occupation and are reminiscent of identity diffused individuals who "are not committed to values and goals, nor are they actively trying to reach them" (Beck, 1998, p.390). Although many youth enter into these life stages with a relatively diffused identity, those who find it difficult to realize their occupational goals because of a lack of vocational choices become at risk to developing an identity diffusion status (Berk, 1998). If identity diffusion remains prolonged or stagnates, adolescents, who have difficulty with the exploration process, may find the task of career planning threatening or overwhelming. Thus, their attempts to explore occupational alternatives and to make a tentative career choice will be met with great difficulty.

In contrast, other responses appear to still be in a period of exploration, which is indicative of Marcia's (1980) moratorium stage. The word moratorium, which means a period of delay or holding pattern, has been used to define a time of adolescence when adolescents "are gathering information and trying out activities, with the desire to find values and goals to guide their life" (Berk, 1998, 390). Although this type of moratorium

is often sanctioned by society as a temporary period, those who continue to search for an identity and have not made any definite commitments to occupational goals become at risk for experiencing a continuous crisis in identity. In essence, "the moratorium person is engaged in an active struggle to clarify personally meaningful values, goals, and beliefs" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, p. 294). As a consequence, adolescents who adopt the moratorium status can become confused, unstable, and discontented by having to continually struggle with these identity issues. Also, "they are often rebellious and uncooperative and score low on measures of authoritarianism" (Berk, 1998, p. 185-186) which could explain one adolescent's response who claims to "have to conform to be an adult – just like you." If moratorium remains drawn out, adolescents may avoid dealing with their problems and concerns, and may develop a tendency to procrastinate until the process of identity clarification is more complete. Thus, for youth in the moratorium stage, making an occupational commitment also appears to be difficult.

Knowing their skills, personal attributes, and decision-making styles, can help those adolescents who seem unable to decide about an unpredictable future. Having a better picture of who they are across all domains will help uncover adolescents' resources, so they may explore those career opportunities that fit this picture. Self-confidence in their ability to make good career decisions and in themselves are therefore integral aspects for making good career choices in adolescence. "Rather than being a singular process of exploring and committing to a set of values, goals, and beliefs, identity formation occurs across several domains" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, p. 294) and is an ongoing process between stages and domains. Still, adolescents who continue to struggle in these stages may become increasingly vulnerable to indecision and

begin to doubt their own problem solving ability. A worse possibility is that they may begin to abandon thinking about their careers altogether. Thus, career development programs need to incorporate aspects that foster opportunities to explore self-concept clarification, life-values, and identity development related to the career domain, in addition to their skills, that will help them make a successful transition from secondary school (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

Moral issues. Havighurst (1972) suggests that adolescence is a time where students acquire a set of values and an ethical system to use as a guide to their behaviour. The importance of clarifying the values and goals that one hopes to express in life can also become an important career concern. Some adolescents have begun to discover that practical dilemmas raise discrepancies between occupational demands and their own standards (Super et al., 1990). Moral issues also have a close similarity with ethical decision-making and may reflect adolescents' new-found ability for critical thinking. Attempts to clarify, articulate, and implement a decision create an internal conflict for adolescents who seek to resolve these dilemmas (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1981, Kohlberg, 1984; Kohlberg, 1987). Thus, these moral questions have implications for the sort of assistance youth will require in reaching a resolution that is acceptable according to the situation, their identity, and to adolescents' self conceived values and skills (Super et al., 1990).

Roles. "Workers now must assume the primary responsibility for creating the lives they live– especially as those creative activities relate to work" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 5). Adolescents who are concerned about life-roles appear to be establishing priorities related to their personal beliefs and values. Thus, adolescents "in contemporary society

will more intentionally come to identify effective strategies for managing the fluid demands of multiple life role activities" (Niles et al., 2002, p.6). Making commitments and dedicating time to work, family, and personal lives, requires adolescents to set goals and to keep them.

Students in junior high are attempting to establish a personal identity and are also thinking about the interrelationship between life-roles and their careers. As adolescents gain an understanding about the world-of-work and participate in a wider range of activities, their occupational preferences and vocational identity also begin to develop. Able to identify their personal strengths and weakness, students are then able to examine how the salience of their life-roles affects their educational and career decisions (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). As their self-concepts take shape, adolescents gain a greater sense of their vocational identity, and attempts to deal with the task of crystallizing and specifying their occupational choices become more prominent.

The centrality of work in identity formation often retains strong links between work and self-worth but also "clearly diminishes the important ways in which non-work life roles contribute to self-worth and self efficacy" (Niles et al., 2002, p.6). In view of these links, people are beginning to search more persistently for life satisfaction and self-expression from their multiple life-roles (Savickas, 2000; Super et al., 1996). "Those adhering to the 'self-fulfillment' ethic seek work that is not so consuming that it denies opportunities for involvement in family, community, leisure and other life roles" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 5). Besides the struggle to find an appropriate balance, life role commitments can also influence the values and goals that one hopes to accomplish through work

activity. Adolescents who have already made these commitments are also faced with the task to set a goal to help them achieve this type of work.

Commitment. An inability to decide is a prevalent theme that serves as a precursor to other sub-themes and to the core theme of commitment. Adolescents are concerned about the degree of individual responsibility they have for shaping their career choices. From a life-span perspective, adolescents most likely have only had a few experiences in regards to obligations and long-term goal setting, but are now expected to devote additional time to other life-roles. Up until now, many of life's choices have been made for them. Thus, these adolescents appear to not know how to honour multiple life role activities simultaneously; they also appear to be confused when faced with managing the responsibilities that these roles will demand of them.

These concepts can be applied to the process of career development. Exploration is an essential key to finding an identity and an occupational identity. Erikson (1959) emphasized that adolescence is a time where individuals begin to become victim to an identity consciousness and must navigate between the dangers of role diffusion and identity diffusion. "To establish identity requires individual effort in evaluating personal assets and liabilities and in learning how to use these to achieve a clear concept of who one is and what one wants to become" (Rice & Dolgan, 2002, p.31). Identity achievement follows after a thorough exploration and success with meeting adolescent development tasks. After extensive exploration, the individual is more likely to find satisfaction and make a greater commitment to his or her occupational identity and tentative career choice. In contrast, adolescents who have trouble with the exploration process during identity formation may find the tasks of career planning equally threatening or

overwhelming (Saltoun, 1980). If identity diffusion remains prolonged or stagnates, attempts to explore occupational alternatives and to make a tentative career choice could be difficult and may result in the adolescent identity crisis (Marcia, 1968). What becomes apparent is that even for those students who have made it this far in their career planning, the struggle is far from over. Playing a number of life-roles simultaneously can eventually result in role conflict (Super et al., 1996). When adolescents perceive that making a commitment means taking full responsibility for that role they become uncertain as to which role they should dedicate themselves to.

Other difficulties also appear to offset adolescents' ability to make career choices. From a developmental perspective, adolescents sometimes have trouble with projecting themselves forward in time. Even though formal operational thought is seen emerging in adolescence, most youth have had little practice in expressing their careers in future contexts and therefore are unsure about which life roles will be most salient to them years from now. It is difficult to have a sense of direction without specific goals and plans to obtain the career that one wants. Consequently, these adolescents who are actively engaged in identity exploration are more likely to evidence a personality pattern characterized by self-doubt, confusion, and disturbed thinking and are therefore apprehensive about acting upon their decisions. These adolescents have difficulty trusting that previous decisions remain right for them and their continuously changing identities. Thus, having a "planful" attitude toward coping with career stages and tasks is an essential component in developing career choice readiness (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

Having to decide – quickly. The rate of change occurring in the world of work and society and the various demands placed on students are reflected in many adolescent responses. Due to skill shortages in the workplace, many workers are finding that their discretionary time is scarce and are more concerned about making timely decisions that will satisfy both work and non-work roles (Niles et al., 2002). Similarly, adolescents begin to feel that they are running out of time and have to make some type of career decision soon. Besides the other types of concerns they are experiencing, adolescents feel an additional sense of urgency by the time they reach Grade 12. In view of all the efforts to build career focused programs within the educational curriculum, it is unfortunate that adolescents perceive they have no time available to make career-related decisions and that they must make these decisions in a state of pressure.

Interestingly, in these responses are their resemblances to Erikson's (1959) theory of adolescence as a psychosocial moratorium. Although similar to Marcia's identity status, this moratorium is "a socially sanctioned period between childhood and adulthood during which an individual is free to experiment to find a socially acceptable identity role" (Rice & Dolgan, 2002, p.31). Rice and Dolgan (2002) elaborate further:

> Adolescence becomes a period of analyzing and trying various roles without the responsibility for assuming any one . . . but . . . near the end of adolescence, a failure to establish identity results in deep suffering for the adolescent because of the diffusion of roles . . . the adolescent who fails in search for an identity will experience self-doubt, role diffusion, and role confusion. (p. 31)

The extent to which adolescents have mastered the adolescent crisis can partly determine the extent to which they are able to cope with future changes. Thus, it is conceivable that adolescents unaccustomed to stating preferences early in career planning could be susceptible to a feeling of helplessness in making career decisions once they reach high school. Knowing that they are running out of time appears to only exasperate these feelings.

Fear of job. Adolescents are hesitant about work tasks that they perceive as unpleasant, as was seen in the "dissatisfaction" and "difficult work" themes. Similarly, some adolescents seem to have identified negative beliefs, thoughts, and impressions about the world of work as well as about their own competence in succeeding today's work world. In unison, unpleasant work tasks and these negative beliefs seem to instil two types of fears in adolescents: fear of trying and fear of taking risks. However, some of the unpleasant work tasks that adolescents find frightening may have some foundation in reality:

> As workplaces and the occupational structures undergo dramatic change, there are both employment uncertainties for many workers and, at the same time, serious skill shortages. In instances where such skill shortages exist, many workers that are employed in such contexts are under significant pressure to make up for the shortage of needed workers by 'slaving away' and intensifying the hours they work. Thus, there are multiple patterns of uncertainty and over-commitment reflected throughout the occupational structure. (Niles et al., 2002, p. 11)

Essentially, many of these kinds of fears and doubts keep adolescents from feeling confident about future employment scenarios.

Including student development in school-to-work preparation programs could assist adolescents in becoming less fearful of the transition to the workforce. "Academic skills, interpersonal skills, and engaging in lifelong learning have emerged as important skills for youth to acquire if they are to be successful workers" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, pp. 291-292). Whether the progression is with further education, training, or employment, adolescents appear to need assistance in order to learn how to cope with these feelings of fear in response to future transitional periods and career development tasks. Providing students with additional support and awareness along with developmental skills can help adolescents view the transition from school-to-work as a manageable process rather than an insurmountable obstacle. Savikas (1999) has even suggested that students may need to be guided in behavioural rehearsals to become more prepared for responding to potential job problems. Thus, adolescents need to acquire competence in productive work habits and attitudes but, most importantly, adolescents need to develop confidence in their ability to do well at tasks and to make their own decisions in order deal with some of the career doubts they perceive in the world of work.

Fear. Adolescents report concerns that appear to be more abstract in nature which largely exposes adolescents' fear of the unknown. Some adolescents seem to be extremely anxious in regards to their present and future career prospects. For these adolescents, aspects of the future have become a black hole of worry and anxiousness. They report unspecified concerns that reflect a general dread, and alarm, and they regard their future possibilities with a state of fear.

Students need emotional support to lessen the anticipatory anxiety they may experience as they consider the transitions they will encounter. Moving from the

familiar to the unknown creates anxiety in all people. However, it is reasonable to expect this anxiety to be fairly high among adolescents who have lived their lives primarily in the arenas of home and school. Post-secondary work, training, and education present new challenges and experiences. It will normalize the transition process to provide students reassurance that, while somewhat frightening, these new opportunities will present them with normal development challenges and that many of the competencies they have developed in their lives thus far will be useful to them as they move forward. In many respects, school counsellors are the human development specialists in the schools. (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, p. 292)

Although adolescents have developed many transition skills, such as building upon self/occupational awareness and decision making skills, these skills can also be expanded to include skills related to stress and anxiety management. However, adolescents may need to begin to gather some occupational options before they will be able to zero in on one. From a life-span perspective, adolescents may require additional assistance in acquiring competency in productive work habits and attitudes aimed at being what they can be (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996), but they may also need to trust in their own ability to make good career decisions.

Making mistakes. Adolescents seem to worry and be frightened about making big decisions and possibly making serious errors. As they move away from home and into the work environment, these mistakes may involve or impact their family, friends, and co-workers. Adolescents are not only worried about the negative consequences of making a mistake; they may also be concerned about the possibility of receiving some form of

punishment. Perceptions of inadequacy and the possibility that they might do something wrong can result in feelings of anxiety, incompleteness, and perhaps even hopelessness in regard to making career choices.

Adolescents may be receiving messages that emphasize individualistic perspectives on individual control and de-emphasize the role that contextual variables play in shaping one's career. This type of logic implies that a person who has a "successful career" has positive attributes and is therefore a 'success', as opposed to the "unsuccessful" person who, by extension, is perceived as inferior. These kinds of static descriptions deny the impact that contextual factors have on influencing the pattern of one's career development. Ultimately, the danger is that adolescents will follow these descriptions and feel they should continually achieve and who may be intolerant of any situation that falls short of this success. Adolescents need to respect the experience they have obtained this far in their lives and need to trust in their abilities to make good decisions and to solve problems.

Failing. Age-graded difficulties can affect adolescents' abilities to change their career doubts. From a developmental perspective, students may have to deal with adolescent egocentrism and role diffusion that can exasperate their fears and doubts even further:

> The adolescent who fails in the search for an identity . . .will likely be preoccupied with the opinions of others or may turn to the other extreme of no longer caring what others think. He or she may withdraw or turn to drugs or alcohol in order to relieve the anxiety that role diffusion creates. (Rice & Dolgan, 2002, pp. 31-32)

Adolescents who perceive the imaginary audience phenomenon will believe that their actions are being closely scrutinized. For susceptible youth, the possibility of making mistakes may be an intolerable circumstance in which "others" might recognize their lack of ability, and the result is feelings of shame. Though this is not demonstrated as often as the fear of failure phenomenon, some adolescents may also come to fear certain degrees of success. For example, in order to keep from making mistakes; these adolescents might choose to partially withdraw their efforts, feign indifference, and perform below their potential; in these ways, they maintain their "success." Therefore, underachievers and overachievers alike can be adversely affected by the fear of failing. However, perfectionists and over-achievers may feel more pressure than those who do not fear failure to the same degree. If they fail, some adolescents fear the prospects of receiving punishment and blame as possible consequences occurring from their failures. Thus, adolescents have a multitude of fears connected to the core theme of failing.

In order to avoid this achievement-related anxiety, one alternative is to "be the best" and to always do a job well, without making mistakes. The perception here is that failing or being unsuccessful is simply bad and a consequence of "not getting it" or "doing something wrong." Adolescents may tend to over-commit to the work at the expense of balancing work and non-work roles. If this fear of failure becomes prolonged, adolescents may become accustomed to performing compulsive behaviours such as incessant work activity. They may relentlessly push themselves in order to ensure that no mistakes are made. An obsession with work is a prevalent problem in North American society and is often a coping strategy for those who fear failure and making mistakes. As Kutlesa and Arthur (2001) note, the increasing pressures to succeed in the workplace,

combined with additional demands on workers, may negatively influence career development when also in combination with perfectionist beliefs and standards. Contributing dimensions to the ways in which perfectionists evaluate discrepancies between desired performance and possible productiveness appear to include concern about making mistakes, tendencies to set unattainable standards, and doubt about the quality of one's performance (Kutlesa & Arthur, 2001). Thus, the concerns about "fear of job," "making mistakes" and "fear" appear to act as precursors to the failing theme. In combination, these factors may contribute to feelings of inferiority and the beginnings of workaholism. From, a life-span perspective, adolescents may need additional assistance in acquiring work habits and attitudes to get along with others and to balance cooperation with a competitive attitude aimed at being what they can be (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). Adolescents with these perceptions have difficulty believing in themselves and therefore need to develop confidence in their competencies and trust in their abilities, respect what failure experiences have to teach, and respect the experience they have obtained this far in their lives.

Theoretical Discussion

The grounded theory approach described in the method section revealed that many career concern descriptors, although distinct from each other, could also be categorized according to main themes of concern. Main themes of concern that youth perceive as important sources of discouragement begin to emerge as early as Grade 7. They appear to function as central hub points around which similar themes also develop. Individual themes were found to conglomerate around five principal career concerns.

This theoretical conceptualization has theoretical links to the existing theories about career.

Thematic expressions of both affect and concern were recorded and then categorized according to grounded theory procedures which revealed a recursive pattern of these themes. Though their responses do not explicitly reveal their emotional state, adolescents' statements did have an emotional tone loaded with affective meaning and expression that seemed to convey overarching degrees of confusion and uncertainty. Words such as "stress," "frustrated," "worried," "scared," "nervous," "afraid," and "discouraged," were just some of the subjective conceptions adolescents used to indicate tension in conjunction with career concern descriptions.

Theoretical Conceptualization

This study reveals that adolescents confront a system of thematic issues that arise in response to dealing with age-graded development tasks, social expectations, and personal projects. These thematic issues include concerns about "learning," "security," "satisfaction," "failing" and "commitment." The purpose of the research was to discover adolescents' perceptions of concern; thus, the discussion of each core theme will be taken from adolescents' perceptions and considered in light of both the age-graded tasks and the situational contexts (historical and culturally graded influences) that make adolescents' career concerns unique. While these core ideas are presented as distinct themes, the reader should also view these variables as interrelated themes of career concern.

Core Themes

Core themes, or principal concern variables, were discovered to be career concerns that stem from extrinsic and intrinsic forms of concern that adolescents consider problematic issues along their career paths. Relationships and possible connections seem to hinge on these core themes and serve as focal points around which further sub-themes develop. Secondary themes were categorized as career concerns that could feasibly be assigned to a core theme. These secondary themes also sometimes contain subsidiary themes that seem somewhat associated to these principal concerns but appear to be more closely linked to aspects of a secondary theme. In the end, it becomes possible to piece together and track adolescents' cognitive and affective processes when they think about their career concerns.

Extrinsic Concerns

Future schooling and career adjustment difficulties were consistent themes of concern for adolescents; these themes were also found in previous needs based research (Violato & Holden, 1988). For instance, three important dimensions that lead toward career choice readiness include "being able to make realistic judgments about potential occupations, gathering information about educational or occupational opportunities, and exploring the world-of-work" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). Although diverse and complex, these core themes are all career concerns that originate with extrinsic issues that adolescents consider problematic as they move along their career paths. They are extrinsic concerns because adolescents' perceive these variables that act upon them as originating from external factors. For example, adolescents commonly reported specific adjustment concerns related to life-cycle challenges such as "learning," "security," and

"dissatisfaction" themes, and addressed very reasonable perceptions about these approaching external tasks (Appendix B).

These appraisals could be found as early as Grade 7 and were often reported as core concerns that adolescents believed were sources of discouragement when they thought about their present and future career paths. Niles et al. (2002) have suggested that "life structure concerns reflect the fact that work occurs within a holistic life context. . . . Apparently, the emerging work ethic is leading many contemporary workers to view their lives more holistically than workers in previous historical periods" (p. 5). Therefore, from a life-space perspective, adolescents appear to have life-structure concerns that triangulate around three themes stemming from their arrangement of student and worker roles. These three themes originate with extrinsic forms of career concern based on the future social positions and roles that adolescents are preparing to occupy.

Learning. One of the first developmental tasks in one's life-span is to decide whether the world is an inviting and supportive place or whether it is a hostile environment. According to Eirkson (1959), developing a healthy sense of trust in ourselves and in others is crucial in order for us to apply the necessary effort to communicate with and interact in novel terrain. As adolescents become aware of and develop more concern about their future, they also encounter the social expectation that they should be able to make more realistic judgements in the selection of educational and vocational paths. Historically and culturally, however, North American students may have more decisions to make regarding education than students in any other era before them. For instance, the need for "knowledge workers" and the growing educational requirements for occupations today have made many workplaces essentially "learning

organizations." In today's context, workers themselves are under continuous pressure to keep their competencies sharp and new and "may find that much of their discretionary time [is] composed of taking courses and learning new skills to be able to successfully compete for work" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 10). Thus, with the mounting importance education is taking in society, students wonder whether they can meet these demands and whether they will be able to orient themselves to these new environments.

From a life-span, life-space perspective, concerns about "learning" appear to relate closely to the thematic development of career concern (Savickas, 2001). According to Super (1980), it is normative for students to have concerns when venturing into the crystallization and specification substages of Exploration. In order to choose an occupation based on self-preferences, learning concern decisions require the development of a realistic self-concept and an adequate knowledge about the self.

In addition to becoming more aware about their future, adolescents have many decisions to make in regard to the core theme of "learning." For instance, many adolescents stated that obtaining the "right kind" of training is an important concern to them. Accordingly, as adolescents begin to make more realistic assessments about which occupations may be right for them, they also begin to make selections regarding necessary educational requirements. In other words, in order to pursue occupational options, adolescents must also consider the appropriate occupational training requirements. As they wonder about the realms of further education, adolescents also make judgments about whether these future scenarios will be hospitable or threatening. Therefore, one of the major choices an adolescent must make is whether to adopt the future role of a student and pursue post-secondary training before entering an occupation.

For these reasons, concern related to the theme of "learning" may be the first career concern that adolescents encounter.

Additional skill or knowledge can be gained by a variety of means and is no longer attributed solely to institutional learning. However, the educational qualifications of the workforce today require that students seriously consider choosing post-secondary education or training as an option. As adolescents begin to make more realistic assessments about which occupations may be right for them, they also begin to make choices about the necessary educational requirements. As they wonder about the realms of further education, adolescents also attempt to judge whether these future scenarios will be hospitable or threatening. Not only have educational choices expanded, but the demands requiring additional education have also grown.

Still, adolescents who consider university, college, or technical training become increasingly aware about how the duration, the cost, and the location of school may impact their lives. Thus, the "learning" hub reveals four secondary themes that include some of the changes this new environment could bring: being "away from home," different "locations," the "length of school" and "paying for school" are pragmatic goal-end outcomes that have immediate associations with the core theme of "learning" (Appendix C). Thus, as students anticipate possible concerns in making the school-to-school transition, they seem to experience different levels of apprehension in regards to the barriers and obstacles encountered in adopting the post-secondary role as a student. Thus, as students explore educational factors about further learning, they also become involved and oriented to anticipating some of the vocational tasks involved in career planning.

As students become oriented to the pending decisions they will have to make in regard to potential occupations and occupational training, they may also discover that the type of investment that further education requires is daunting. To gain a higher level of education or training, students must also be prepared to sacrifice their time, energy, finances, and possibly familiar sources of support. Additional issues also arise, such as leaving an environment to which they belong to and in which they have an assured place, or to assume the post-secondary role as a student. Understandably, this anticipation for additional educational experience may be tempered with apprehension about whether the amount of loss (i.e., effort, time, money, dislocation) justifies the gains (i.e., increased employability). "Learning" may be the initial career concern encountered in adolescence. In order to make a successful transition after secondary school, adolescents must at least consider some of the career development tasks required by the post-secondary role as a student even if they to not follow that route.

Security. A developed sense of responsibility has been defined by an impulse toward autonomy and the ability to exercise control over life (Erikson, 1959). Usually the prescription to make sense out of confusion and uncertainty is to take control. However, when people react to this lack of control in an uncontrollable situation, this prescription is no longer helpful. When the situation is misinterpreted, the desire for stability may become secured either by compulsions toward withdrawal or perfectionism. This balance between discipline and flexibility can be a delicate one and is often tested throughout the life-span, perhaps even more in teenage years, in view of the multi-dimensional development of adolescents.

Adolescents wonder whether what they learn will be adequate enough to enable them to find jobs, and once they do, whether it will be enough to help them keep those jobs. Students not only want to be able to support themselves; they also desire a way to retain some sense of constancy during their career paths. In the case of older adolescents, jobs begin to be not only associated with a monetary reward but with the desire for obtaining a sense of stability. As they explore their alternatives and learn more about more possibilities involved with the worker role, adolescents begin to differentiate more realistically about the kind of security they wish to achieve. This is particularly evident in the three highly related sub-themes that include financial, job, and physical security. For example, the security hub has five secondary themes that include "financial security," "job security," "physical security," "injury," and "competition" themes. These secondary themes have immediate associations with the core theme of security and are specific themes about either maintaining or removing possible threats to the core theme of security (Appendix C).

Adolescents who are looking to be independent are becoming aware about living on their own and the concept of self-reliance that are the societal requirements that one assumes once they accept the working role. Many of the concerns that adolescents hold about stability relate to these perceptions about their future as adult workers. Noticeable amounts of tension and anxiety appear in their responses. Perhaps it is because of this tension that some adolescents go so far as to indicate the theme "death" as an important career concern. In all, advances and growth such as this can be bitter-sweet. According to Super (1990), core roles are fundamental to individuals' identity and essential to life satisfaction because of the meaning and focus those roles give to their lives. In order to

achieve the desired outcomes of future independence and self-sufficiency, they may come to notice the loss of the protection and dependency that they had throughout childhood. Issues particular to adolescence, such as separating from childhood certainties and from the reliance on authority, appear to highlight a turning point at which adolescents must compensate for these losses. For example, this disruption in movement requires a change in life-structure in which the role as a worker gains more prominence than the formerly known role as a child. Adolescents' actively desire to gain more control over their circumstances; that drive is met with the passive desire to remain dependent. Each may offer the promise of stability in different ways. Still, adolescents realize that, as workers, they must eventually accept responsibility for achieving their own goals.

From a life-span, life-space perspective, adolescents have many decisions to make in regard to the core theme of "security" which seems to have a close relationship with the thematic development of career control (Savickas, 2001). Essentially, this is a period when a choice must be made, one that will result in achieving the security they desire. As would be expected, adolescents experience different levels of insecurity in connection with this theme and appear to be unsure about the conflicting role interactions that have begun to emerge in the domains important to them. "Security" concerns then evolve from this tension in conflicting roles because, in order to achieve a measure of direction over their lives, adolescents must become aware of, and include, in their life, some of the career development tasks required by the worker role. The selection of viable educational and vocational paths, according to Super's (1980) Exploration stage in the life-span, life-space perspective, necessitates that students develop planning and exploration skills so

that they will also develop the self-confidence needed to plan a way of gaining their own sense of security and future well-being.

Dissatisfaction. According to Erikson (1959), normal interests and growth are cultivated by developing a healthy sense of curiosity about the world. The development of initiative conceivably progresses when one can incorporate ways to satisfy these interests.

As possible educational and vocational paths begin to crystallize, adolescents contemplate possible concerns that relate to the themes of "learning" and "security" as they explore the work world. Those who may have formulated possible alternatives also begin to examine these tentative choices and evaluate the pros and cons so as to make comparisons and distinctions between their options. Adolescents want work that is not only challenging but also satisfying. Adolescents with "dissatisfaction" concerns judge some aspects of work as containing unfavourable qualities or vocational development tasks. Working may sometimes be undesirable, but it may also be disappointing if it is unrepresentative of work adolescents would like to do. If adolescents are going to endure "difficult work," "stress," "long hours," and the "time" involved in the role of the worker, these secondary themes need to be rewarded by work that is also enjoyable. Settling for a position that falls short of fulfilling this aspect may represent a failure to meet their own expectations and to fulfil their own hopes for a dream job. While adolescents are expected to get started in exploring chosen fields of interest, they also have substantial concerns about the dissatisfaction theme (Appendix C). Thus, another element of choice has been introduced to their career planning process as they explore the work world: Should they work for love or for money? Should they obtain jobs or careers?

From a life-span, life-space perspective, adolescents have many decisions to make in regard to the core theme of "dissatisfaction," which seems to relate closely to with the thematic development of career conviction (Savickas, 2001). Adolescents' perceptions on how to acquire, maintain, and progress toward satisfying positions appear ambiguous when compared to the clarity of advancement provided in school. "When only a few of the better performing employees are permitted to advance, the means to advancement are ambiguous, and little if any support for advancement is offered" (Savickas, 1999, p.332) thus, new factors for what adolescents consider indicators of success in the worker role may need to be established. In other words, the pathways to success that were assured in the student role must give way to a new pattern of thinking that includes the role of the worker in order to achieve the desired outcomes of satisfaction. Adolescents with dissatisfaction concerns, then, become worried that they may not have the practical knowledge and coping resources to obtain and maintain their preferred occupation of choice. "Individuals with similar levels of academic success in school vary in the degree of success that they achieve on the job. Cognitive psychologists contend that the differences in job success and satisfaction are only partially explained by ability and motivation" (Savikas, 1999, p.332). Therefore, from a life-span, life-space perspective, adolescents need accurate beliefs about the work world, as well as the belief that they can succeed in it, before they will gain the confidence to pursue satisfying career options.

Even if adolescents begin to specify career paths that they perceive will be satisfying for them "learning," "security," "commitment," and "failing" concerns can conspire with each other and influence adolescents' concern about possible "dissatisfaction" in their career. The need to "decide quickly" and adolescents' sense of

time urgency only complicate this concern further; some adolescents may have to make this decision under duress as their tenure in secondary school comes closer to completion. Furthermore, adolescents fear their careers will be marked by dissatisfaction if they ultimately end up choosing the "wrong occupation" (Appendix C). Thus, the theme of dissatisfaction has been a culmination of all the concerns adolescents have had since junior high (Grade 7) if they have not yet been successfully resolved.

Intrinsic Concerns

Adolescents also contemplate internal issues that may be rich in detail to them, but difficult to categorize (Appendix D). Two important dimensions that lead to career choice readiness include being able to make realistic judgments about potential occupations and having a "planful" attitude toward coping with career stages and tasks (Niles & Harris-Bowlsby, 2002). These are intrinsic concerns because adolescents perceive them as variables that occur, or do not occur from within themselves. As an illustration, adolescents commonly reported concerns that appear to be more abstract in nature and that surround issues related to "failing" and "commitment." For example, adolescents are concerned about being able to handle their level of personal responsibility in regard to making decisions. In addition, adolescents also wonder whether they will have the ability to succeed and whether their efforts will eventually be undermined, once these decisions have been made. Although dealing with these types of doubts is both a struggle and a source of concern for adolescents, many appear to perceive these concerns to be necessary and inherent questions that pertain to their career. These appraisals were found as early as Grade 7; they were also often reported as concerns that adolescents perceived to be core sources of discouragement when they thought about their present

and future career paths. Thus, these two core themes emanate from similar foundations: intrinsic forms of career concerns (Appendix E).

At still deeper levels, these difficulties can become exasperated for high school students who have been unable to make career decisions. For example, Grade 11 and 12 students frequently report that "having to decide quickly" is now an additional theme of concern, related but additional to the "inability to decide" theme. Thus, over and above experiencing their intrinsic concerns, these adolescents are beginning to feel that the available time to make a decision is starting to run out and perceive a sense of urgency to make this decision quickly.

Failing. Erikson (1959) believed that pre-adolescent children need to develop a feeling of usefulness in order to cultivate a sense of industry. These children incorporate practice in their play and begin to recognize their own accomplishments. As a result, they enjoy success for its own sake: Their internal barometers are set toward developing a sense of mastery. What begins as play can quickly become a detrimental chore when children lose sight of their natural interests under the pressure to be more reasonable. In other words, the need to be competent can be driven by necessity and anxiety, not by pleasure.

Adolescents fear that if they make poor decisions, the consequences of failing may negatively impact or end their careers. Thus, adolescent career planning can also become sidetracked by images of catastrophic possibilities that lie in the future. Some adolescents go so far as to make global comments that personalize failing as a self-referenced circumstance specific to them. Some adolescents believe that failure is that which is the opposite of being "successful" and therefore perceive failing as solely a

negative and detrimental experience. Thus, concerns about future decline seem to reveal adolescents' negative and irrational self-statements as well as fears of failing. Adolescents are uncertain about their future prospects and experience different levels of fear related to failing (Appendix E).

From a life-span, life-space perspective, these concerns about "failing" appear to have a similar relationship with the thematic development of career competence (Savickas, 2001). According to Super (1980), one of the vocational tasks during the Exploration stage is that adolescents are expected to obtain some kind of verification for a current occupational choice and to have developed the self-reliance necessary to manage their own affairs. From a life-span perspective, adolescents have likely only had a few experiences in regard to career challenges and identifying which career decisions to make. Therefore, some students want to work and do their jobs well, but often experience debilitating doubts about their ability to perform adequately and overcome obstacles. From a life-span, life-space perspective, adolescents need appropriate skills and abilities as the competencies that will help them make good career decisions and solve problems in the student and worker roles.

Commitment. According to Erikson (1959), the development of identity neither begins nor ends in adolescence; rather, it begins to solidify. Driven by natural impulse towards maturity, adolescents begin separating from their childhood roles and attempt to find other ways to fit in. Consequently, adolescents adopt new roles and drop outdated ones, as well as making commitments to a life-structure that reflects their newly changing identities.

Workers today "struggle to balance their various life-role commitments as predictions concerning . . . a leisure society long ago gave way to reality" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 13). Loyalty, commitment, and dedication to an organization have long been valued attributes that employees assumed would bring reciprocal favours such as protection and job security from their employers. Adolescents may still be receiving messages in regard to the commitment ethic from parts of society that still perceive the world of work from the 20th century view (Savikas, 1997b).

What ties commitment themes together is the persistent confusion for adolescents that comes from their efforts to make present and future choices in a time of uncertainty. "Part of the uncertainty of sustained employment for individual workers . . . . is reflected in the propensity of many workers to work harder and harder, having less and less time for other aspects of their life, including marriage and children" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 11). Finding an appropriate balance between these types of life-role commitments does not appear to be easier at any age. Ultimately, adolescents are concerned about how to preserver in their careers and still achieve an adequate balance with other life-role commitments (Appendix E). Today's increased requirements in the work role seem to complicate adolescents' commitment concerns further.

In addition, the commitment hub has two secondary themes: "an inability to decide" progresses into "having to decide quickly" among high school students. These secondary themes act as starting points that evolve into the core concern related to commitment. Many students' responses reveal that they do want to work and have a career; yet, responses on this theme of concern often appear to reveal that adolescents have difficulty in making choices between the opportunities available. To complicate

matters further, adolescents' have difficulty trusting that previous decisions remain right for them and their continuously changing identities.

From a life-span life-space perspective, these perceptions about commitment appear to have an almost identical relationship to the thematic development of career commitment as defined by Super (1980) and Savickas (2001). According to Super (1980), adolescents are expected to devote more of their time to other life-roles besides leisure pursuits. As expected, adolescents experience differing levels of frustration in connection with this theme, and appear to be quite concerned about the added responsibility in their lives, which will need to be resolved in order to make more solid commitments to their career choices. For instance, questions about "moral issues" and "roles" appear to be outcome themes that arise from an "inability to decide" and "making a commitment." These secondary and ancillary career concerns are fundamentally themes about committing to and enacting a decision once it has been made. Some adolescents appear to have examined their options and made their choices in regard to their life-roles however, they seem unsure in regard to obtaining an appropriate balance between the types of life-role commitments. Therefore, once a choice is made, adolescents then need to see that career decision through in order to enact it and then be able to enact appropriate coping behaviours in order to balance among the roles they have chosen. Thus, having a "planful" attitude toward coping with career stages and tasks is an integral dimension that contributes to a commitment in developing career choice readiness (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002).

Life-Space Concerns

Core life-roles (student, worker, citizen, family, and leisurite) are the social positions occupied and the roles enacted by an individual for self-extension into the societal environment (Savickas, 2001).

The social elements that constitute a life are arranged in a pattern of core and peripheral roles. This arrangement, or life structure, forms the basic configuration of a person's life: a design that organizes and channels the person's engagement in society including occupational choice (Super et al., 1996, p. 128).

While identity and personal connections from major roles are explained by the salience (value and meaning) they hold for each individual, perhaps career concerns can be predicted according to the core life-roles society expects of each individual as well. Though a life-structure design for the individual is not static, it does run a developmental course which "progress[es] through a relatively ordered sequence of structure-building and structure-changing periods" (Super et al., 1996, p. 129-130). Adolescents, then, are building a life-structure with which to enter the adult world. "Accordingly, life-span, life-space theory views implementing and stabilizing the first adult life structure as developmental tasks that a society expects of each individual" (Super et al., 1996, p. 130). Thus, negotiating transitional periods such as STS (school-to-school) and STW (school-to-work) initiate similar life-role (student/worker) concerns unique to adolescents.

The life-span, life-space theory describes and seeks to explain work-related situations and demands that people typically encounter. Super called these vocational situations and demands career development tasks. As Super applies the terms cycling and

recycling to developmental tasks through the life-span, perhaps it is also possible to conceptualize and chart the cycling and recycling of recursive contextual tasks for a life-space. In other words, career concerns could be located according to "self-regulation strategies and goal-implementation during a particular ontogenetic period and in a specific social ecology" (Savickas, 2001, p.309). Like the ontogenetic stages across the life-span, the secondary system of self-regulatory mechanisms (including concern, control, conviction, competence, and commitment) remains generally the same throughout the life-span. As with the characterization of developmental tasks among a period of concern, the desirability of outcomes changes and develops and can be influenced according to the normative expectations of the life-stages in which the changes occur.

As Savickas (2001) states, "career concerns are psychosocial considerations used to compare an individual to himself or herself across developmental eras as well as to other people" (p.308). Although personal concerns are often noncomparative dimensionally and highly conditional, perhaps the similarities among adolescents' career concerns manifest according to the stability of these stages in development. Conceivably, the characterization of desired outcomes in adolescents' life-roles contain thematic stage-specific concerns (Appendix F) and normative goals that are similar for the corresponding development tasks in the same period. While contingent on the contextual factors such as time, place, and role, the similarity in social positions occupied by adolescents' central life-roles also help to explain the commonalities among career concerns and similarities among the perceived contextual tasks in their life-structure. Thus, just as vocational situations and demands illustrated by career development tasks in

a life-span, perhaps, vocational environments and expectations exist that create career contextual tasks in a life-space.

Identity and Adaptability

While salient life-roles in the life-space of adolescence are important variables that influence adolescent career concerns, this discussion would be incomplete without also including one of the most important aspects of adolescent development. Identity achievement and commitment to an occupational identity are integral to the construction of an adult life-structure and the implementation of occupational choices (Super et al., 1996). These objective conceptions of self may help to explain how society's expectations and social meaning making become adolescents' internalized career concerns. Adolescents' goals may be in part determined by social activity, but they only become important to adolescents if these goals are accepted and valued.

> Values provide a sense of purpose. They serve as stars to steer by, guiding individuals to specific places within life spaces, places that can be the center of meaning, locales for need satisfaction, and venues for the expression of interests" (Super et al., 1996, p. 138).

Values then, are the desirable ends or means to an end that comprise the stage specific concerns and normative goals sought in adolescence. Values are beliefs and cognitive structures that are experienced by the individual as standards regarding how he or she should function, but they also have behavioral and affective dimensions (Super et al., 1996). Values develop so that individuals can meet their needs in socially acceptable ways, and thus the behavioral aspect of values is shaped by the cultural context in which those values develop.

Under the SOC model, values and goals help to explain the motivational strivings that guide adolescents' occupational choices and vocational adaptations (Savickas, 2001). For example, while many may consider additional training after high school to be an important learning concern, not all adolescents will see the need or realize this societal value in the traditional way. Some choose not to proceed with further training. Since vocational identities are obtained through an objective perspective and derived from public meaning, vocational values and goals can be externally held values in society that become internalized by the level of salience they hold for an individual's life-roles. This explains why similar career concerns are commonly held by many adolescents. Yet, vocational identities allow for individualized differences based on the degree to which the values become internalized and on the level of fit these values have to their perceived vocational identity (Super et al., 1996). Thus, life-role salience and values are used for evaluating the beliefs and behaviors of others and also serve as benchmarks for self-evaluation and self-regulatory purposes (Savickas, 2001).

Adolescent Career Concerns

This study reveals that adolescents confront a system of thematic issues (Appendix F) that arise in response to their dealing with the age-graded development tasks, social expectations, and personal projects that include concerns (and subjective responses of affect) about "learning" (apprehension), "security" (insecurity), "satisfaction" (worry), "failing" (fear) and "commitment" (frustration). Noticeably, these thematic concerns (Appendix G) are highly analogous to Super's system of self-regulation mechanisms, which appear to interact with adolescents' personal expressions of affect and concern. What adolescents' responses suggest, and what the theoretical

literature has largely ignored, is that adolescents appear to perceive their career concerns in outcome terms and not in terms of the strategies, motivational systems, and domain-specific skills gained in the career planning process.

While this discussion essentially addresses the same self-regulatory mechanisms as suggested by Savickas (2001), the difference is one of perception. "People have quite clear conceptions about what they consider to be a desirable and what an undesirable developmental outcome and also when it is supposed to occur" (Baltes et al., 1996, p. 1095). Successful development and the attainment of salient goals is what adolsecents strive for, but they do not focus on the processes and structures involved in making and implementing career decisions. Instead, they perceive end-goal achievements resulting from self-regulatory concerns as proof of having successfully (or unsuccessfully) adapted to life's transitions. Thus, adolescents' perceptions of the future include educational, work-related, and personal (non-work) outcomes.

Though the consistency with which adolescents express their career concerns in outcome terms is not entirely surprising, the stage of dominance in which they express these concerns is. Even Super (1988) noted in the ACCI (Adult Career Concerns Inventory) that "for men 24 years of age or less, the dominant career concern, contrary to theory and CPS data (Super et al., 1967) is Establishment, followed by Maintenance and Exploration" (p. 27). In other words, adolescents seem to express a future orientation in time perspective and are able to look ahead to anticipate and foresee the choices and transitions that will impact their lives in young, and even middle, adulthood.

According to the theoretical literature, adolescents are essentially in the stage of Exploration that requires that they make tentative career choices and includes adolescent

concerns such as (a) clarifying their ideas about the type of work they really want to do; (b) choosing the best occupation among the alternatives; (c) getting started in the occupational field of choice (Super et al., 1996). However, adolescents' responses seem to manifest career concerns about adapting to a position (as is outlined in the sub-stages of stabilizing, consolidating, and advancing) and about protecting a position, in a period of holding on to and updating knowledge and skills. In terms of life-span theory (Super et al., 1996), adolescents' career concerns also include vocational tasks in the stage of Establishment, in which they are preparing to (a) learn how to relate to others (concern); (b) find an opportunity to do desired work (control); (c) settle down in a position (conviction); (d) secure an occupational position (competence); (e) reduce participation in previous life-roles (commitment). Thus, adolescents seem to be anticipating successful adaptations to the environment across the life-span.

On the one hand, this is, to a certain degree, a reflection of a systems advance of formal operations and future orientation. On the other hand, it is interesting to note the similarity of these perceived concerns in reflecting the match between social functioning and development, as illustrated by Havinghurst (1972) and Erikson (1959). Adolescents' subjective conceptions of the desirability of developmental outcomes appear to be psychosocial concerns related to their intermediate future in addition to their most immediate future. As Savickas (1999) notes, "the CPS, along with the landmark studies that preceded it, took place under different economic and labour market conditions than exist today" (p.330). Perhaps the grand narrative about psychosocial maturation and cultural adaptation is being rewritten to reflect adolescents' contemporary lives and the societal expectations that they adolescents perceive as occurring today.

Mechanisms of Career Development

It we apply the selection and optimization with compensation model (Baltes et al., 1996) as the primary mechanism of career development, then compensation occurs through the pursuit of new goals, or a change in selected direction. These shifts necessitate changes in adaptive contexts that are meant to maximize gains while minimizing losses. In other words, selection of educational or vocational goals necessitates the use of self-regulatory mechanisms across several domains (i.e., vocational, educational, personal) in order to mediate successful adaptations to the environment. Similarly, career concerns arise in corresponding domains and become the adaptive tasks that adolescents' perceive stem from having their selected particular career goals. As adolescents begin to imagine the desired outcomes related to career goals, they will also inevitably face losses each time they pursue a different goal. Adolescents' affective expressions and career concerns are responses associated to loss (Baltes et al., 1996) in the process of change and occur in combination with all three process variables of the SOC model.

As an illustration, the goal of obtaining stability (selection) is achieved by strivings for self-sufficiency (optimization), which require that adolescents assume responsibility and regulation of behaviour (compensation) over their future paths. As adolescents strive toward increased levels of autonomy, and begin to explore the issue of "security" (career concern), they may also experience age-normative reactions in the adaptation process; those reactions include the feeling of insecurity (affective response) as well as the need to cope (SOC adaptive process) with the transition from dependency (loss) to independence (gain). While theorists have determined the constructs of control

and autonomy (self-regulation) as critical components to adolescents' psychosocial development and self-extension, adolescents themselves perceive security as an outcome term which denotes the future degree of successful adaptation to the environment.

From the life-span perspective, Savickas (2001) has indicated a secondary set of self-regulatory mechanisms that are believed to be the regulatory behaviours to mediate successful adaptations. As previously mentioned, these mechanisms include a system of developing a sense of career concern, control, conviction, competence, and commitment that are the efforts, abilities, and skills individuals bring to bear on monitoring their behaviour and experience. Savickas (2001) goes a step further in suggesting that these mechanisms of development may also be thematic issues of recursive career concerns. Adolescents' responses in this study do appear to indicate the use of a primary and secondary set of self-regulatory mechanisms when asked to think about their career concerns (Appendix G). Thus, the career concerns that adolescents themselves perceive are expressed in outcome terms (Appendix F) that are assumed to distinguish between what a successful and an unsuccessful adaptation to a future life-role or environment will be.

Anxiety. The career concerns that adolescents express give an indication as to which losses adolescents may be struggling with at a particular time. According to the SOC model, the accrued learning and adaptation that adolescents gain by addressing these concerns will have considerable bearing on their success in coping with other concerns. Learning a new way of adapting, or changing directions, can be anxiety provoking, and severe anxiety can interfere with or even defeat efforts to establish adaptive strategies (Kimmel & Weiner, 1995). If overwhelmed by the emotional strain

and stress associated with making successful transitions, adolescents may avoid tasks such as career planning, or may even devalue the importance of career planning all together (Saltoun, 1980). Anxiety and negative self-evaluations are essentially impediments to adaptability; anxiety is a highly distressing experience, in that one does not know exactly what happened to cause it. Anxiety may sometimes be the mobilizing force behind responding to career concerns; however, at its extreme, it can also paralyze vocational growth and undermine career-planning efforts.

This study reveals that adolescents confront a system of thematic issues that arise in response to dealing with the age-graded development tasks, social expectations, and personal projects that include concerns (and subjective responses of affect) about "learning" (apprehension), "security" (insecurity), "satisfaction" (worry), "failing" (fear) and "commitment" (frustration). The words to denote an expression of affect were chosen to reflect specific types of feelings related to their corresponding career concern; however, they were also chosen to represent types of anxiousness and are interchangeable with the word "anxiety." Furthermore, adolescents' perceived career concerns appear to contain definitions that integrate with Super's (Super, 1980; Super, Savickas & Super, 1990) thematic issues of career concern and Erikson's (1950) constructs of psychosocial development. For example, adolescents commonly cited the need for security, which also refers to freedom from anxiety, as an important concern of relevance. It is again interesting to note the close analogy of this theme to Super's self-regulatory construct of control and Erikson's autonomy versus doubt theme. Adolescents' statements did have an emotional tone loaded with affective meaning and expression that seemed to convey

overarching degrees of confusion and uncertainty when they approached developmental and contextual tasks.

Perhaps, as Baltes et al. (1996) suggests, psychosocial concerns could also be anxiety provoking, since "it is through the interactions between cognition and emotion that personality and social development are propelled" (p. 1093). Anxiety, and the link between cognition and affect, must be looked at carefully, because it can either foster or inhibit academic vocational development (Saltoun, 1980). In a situation such as this, "an individual must first deal with the situations and feelings that precipitated the breakdown of the old life structure before building a new one" (Super, Savickas & Super, 1990, p. 130). Without first acknowledging which career concerns are troubling, and why, some students may employ numerous strategies to avoid the career planning process and reduce their anxiety; unfortunately, the anxiety may also interfere with their vocational growth and exploration (Saltoun, 1980). In view of adolescents' ontogenetic stage of development, these perceived career concerns are likely specific to adolescents and are also the psychosocial considerations they use to compare themselves across developmental stages, as well as to other people, when making their educational and vocational choices. According to Super et al. (1990), career adaptability is the cardinal construct in these circumstances:

> The impetus is psychosocial in the form of expectations, in the curriculum and in the minds of family and teachers, for students who are approaching the end of their schooling. Once out of school, the psychosocial impetus for individual career development shifts to changes in work and working conditions. (p. 133)

In other words, career concerns are the formulated conceptions of self-regulation concerns that arise from attempts to adapt to the social environment; however, perceived career concerns are the subjectively contingent life-span issues that arise from the psychosocial context they occur in.

According to Erikson (1950), the cause of anxiety lies in the conflict between opposing issues and is the tension between the basic needs of security, belonging, and expression. The life-span, life-space theory views the early adult transition as a period that involves a rearrangement of roles and developmental tasks that society expects of each individual. "During such a transition, individuals adopt new roles, drop outdated roles, and modify continuing roles as they redesign their lives" (Super et al., 1990, p. 129). This is a time where various life-roles interact, in that a pre-adolescent child's leisure roles are beginning to be absorbed by the student, worker, and citizen roles. Instead of concern and autonomy, adolescents perceive issues that relate to learning and security. Instead of initiating purposes for their lives and finding self-reliance to manage their affairs, adolescents see satisfaction and success issues. Instead of individuation, adolescents see issues of being able to commit to their responsibilities. The desirability of these developmental outcomes appear to arise from concerns related to the adult roles of the intermediate future in addition to the adolescent roles of the present. As Savickas (2001) suggests,

> Today, in an unstable and rapidly changing society, individuals must create their
> own futures in various contexts. The new narratives will emphasize self-
> organization and self-regulation that advance individuals into an open and plastic

tomorrow. Counselors might no longer talk about developing a career; instead,

they may talk about managing a career. (p. 303)

Adolescents' subjective conceptions of these concerns are uncomfortable for them

to experience, since many of these events have yet to happen. Recognizing that career

planning can be accomplished in the present, as well as in the future, adolescents can

regain a sense of control over their own immediate concerns of relevance. That sense of

control will help alleviate the distressing symptoms related to their anxiety (Appendix H).

Recommendations

Generally, helping adolescents to realize that they can also view career planning

as more akin to adaptation than just achieving an end result may help to alleviate some of

the strain and stress associated with their career concerns. Furthermore, the classical

view, which promotes adolescents' concerns as indicators of crisis needs, may be an

inappropriate approach to the complexities reflected by adolescents' stated career

concerns. If one adopts the empirical perspective, it appears many students' responses

indicate stage-specific needs and are related to normative goals in adolescence.

Customization of Career Programs to Each Core Career Concern

Adolescents' career concerns imply that preparation to meet future educational,

vocational, and personal goals is a need. Tailoring career programs, interventions, and

tools to respect and include adolescents' perceived concerns would help to reflect these

perceptions and put the career planning process back in the hands of adolescents. These

changes would also help to improve communication and understanding between career

facilitators and adolescents. Adolescents' unique perceptions could be normalized and

would be considered in attempts to bring relevant career concerns to resolution. The

following recommendations would incorporate each core career concern into career programs (Appendix I):

Learning. Introducing topics that surround "learning" concerns is an excellent way to prompt students' awareness of the developmental tasks they will face and to anticipate the decisions that they will eventually make. "Orientation concentrates on students' career awareness and fosters development of positive attitudes toward planning and exploring" (Savickas, 1999, p.332). As their comprehension about post-secondary factors bears on making career decisions, students will become more oriented to continually looking ahead and more involved with realistically meeting their learning concerns. Promoting education for the sake of having "to go to school" does not promote career choice readiness (Niles & Harris-Bowlsby, 2002); adolescents instead have indicated a need to be able to relate to the usefulness of additional "schooling" or "training." The ability to make realistic judgments about potential occupational fits requires the development of a realistic self-concept and adequate knowledge about the self. Similarly, learning concern decisions will require that students be aware of these factors when considering occupational options. Thus, their decisions will be based on obtaining the "right kind" of training, the kind that coordinates with the training requirements of those occupations under consideration.

The usefulness, difficulties, and barriers associated with additional "schooling/training" should also be included in career orientation techniques so that some of the learning concerns of adolescents are addressed. Topics that include the factors involved with the "duration of school," "paying for school," "being away from home" and with different "locations" are important concerns to adolescents. Students need to

relate curricular options and self-preferences to possible occupational paths as well as developing positive attitudes toward planning and exploring; however, adolescents may also require opportunities to discuss the potential barriers that could prevent them from considering post-secondary training as an option.

Students will need opportunities to become oriented to the practicalities associated with "learning" concerns and to be taught that apprehension in considering further education and training amid continuously changing identities is an age-normative response to these concerns. Proactive interventions that aim to address these concerns and to relieve these apprehensions will need to

- Foster awareness about the links between self-knowledge and the ability to make realistic judgments in the selection of educational and vocational paths

- Provide encouragement to cultivate adequate knowledge about self and self-preferences by relaying the learning is continuous message

- Cultivate adaptable attitudes and skills in handling career development and occupational identity tasks in the STS and STW transitions

- Establish present and future sources of support as adolescents cope with the age-graded feelings of apprehension and "rootlessness" that can arise as they contemplate the transitions that occur after secondary school

Security. Topics that surround security concerns are outcomes from adolescents who are gathering information about educational and occupational opportunities and learning more about more possibilities. Students need skills and knowledge about career information, job seeking, and the structure of work in society in order to process this information; however, they also require opportunities to explore the different factors that

can jeopardise their sense of stability and well-being. "Teaching concentrates on developing cognitive competencies and behavioural skills that students may use to advance their career" (Savickas, 1990, p.332). Discussion about the meaning of barriers and possible threats to security should be included to interventions. The purpose of this intervention would assist students' in gaining a sense of control over their career planning and exploration skills.

"Job security," "financial security," "physical security," and "competition," in the world-of-work are topics that adolescents consider to be important concerns of relevance. Feelings of insecurity about these topics are normative responses and adolescents may need assistance in finding ways to resolve concerns about security.

In the emerging employment contract, employees are being urged to view themselves as "self-employed" with employers being their customers. Because employees can anticipate losing several jobs or working for several customers during their work lives, they must focus on developing and maintaining skills that enhance current performance and can get the next job. This means that, to maintain their employability, contemporary workers must manage their own careers, with résumés becoming a list of transferable skills and adaptive strengths. (Savickas, 1990, p. 332)

Just being "able to get a job" does not promote career choice readiness (Niles & Harris-Bowlsby, 2002) and adolescents have instead indicated a need for obtaining information and skills that they can use in gaining a sense of well-being when making the STW transition.

The cognitive and behavioural skills that adolescents need to learn encompass flexibility and adaptability in order to remain employable. Modern concepts such as the "organizational hierarchy," "job security," and "lifetime employment," have gave way to a post-modern reality that instead embraces concepts such as "life-time employability" and "life-structure design" (Savickas, 1997a).

> Adaptability, whether in adolescents or in adults, involves planful attitudes, self- and environmental exploration, and informed decision making. Counsellors could help individuals to continually, throughout the life course, look ahead to anticipate choices and transitions, explore possibilities, and chose directions that improve fit and develop the self. (Savickas, 1997a, p. 5)

In addition to orientating students to their educational and vocational comprehension of careers, proactive interventions will need to:

- Foster attitudes to learn about more possibilities through the development of career planning and exploration skills

- Teach cognitive and behavioural skills for career employability and advancement

- Offer encouragement to learn career choice processes and work based competencies by relaying the 'change is constant' message

- Establish sources of support to deal with how they aim to cope in the worker role

- Address students' security concerns and age-graded feelings of insecurity about designing their own careers

Dissatisfaction. Topics that relate to "dissatisfaction" concerns are the outcomes of adolescents who are exploring the world-of-work and getting started in exploring a chosen field of interest. Students need to understand the need for having positive beliefs about the work world as well as the belief that they can succeed in it; however, adolescents also require career management techniques that will help them manage, cope, and advance within their work environment. For example, "coping behaviours that deal . . . . with managing the tasks of organizational fusion, position performance, co-worker relations, work habits and attitudes, advancement, and career planning" (Savickas, 1999, p.333) are just a few of the career management techniques that may need to be employed to resolve "dissatisfaction" concerns. Beliefs about unattractive work tasks and experiences may interfere with the development of career choice readiness; adolescents have instead indicated a need for practical knowledge and coping resources to obtain and maintain their occupation of choice.

Satisfaction is gained by the ability to maximize career gains while minimizing losses. Unfavourable tasks may occur on the job, which is why adolescents need to be able to find work that is satisfying to them as a whole. Being hopeful and staying positive provides the necessary energy to pursue satisfying work experiences. Nevertheless, adolescents have indicated that concerns such as "difficult work," "stress," "long hours," "time," and "making the wrong occupational choice" may eventually lead to dissatisfaction in their careers. Adolescents with these worries will need opportunities to explore these perceptions in regard to the "dissatisfaction" theme, and will need a variety of resources in order to bring these concerns to resolution. Proactive interventions that aim to resolve these concerns about conviction and satisfaction will need to:

- Foster accurate beliefs about the *current* world of work

- Establish career management techniques and tips that link coping behaviours with work satisfaction

- Offer adolescents practical information for managing, stabilizing, and succeeding in their careers

- Encourage adolescents to follow their passions and to actively explore chosen fields of interest

- Familiarize students with the notion of career adaptability and provide support to address feelings of worry and discouragement

Failure. Topics that relate to "failure" concerns are the outcomes for adolescents who are able to assess their own skills and abilities to make decisions and problem-solve. There are students who want to work and do their jobs well but experience debilitating doubts about their ability to perform adequately and overcome obstacles. Thus, the concerns about "fear of job," "making mistakes" and "fear" appear to act as precursors to the failing theme; these factors in combination, may contribute to feelings of inferiority and the beginning of workaholism. Adolescents with these perceptions have difficulty believing in themselves and respecting the experience they have obtained this far in their lives. Therefore, adolescents have indicated a need to prepare for these problems that can occur in their jobs and careers.

As decisions in career planning are made, adolescents are then required to implement and secure suitable positions or choices. Once a course of action has been decided upon, adolescents may begin to encounter concerns related to "failing" and the consequences associated with making poor decisions. Issues such as shame and doubt

originate from adolescents' "fear of job" and may influence achievement-related anxiety for adolescents who "fear" "making mistakes" and "failing" on the job.

Students need to feel prepared to solve problems so that they can take on additional challenges and test their abilities; however, adolescents may also require opportunities to practice the use of role play and problem solving skills in relation to possible job problems. The more they experience and acquire new skills to solve problems that could occur at work, the more adolescents will be interested in and willing to use proactive decision-making skills to solve typical problems encountered on the job and in their careers. Proactive interventions that aim to resolve these concerns about competence and successfulness will need to:

- Establish student-centered, problem-based learning in preparation for future job problems

- Foster positive attitudes in dealing with doubts

- Offer encouragement to believe in themselves and to trust their ability to perform adequately

- Include role rehearsals, role-playing, and case study discussion to assist with decision-making and problem-solving skill practice

- Provide support to address feelings of fear and fears about work

Commitment. Once tentative options about worker and student roles have been examined and evaluated, adolescents may begin to face concerns related to making a "commitment" to and carrying out a choice between different career alternatives. "The tentative sub-stage involves the tasks of specification and instrumentation, that is, choosing an occupation and getting the required training" (Savikas, 1999, p.329). The

more their experience and confidence in examining choices, setting goals, decision making, and making plans increases, the more prepared adolescents will be to commit to, and cope with life-role decisions once made.

> Too many career theories ignore the fact that while making a living people live a life. The work role, albeit a critical role in contemporary society, is only one among many roles that an individual occupies. A person's multiple roles interact to reciprocally shape each other. Thus, individuals make decisions about work-role behaviour, such as occupational choice and organizational commitment, within the circumstances imposed by the constellation of social positions that give meaning and focus to their lives. (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996, p. 128)

Thus, adolescents have indicated a need to find an appropriate balance between these types of life-role commitments.

With the added responsibility of making commitments to additional life-roles, adolescents may also experience feelings of frustration (affective response) in the decision-making process. For example, adolescents must relinquish their dependence on others to make decisions for them and begin to rely on their own skills for decision making and career planning.

> Sometimes examination of the life structure is not simply occasioned by a work-role transition, such as … graduation, but that the problem is spun in another strand of the web. For example, some students' indecision problems are wrapped in their role as children because they cannot make a choice for fear of disappointing a parent. (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1990, p. 129)

Again, issues such as dependency and security may need to be dealt with, and personal responsibility will need to be accepted. Proactive interventions that aim to resolve these concerns about commitment and undecidedness will need to accomplish the following:

- Establish life-planning and life-design information to deal with how they aim to cope with conflicting role dynamics and life-structure changes in the STW transition

- Foster "planful" attitudes toward coping behaviours in preparation for the cultural adaptation to work and working conditions

- Offer encouragement to focus on the journey through career decision-making skills such as, examining choices, setting goals, and making plans

- Provide support to address feelings of frustration about the added responsibilities in adolescents' life-structure gained by the adoption and modification of life-roles

Implications

On the basis of adolescents' responses and their perceptions of career concern, other more general implications are also recommended.

Implications for Earlier Career Counselling

Results of this investigation suggest that although adolescents have different perceptions regarding career concerns, themes within each grade and across developmental stages are not significantly different. The implication is that junior and high school students are capable of thinking about career concerns within very similar themes. According to the qualitative data, a majority of themes emerged during Grade 7, a limited amount of themes were added, and no original themes could be eliminated from

the senior high school samples. However, with each increasing grade, the responses became more sophisticated, while the themes themselves were described with greater detail. Thus some themes were transformed to reflect more specified concerns, such as the "wrong occupational choice" and the "having to decide quickly" themes. This research would suggest that both junior high and senior high school students are capable of thinking about their career concerns, regardless of their developmental age.

Implications for career counselling in middle/junior high school. Adolescents experience many developmental tasks and career concerns at the junior high school level. The transition from childhood to adolescence presents the challenges of achieving independence, clarifying an identity, feeling that they belong, and setting vocational goals (Havighurst, 1972). "Strides toward independence, however, are often accompanied by feelings of insecurity, conflict, fear, and anxiety" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, p. 284). It will become increasingly necessary that practioners developing career programs for youth able to explore the feelings, needs, concerns, and uncertainties that adolescents have toward their careers. Although adolescents in junior high school struggle with these career concerns, counsellors may "need to challenge students to become active agents in the career development process while at the same time offering supportive assistance as students acquire additional self- and career information" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, p. 284). Therefore, junior high school students require practitioners who are able to understand and respond to both their personal and career development concerns.

"Specifically, middle/junior high school students are required to learn about themselves and the world-of-work and then translate this learning into an educational plan for the remainder of their secondary school education" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey,

2002, p. 285). Adolescents whose curiosity has been stimulated by the exploration of their career development concerns will be more likely to engage in those exploratory and "planful" behaviours that will help to resolve them. Thus, programs that provide a wide range of opportunities to explore both personal characteristics and educational options can help enhance the career development of junior high students. Adolescents unable to resolve these concerns may experience uncertainty about the complicated career development tasks confronting them.

Implications for career counselling in high school/early adulthood. Giving adolescents opportunities to explore interests, learn self-management and job skills, and relate activities they already enjoy to different types of work may help adolescents prepare for their career journey more than simply supplying them with occupational information (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1995). Clearer options appear to adolescents as they start to gain preparatory experiences to learn more about themselves and the world-of-work. However, adolescents need to be able to use available information to guide their exploration of post secondary and other educational/vocational opportunities in order to set tentative career goals. Although relating students' abilities and interests to occupational options provide important information for adolescents engaging in career choices, this type of information fails to assess whether students have developed a readiness for making career decisions. If the "the key elements to a successful school-to-work and school-to-school transition involve being able to implement and adjust to a career choice" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002, p. 291), then practitioners will need to focus additional attention on moderator variables of transition such as readiness for career decision making, life-role salience, and values.

Thus, counsellors may help adolescents gain the exposure needed to hypothesize and problem-solve across many career transitions. Counsellors can do this by encouraging adolescents to keep their options open, make their own decisions, set their own goals, and explore as many life styles and occupational choices as possible (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1995; Grotevant, Cooper, & Kramer, 1986).

Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2002) recommend that, since transitions are a regular part of students' development, adolescents and counsellors alike be encouraged to view these "transitions as a process rather than as events or a sequence of events" (p. 292). Categories that coalesce with adolescents' basic needs in transition should incorporate assistance including support, awareness, and skills in "a) orienting students' comprehension of careers, b) developing students' competence at planning and exploring, c) coaching students to develop effective career management techniques, and d) guiding students in behavioural rehearsals to become prepared for coping with job problems" (Savickas, 1999). In particular, many adolescents appear to need transition skills that can be built upon the self-awareness, occupational awareness, and decision-making skills, that they have already gathered so far in their educational experience. In addition, adolescents appear to need transitional skills related to stress and anxiety management. Therefore, career and personal concerns will need to be addressed in unison throughout adolescents' career development and need to be part of the process of career planning interventions.

Implications for Career Counselling Assessment

Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2002) outlined three areas of importance for students prior to focusing on career decision making. Values, life-role salience, and readiness for

career decision making are considered to be necessary process variables before adolescents will be ready to choose and adapt to occupations (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). Adolescents then will need to make certain decisions and acquire competencies so they can progress through the developmental tasks they face.

When evaluating individual readiness to adapt, counsellors and researchers could assess the processes of adaptability and their developmental course in terms of planful foresight, exploration of the situation, relevant knowledge about self and situation, and decisional skill. The outcomes could be assessed in terms of increase or decrease in person-situation congruence and movement toward self-completion. (Savickas, 1997b, p. 5)

Adolescence is a time when students acquire a set of values which can reflect adolescent goals and provide a sense of purpose and direction. Value clarification is an important aspect of the personality composition of students who must acquire adequate self-knowledge for educational and occupational exploration. Making commitments, dedicating time to life-roles, and being able to solve moral dilemmas may be concerns and career tasks that provide adolescents with opportunities for value expression and exploration. Practitioners can help adolescents review these experiences and concerns to reach value resolutions and also to identify work-related activities that will later provide adolescents with opportunities to express individual values.

Adolescents' ability to organize their self-descriptions in identity formation helps to cultivate a realistic self-concept and informs their occupational identity. "Having already explored alternatives, identity-achieved individuals have been able to commit to a clearly formulated set of self chosen values and goals" (Beck, 1999) and are often

motivated to develop the career maturity necessary for making good decisions. When students are able to formulate total concepts of self, this helps them identify those life-roles in which "they spend most of their time, those to which they are emotionally committed and those they expect to be important for them in the future" (Niles & Bowlsby, 2002, p. 291). Those life-roles inform adolescents' sense of personal self-concepts, and contribute to a sense of psychological well-being, of continuity through time, and of knowing the direction they are heading in (Beck, 1999).

Exploring factors that affect life can further facilitate career development by discussing those values adolescents find salient in each life-role. Discussion of this information can establish a foundation for making accurate self-evaluations, developing appropriate expectations for value satisfaction in life-roles, guiding the pursuit of educational and occupational alternatives, and developing career choice readiness (Niles & Bolwsby, 2002). Life-role salience questions concerning the interrelationship between life-roles and career can influence the goal commitments of adolescents and need to be incorporated in the career assessments for students.

Implications for Career Counselling Interventions

Uniform attempts to address adolescent concerns from a unitary approach to vocational development may work for some and fail for others. Vocational guidance has typically assessed individuals as coming from a homogeneous group needing interest inventory interpretation and occupational information to solve their career concerns. Neimeyer's (1988) model of vocational development and Savickas' (2001) life-span, life-space approach to locating career concerns highlight the need to view adolescents, regardless of their ages, as a heterogeneous group of individuals who may struggle in any

of these developmental stages. Development along these vocational construct systems requires differential interventions that depend on the stage and goal-end outcomes revealed by adolescents' career concerns.

Interventions that deal with the development tasks of vocational systems and the adaptive tasks of coping with career concerns will be more effective in helping adolescents develop the adaptive fitness necessary to successfully mediate career challenges. "Adaptation" as a career development concept seems to be a marked improvement on the earlier "biological" construct used to denote maturation. Adaptation emphasizes the interaction between the individual and the environment. "Adaptation, meaning to make more suitable (or congruent) by changing, also coincides with the development perspective on careers. It suggests flexibility in responding to the environment, without the negative connotation of similar words such as adjust, accommodate, and conform" (Savickas, 1997a, p. 5). This shift in attention from the individual to the individual-in-situation coincides with contextual and multicultural perspectives on work; it is an adept approach for counsellors to take when tailoring interventions to address adolescent career concerns.

Students who have not sufficiently accomplished the career development tasks presented to them at previous educational levels may need career development interventions that assess the internal and environmental pressures in making career decisions. Developing career choice readiness may depend on the ability of adolescents to resolve many of the internal concerns and pressures prior to focusing on career decision making. "When adolescents do not engage in appropriate career planning, they often encounter career tasks for which they are not prepared" (Niles, 2002, p. 291) and

many make poor career choices. Therefore, in developing readiness to make career choices, adolescents will need to become adept at recognizing and addressing interrelated external and internal career choice concerns (Appendix I). Whether the progression involves career choice content or process, adolescents will need additional assistance in order to cope with the feelings and concerns that make it difficult for them to meet career development tasks and plan for their future careers. Counsellors should focus interventions on helping students progress through each particular concern prior to focusing on career decision-making.

Limitations of the Study

In regard to the qualitative approach of grounded theory, the nature of the research question allowed the researcher freedom to explore a broad range of responses related to the topic of career concern. The range of participants' responses uncovered themes that could be subject to a variety of interpretations. That is one difficulty that results from the grounded theory approach. Although the focus of this research allowed an introductory analysis on how career concerns are perceived by adolescents, additional analysis procedures, such as the interview method, could be useful in providing supplementary information in which a more in-depth exploration of adolescents' career needs can be gained. Since other individual research may have further insights into these findings, further research on this topic may be necessary.

Directions for Future Research

To date relatively few research studies have attempted to obtain students' perceptions about their concerns and program needs. In order to enhance the present understanding of adolescents' career needs, further research is required regarding

students' perceptions of concern. Utilizing an interviewing procedure would provide supplementary information that could bring the power of adolescents' contextualized narratives and their lived experience to the forefront of the investigation. Qualitative analysis following the interview method will provide a greater depth and richness to our understanding about what students believe their concerns are. From here, qualitative analysis within grounded theory procedures and methodology could be used in coding the themes and categories found in these differentiated response groups. Soliciting personal stories and descriptive accounts as they are experienced will provide a full and detailed description of adolescents' career concerns.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to discover adolescents' perceptions of career concern. A grounded theory approach to data analysis was used and found that adolescents considered both extrinsic and intrinsic forms of concern to be problematic along their career paths. Furthermore, adolescents have many concerns and questions about their career; unchecked, their concerns can progress into feelings of apprehension, insecurity, worry, frustration, and even fear. The results of this project combined with the literature suggest that adolescents confront a system of core thematic issues that stem from dealing with those age-graded development tasks, social expectations, and personal projects that are connected with the word career. This study reveals that adolescents confront a system of thematic concerns that include distinct core issues related to (1) learning, (2) security, (3) satisfaction, (4) failing, and (5) commitment. Those who are left with unanswered questions and unresolved concerns illuminate why some adolescents are experiencing difficulty in settling some of their career distress. With endless possibilities

and too few certainties, some adolescents appear to feel unsure about their future; the abundance of alternatives and lack of certainty seem to make resolving these career concerns (and finding their own career path) a difficult process.

Conclusion

Adolescents wonder how they will be able to persevere in the face of difficult decisions and transitions. Viewed in light of career choice process variables, such as readiness for career decision making, life-role salience, and values, interest and ability assessments are inadequate tools for determining whether students have developed a readiness for career decision making. Career counselling today more often takes into consideration internal concerns that are not exclusively work based, as well as including coping strategies related to personal life-role commitments. Work itself now occurs within a larger societal context and thus necessitates a more holistic approach to career concerns. Thus, career practitioners will need to look more closely at how personal concerns, individual contexts, and life-role commitments affect the adolescent population.

"Career concerns are personal and workers today evaluate career decisions within the context of the life roles they play" (Niles et al., 2002, p. 5). Career development interventions should address the internal and environmental pressure many students experience in making career decisions (Herr & Cramer, 1996). Ultimately, learning, understanding, and applying the process of career planning can help adolescents resolve these concerns, while still acknowledging their complexity.

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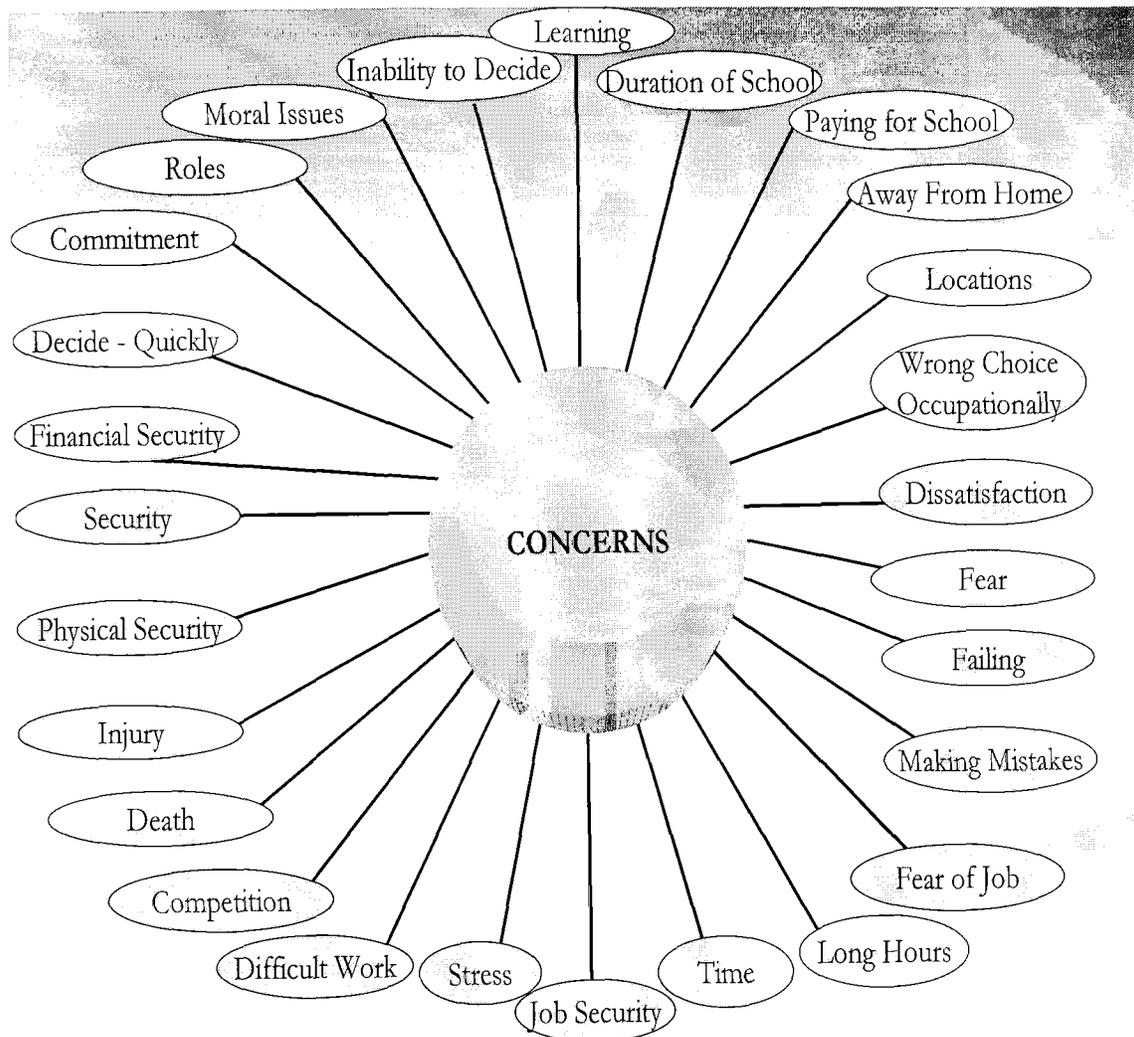
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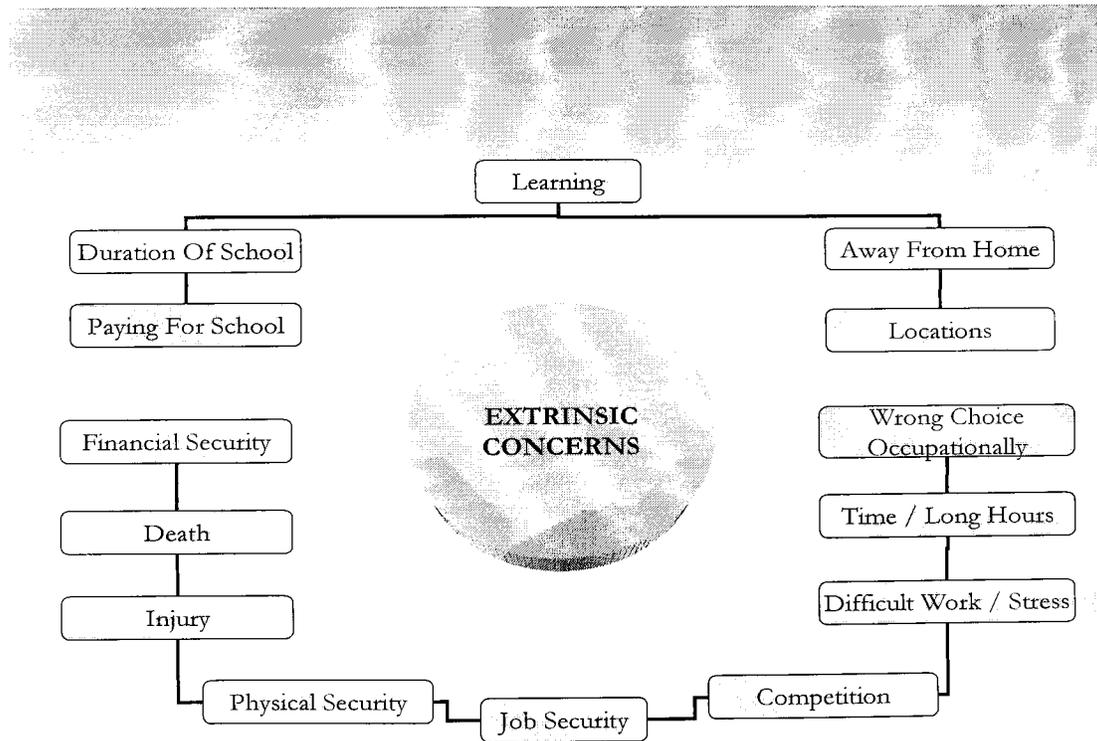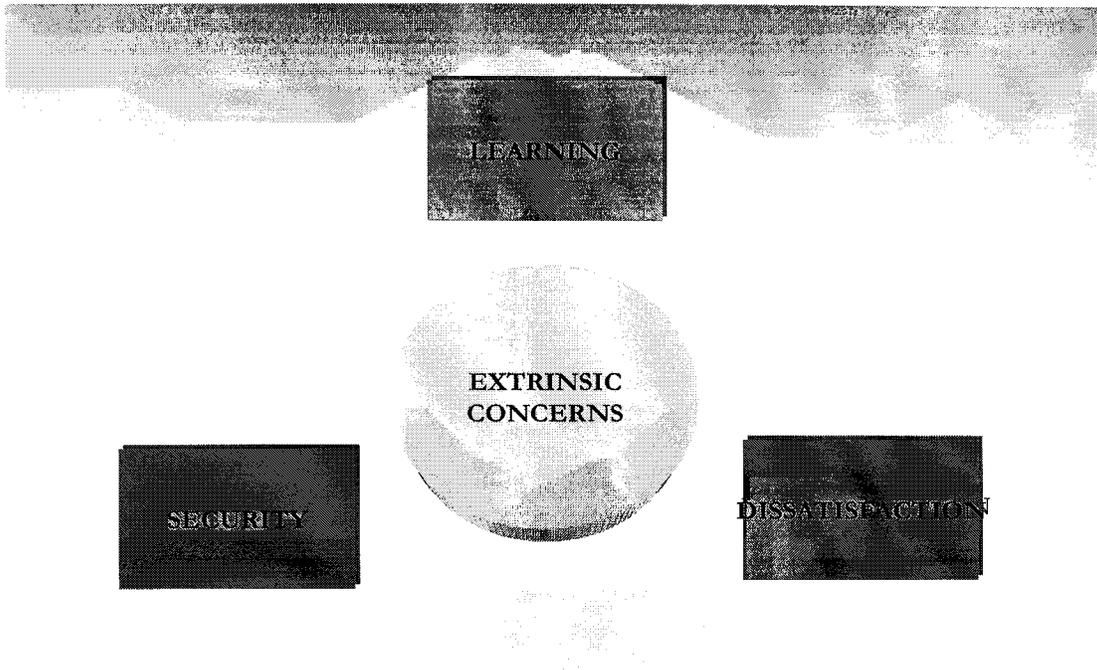
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Appendix A. Junior High and High School Themes

Learning
Inability to Decide
Duration of School
Moral Issues
Paying for School
Roles
Away From Home
Commitment
Locations
Decide - Quickly
Wrong Choice Occupationally
Financial Security
Dissatisfaction
Security
Fear
Physical Security
Failing
Injury
Making Mistakes
Death
Fear of Job
Competition
Difficult Work
Stress
Time
Long Hours
Job Security
CONCERNS

Appendix B. Extrinsic Concerns

LEARNING

EXTRINSIC
CONCERNS

SECURITY

DISSATISFACTION

Learning

Duration Of School

Paying For School

Away From Home

Locations

Financial Security

EXTRINSIC
CONCERNS

Wrong Choice
Occupationally

Death

Time / Long Hours

Injury

Difficult Work / Stress

Physical Security

Job Security

Competition

Appendix C. Learning, Security, & Dissatisfaction Concerns

EXTRINSIC CONCERNS

LEARNING

Duration Of School

Away From Home

SECURITY

Paying For School

Locations

Financial Security

EXTRINSIC
CONCERNS

Wrong Choice
Occupationally

DISSATISFACTION

Death

Time / Long Hours

Injury

Difficult Work / Stress

Physical Security

Job Security

Competition
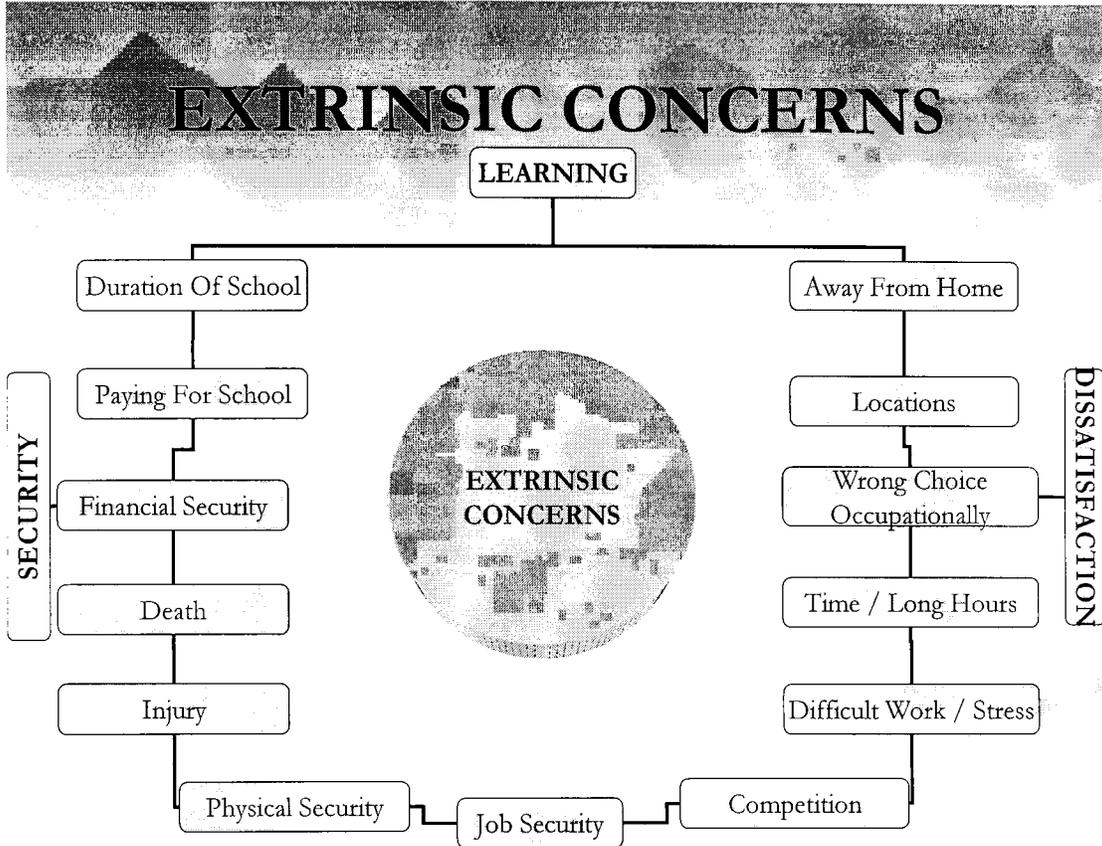
Appendix D. Intrinsic Concerns

INABILITY TO DECIDE

COMMITMENT

INTRINSIC CONCERNS

FEAR OF JOB

FAILING

Moral Issues   Inability to Choose   Roles

Commitment

Failing

Fear   Fear of Job   Making Mistakes
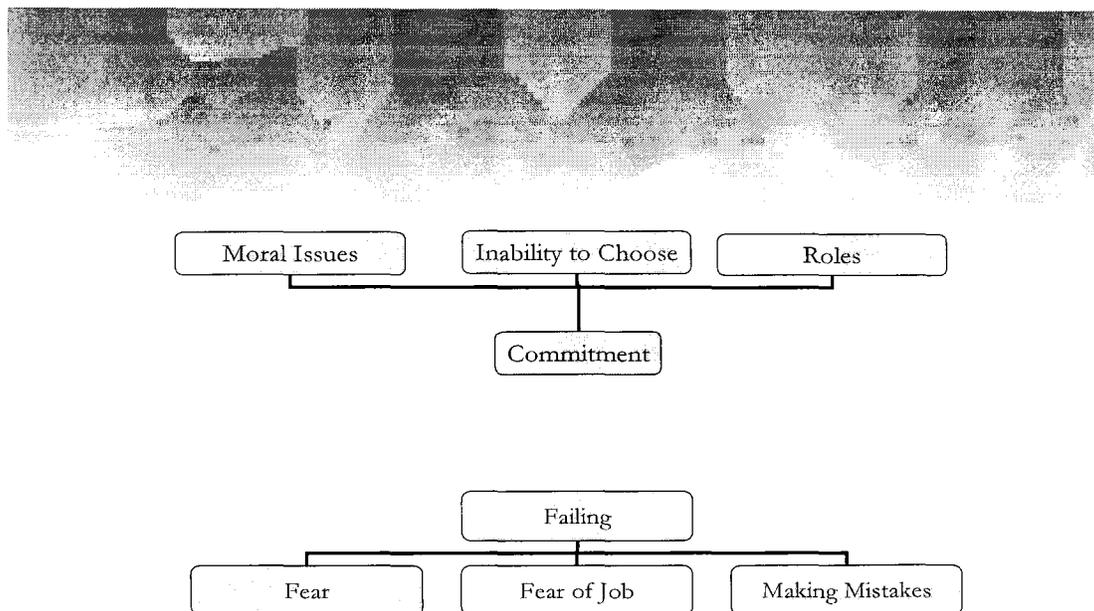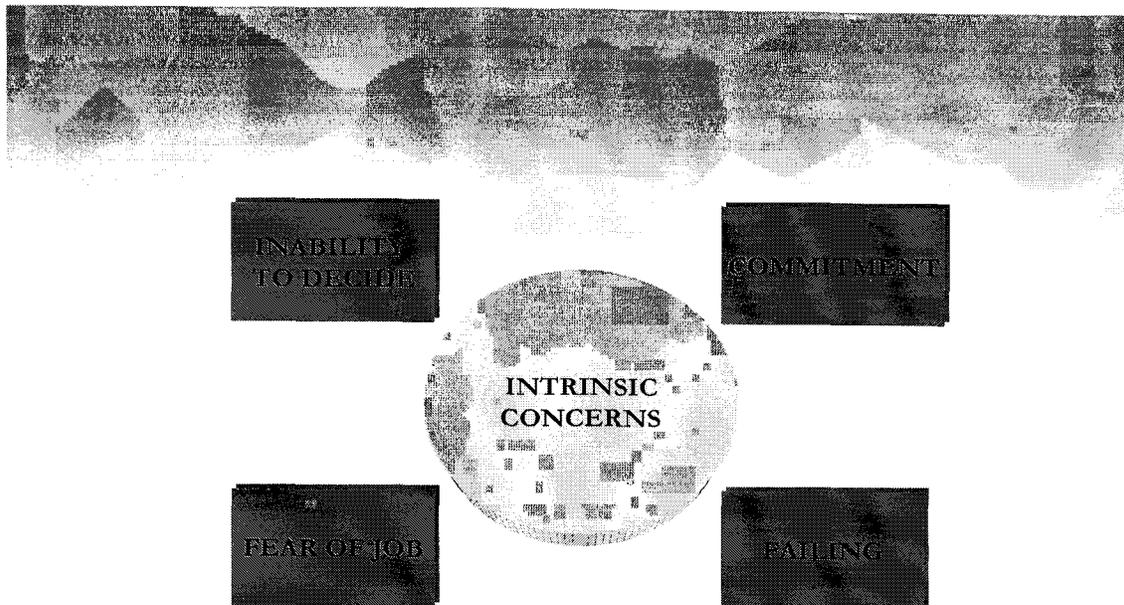
Appendix E. Failing and Commitment Concerns

FAILING CONCERNS

```
              ┌──────────┐
         ┌────│ Failing  │────┐
         │    └──────────┘    │
    ┌────────┐  INTRINSIC  ┌──────────┐
    │  Fear  │  CONCERNS   │  Making  │
    └────────┘             │ Mistakes │
         │    ┌──────────┐  └──────────┘
         └────│ Fear of Job│──┘
              └──────────┘
```

COMMITMENT CONCERNS

```
              ┌──────────────────┐
         ┌────│ Inability to Choose │────┐
         │    └──────────────────┘      │
    ┌──────────────┐  INTRINSIC  ┌──────────┐
    │ Moral Issues │  CONCERNS   │  Roles   │
    └──────────────┘             └──────────┘
         │    ┌──────────────┐          │
         └────│  Commitment  │──────────┘
              └──────────────┘
```

Appendix F. Adolescents' Thematic Career Concerns and Core Career Concern Structure

LEARNING

Duration Of School

Inability to Decide

Away From Home

Paying For School

Moral Issues   Roles

Locations

COMMITMENT

SECURITY

Financial Security   Decide - Quickly   Wrong Choice Occupationally

DISSATISFACTION

FAILING

Death

Fear   Making Mistakes

Time / Long Hours

Fear of Job

Injury

Difficult Work / Stress

Physical Security   Job Security   Competition

Appendix G. Self-Regulation Mechanisms and Core Career Concern Similarities

Appendix H. Subjective Responses of Affect (Anxiety) and Specific Directions to

Alleviate Symptoms

Appendix I. Adolescents' Perceived Career Concerns and Tailored Directions for

Intervention