

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Debra A. Derr for the degree of Doctor of Education presented on July 22, 1996. Title:  
Selected Oregon Student, Parent, and Teacher Perceptions of the Factors That Influenced  
Eleventh Grade Students' Readiness to Make Career Choices.

Abstract approved:

*Redacted for Privacy*

R. Lance Haddon

Oregon educational reform efforts are moving ahead with the support of legislation, business and industry, and education. There has been little apparent consideration given to the readiness of tenth graders to make career choices even though the research in the area of career maturity indicates that students at this period in their career development are not prepared to make mature career choices.

This study examined the perceptions of selected eleventh graders, parents, and teachers of the factors that influenced the students' readiness to make their career choices. The perceived factors found by each participant included: experience and information, interest in the career area, and personal values. Students and parents identified the need for personal satisfaction. Students and teachers identified skills and abilities. Students, solely, identified the importance of parental support as a factor in their readiness.

The factors were comparable to those found in current literature on career maturity and career choice. However, the emphasis placed on certain factors was in contrast to the literature. Participants emphasized the importance of work experience in the area of career choice. Students did not find value in career education classes. They wanted career experiences to provide individualized career information. Each student discussed television as a means of obtaining career-related information. Students stressed the essential nature of

positive parental support. This study showed a strong connection between the self-described self-concept of the student, perception of parental support, and career choice readiness.

The participants believed that the students were ready to make individual career choices. However, this readiness was presented within the boundaries that students be allowed the flexibility to change their minds at any point in the process, without penalty.

Further research was indicated in relation to: the importance of television as a means of obtaining career-related information; the link between self-concept, perception of parental support, and career choice; and the need to examine current approaches to career development and guidance practices in light of educational reform mandates.

Selected Oregon Student, Parent, and Teacher Perceptions  
of the Factors That Influenced Eleventh Grade  
Students' Readiness to Make Career Choices

by

Debra A. Derr

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Doctor of Education thesis of Debra A. Derr presented on July 22, 1996

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Debra A. Derr, Author

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## **DEDICATION**

**To Emily and Brennan**

# **SELECTED OREGON STUDENT, PARENT, AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS' READINESS TO MAKE CAREER CHOICES**

## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE PROBLEM**

Oregon is implementing the Oregon House of Representatives, Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century (1991), better known as House Bill 3565, and the subsequent revisions to the legislation provided by Oregon House of Representatives Conference Committee Amendments to B-Engrossed (1995) also known as House Bill 2991. Legislators and educators have discussed proficiencies, outcomes, authentic assessment, Certificates of Initial Mastery (CIM) and Certificates of Advanced Mastery (CAM), as a part of the reform. Under the Education Reform Act, the student is led on a journey from what is now kindergarten through grade 10. At that time, students, at about age 15, will make decisions as to what general occupational or career area they wish to pursue. The legislation provides for a minimum of six broad career endorsement areas of study beyond grade 10 and sets high academic expectations. House Bill 2991 (1995) acknowledges the importance of encouraging student choice by allowing students to move among endorsement areas. This process is intended to prepare the best educated and trained work force in the United States by the year 2000. However, it does not speak to the developmental, physical, emotional, social, or spiritual changes affecting people who are 15 years old and of their readiness to make career choices.

## Historical Perspectives of Education Reform

Education reform is not new to the United States. Reform efforts can be traced back to William Penn, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and state-financed schools for the underprivileged, Horace Mann and the Common School, and John Dewey and the democratic classroom. These reformists were impassioned by the ideal that education could be used to serve the common good and better the plight of the disenfranchised (Lauderdale, 1987). The second major theme in education reform came to the United States from Western Europe. This theme focused on the urgency for academic excellence that would produce "a literate and cultured person — one whose life is infused with the world of ideas, an appreciation of the arts, and the acceptance of civic responsibility" (Lauderdale, 1987, p. 23). Those first reform efforts focused on issues of equity; the second focused on commitment to academic excellence.

More recently, the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), occurring less than two decades apart, "symbolically represent the polarity of views on what should be the national priorities for education" (Lauderdale, 1987, p. 24). Beyond the desire to provide education to the masses and guarantee excellence in education, the cultural demands addressed in education reform movements represented by *Brown v. Board of Education* (where the Supreme Court overturned the separate but equal doctrine, "ruling that segregated schools were inherently unequal and violated the Fourteenth Amendment" [Gutek, 1991, p. 265]), and *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (where, in 1971, the Supreme Court upheld its use of citywide busing to achieve integration), the passage of Public Law 94.142 (the Education of All Handicapped Children Act) (Gutek, 1991), and the ongoing immigration of people into our country, and consequently into our

educational systems, are also a part of the continuing reform of public education. Our schools are called upon to provide support to changing family structures and address the needs of children in poverty, the inadequacy of social welfare and social service programs, and a decrease in a sense of civic responsibility (Thompson, 1993). Lauderdale (1987) states, "the fact that our schools have been able to absorb such an immense transformation and continue to function effectively is a credit to the institution" (p. 27).

### Education Reform in Oregon

The latest reform efforts in Oregon have been driven by the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. This legislation, and the subsequent revisions made in House Bill 2991 (1995), establishes a plan for the state's public schools encompassing many reforms including content and performance-based assessment, outcome-based education, alternative learning options, school site councils, non-graded primary education, and required second language proficiency (Thompson, 1993). The Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century was developed over a 10-year period of time through the efforts of legislators, business and industry leaders, school boards, school administrators, teachers, and post-secondary educators (Engel, 1994). The goal of the legislation is to better address the educational and training needs of young people, as they prepare to enter the workplace, college and adulthood. Jim Jamieson, principal at Willamette High School in Eugene, Oregon, stated, "I think we've educated kids for an economic system that existed years ago" (Thompson, 1993, p. 5). This theme is repeated in studies such as *A Nation At Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

The primary motivator for the current reform movement has been "the realization that our economy has changed to a service and information-based system. The need to focus on communication, cooperative learning, system analysis, and technology has become

paramount" (Engel, 1994, p. 2). Educators recognize that public education has not met the needs of industry and with that a shortage of skilled workers has developed. Industry requires workers who are flexible, have strong communication skills, can learn on the job, and who have the ability to self-supervise. The job market is ambiguous and individuals must possess the skills and abilities to move from one job to another through retraining. Our new work force must be adaptable and possess the ability to think critically, solve problems, and move through a system or process that is in flux (Thompson, 1993).

Oregon's educational reform legislation proposes to address the academic and work-related concerns discussed above. The component of the legislation designed to provide students the opportunity to gain specific knowledge, exposure, and training in broad career areas is the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM). The CAM has six general career endorsement areas students may choose to explore. These areas are arts and communication, business and management, health services, human resources, industrial and engineering systems, and natural resources. House Bill 2991 (1995) states clearly that, "the Oregon State Board of Education, shall adopt rules that facilitate movement among endorsements and shall encourage public school choice and mobility so as to enhance a student's opportunities for a full range of educational experiences" (p. 13). This component of the legislation broadens a student's possible choices.

### Rationale

Much work and research have been conducted in the field of career development and career decision-making. In this area, Donald Super and his colleagues have developed the most comprehensive developmental theory of career choice (Dusek, 1977). "The basic concept in Super's theory is that vocational choices are made in such a way as to allow the greatest opportunity for the expression of the developing self-concept of the individual"

(Dusek, 1977, p. 275). The individual's self-concept develops through his or her life. The process of career choice emulates the evolution of the individual's self-concept reflecting the changes in how one sees oneself. "In the earlier stages of development the self-concept is not fully developed; as a result, the vocational choices of younger and older adolescents will differ considerably" (Dusek, 1977, p. 275). People choose careers that allow the greatest expression of self-concept. As one's self-concept becomes more defined, career choices become narrower and more specific.

Career development is a complex, lifelong process. "It is a developmental process involving progression through a series of more or less discernible states and substages" (Jordaan, 1974, p. 267). Individuals move through the developmental stages at different rates. Attempts to specify precise ages is difficult and general estimates such as early adolescence or young adulthood are used more commonly (Jordaan, 1974).

"If . . . vocational development is systematic . . . it should be possible to assess not only how much of the road the individual has covered, but also how fast he is traveling in comparison with others who are embarked on the same journey" (Jordaan, 1974, p. 270). Career maturity is a behavioral and attitudinal concept first used by Donald Super in 1957. His definition originated as a construct of his theory of career development and was defined "as the extent to which an individual has mastered the age-appropriate vocational tasks relevant to his or her developmental state (Betz, 1988)" (as cited in Fouad & Keeley, 1992, p. 257). Super further stated that "the process of career development is essentially that of developing and implementing occupational self-concepts and further conceived of career maturity as the ability to successfully cope with demands placed on an individual at any given life-career state" (as cited in Fouad & Keeley, 1992, p. 258). Career maturity is more than the readiness to make a decision about becoming a doctor or welder. It is a tool used



to examine one's understanding of who he or she is and what his or her life goals are. It is used to examine where an individual is in the process of his or her career development.

Super (1974) believes that career maturity is a central, although neglected, idea in education and career guidance and counseling. He believes that understanding the process of career development is essential to education. Super (1974) states, "Without a knowledge of career development and vocational maturity there can be no such thing as genuine career education or career guidance" (p. 9). The model that is used in career guidance or developmental career counseling presumes that the individual moves along one of a number of possible pathways through, or ladders up, the educational system and into the world of work.

Readiness to make decisions at each branch of the career tree as he climbs it, is crucial to the success of his efforts. The speed with which he moves is determined largely by psychological and social characteristics, but speed is no asset if the goal is unclear. (Super, 1974, p. 10)

We recognize individual differences in how and when people develop. This recognition of variation applies in a person's readiness and capacity to deal with vocational developmental tasks (Jordaan, 1974).

Education reform efforts in Oregon have been mandated to move at a fast pace. The push to implement changes in the way in which education is delivered may have ignored issues regarding career choices students must make at the end of tenth grade, and their readiness to make them. Overall, the research in the area of career maturity and readiness to make career choices indicates that students, between eighth and tenth grade, and sometimes beyond, are not prepared to make these decisions (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968; Jordaan, 1974; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Pratt, 1989; Super, 1974, 1983). Current research further indicates that there are many complex variables associated with career choice. The research also questions the ability of people, particularly adolescents, to make accurate self-estimates

of where they are in the career exploration process (Brown, Fulkerson, Vedder, & Ware, 1983; Westbrook, Sanford, Merwin, Fleenor, & Gilleland, 1988). This is an important factor in that historically, much of the determination of career maturity is based on the student's self-estimate on certain measures of self-concept, career maturity, and readiness.

Recognition of these considerations is important. Career development program design can consider the career maturity issue by examining the factors influencing a person's readiness to make career decisions.

House Bill 2991 (1995) refers indirectly to career exploration and preparation activities. The legislation that defines the Certificate of Initial Mastery alludes to the need for students to gain the knowledge necessary to succeed in the world of work. This is the only mention of activities prior to grade 10 that have career development as a possible focus. The CAM must provide a combination of study and work-related learning experiences such as job shadowing, workplace mentoring, workplace simulations, school-based enterprises, cooperative work and study programs, on-the-job training, apprenticeship, or other school-to-work opportunities. These activities are mentioned in the literature as tools students use to crystallize career choices (Jordaan, 1974). However, as the legislation is written, these activities will not be available to the student until after the student's choice is made.

Oregon currently requires students to complete a one-half unit (.5 unit) of career education prior to graduation. The one-half unit can be presented to students in a number of ways. Some high schools provide a semester course in career education, while other high schools spread smaller unique activities over the 4 years of high school. Either of these options has strengths and weaknesses. However, for the student, neither option appears to provide a clear thread to follow in making a career choice, unless careful and continuous monitoring and career counseling is provided. Jordaan (1974) summarized this concern

about current career development programs by emphasizing the focus on the activities involved in career exploration, not the developmental process. The field has traditionally looked at what students do, not why they do it.

Students will be exposed to the career development process in varying ways through elementary and into high school. They will be required to choose a career endorsement area by the end of grade 10. During grades 11 and 12, students are exposed to and gain academic and experiential competency in certain aspects of the career area they have chosen. This choice affects the courses the student will complete during their remaining years in high school and may also effect decisions related to future training and education or employment after high school graduation.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a current perspective of the perceptions of the factors that influenced eleventh grade students' readiness to make reasonable career choices. The focus of this study is to examine, in depth, the perceptions of significant individuals involved in the career choice of a typical Oregon eleventh grade student, at a high school implementing the Certificate of Advanced Mastery, as defined by House Bill 2991 (1995). The study will explore the perceptions of three interlinking groups: students, their parents, and their teachers.

#### Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is twofold. First, it may provide needed information for career educators in public schools that may be used in the planning of career development and guidance programs. Second, this information may be used by career and life planning educators in Oregon community colleges in the planning of career programs.

Currently, it is not uncommon for the community college to be a person's first opportunity for a guided or structured process of career decision-making. Students coming from Oregon high schools under the new legislation will have different educational and life experiences and different expectations of career and life planning programs than in the past. The issues associated with this have not been fully explored. The information from this study may be useful in examining the future career development needs of younger students.

### Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To conduct a review of the literature examining what research on this subject has been completed since the inception of the concept of career maturity and readiness to make career decisions in the late 1950s. This study focused on the work of the theorists and researchers who worked together on the Career Pattern Study (Super, 1957) and studies that followed in response to the findings of Super and his contemporaries.
2. To conduct research using qualitative methodology to include in-depth interviewing and constant-comparative methods of data analysis.
3. To interpret the findings by examining the data for themes within and between the groups to be interviewed. To analyze the data with respect to past research and to make comparisons to student records and documents that included the students' career portfolio, looking for similarities, differences, and new perspectives.
4. To interpret the findings, providing to educators in the state of Oregon who plan, implement, and monitor career guidance programs in elementary and secondary schools, and community colleges, a current perspective on the perceptions of the factors that influenced the readiness of eleventh grade students to make career choices. This research

may provide current information for examination that to date has not been explored as a part of the new wave of educational reform in Oregon.

### Definition of Terms

*Career choice:* A definite commitment, with some degree of certainty, to a particular career goal. Inherent in career choice is the necessity to compromise. The career choice makes as much use as possible of the person's interests and capacities in a manner that will satisfy as many values and goals of the individual as possible (Roth, Hershenson, & Hilliard, 1970).

*Career development:* An ongoing, continuous, generally irreversible, orderly, patterned, and dynamic process, which involves interaction between the individual's behavioral repertoire, vocational developmental tasks, the demands of society, and other factors (Super, 1957). Career development is a process extending over most of one's life involving one's abilities and interests. The process is influenced by a multitude of psychosocial forces which require constant and persistent compromise (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968).

*Career or vocational maturity:* The "extent to which an individual has mastered the age-appropriate vocational tasks relevant to his or her developmental stage (Betz, 1988)" (as cited in Fouad & Keeley, 1992, p. 257).

*Certificate of advanced mastery:* The component of House Bill 3565 (1991) and House Bill 2991 (1995) that defines levels of competency for students completing high school. The CAM provides students the opportunity to gain specific knowledge, exposure, and training in six general career areas: arts and communication, business and management, health services, human resources, industrial and engineering systems, and natural resources. Upon completion of the CAM, the student must demonstrate high levels of performance in

nine outcome areas. The first six outcome areas are defined as the foundations skills: thinking, self-directed learning, communicating, use of technology, quantifying, and collaborating. The advanced application skills provide the student opportunities to demonstrate expanded knowledge and more sophisticated skills: use of knowledge, improving processes, and enhancing systems (21st Century Schools Council, 1994).

*Oregon House of Representatives, Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century (House Bill 3565)*: Legislation enacted in 1991 "which proposed achieving . . . the best educated citizens in the nation by the year 2000; and work force equal to any in the world by the year 2010" (Kaltwasser, Golding, McConoughey, Rabchuk, Unger, & Eaton, 1993, p. 5). Objectives of this law included establishing the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM); offering alternative learning options for students experiencing difficulties achieving the CIM and CAM; establishing early childhood programs and academic professional programs as a part of a comprehensive educational system; and establishing partnerships among business, labor, parents, and the educational community . . . (Kaltwasser et al., 1993).

*Readiness*: The degree of preparedness an individual has achieved to make a career choice (Phillips & Blustein, 1994).

*Oregon House of Representatives, Conference Committee Amendments to B-Engrossed (House Bill 2991)*: The revisions made in June 1995 by the Oregon State Legislature to the Educational Act for the 21st Century. The changes to the legislation profess to strengthen and clarify Oregon's efforts to build a more academically rigorous system of public education.

*Self-concept*: The perceptions one has of oneself (Damon & Hart, 1988; Super, 1963a). These perceptions acquire meaning by an individual picturing himself or herself in a

role of some kind, a situation, position, performing some set of functions, or in a relationship of some kind (Super, 1963a).

### Delimitations

This study is delimited by several factors. First, the study explored the perceptions of four high school students in their junior year, who represent a "typical" Oregon high school eleventh grader, as defined by an analysis of Oregon Department of Education demographic information; four parents, one parent of each selected student; and four teachers, one lead teacher of the career endorsement area each student chose. Second, the students were recommended for participation in this study by the high school counseling department based on the selection criteria. Finally, this study explored the perceptions of students, parents, and teachers from one Oregon high school implementing a form of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery.

### Limitations

Any study has limitations inherent in its design. The limitations of this study include the following considerations. First, there exist intrinsic concerns surrounding the interviewing process. Qualitative research, in-depth interviewing specifically, is vulnerable to the personal biases of the researcher and can be shaped by his or her perspectives and theoretical positions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 1987). Neutrality must be maintained to the greatest degree possible. Issues related to differences in gender, class, and age may create tension inhibiting full development of an effective interviewing relationship. The interviewer must be skillful in recognizing the participants' perceptions of what constitutes private, personal, and public information (Seidman, 1991). Rapport is a vital component of a successful interviewing relationship. The interviewing in this study was limited to two, 45-

minute interviews. This time constraint may have limited the establishment of rapport. In an interviewing relationship, the interviewer must acknowledge the limitation of language. The meaning the interviewer gives to a word or concept may not be that of the participant. Meaning may also be, to some degree, "a function of the participants' interaction with the interviewer" (Seidman, 1991, p. 16). There will always be a role the interviewer and the interviewing situation have on how participants reconstruct their experiences (Seidman, 1991). The interviewer may be seen as an intruder (Patton, 1987).

Second, specific to this study, a limitation may have existed inherent in the potential biases present in the selection of the study's participants. The high school in this study selected a single counselor to participate in the study. To protect the anonymity of the potential participants, and to encourage the appropriate use of typical case sampling methods for participant selection, the high school counselor selected the students of the study. The counselor was presented with specific selection criteria to guide the selection of the student participants; however, this may not have completely eliminated any personal biases the counselor may have had. Also, the selection of participants was presented to the counselor in addition to other regular duties. The counselor was forced to choose alternative participants when initial participant choices declined to take part in the study.

Third, caution must be used in generalizing the findings of this research to the population as a whole. "It is virtually impossible to imagine any human behavior that is not heavily mediated by the context in which it occurs" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 62). This idea was also presented by Borg, Gall, and Gall (1993), and Patton (1987). Consequently, it is very difficult to generalize human behavior and the meaning humans associate to their behavior. This becomes even more complex when one considers the associated difficulty of generalizing human behavior outside of the context in which it occurs. Potential users of this research should examine the methods used and the persons studied before applying the



findings to another situation. It is the intent of this study to identify the perceptions of the factors influencing the readiness of a typical Oregon eleventh grader to make career choices, as identified by significant individuals involved in that choice. Findings of this study may be considered for possible applications in other similar (but not identical) situations, such as found in Oregon high schools and community colleges, which may be changing career development and guidance programs to address education reform mandates. Future research is necessary to test this study's findings.

Finally, it was not the intent of this study to explore ethnic or cultural variations in student, parent, or teacher perceptions of the readiness to make career choices. Career maturity is a complex construct. Research in this area has indicated that ethnicity and culture play a significant role in career maturity (McNair & Brown, 1983; Westbrook & Sanford, 1991). There appear to be certain factors influencing this construct common to white adolescents, that are not common to other ethnic and cultural groups. Most research in this area has been conducted in the United States, Canada, and Australia, and potential users must be cautioned not to apply these findings beyond the scope of this study.

### Summary

Oregon educational reform efforts are moving ahead rapidly and with the support of legislation, business and industry, and education. There has been little, if any, apparent consideration given to the readiness of tenth grade students to make career choices, even though the research, in the area of career maturity, indicates that students, at this point in their career development, are not prepared to make mature career choice decisions. The purpose of this research was to identify and explore the student, parent, and teacher perceptions of the factors that influenced eleventh grade students' readiness to make career choices. The assumption must be made that Oregon will implement reform efforts regardless

of the readiness of the students to make career choices. Consequently, attention must be centered on the factors influencing readiness and the importance of them for the design and implementation of future career guidance programs.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

One cannot get very far with the premise that vocational decisions and outcomes have their roots in the past as well as the present, that they evolve and change as the individual and his circumstances change, and that choice and adjustment are frequently repeated processes, without indicating, or at least speculating about, the nature, sequence, significance and possible determinants of these phenomena. (Jordaan, 1974, p. 266)

This study explored one aspect of the lifelong process of career development: that of readiness to make a career choice. The research in the area of career development, career maturity, and career choice is extensive. It is the purpose of this chapter to review constructs of the process of career development that are most relevant to this study. The review will explore career choice as a developmental process, self-concept and its importance to career choice, and the relationship of career maturity to career choice. Historically the research is quantitative by design, although many of the studies began the collection of their data by qualitative means, primarily, in-depth interviewing. The review of the literature, for the purposes of this study, focused on the work of Donald E. Super, his colleagues and contemporaries.

#### Career Choice as a Developmental Process

##### Stage Development Theory

Donald Super has been investigating and developing his theory of career development since 1942 (Jordaan, 1974). His research includes the study of developmental psychology, for it was essential that his research contain a conceptual framework from which he and his colleagues could organize and interpret their observations and findings (Super, 1957). "Vocational development is conceived of as a lifelong process. . . . It is a

developmental process involving progression through a series of more or less clearly discernible stages and substages" (Jordaan, 1974, p. 267). "The doctrine of stages requires that these different modes of thought form an invariant sequence, order or succession in individual development" (Jepson, 1974, p. 128). It is the stage construct that provides the order and sequence to career development.

Super's (1957) first premise, related to stage theory, encompasses the importance of the relationship between behavior and development. Although the two concepts are distinct, their relationship is essential in Super's construction of a theory of career development. Super defined behavior as "responses the individual makes to the circumstances, figures, and objects in his world, regardless of his age" (Super, 1957, p. 35). Development is a process of natural growth, resulting in successive changes, manifested in an individual's abilities. Super discusses development in terms of such abilities as language, symbolic response, abstract reasoning, the differentiation of obscure objects, the anticipation of consequences, the striving for abstract as well as concrete goals, the recognition of constant and objective properties of the external world, and the like (Super, 1957).

Jepson (1974) sees the concept of stage in career development as serving two broad descriptive functions. The first is a description of the behavioral characteristics of a particular age range. The second is a description of the behavioral expectations of particular social norms. Although attempts have been made to specify the precise age at which a particular stage might be expected to begin and end, more general estimates such as "early adolescence" and "young adulthood" are preferred. As Harris has pointed out, "'individuals move through developmental sequences at different rates and with different velocities,' and they even may manifest more than one type of behavior during the same stage" (Jordaan, 1974, p. 267). Expectations and demands of society function as social norms. These expectations may be based on age or stage, but generally involve the "mastery of certain

skills (e.g., reading), the acquisition of certain attitudes (e.g., toward the opposite sex), and the willingness and ability to assume certain roles and obligations (e.g., of father and provider)" (Jordaan, 1974, p. 266). Stage transitions may be defined in part by changed expectations in the socialization process. Consequently, there exists a constant reconciliation of social processes with individual growth characteristics (Harris, 1974). These expectations may define the movement through and completion of particular career development stages.

Career behavior is the basis for career development. This behavior must be examined in the context that growth and learning operate interdependently, expanding an individual's behavioral potential. "The essence of development is a progressive increase and modification of the individual's behavioral repertoire through growth and learning. This process occurs over time and is marked by stages of increasing competence" (Super, 1957, p. 36). Behavior depicted in each stage is based on the potential developed in the preceding stages (Harris, 1974; Super, 1957). Harris (1974) describes these features of the behavior structure as growth from dependence to independence, moving one's orientation from the present to the future, and moving away from immediate gratification to delayed gratification — all essential factors in career development. "It follows if one of these is incomplete or insufficient, this deficiency will reverberate through all successive stages" (Harris, 1974, p. 91).

#### Stage Theory as a Conceptual Framework

The importance stage theory has in career development theory is discussed by Harris (1974), Jordaan (1974) and Super (1957). Jordan (1974) explains, "The value of a conceptual framework is that it provides the investigator with a map, which even though it may be lacking in detail, is still a help in identifying the more prominent features of the terrain to be explored" (p. 265). This framework provides the researcher with a basis for

organizing and interpreting observations and findings. Observations that are not guided by theory are likely to be too narrow or too broad in scope.

Super (1957) saw that "vocational behaviors occur as events in a process which take place over a time span" (p. 16). "Studies of life stages suggest that characteristic modifications of vocational behavior are necessary in different phases of development. Studies of life patterns indicate that it is possible to identify recurrent themes and persisting trends in behavior" (p. 17). The patterns and themes are the guideposts the researcher uses in making comparisons to and contrasts with the data being observed, collected and analyzed.

Harris states, "succession of stages may be readily discernible and easily discussed, whereas, points on an extended continuum may be harder to grasp and explain" (Harris, 1974, p. 90). Harris (1974) further describes the value of using a developmental stage approach by stating, "This posture, with respect to the self as agent and to its anticipated future, makes it logical that vocational psychologists consider a developmental stance as appropriate to their efforts, as they must always consider the effects of personal histories, and plans and aspirations as significant in vocational selection and training" (p. 89). It cannot be denied that vocational decisions and outcomes have roots in the past as well as the present.

### The Foundation of Super's Theory of Career Development

A strength in the development of Super's theory of career development is the extensive research he conducted before and after the theory was publicly presented and utilized by Super and future colleagues and investigators. Early in the development of his theory, Super examined Lehman and Witty's early research in the change of interest of individuals with age; Strong's and Sisson's work surrounding the increasing realism of

choice with increasing age (Super, 1953); Davidson's and Anderson's studies of occupational mobility; Miller and Form's study of adult work histories; Havighurst's concept of developmental tasks; and most significantly, the work of Charlotte Buehler and life stages (Jordaan, 1974); and Ginzberg's theory of occupational choice (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951).

Super examined and utilized Buehler's concept of life stages extensively in his theory of career development. Her theory was based on studies of human life gleaned from biographies and autobiographies of about 400 people. Her life stage theory focused on all aspects of life, career being one area. Buehler's work had limitations in its data, but the framework focused on a lifetime, an idea that Super supported wholeheartedly (Super, 1957). Buehler presented five life stages:

1.       Growth: conception through age 14. This was viewed as a time of rapid physical, emotional, and mental development.
2.       Exploration: age 14 through 25. A period when people are ready to assume adult responsibilities, attempt to understand themselves, and find a place in the world of adults and world of work.
3.       Establishment: age 25 through 45. A time when people establish a career, way of life, home, and family.
4.       Maintenance: age 45 to 65 (or later depending on the individual). People consolidate and maintain their gains in life.
5.       Decline: after 65 (or later depending on the individual). There is a decline in physical and mental powers (Super, 1957).

Super fashioned his vocational life stages after Buehler's, utilizing the names of each stage and the basic premise of each. Super did not, however, adhere to the age ranges as presented by Buehler and agreed with her assumption that the age ranges must be

considered approximations, which vary considerably from one person to another (Super, 1957).

Another important influence on the development of Super's theory was the work of Ginzberg and his theory of occupational choice (Ginzberg et al., 1951). Ginzberg believed that occupational choice was a process that typically takes place over approximately a 10-year period. The process is largely irreversible and ends in a compromise between interests, capacities, values, and opportunities. He proposed three periods of occupational choice: fantasy, a period in which children up to age 11 are unaware of the barriers to attaining their choices; tentative, a period during which people's choices are based almost exclusively on subjective factors and which is divided into four substages (interest, capacity, values, and transition); and realistic, a period that emphasizes reality conditions and is divided into three substages (exploration, crystallization, and specification) (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968; Super, 1957).

While Super acknowledged the contributions of Ginzberg, he also presented his concerns around his perceived limitations of the theory. Although there had been considerable research conducted preceding the formulation of Ginzberg's theory, Super believed that he did not build adequately on previous work in the area of career development. Ginzberg defined choice as a preference, rather than as entry or some other implementation of choice; hence, choice meant something different at different ages. Finally, according to Super, Ginzberg made an inaccurate distinction between choice and adjustment, influencing the process of compromise (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968; Super, 1953).

Although Super acknowledged the weaknesses he perceived in the work of Buehler and Ginzberg, he also recognized the contributions made by these theorists by using their



work as a foundation for his theory of vocational development. Super's theory of vocational development (1953) included 10 propositions:

1. People differ in their abilities, interests and personalities.
2. They are qualified, by virtue of these characteristics, each for a number of occupations.
3. Each of these occupations requires a characteristic pattern of abilities, interests, and personality traits, with tolerances wide enough, however, to allow both some variety of occupations for each individual and some variety of individuals in each occupation.
4. Vocational preferences and competencies, the situations in which people live and work, and hence their self concepts, change with time and experience (although self concepts are generally fairly stable from late adolescence until late maturity) making choice and adjustment a continuous process.
5. This process may be summed up in a series of life stages. . . .
6. The nature of the career pattern (that is, the occupational level attained and the sequence, frequency, and duration of trial and stable jobs) is determined by the individual's parental socioeconomic level, mental ability, and personality characters, and by the opportunities to which he is exposed.
7. Development through the life stages can be guided, partly by facilitating the process of maturation of abilities and interests and partly by aiding in reality testing and in the development of the self concept.
8. The process of vocational development is essentially that of developing and implementing a self concept. . . .
9. The process of compromise between individual and social factors, between self concept and reality, is one of role playing. . . .
10. Work satisfactions and life satisfactions depend upon the extent to which the individual finds adequate outlets for his abilities, interests, personality traits, and values; they depend upon his establishment in a type of work, a work situation, and a way of life in which he can play the kind of role which his growth and exploratory experiences have led him to consider congenial and appropriate. (Super, 1953, p. 189-90)

Super views career development through a series of career life stages borrowed from Buehler's five developmental life stages: growth (divided into the substages of fantasy

and interest); exploration (divided into the substages of tentative, transition, and trial); establishment (divided into trial and stabilization); maintenance; and decline. He defines career development as an "ongoing, continuous, generally irreversible, orderly, patterned, and dynamic process, which involves interaction between the individuals behavioral repertoire and the demands made by society, that is, by the developmental tasks" (Super, Crites, Moser, Overstreet, & Warnath, 1957, p. 53).

"The task to be accomplished in each stage or substage is called a vocational developmental task" (Jordaan, 1974, p. 270). Super conceptualized development as a series of vocational developmental tasks that are encountered at or about certain periods in life, derived from the expectations of a social group, and manifested in a relatively ordered behavioral sequence (Jepson, 1974; Jordaan, 1974). Those expectations are based on what is thought to be typical of persons at a given stage and on what society would like to see happen at that stage (Jordaan, 1974). "Until adolescence, almost all vocational developmental tasks are only indirectly related to future work. Beginning in adolescence, with entry into high school as a convenient starting point, the tasks become more and more directly related to vocations (Super et al., 1957, p. 43).

Vocational developmental tasks must be accomplished in each stage or substage of the career development process.

The primary task of the growth stage is self-definition or self-concept development. Another task is to develop an orientation to the world of work and a conception of the meaning of work. The tasks of the exploratory stage are to crystallize, specify, and implement a vocational preference; those of the establishment stage are to make a place for oneself in the occupation, to commit oneself to it, and to consolidate and improve one's position. The main developmental task of the maintenance stage is to preserve one's achievements and gains, and those of the decline stage are to decelerate, disengage, and upon retirement, find other sources of satisfaction. (Jordaan, 1974, p. 270)

Two of the stages defined by Super specifically address the process of vocational choice. Within the exploratory and establishment stages, five developmental-vocational tasks exist that the individual must work through. The first developmental task is crystallization, the integration of the notion of work into the self-concept. The second task, vocational preference specification, involves narrowing the range of possible vocational choices and making appropriate preparations for those careers. The third task is implementation of a vocational preference. During this time the individual either undergoes extensive training or takes a job. Stabilization is the fourth task, at which time the individual is working in a job and testing it to see if the right choice was made. During the fifth task of consolidation, the individual advances in the chosen career and attains some degree of success and status (Dusek, 1977, p. 276).

#### Summary: Career Choice as a Developmental Process

Super and his contemporaries saw a need to establish a framework from which career development could be explained and observed. Through the influence of theorists like Buehler and Ginzberg, Super developed his theory which emphasized the concepts of career development as a continuous, lifelong process viewed through a series of career life stages, each stage characterized by various developmental tasks, encountered and addressed by each person. A focus on Super's theory was the need to recognize individual differences. Further, Super acknowledged society's role in the development of behavioral expectations which the individual must contend with through the modification of behavior, by personal growth and learning.

## Self-concept, Career Development, and Career Choice

### Self-Concept Theory

Central to Super's theory of career development is self-concept. Beginning in about 1951, "the conceptualization of occupational choice as the process of implementing the self-concept began to bridge the gap between personality theory and vocational psychology" (Super, 1963a, p. 1). Although the process of forming the self-concept begins in infancy and continues throughout one's life, adolescence is the most integral time for one's identity to become distinctly one's own. During adolescence, young adults seek to become different from, while also resembling other significant people in their lives (Super, 1963a). At no period in life is exploration as sustained and prevalent (Jordaan, 1974). It is also the time in a person's life when society expects the adolescent to begin the process of choosing a career. Adolescence is when the individual is expected to translate his or her self-concept first into general and then into specific occupational terms (Jordaan, 1974). The relationship between the development of self-concept and career choice cannot be denied.

Eric Erikson's theory of identity development has been used most frequently in describing and understanding the process of self-concept development from adolescence to adulthood (Savickas, 1985; Waterman, 1982). Erikson (1988) stated:

The young person, in order to experience wholeness, must feel a progressive continuity between that which he has come to be during the long years of childhood and that which he promises to become in the anticipated future, between that which he conceives himself to be and that which he perceives others to see in him and to expect of him. Individually speaking, identity includes, but is more than, the sum of all the successive identifications of those earlier years when the child wanted to be, and often was forced to become, like the people he depended on. Identity is a unique product which now meets a crisis to be solved only in new identifications with age mates and with leader figures outside of the family. (as cited in Waterman, 1982, p. 341)

Super's stage theory of career development is often associated with Erikson's theory of vocational ego identification. Raskin wrote of Erikson's emphasis on career development and career choice as being an integral part of identity formation. "What one does for a living is a primary source of information about social class, education, and values. One's occupation is a public statement of one's identity, even when one's job is not necessarily a well-thought-out step on a career ladder" (Raskin, 1985). Erikson (1963) stated: "The sense of ego identity, then, is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others as evidenced in the tangible promise of a 'career'" (as cited in Raskin, 1985, p. 26). Erikson's belief was that career choice was of great significance to the adolescent, far more than simply questions of pay or status. This process included times of exploration and commitment related to the individual's identity and times when exploration or commitment were absent or lost (Grutter, 1992).

The development of one's self-concept is a complex, multifaceted, lifelong process. The influences in the development of one's identity are numerous. Each interaction or engagement individuals experience with their environment, and the people in their environment, may potentially affect who they will become and consequently, the career they choose (Harris, 1974). Waterman (1982) summarizes seven influences or antecedent conditions that may effect the developing self-concept:

1. The greater the extent of identification with parents prior to or during adolescence, the greater the likelihood of forming and maintaining personally meaningful commitments. Commitment to an identity is essential in career choice.
2. Differences in parenting styles may reflect differences in how a person's identity forms.

3. The greater the range of identity alternatives a person is exposed to prior to adolescence, the greater the likelihood the adolescent will experience a time of exploration, or what Erikson calls an "identity crisis," prior to committing to a career choice.

4. The greater the availability of role models perceived as successful, the greater the probability that the person will form meaningful commitments.

5. Adolescents are significantly influenced by the social expectations they experience within school, family, and peer groups.

6. It can be anticipated that to the extent that the preadolescent personality provides an appropriate foundation for coping with identity concerns, the more successfully identity development is likely to proceed.

7. A person's work history may be influential to the development of the self-concept.

Munro and Adams (1977):

Reported a comparison of the distribution of the identity statuses between samples of college students and working youth of equivalent age. They found the working sample to be more frequently in identity achievement status (progressed through exploration and on to commitment) and the college sample to be more often in the identity diffusion status (no history of exploration or commitment). (as cited in Waterman, 1982, p. 355).

"At its simplest, the basic hypothesis of identity development is that the transition from adolescent to adulthood involves progressive strengthening in the sense of identity" (Waterman, 1982, p. 342).

Considering the factors outlined above, Super defines self concept as "the individual's picture of himself, the perceived self with accrued meanings" (Super, 1963b, p. 18). Hamacheck defines self-concept this way: "It is this capacity of self-consciousness, this ability to look at the self from the outside as an object, that enables a person to develop the particular cluster of ideas and attitudes that constitute that aspect of personality known as

self-concept. . . . It is that aspect of self that organizes and assimilates one's perceptions and experiences into a coherent self-picture which one then strives to be consistent"

(Hamacheck, 1985, p. 137). O'Hara and Tiedeman (1970) define self-concept as "an individual's evaluation of himself" (p. 227).

Super views self-concept as the perceptions one holds of oneself, which have acquired meaning through experiences and environments, and which are related to other self-precepts. "Since the person cannot ascribe meanings to himself in a vacuum, the concept of self is generally a picture of the self in some role, some situation, in a position performing some set of functions, or in some web of relationships" (Super, 1963b, p. 18). However, the complexity of the self-concept cannot be overstated. Each new experience and new relationship affects who we are and how we view ourselves. It is often presented that the development of the self-concept is a process with a conclusion. It is important to consider the development of the self-concept as lifelong. "In seeing life as a process, a person may come to believe that conceptions of self are just that, conceptions, that is, categorizations of experience which are valuable in ordering experience and anticipating the future. Realizing this, a person can view not only life as a process, but self as a process, so that the focus changes from one of self-concept to the process of self-conceptualizing" (Field, Kehas, & Tiedeman, 1970, p. 209). Each person interprets his or her life experiences uniquely. People choose which actions fit their current notions of what they are like, what they can be like, what they want to be like, what their situation is like, what their situation might become, and the way they see these aspects of self and situation as being related (Field et al., 1970). The translation of one's self concept into career does not happen only once; it must also be looked at as a developmental process (Field et al., 1970; Super, 1963b).

Realizing that the development of the self-concept is a lifelong process, Super has defined this process as "the self-concept system" (Super, 1963b). This system is made up of the various self-concepts, the pictures a person has of himself in different roles and in different situations. The complex self-concept is organized within the framework of a role. The self may be viewed as what a person is. A role is defined as what a person does (Super et al., 1957). Consequently, throughout a person's life, a variety of roles are played which provide an opportunity to discover who one is and what one wants to become (Crites, 1969). The individual will test various roles, monitor his or her reactions and the reactions of others, and develop a picture of the future. "As the individual grows older, he integrates the various pictures he has of himself into a consistent self-concept, which he strives to preserve and enhance through all of his activities, but particularly through his occupational activities" (Crites, 1969, p. 98). The individual will strive for compatibility of career choice and self-concept.

Super emphasized the importance of the idea that the self-concept, as defined in career development theory, cannot exist without the person being aware of it (Super, 1963c). The degree to which individuals are self-aware, affects their ability to make accurate predictions of their vocational interests (Norrell & Grater, 1970). This awareness must be translated into terms that describe the vocational self-concept as evidenced by awareness of self attributes, interests, and aptitudes. Norrell and Grater (1970) studied 53 male university students in 1959. Their research was designed to investigate the relationship between an individual's degree of self-awareness and his ability to make accurate predictions of his measured vocational interests. They found interest awareness to be an aspect of self-awareness, and that needs which limit self-awareness will also reduce the accuracy with which a person can predict his interest patterns. O'Hara and Tiedeman (1970) studied 1,021 boys at a Catholic day school in 1958. Their research indicated an increasing congruence of



self-estimates and test estimates with increasing grade. They also found that their data indicated increasing clarification of self-concepts in four vocationally relevant areas: aptitudes, interests, social class, and values. The only data contrary to the clarification of self-concept had to do with the quality of estimates of aptitude. Their data indicated that "aptitude is relatively poorly perceived throughout grades 9 through 12 even by academically able boys" (O'Hara & Tiedeman, 1970, p. 238).

"The *dimensions* of the self concept which must be studied, if we are to know that which the individual translates into a vocational self concept, are clearly the dimensions of personality, the traits which people attribute to others and to themselves" (Super, 1963b, p. 24). In order for a person to accurately evaluate self-concept, a framework must be available by which to examine the traits people attribute to themselves. Super (1963b) defines these "metadimensions" as self-esteem, clarity, abstraction, refinement, certainty, stability, and realism.

Each metadimension is related to career choice. Self-esteem is defined as one's acceptance of self. Clarity is the awareness of the nature of attributes which is expected to increase with age and be related to intelligence and to adjustment. Super found in the Career Pattern Study that many eighth and ninth graders had difficulty describing what kind of person they were (Super, 1963b). Abstraction is the ability to describe oneself in abstract or general rather than only concrete or specific terms. Abstraction is related to age, intelligence, vocational maturity, and adjustment. Refinement is the degree of elaboration of the traits a person ascribes to himself. Certainty is the degree of confidence which a person attributes to himself; the conviction one has as to the kind of person one is. Stability is a measure of consistency over time of the descriptions of one's self. Realism indicates the degree of agreement between the individual's picture of self and the objective outside evidence of that self (Super, 1963b). "O'Hara and Tiedeman (1959) found that realism tends

to increase with age in adolescence, but that rates of increase and degrees of realism vary with the type of attribute studies" (as cited in Super, 1963b, p. 28).

Super's (1963a) early conceptualizations of the role of self-concept in career development theory were based on research conducted by Carter, Borden, Tyler, Torrance, Tyler and Tiedman, and Super. From this early research, other studies of self-concept and career choice came about. In 1957, Huntington found in medical students that the vocational self-concept (one's concept of oneself in an occupation) is a function of the perceptions (role expectations) of others (as cited in Super, 1963a). Later, Brophy, working with nurses, found that similarity of self-concept and of the perceived occupational role requirement (occupational concept) is correlated with job satisfaction (Super, 1963a). In 1960, Englander found students to perceive occupation to be a means of perpetuating self (as cited in Super, 1963a). Also in 1960, Tageson worked with students at a Catholic seminary and found positive and significant relationships between compatibility of self and occupational role concepts and realism of career choice (as cited in Super, 1963a). Blocher and Schultz found that in adolescent boys, similarity of self and liked occupation was greater than that of self and disliked occupation (Super, 1963a). Warren conducted research with 525 high school seniors through their sophomore year in high school. Warren found self-role discrepancy measures predicted changes in college majors (Super, 1963a).

Super (1963a) summarized the early research in the area of self-concept as it related to career choice:

1. Agreement between the self concept and one's own occupational concept is related to occupational references and to both internal and external criteria of success and satisfaction.
2. Agreement between the self-concept and the occupational role concepts of important persons has so far tended not to be related to external criteria of success.

3. Vocational self-concepts are a function of perception of the occupational role expectation of important persons, and are related to level of attainment in an occupations.
4. Agreement between self-concepts and other measures of the same characteristics, that is self-understanding, increases at varying rates with age in adolescence and is related to strength of certain needs.
5. Adolescents' parent-identifications (agreement between self-concept and concept of parent) are related to type of vocational interest. (p. 11)

### Self-Concept and Career Choice

Super's theory of vocational self-concept, and its accompanying research by Super and other career theorists and researchers, has provided evidence of the relationship between the self-concept and career choice. Super simply defined vocational choice as the "implementation of a self-concept" (Super et al., 1957, p. 48). Considerable research has been conducted in this area exploring this connection. Anderson and Olsen (1970) in a review of the literature prior to their study examining the relationship between the congruence of self and ideal self and occupational choices, found Calvin and Holtzman, Hanlon, Holt, Levy, and Strong and Feder in agreement that there existed evidence of a positive relationship between the congruency of self and ideal self and the achievement of successful adjustment. Blustein (1989), in a similar review, found career development theorists (Harren, Holland, and Super) have suggested that the degree to which individuals are able to establish coherent career plans seems to be linked to their progress in forming a crystallized self concept or identity.

Anderson and Olsen (1970) studied 96 college-bound students, both male and female, between the ages of 16 and 18. Their research indicated that a greater number of students showed a tendency to choose career goals above their aptitude level and in inappropriate occupational areas than the number of students who chose careers below their

aptitude level. Their conclusion was that the inability of students to realistically appraise their aptitudes and successfully relate them to critical job tasks of career may exist. This may in turn contribute to the tendency of some adolescents to make inappropriate choices.

James Fleming (1970) examined how individuals resolve the dilemma which arises when expectations for self are incongruent with a concept or stereotype of a chosen occupational role. He studied male university undergraduates. The study suggested that in certain professions, once an occupational choice is made and the individual begins to think of himself as a member of that profession,

Any discrepancy he perceived between his self-concept and the newly conceived identity will motivate attitude change toward congruity. The success with which the individual is able to assume his chosen identity may depend in part upon the degree to which he is able to reduce the discrepancy between his self and occupational concepts to a tolerable level. (Fleming, 1970, p. 262)

Huntington had similar conclusions following his study of medical students. It was found that the vocational self-concept (one's concept of oneself in an occupation) is a function of the role expectations of others (Super, 1963a).

Morrison (1970) studied nursing and teacher trainees. The participants were asked to describe themselves, their chosen occupational role, and an occupational role they had not chosen. "Both samples showed a significantly greater similarity between their self-perception and their perception of their chosen occupational roles than between their perceptions of an occupational role they had not chosen" (Morrison, 1970, pp. 243-254).

In a study of 143 first and second year college students with the same career aspirations, Savickas' (1985) results indicated that vocational identity was related to both degree of vocational development and progress in ego identity achievement. "Students who had a clearer picture of their vocational goals, abilities, and talents also were dealing with tasks further along the continuum of vocational development and had made more progress

in ego-identity achievement" (Savickas, 1985, pp. 334-335). In an earlier study, Stephenson (1961) found that persistence in pursuit of an occupational goal (for example, medicine) despite obstacles (for example, failure to gain admittance to medical school) provided a good indicator of crystallization of vocational self-concept. In the study, Stephenson found that between 4 and 8 years after not being accepted into medical school, 62% of 368 participants were in medical or medically-related occupations (as cited in Super, 1963a).

Self-concept and career choice have been associated by researchers comparing career development to identity development using Erikson's theory of identity formation (Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989; Raskin, 1985). Blustein et al. (1989) believed that the two career developmental tasks of exploration and commitment provide the dimensions by which the ego identity process is conceptualized. "From the ego identity perspective, exploration pertains to the active consideration of alternatives, encompassing ideological issues (which include the philosophical, religious, political, and vocational domains) and interpersonal issues (which include the friendship, dating, sex role, and recreational domains)" (Blustein et al., 1989, p. 196). In clarification, he suggested that exploration taking place in adolescence is actually a method of discovering information about oneself and one's environment. This information is then used to clarify one's overall self-concept. The literature supports a relationship between self-concept and occupational fit (Raskin, 1985). Munley (1975) found that 18 to 21-year-old college males who had career choices consistent with their abilities and interests exhibited more successful resolution of Erikson's first six stages than those whose career choices were inconsistent with their abilities and interests (as cited in Raskin, 1985).

Exploring these ideas, Blustein et al. (1989) studied 99 college students to test the relationship between whether the variability in career exploration and occupational commitment might be related to characteristic differences in the manner by which people

explore and commit to their ego identity in late adolescence. The study found that occupational commitment is inversely related to (Erikson's) moratorium status. During moratorium, the individual is actively exploring, but has not committed to a career and ideology. Second, the study found that career exploration is positively associated with the moratorium and identity-achieved (clearly committed to career and ideology) statuses and inversely related to the diffusion (no commitment to career or ideology) status. From this study it appears that individuals who are exploring their identity also tend to be in the planning phase of decision-making. The results of this research are consistent with "previous research (Grotevant & Thorbecke, 1982; Munley, 1975; Savickas, 1985) . . . [that] demonstrated for the proposition that the exploration and commitment processes that characterize one's identity formation are closely related to an analogous set of career development tasks" (as cited in Blustein, et al., 1989, p. 200).

#### Self-Concept, Career Choice, and Adolescence

At no other time does a person experience the growth and development of the self-concept as during adolescence. Our society recognizes this, and compounds the complexity of this time by expecting the adolescent to make a career choice. "Choosing a vocation involves a kind of public self-definition that forces one to say to the world, 'This is what I am.' . . . Although they may wish to avoid declaring themselves, adolescents are always painfully aware of the demand that some decision be made" (Galinsky & Fast, 1970, p. 220). In 1957, Super stated that "self-concepts begin to form prior to adolescence, become clearer in adolescence, and are translated into occupational terms in adolescence" (O'Hara & Tiedeman, 1970).

Waterman (1982) summarized research conducted in the area of children and identity development. Ciaccio studied children in relation to their concern for self-concept.

Children younger than age 11 showed no concern. It was not until age 11 that the beginnings of concern were evidenced and with a very low frequency. Meilman and Archer interviewed 11 to 13 year olds and found that less than 4% of these children were observed as having gone through a period of exploration and emerging with some sense of commitment. Pomerant, Voie, and Howard studied high school students using measures of identity and found the results not to indicate strength in ego-identity. Hauser studied high school students for 3 years. His results showed a "pattern of progressive identity formation characterized by frequent changes in self-concept during the high school years, followed by increasing consistency and stability as the person approached graduation" (as cited in Waterman, 1982, p. 346).

Waterman (1982) determined that the greatest gains in identity formation appear to occur during the college years. A review of the literature found research supporting increased identity formation with advancing age and or years in college for both men and women (Constantinople, 1969, 1970; Dignan, 1965; Frye, 1974; Stark & Traxler, 1974; Thompson, 1963; Whitbourne, Jelsma, & Waterman, 1982; as cited in Waterman, 1982). Additional longitudinal studies of college students found that college facilitates identity development in the area of career plans (Waterman, 1982).

The above-named researchers also explored the area of stability of identity status in college students and found that through the college years, students came to this time exploring their identities, experienced identity crises, and committed to identities by their senior year. The studies also found that students who began college with firm commitments, changed and moved through different identity statuses. "This finding makes it clear that the successful resolution of an identity crisis does not give a permanence to the commitment formed" (Waterman, 1982, p. 349).

The self influences career choice (Super, 1963a). Super (1951) stated, "the choice of an occupation is one of the points in life at which a young person is called upon to state rather explicitly, his concept of himself" (as cited in Crites, 1969, p. 98). "As the individual grows older, he integrates the various pictures he has of himself into a consistent self-concept, which he strives to preserve and enhance through all of his activities, but particularly through his occupational activities" (Crites, 1969, p. 98). Adolescents accomplish this by elaborating upon and clarifying the concept of self formed during childhood, beginning to translate this self-concept into career terms through their aspirations, preferences, and work values (Crites, 1969; Raskin, 1985).

Raskin (1985) summarizes Osipow's explanation of the process adolescents journey through, during this time of exploration and commitment to a self-concept:

(1) individuals develop more clearly defined self-concepts as they grow older . . . (2) people develop images of the occupational world that they compare with their self-image in trying to make career decisions, and (3) the adequacy of the eventual career decision is based on the similarity between and individual's self-concept and the vocational concept of the career he eventually chooses. (Osipow, 1973, as cited in Raskin, 1985, p. 27)

Career exploration and the exploration of adolescence associated with the developing self-concept are integrally linked. Jordaan defined career exploration "as those activities in which individuals seek to assess themselves and acquire information from the external environment in order to facilitate the decision-making, job entry and vocational adjustment processes" (Jordan, 1963, as cited in Blustein et al., 1989, p. 197). It has been suggested by a number of theorists (Grotevant & Cooper, 1988; Jordaan, 1963; Waterman, 1985; as cited in Blustein et al., 1989) that "exploratory activity in late adolescence may reflect an individual's means of seeking information about oneself and the environment in order to clarify one's overall self-concept or identity" (Blustein et al., 1989, p. 197).



Super (1963b) describes the translation of the adolescent self-concept into occupational terms through the identification with an adult, experience in a role, and awareness of one's attributes. The student moves from having the parent as the sole or primary influence, to other adults becoming important as role models. The student begins to convert initial choices into reality by taking a job or beginning training or an educational program which may lead to a desired career. To do this, the adolescent must clarify his picture of himself and also his picture of the world of work. Further, the adolescent will test and modify perceptions of reality (Crites, 1969; Hadley & Levy, 1970; Super, 1963b).

The ability of adolescents to accurately appraise themselves has been questioned through the research (Crites, 1981; Harren, 1979; Holland, 1985; Super, 1957, 1984; Blustein, 1987). Jordaan (1974) stated, "one of the reasons why high school students have problems when they leave school and enter 'the real world' appears to be that they do not know themselves and the world of work sufficiently well to make good decisions and plans" (p. 287). "The importance of self-knowledge is based on the assumption that individuals with accurate and accessible knowledge about themselves should be able to clarify, specify and implement their career plans (Crites, 1981; Super, 1984)" (as cited in Blustein, 1987, p. 64). Holland (1964) believes that students make choices in terms of the kind of person they believe themselves to be (as cited in Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968).

In their study, Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) found an inability in a large percentage of tenth graders to make accurate appraisals of their abilities. Further, 49% of the tenth graders studied scored below the eighth grade mean on understanding the concept of interests and their relationship to educational and vocational decisions. In contrast, O'Hara and Tiedeman's (1970) review of the literature indicated that some awareness of vocationally-relevant attributes does exist during adolescence and early adulthood. Two specific examples were presented. They cited their 1959 study, finding that older male

adolescents, between the ninth and twelfth grades, were better able to appraise themselves objectively at the end of adolescence than at the beginning. They also presented Sinnett's study that found as a person grows older, he or she knows more about occupations and, as a result, has a better understanding of what his or her interests are.

Each study was indicative of the interaction among many individual and environmental factors involved in the definition of self and the choice of a career. "Often it is late in the process before an individual realizes what kind of person he is becoming and what kind of career he wants to enter" (Crites, 1969, p. 120).

#### Summary: Self-Concept, Career Development, and Career Choice

The actualization of self-concept is at the heart of Super's theory of career development. Self-concept must be thought of as a lifelong process, progressively strengthening through the complexity of personal experiences and relationships. The individual, it is theorized, has a system of self-concepts, made up of the various pictures held of oneself in different roles. Adolescence is the most significant time in the development of self-concept. It is a period of dramatic growth and change, resulting in what Erikson calls an identity-crisis. During these years, the individual seeks information about the environment and him or herself, to identify the self as unique. Adolescence is when society has deemed it appropriate for young adults to make career choices. It is at this time, that the young person is expected to translate self-concept into career or vocational identity. In this process of choice, the individual strives for compatibility between career choice and self-concept. The research in this field supports the vitality of the relationship between self-concept actualization and career choice. It also questions the ability of adolescents to accurately appraise themselves, which is important in making reasonable career decisions.

## The Relationship Between Career Maturity and Career Choice

### Defining Career Maturity

The concept of career (or vocational) maturity has its beginnings in the earliest theories of career development. Frank Parsons, director of the first vocational guidance center in the United States, embraced three broad factors in the first theory of vocational choice: a clear understanding of self, knowledge of the requirements of the occupation, and "true reasoning about the relations between the two groups of facts" (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968, p. 1). Parsons advised career counselors to classify clients into one of two main categories

First, those who have well-developed aptitudes and interests and practical bases for a reasonable conclusion in respect to the choice of a vocation. Second, boys and girls with so little experience there is no basis yet for a wise decision (Parsons, 1909/1967). (as cited in Savickas, 1990, p. 3)

"Simply defined, career maturity means readiness for making realistic career choices. Clients below a certain threshold of readiness lack the life experiences and personal inclinations to make realistic choices" (Savickas, 1990, p. 3). Super and Jordaan expand this definition. Career maturity is the "readiness to cope with the developmental tasks of one's life stage, to make socially required career decisions and to cope appropriately with the tasks which society confronts the developing youth and adult" (Super & Jordan, 1973, as cited in Phillips & Blustein, 1994, p. 64). This concept of readiness regarding career choice is considered to include "both attitudinal factors (such as planning and exploring) and cognitive factors (such as decision-making and informational knowledge)" (Phillips & Blustein, 1994, p. 64). The components of readiness include planning, exploring, and deciding (Phillips & Blustein, 1994).

Theory presents two ways of assessing an individual's career maturity. "First, by determining whether he is addressing himself to, has already completed, or has yet to deal with the appropriate (career developmental) tasks for his age; second, by determining how well he is dealing with the tasks compared to others his age" (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979, p. 4). It is theorized that people differ in their readiness to deal with career developmental tasks at the time society deems appropriate (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Savickas, 1990). Consequently, the assessment of career maturity examines the way individuals respond to emerging demands, problems, challenges, and expectations placed upon them at various stages in the career development process.

The complexity of career maturity and readiness to make career decisions cannot be overstated. It is a vital component of the developmental stage theory of career development which Super proposed, and which his contemporaries continue to explore. Savickas (1990) summarized his research findings related to developing career choice readiness by stating:

Clients are ready to make decisive and realistic career choices when they display concern for and a sense of control over the vocational decision-making process, hold a viable view of how to make a choice, express intrinsic criteria for their choices, and want to base their choices on a synthesis of their needs, interests, abilities, and values. (p. 9)

### Dimensions of Career Maturity

The dimensions of career maturity have evolved from Super's original theory. Three primary studies were examined for this study: the Career Pattern Study (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Super et al., 1957), the Career Development Study (Gibbons & Lohnes, 1968), and the Vocational Development Project (Crites, 1971). Each study was longitudinal by design and through the analysis of each study's findings, dimensions of career maturity were identified and defined.

The Career Pattern Study analyzed the career development of ninth grade boys over a 21-year time period. Super's first hypothesized dimensions were presented in the study's original design. Super presented six dimensions along which, he theorized, career maturation proceeds: orientation to vocational choice, information and planning, consistency of vocational choice, crystallization of traits, vocational independence, and wisdom of vocational preferences (Super, 1974). This theory was tested by an analysis of the ninth grade data and resulted in a revision of the original model. Super conducted a factor analysis which led to the description of the development and measurement of indices of career maturity: acceptance of responsibility, concern with choice, specificity of information, specificity of planning, extent of planning, and use of resources. These indices were represented by four factors: planning orientation, the long view ahead, the short view ahead, and the intermediate view ahead (Roth et al., 1970; Super, 1974).

The next analysis of data from the Career Pattern Study was conducted by Jordaan and Hyde (1979). This analysis examined the similarities and differences in career maturity between the ninth and twelfth grades. Jordaan and Hyde (1979) defined seven indices of career maturity through their analysis. The first, crystallization of interests, presented the idea that adolescent preferences and interests should become more differentiated, more focused, more consistent, and more like those of adults with age and experience. The second again examined the appropriateness or wisdom of the students' preferences. The third indication examined the nature and extent of the students' work experience. It was found that occupational information played a significant part in the students' maturation. Fourth, as students become more mature, the specificity, range, extensiveness, quality, and significance of career information increases. Fifth, acceptance of responsibility for one's career choice was found to be a significant indicator of career maturity. Sixth, planning was reexamined in this analysis and looked at by the specificity and range of planning completed by the

students, the awareness of contingency factors necessary in sound planning, and the extent to which the students had weighed alternatives. Finally, Jordan and Hyde examined the extent to which the students had implemented choice by examining both behaviors and degree of implementation.

The second study explored was the Career Development Study (Gibbons & Lohnes, 1968). This study examined the career maturity of 111 students of both sexes (57 males and 54 females) between eighth grade and 2 years post high school. The students were interviewed on four separate occasions during the course of the study. Through this research, Gibbons and Lohnes (1968) developed a process for measuring career maturity known as *Readiness for Vocational Planning*. One of the primary purposes of this study was to "describe in detail 111 real career stories over 8 years of development" (Gibbons & Lohnes, 1968, p. 5). This was accomplished through in-depth interviews of the study's participants. From this research emerged eight dimensions of readiness for vocational planning: factors in curriculum choice, factors in occupational choice, verbalized strengths and weaknesses, accuracy of self-appraisal, evidence of self-rating, awareness of interests (and their relationship to occupational choice), awareness of values (and their relationship to occupational choice), and independence of choice (Gibbons & Lohnes, 1968; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979).

The third study examined was Crites' (1971) Vocational Development Project. This study built upon the work of the Career Pattern Study and Crites' work at the University of Iowa and later at the University of Maryland. Crites wanted to refine the model of career maturity and develop a battery of instruments for measuring a person's degree of career maturity. The two dimensions developed through this study included vocational choice attitudes (involvement in the choice process, orientation toward work, independence in decision-making, preference for choice factors, and conceptions of the choice process) and

vocational choice competencies (self-appraisal, occupational information, problem solving, goal selection, and planning) (Crites, 1971; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Super, 1974). The significant difference in this study, as compared to the Career Pattern Study and the Career Development Study, was Crites' comparison of the vocational coping behaviors of an individual "with the oldest individuals in the same vocational life stage" (Super, 1974, p. 14). Thus, ninth graders were compared not with ninth graders (as was true in the Career Pattern Study and the Career Development Study), but with twelfth graders on what was essentially an age scale (Crites, 1971; Super, 1974). Crites described the indices of career maturity as consistency, wisdom, choice attitudes, and choice competencies (Super, 1974).

#### Influences on Career Maturity

Career maturity has a history "marked by a series of debates over (a) the choice of criteria that define career maturity; (b) high correlation between measures of career maturity attitudes and measures of general intelligence and, thus, whether career maturity inventories are measuring some aspect of intelligence; and (c) by questionable reliability and validity of measures (Bentz, 1988)" (as cited in Fouad, 1988, p. 258). The complexity intensifies when one also considers, and explores in depth, the variables associated with career maturity.

Career maturity research has focused on adolescence — a time of exploration and of development. Research has sought to identify the antecedents, consequences, and correlates of readiness (Phillips & Blustein, 1994).

Jordaan and Hyde (1979) found numerous correlates to career maturity in their analysis of the Career Pattern Study data. They divided the correlates into five broad areas: status characteristics, vocational aspirations, ability and achievement, participation, and stability of preference.

Status characteristics. Status characteristics include such factors as age, birth order, residence, religion, and socioeconomic status. Age has been explored in the context of years of life and grade in school. Overall, the research agrees that as the person moves through adolescence and into young adulthood, career mature behaviors increase (Alvi & Khan, 1983; Chodzinski & Randhawa, 1983; Crites, 1971; Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968; Healy, 1991; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Super et al., 1957). Crites specifically mentioned the variability in career maturity within grades and from one group to another, depending upon what the backgrounds and circumstances of the individuals were (Crites, 1971).

Much of the research on career maturity has focused on males. King (1989) was concerned that little research had been conducted to explore whether sex differences existed between males and females when examining career maturity. She collected data from 318 students in grades 10, 11, and 12, and examined career maturity through six independent variables. King found that there were no significant differences in career maturity between male and female subjects. What she did find were differences, by sex, in the most important determinants of career maturity between males and females. Age, locus of control, family cohesion, and parental aspiration were the most significant determinants in males. Cohesion, locus of control, age, and cultural participation were most important determinants for females. Gribbons and Lohnes (1968); Nevill and Super (1988); Pratt (1989); Super and Nevill (1984); and Westbrook, Sanford, Merwin, Fleenor, and Renzi (1987) also found no significant difference between sexes on measures of career maturity. Contrary to these findings was a study conducted by McNair and Brown (1983) of 251 tenth grade students, 134 of whom were female. The results of this study indicated that females scored higher in measures of career maturity than males. Studies by Alvi and Khan (1983) and Chodzinski and Randhawa (1983) also found sex to be a significant predictor of career maturity.



The socioeconomic status (SES) of the individual's parents has also been linked to career maturity. The research has found mixed opinions on the effect of SES. Super originally postulated that individuals would have marked difficulty pursuing, and consequently choosing, careers outside of their SES (Super et al., 1957). Since his original assumption, results of the Career Pattern Study (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979) indicated that one half of the study's subjects, in both ninth and tenth grade, did not have career goals in line with their SES resources. Other studies by Crites (1971), Nevill and Super (1988), Pratt (1989), and Super and Nevill (1984) found that SES did not appear to be related to career maturity. Gibbons and Lohnes (1968) found a moderate relationship between SES and subjects' success in reaching stated career aspirations 2 years post high school.

Vocational aspirations. Vocational aspirations include such factors as parental aspirations for their children, students' level of aspiration and agreement between aspiration and expectation. Jordaan and Heyde (1979) presented the possibility that some subjects of the Career Pattern Study showed greater career maturity due to higher intelligence coupled with higher aspirations. "A vocationally mature subject who aspires to a high-level occupation may do so on the basis of his capacities or achievements, in which case he is merely translating existing assets into a vocational preference" (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979, p. 160). The analysis of the data completed by Jordaan and Heyde (1979) found level of aspiration related to only three of the ninth grade vocational maturity factors: occupational information, accessibility of vocational preferences, and agreement between ability and vocational preferences. "The relationships indicate that boys aspiring to higher-level occupations need to have more information about how to prepare for them than boys aspiring to lower-level occupations, but as might be expected in a culture that encourages

high aspirations — their preferences are not necessarily more realistic” (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979, p. 160).

Khan and Alvi (1983) in their study of educational, social, and psychological correlates of career maturity, analyzed data from 272 high school students. Their findings revealed the educational and occupational aspirations of the students, and the educational and occupational aspirations the students’ parents held for them, to be generally correlated with career maturity. King (1989) found that parental aspirations were a significant determinant of career maturity in males; however, parental aspirations had minimal total effect on the career maturity of the females in her study.

One of the comprehensive views of career aspiration and its effect on career maturity was completed through the Career Development Study (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968). Subjects were questioned regarding their career aspirations at four different points between the eighth grade and 2 years after high school.

For some subjects, the pattern is one of increasing aspiration, for others of declining aspiration. Quite a few subjects stay with the same vocational preference for all four interviews, perhaps with some increase in specificity. For many subjects the actual HS+2 occupation is consistent with the aspirations over 7 years, but for others it is inconsistent. (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968, p. 65)

More than half of the subjects aspired to college in grade 8. However, only one-quarter of the subjects had achieved or were still pursuing a college education 4 years after high school (Jordaan, 1974).

Ability and achievement. Ability and achievement were examined by Jordaan and Heyde (1979). Ability is defined as aptitude or intelligence. Achievement is defined as the level of competence reached in one’s school curriculum as measured by various indicators to include grades. There has been controversy over the high correlation between measures of career maturity attitudes and measures of general intelligence. A question has been posed

through the research as to whether career maturity inventories actually measure some aspect of intelligence (Fouad, 1988). Crites (1971) found only a low-to-moderate positive correlation between intelligence and career maturity. Chodzinski and Randhawa (1983) found, in a study of 279 tenth graders and 256 twelfth graders, that intelligence test scores were significant predictors of career maturity variables. Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) found that "brighter students in this study appeared to make choices which were consistent with their measured intelligence . . . too many subjects stated preferences which appear to be inconsistent with these scores (pp. 79-80). Alvi and Khan (1982) found, in a study of high school students, that grades did not have a relationship to career maturity, yet two indicators of achievement were related. In contrast, Jordaan and Hyde (1979) found that high school grades were an indicator of career maturity.

Participation. Participation was defined by Jordaan and Heyde (1979) as school activities, out-of-school activities, and after-school and summer employment. Most participants in the Career Pattern Study worked or participated in activities in high school. Most of the subjects' jobs were not associated with their stated career goals. Research findings indicated that subjects who had certain kinds of experiences were likely to be better informed about certain aspects of their preferred career, to be considering more alternatives, and to be further along in crystallizing and specifying a career choice than subjects who had not had similar experiences. Consequently, it was found that after-school work experience and the pursuit of avocational activities were useful predictors of career maturity (Jordaan, 1974).

Research has been conducted which looks at work values and commitment to work. Khan and Alvi (1983) found that their research indicated a relationship between an individual's intrinsic work values and career maturity. Super and Nevill examined the

relationship of commitment to work to career maturity. The first study examined 204 high school students, and its findings indicated that commitment to work is positively correlated to career maturity. A similar study exploring university students also found a positive relationship (Nevill & Super, 1988; Super & Nevill, 1984).

Stability of preference. Adolescence is a time of growth and development and change. It is not surprising to find that the research supports the contention that students in high school will change their minds about what their future career(s) will be. During this period of exploration, the student examines information about potential careers and works diligently to blend what is known about self with what is known about a particular career area. Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) found through an examination of eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade student preferences, that 70% of the students changed fields and 60% changed occupational levels over the 5-year period. However, if one defines change differently, reexamining this data show that if,

Changing level only once and then only to an adjacent level is regarded as a minor deviation, and the subjects falling in this category are added to those who did not change levels at all over the 5-year period, then almost 80% of them can be considered to have specified quite early the level at which they intend or hope to be employed one day. (Jordaan, 1974, p. 275)

Further, the results of the Career Development Study indicated that by the tenth grade, students were more aware of their interests and values and their relationship to career decisions. Students' levels continued to increase in both awareness and accuracy of appraisal of their abilities. In tenth grade, students were considering more factors when making educational and career decisions. A concern the study discovered was that "even as late as the tenth grade, many youngsters were behaving in a manner that would indicate they had made decisions and would make future decisions based on irrelevant and often inaccurate information" (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968, p. 97).

Jordaan and Hyde (1979) found somewhat different results in their examination of the Career Pattern Study data. Their findings indicated that most 18 year olds are still considering several career fields and several specific occupations.

About half are considering occupations which are not in the same field or at the same level . . . about 40% appear to know the field they want to go into but not the level, and vice versa; that only one out of every five has settled on an occupation or a specialty within an occupation and that two out of three still have little confidence in their expressed vocational goal. (Jordaan, 1974, p. 273)

Further, Jordaan and Hyde (1979) found the typical twelfth grader to have fewer occupations and career fields under consideration than he did in grade 9. In nearly two-thirds of the cases, twelfth grade vocational preference bore little or no resemblance to ninth grade preferences. Specificity of preference had not been attained in 1 out of 10 ninth graders and 1 out of 5 twelfth graders. Interests were more adult and preferences were both more congruent and more specific in twelfth grade. Twelfth graders had more confidence in their preferences. However, twelfth grade preferences were no more realistic or appropriate than ninth grade preferences, and most 18 year olds still knew relatively little about the occupation they were planning to enter (Jordaan, 1974; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979).

Pratt (1989) analyzed the data from the High School and Beyond Study, which examined high school seniors in 1980 and followed up with them in 1982, 1984, and 1986. The study included 9,400 subjects. Pratt (1989) found that "mind changing seems to be endemic in this age group" (p. 1). His research indicated that "more than half the sample experienced marked instability of occupational aspiration along side presumed maturity" (Pratt, 1989, p. 24). There were, however, modest trends toward greater aspirational stability over time. Pratt believed that this instability may be a function of the need for individuals to adapt to changing environmental circumstances and availability of opportunities or vice versa.

Other influences. Beyond the influences on career maturity analyzed through the Career Pattern Study, other research has suggested variables affecting the career maturity of adolescents. Crites (1971), and Khan and Alvi (1983) found that parents' educational attainment level was related to career maturity of their children.

Locus of control and self-efficacy, and or self-esteem have also been examined in relation to career mature attitudes. Super (1990) hypothesized that locus of control and self-efficacy predict career maturity (as cited in Luzzo, 1993). Luzzo (1993), Khan and Alvi (1983), and King (1989) found through independent studies that locus of control was related to career maturity in a positive manner. Further, Luzzo (1993) found self-efficacy to be a predictor of career maturity. Khan and Alvi's (1983) research indicated that persons with high self-esteem also scored higher on measures of career maturity.

Savickas (1984) researched the role of time perspective to career maturity. This research was based in Super's (1974) developmental model of career maturity that "contained 'planfulness or time perspective' as a basic dimension or second-order factor subsuming the first-order factors of distant future, immediate future and present" (as cited in Savickas, 1984, p. 259). Savickas studied 97 college freshmen, and the results of the study indicated that time perspective was a component of vocational maturity and career decision-making. Other studies have explored the concept of time perspective. Jepson (1974) found that the results of his study clustered group decision-making behaviors according to planning activity cluster (present), senior courses cluster (immediate future), and post high school plans cluster (10 years future) (as cited in Savickas, 1984). The Career Pattern Study also extracted planfulness as a major factor, along with three different time segments as lessor factors (short, intermediate, and long view ahead) (Savickas, 1984).

### Why Assess Career Maturity

"In light of the fact that the measurement of vocational maturity assumes (1) that "vocation" is an important organizing force in human life, (2) that individuals have some control over the choices they are offered, (3) that the process of acquiring vocational maturity is amenable to intervention by the counselor, and (4) that the behavior is related to significant non-test behavior" (Harmon, 1974, p. 84), why is it important to assess the degree or extent of the career maturity of an individual?

First, the assessment of career maturity can provide insight into the level of career development that can be expected from people at various ages. Harmon (1974) believes, "this information can be useful to counselors and to parents who probably tend to expect too much from young children and early adolescents" (p. 81). Secondly, this assessment allows for the examination of the quality of the career decisions made by the adolescent. It is important not to lock children into decisions that may have been made early, while the child was still fantasizing about possibilities (Harmon, 1974). Finally, this assessment allows for the examination of good decisions made by the adolescent, but made for the wrong reasons. "They decide to explore an occupation which seems appropriate for them because a friend is going into it or an uncle likes it. They rely too heavily on tests, adolescent or adult role models, or counselor judgments" (Harmon, 1974, p. 81). Super (1974) summarizes the importance of assessing career maturity: "Readiness to make decisions at each branching of the career tree as he climbs it is crucial to the success for his efforts. The speed with which he moves is determined largely by psychological and social characteristics, but speed is no asset if the goal is unclear" (p. 10).

### Defining Career Choice

Crites (1969) explains career choice in two ways. First, choice can be explained as, "the occupations which the individual says he will probably enter" (p. 570). Operationally, choice can be defined as, "an individual X makes a vocational choice if he expresses an intention to enter a particular occupation" (p. 570). Career choice is most often looked at as an event, a vocational decision made at a given moment in time. Career choice may also be examined as a process; a series of decisions made over a period of time (Crites, 1969; Roth et al., 1970; Super, 1953).

Career development cannot be explored without considering vocational identity, career maturity and career choice. "Vocational development then is self-development viewed in relation with choice, entry and progress in educational and vocational pursuits" (O'Hara & Tiedeman, 1970, p. 423). Career choice results from and is interwoven within a maturational process (Super, 1957). Career development is oriented by decisions related to school, work, and life. Each decision can be divided into two periods. One, anticipation is the time of exploration, crystallization, and specification of career choice. Second, during implementation or adjustment, the individual moves through induction or initiation of choice, transition, and maintenance (O'Hara & Tiedeman, 1970).

Super has theorized that people select careers that will be compatible with their self-concepts. He sees choice as a developmental process encompassing trait-and-factor theory, self-concept theory, and emphasizing the importance of career guidance in the process. Super believes in the developmental nature of career choice to the extent that he does not see a differentiation between the concepts of career choice and career development. Super sees choice as encompassing preference, choice, entry, and adjustment (Crites, 1969). He "introduced the concept of vocational maturity to denote the individual's degree of



development from the time of his early fantasy choice in childhood to his decisions about old age and retirement" (Crites, 1969, p. 102).

### Career Choice as a Process

Tyler suggests that, "a person to some extent shapes the pattern of his life by the choices and decisions he makes at successive stages" (as cited in Roth et al., 1970, p. 429). As an integral part of this process, Super defined career choice. Choice is a continuous process that is irreversible in nature. As the process progresses, it becomes more exclusive in nature, the individual progressively narrowing the alternatives under consideration. The choice process is defined by the dimensions of orientation to choice, or the acknowledgment that one will make a career choice; clarification of the vocational self-concept; occupational information which will increase in relevance, reliability and specificity; independence, characterized by an increase in self-sufficiency in decision-making; planful daydreaming and fantasy, where one sees oneself doing a certain kind of work; a plan on how to reach a goal; consistency of choice, where it is recognized that it is better to work consistently toward one clear-cut goal, than to continually shift objectives; and a reality basis for making a career choice (Crites, 1969).

Super and Overstreet found in the initial analysis of data from the Career Pattern Study in 1960, that "the primary dimension of the choice process in early adolescence is an orientation toward planning for the future, and the secondary dimensions include the anticipation of immediate, intermediate and remote vocational developmental tasks" (Crites, 1969, p. 169). Adolescence is a time of exploration where, in most cases, students clarify, elaborate upon, and confirm the concept of self which has already begun to merge and crystallize.

### Influences on Career Choice

Choice can be affected by numerous variables occurring within the individual's environment and personal make-up. Those factors that can relate to choice include one's culture; sub-culture, such as social class, geographic region, or community; and immediate environment, including family, school, and place of worship. Considerable research has been conducted on the relationship of school and family to the individual's career choice, which is of particular interest to this study.

School. Crites (1969) reviewed the literature and found three studies examining the relationship of school to career choice. One study analyzed the educational and career aspirations of students from 13 high schools. The findings indicated that "the dominant climate of opinion within a school makes a significant impact on students' occupational goals" (Wilson, 1959, as cited in Crites, 1969, p. 240). Another investigated the associations between college major and favorite high school teacher, favorite high school extracurricular activity, and effectiveness of occupational information courses in school. The study's findings indicated that about one-third of the students chose college majors in the same subject as was taught by their favorite teacher. Thirty percent of the students selected majors closely related to their favorite extracurricular activity. Forty-one percent of the students reported that career classes were helpful in their choice process. The limitations to this study were the absence of examination of other factors related to career choice (Carlin, 1960, as cited in Crites, 1969). And a third hypothesized that "during college the students' vocational choice comes to conform more and more to the dominant or model choice in his college" (Austin, 1965, as cited in Crites, 1969, p. 241). Austin (1965) found "that the student's career choice at graduation from college is affected far more by his characteristics as an

entering freshman than by the characteristics of his college environment" (as cited in Crites, 1969, p. 33), realizing that there may be other factors affecting choice.

Family. Parents have been studied to determine their effect on the career development and, subsequently, career decisions and career choices of their children. Crites, in 1962, studied male subjects, and hypothesized that parental identification was a significant variable in the selection of a career field. He found, "identification with both parents influences the formation of vocational patterns, but identification with the father is more important than with the mother" (Crites, 1969).

More recently, Young and Friesen (1992) explored the intentions of parents in influencing the career development of their children. They interviewed 207 parents and found that although they were not necessarily trying to influence particular career choices, they were "active agents in influencing their children in a broad range of areas in career development" (Young & Friesen, 1992, p. 198). Further, the study found that parents attempted to influence their children in a wide range of skills and attitudes, viewing this as an important "means of enhancing their children's ability to choose appropriate career aspirations and make decisions consistent with those aspirations" (Young & Friesen, 1992, p. 204).

Penick and Jepsen (1992) emphasized the importance of the relationship between family members' perceptions of family functioning and adolescent career development. Previous to this study, research had identified family background factors, to include parents' socioeconomic status, educational level, and biogenetic factors such as physical size, gender ability, and temperament, to be associated with the adolescent's career development. Further, research has indicated that family structure and family relationship factors, such as parental support, parental modeling, and egalitarian parenting styles, are positively related to career

development (Penick & Jepsen, 1992). The results of this study of 215 eleventh grade students and their parents, indicated family functioning to be a stronger predictor of career development than gender, socioeconomic status, and educational achievement (Penick & Jepsen, 1992).

Aptitude. The research has also explored intrinsic influences to career choice including aptitude, interests, self-concept, and curriculum choice. The interest in aptitude has its historical roots dating from the early 1930s. Crites (1969) summarized the early research in this area: Witty and Lehman found a relationship between an individual's aptitude and both the number and maturity of career choices. Wren found greater consistency, permanence and suitability of career choices of students with high academic achievement and aptitude. Stubbins studied 219 veterans, and the research indicated a high correlation between intelligence and career aspiration. Holden found general aptitude to be related to several aspects of vocational choice, particularly to the level and stability of choice. Jones, Porter, and Perrone demonstrated that a person's general intelligence is correlated with career choice and career aspiration.

Interest. Interest has long been researched and used as a tool in career development and career choice. Crites (1969) again presented early research in this area illustrating the indicated importance of the relationship between interest and choice: Carter and Jones studied 208 high school students using the *Strong Vocational Interest Blank*. This was the first phase of a longitudinal study identifying a definite tendency for choice to agree with interest. Later, Carter, Taylor, and Canning had followed 146 of the original group for the remaining years in high school. The research indicated that males crystallized interest patterns as they grew older. Females had a higher percentage of agreement between

choice and interest than males. Darley studied 1,000 college students and found relationships between choice and interests.

Montesano and Geist (as cited in Roth et al., 1970) studied 30 boys in grades 9 and 12, exploring the reason for making career choices. In grade 9, the study indicated that the major determinants of choice were interest and personal need satisfaction. The least mentioned was the assessment of abilities. In grade 12, the students expanded on the reasons choices were made. These students most often mentioned interest as a reason for career choice. They also stated that personal satisfaction was an important factor. Further, the twelfth graders stated that they were concerned with career suitability, money, prestige, status, and working conditions. This study found that older adolescent boys are less concerned about what they like and more concerned about the complexities of the job.

Self-concept. At the heart of Super's (1953) theory of career development is the idea that choosing a career is, in effect, choosing a means of implementing one's self-concept. Beyond the work of Super, numerous studies have been conducted to determine the relationship of career choice to self-concept. Warren (1961), James (1965), Stephensen (1961), and Schuh (1966) each studied changes in self-concept and related career choice or occupational variables, and found a positive relationship between these variables (as cited in Crites, 1969). Englander (1960) and Morrison (1962) found that "individuals select or reject teaching in accordance to their respective perception of it as being compatible or incompatible with the self-concept" (as cited in Crites, 1969, p. 264). Blocher and Schultz (1961) studied twelfth grade boys' actual and ideal self concepts. They found that both actual and ideal self-descriptions were more closely related to occupations which the students considered most interesting, compared to those they ranked as at least interesting (as cited in Crites, 1969). Anderson and Olsen (1965) also explored actual and ideal self-

concepts. Their research findings indicated a relationship between career choice and self-concept, but this relationship may not extend to realism of choice (as cited in Crites, 1969). Oppenheimer's research in 1966 also concluded the "people prefer occupations perceived as congruent with their self-concepts" (as cited in Crites, 1969, p. 264).

Curriculum choice. Research in the area of curriculum choice and its relationship to career choice has been explored indirectly in a number of longitudinal studies. Jordaan and Hyde (1979) examined curriculum and its relationship to career choice in their analysis of ninth and twelfth graders in the Career Pattern Study:

With or without the help of parents and teachers, freshmen in most high schools must sooner or later choose. . . . Although they may not realize it, these curriculum choices are also, for many, prevocational choices. . . . The longer students persist in a given curriculum, the more difficult it will be for them to transfer to another, which may be more in accordance with their developing self-concepts, interests and aspirations. (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979, p. 2)

The importance of curriculum choice to career choice is noted by the fact that for many students, by pursuing a certain curriculum, they are, whether they realize it or not, increasing the probability of being admitted or excluded from certain career fields and training or educational programs (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979).

#### Summary: The Relationships Between Career Maturity and Career Choice

The relationships between career maturity and career choice allow people to examine their career expectations or, in certain cases, the expectations of their children, the quality of the decisions being made, and the influences on those decisions. Career maturity and career choice were defined and examined primarily in the context of three longitudinal studies: The Career Pattern Study (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Super et al., 1957), the Career Development Study (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968), and the Vocational Development Project (Crites, 1971). Through these studies the dimensions of career maturity were examined.

Choice, as a construct of career development, was explored as a process, rather than an outcome, as it is often thought of. Choice most often is defined as the intent to enter, or the preference for, a particular career field. It is the culmination of many decisions, derived through the assimilation of information about oneself and the environment. It becomes evident, through the literature, that there are numerous influences on both career maturity and career choice. The factor that appears to be of current interest and concern is the planning orientation that characterizes career mature behaviors, and it being essential to realistic career choice.

### Summary

The link between career development, career maturity, and career choice cannot be over emphasized. Career development is the structure by which a lifelong process proceeds. Career maturity is the means by which examination of progress through this developmental process can take place. Career choice, also a process of many linked decisions, provides a pathway to the actualization of self-concept. This chapter has examined each of these constructs and presented a summary of the historical and more current research in each. The complexity of each construct was defined, and the factors that influence career maturity and career choice examined. The quantitative nature of the research to date has not provided a close look at the perceptions of the people who participated in these studies. Although the research historically has included in-depth interviews, the results of these interviews were quantified and the perceptions of the subjects lost. It was the intent of this study to explore, in-depth, the perceptions of four eleventh grade students and of their respective parents and teachers, of the students' readiness to make a career choice.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate selected Oregon student, parent, and teacher perceptions of the factors that influenced the readiness of eleventh grade students to make realistic career decisions. The literature presents numerous studies on career maturity, career decision-making, and the like, but little research has been conducted specifically on the factor of readiness nor on the perceptions individuals have, related to their readiness to make career choices, when placed in a position of having to make a career choice.

#### Methodology

Phillips and Blustein (1994) reviewed the research that has been conducted historically and summarized their findings as a pervasive debate that "has justifiably been focused on questions of psychometric structure, reliability, and validity" (p. 70). Further, they state, "this debate should be expanded to include conceptual arguments about whether the available measures of maturity really capture the richness of the construct as it was originally postulated in Super's work, or as it has been (and will continue to be) shaped" (p.70). It was suggested that a way to capture what Super and other career theorists describe as readiness to a make career choice, is to use qualitative research methods (Phillips & Blustein, 1994). Qualitative methods are not new to this area of research. Super's original Career Pattern Study was, in fact, a case study of 141 ninth grade males (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Super et al., 1957). The review of the literature illustrated the movement away from qualitative methodology. During the 20-year period of time following the Career Pattern Study, quantitative methodology was recognized as the preferred means of developing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Phillips and Blustein (1994) imply that it is time to



reexamine at how qualitative research can be used to explore more fully the construct of readiness and career maturity.

The researcher, using qualitative methods, is provided the opportunity to "develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural state, taking into account the relevant context" (Borg et al., 1993, p. 194). The researcher "is bent on understanding, in considerable detail, how people . . . think and how they came to develop the perspectives they hold" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The research is descriptive by nature and is more concerned with process than outcomes or products. The researcher is the key instrument (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). "Qualitative research typically yields verbal descriptions, largely derived from interview and observational notes. These notes are analyzed for themes and patterns, which are described with examples" (Borg et al., 1993, p. 199). The design of qualitative research is flexible. It is assumed that "meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behavior; descriptive data are what is important to collect; and analysis is best done inductively" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The anticipated result of a qualitative study is the development of a theory within the area of study. Strauss and Corbin (1990) discuss the concept of "grounded theory," describing the process as discovering, developing, and provisionally verifying, through systematic collection and analysis of the data, resulting in a theory which reflects the emergence of what became relevant through the course of the study.

This was a qualitative study employing in-depth interviewing to gather data and utilizing a constant comparative method for the analysis of the data for the purposes of describing perceptions and the developing theory. In-depth interviewing provides "access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior" (Seidman, 1991). This study explores the perceptions of people regarding the factors influencing readiness to make a career choice. In-depth

interviewing provides a means by which the researcher can explore perceptions and the meaning participants attach to those perceptions.

This chapter will describe in detail the research questions to be addressed and the research methods employed in this study of the factors influencing readiness to make career choices. The design of the study, the participants, and the process used to analyze the data will be presented.

### Research Questions to be Explored

This investigation explored perceptions of students, their parents, and their teachers of the factors influencing the readiness of the student to make a career choice. This study presented the possibility of broad, as well as more specific, questions to explore. People involved with career development, career education, the current reform agenda, or the development of young adults in a most global sense may ask one or more of the following research questions presented to guide this study:

1. What are the perceived factors that influenced the readiness to make career choices in selected eleventh grade students?
2. Do selected eleventh grade students perceive themselves to be ready to make career choices?
3. Do the parents of these eleventh grade students perceive that their children are ready to make career choices?
4. Do the teachers of these eleventh grade students perceive that their students are ready to make career choices?
5. Are there common factors identified by the students, their parents, and their teachers perceived to have influenced the readiness of eleventh graders, who made career choices?

6. How do the perceptions observed relate to current literature on career maturity and career choice?
7. What do the findings of this study suggest for the changing student needs and expectations for career and life planning programs in Oregon community colleges?

### Design of the Study

The process of understanding and consequently describing how a person experiences and recounts the process of preparing for, and making a career choice is a complex one, simply because accurately capturing and communicating people's perceptions of that journey is difficult. The in-depth interview provides the researcher a tool to "understand the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1991, p. 3). Seidman further states that the understanding of meaning is essential in that the meaning people make of a situation affects the way they behave (1991).

The in-depth interview provides the researcher, and subsequently the process, flexibility and the opportunity for people to tell their career life stories. The stories the students, parents, and teachers told, through this study, are the data that captured the perceptions of the factors influencing readiness to make career decisions. The questions used in an in-depth interview are both open-ended and semi-structured in their design. The questions for this study were open-ended, yet focused on the process of becoming ready to make a career choice. The questions were consistent from participant to participant so as to provide comparable data across participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The interviews were conducted by the researcher and were tape-recorded. The use of a tape recorder was chosen to capture the exact language used by the participants, while maintaining, to the greatest degree possible, an environment that was comfortable and nonintrusive to the them.

The tapes were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The data were analyzed by the constant-comparative method. This process, outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and adapted from Glaser and Strauss (1967), describes a mechanism for analyzing data where the researcher looks for "key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data, that then become categories of focus within the study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 74). The researcher must look for recurring instances of particular phenomenon, paying special attention to the "diversity of dimensions under the categories" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 74). The process requires the researcher to write in detail about the categories being explored, while attempting to describe and account for all the incidents the researcher finds in the data, continually searching for new incidents. The researcher "engages in sampling, coding and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories" (p. 74). The researcher works with the data developing an emerging model or theory (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The study's purpose directed that 4 groups of participants explore their perceptions of the factors that influenced a single student's readiness to make his or her career decision. The interview questions were formulated using the work of Super (1957) and Gribbons and Lohnes (1968). Both studies, longitudinal in nature, utilized open-ended, semi-structured in-depth interviews as their foundation. The design of the interview questions also addressed the research questions presented earlier in this chapter.

The researcher endeavored to provide an environment that encouraged free and open communication. The interview questions were designed to provide a means by which the participants could share the perceptions of their experiences, which in turn became the data for this study. The analysis was conducted to explore the meaning associated with this process and not to prove or disprove a hypothesis. This design was consistent with the intent of this study.

### Pilot Interviews

Seidman (1991) advises that the pilot interviews provide the researcher the opportunity to determine if the design of the study is appropriate for the research as it is envisioned. The researcher will experience first hand some of "the practical aspects of the study such as establishing access, making contact and conducting the interview" (p. 30). Three tape recorded pilot interviews were conducted prior to the beginning of the actual research study. One student, one parent, and one teacher were interviewed separately. The interviews were tape-recorded and took place at the site selected for this study. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed. A particular purpose for piloting the study was to closely examine the interview questions to see that they were clear and that the data gathered were relevant to the research questions proposed. The comfort of the participants was analyzed to determine if any changes needed to be made. It was proposed that changes to an interview question would be made if it was found that the participants did not understand the question or if the participants' responses did not appear to answer the research questions presented.

After the pilot interviews were finished and the transcription of the tapes was completed, no changes were made to the interview questions. The questions successfully guided the participants through discussions of the student's career choice process. The pilot interviews were data rich, and it was decided that the information from these interviews would be incorporated into the full analysis of data collected through the other interviews.

### Selection of Participants

The study explored the perceptions of the factors influencing the readiness to make a career decision. The researcher interviewed four students, their respective parents, and

their respective teachers. Each student, parent, and teacher formed a participant team. This study interviewed students, parents, and teachers from one high school site.

### Site Selection

Oregon is mandated by House Bill 2991 (1995) to implement the Certificate of Advanced Mastery before March 1, 1999. There are, however, high schools in Oregon that have taken it upon themselves to move toward and implement changes in their curriculums, consistent with the CAM, in which courses are clustered by careers and students are asked to choose a career area. By choosing a career area, students are also choosing a particular curriculum they will follow in preparing to meet graduation requirements.

The site used in this study is a high school that has been implementing the intent of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery for at least 2 years. Students from the selected school are asked to choose a career area or career cluster at the end of their eighth grade year. This selection is the basis from which course selection and graduation requirements are met for their remaining years in high school. The students attending the high school were representative of students in the state of Oregon as determined by the established selection criteria for participants of this study.

### The Participants

Purposeful sampling brings to the study information-rich cases allowing the researcher to explore, in detail, the issues of central importance to the study. This study utilized typical case sampling as the method of participant selection (Patton, 1987).

The participants were selected through the recommendation of a counselor at the chosen high school. It was believed that the counselor would know the students who were representative of a "typical" Oregon high school junior, as defined by this study. The typical Oregon high school junior is defined as either male or female, white, and between the ages

of 16 and 17 years old. The typical student does not meet the definition of any of the following special population groups as outlined by the Oregon Department of Education: academically disadvantaged, economically disadvantaged, disabled, limited English proficiency, incarcerated, a parent, or pregnant (I. Spencer, Administrative Assistant, Office of Professional Technical Education, Oregon Department of Education, personal communication, January 4, 1996). It was not the intent of this study to explore the ethnic or cultural differences that may appear when discussing career choice and readiness to make career decisions. The counselor also had knowledge of parents of students meeting the student participant criteria, who were interested and willing to participate in a study of this nature. The counselor had knowledge of the student's lead teacher within the career area or cluster chosen. The teaming of the three participants was essential to the design of the study for the purposes of data analysis. Thus, the participant team consisted of the student, his or her parent, and the lead teacher in his or her chosen career area.

The high school counselor contacted each of the recommended participant teams. The initial contact was a personal contact by the counselor to each potential participant. If the student and parent indicated an interest in participating in the study, the researcher contacted each person through a letter of introduction describing the purpose of the study, the role of the participant, the time commitment, and anticipated goal of the study. The letter stated that participation in this study was voluntary and that the anonymity of all parties would be protected to the greatest extent possible. The letter of introduction was an invitation to participate (Appendix A).

The researcher then contacted each of the recommended teams who responded positively to the invitation to participate. The student and parent were contacted by phone; the teacher was contacted in person. First, the students were asked to meet with the researcher individually for a short interview to discuss his or her participation in the study.

It was made clear to the student (and subsequently to all participants) that involvement in this study was completely voluntary and that there would be no repercussions for choosing not to participate. The participants were also informed that they may leave the study at any point in time. The parents of those students who indicated a strong interest in the study were then contacted by phone to determine their own interest and ability to participate. The study asked that only one parent for each student be involved. Once the student and his or her parent agreed to be involved in the study, the lead teacher of the career area the student had chosen, was contacted. Upon completion of the formation of the participant teams, informed consent was obtained from each individual.

#### Informed Consent

The researcher discussed with each parent, student, and teacher prior to the first interview the purpose of the study and the need to obtain informed consent and the factors outlined in the informed consent form (Appendix B). Participants were asked to read the informed consent form. The researcher asked if there were any questions related to giving informed consent, and answered them. The parents signed an informed consent form for themselves and a separate form for their respective child. The students signed an agreement to participate. The teachers signed an informed consent form. Each participant received a copy of the signed informed consent form before the interviewing began.

#### Interview Setting and Process

The interview settings were selected so as to maximize anonymity, convenience, and comfort of the participants. The interviews took place at the high school. The rooms where the interviews took place were as free from distraction as possible. The researcher worked with staff at the high school to select the interview locations.



All participants were interviewed twice, with the exception of one parent who requested that the two interviews occur concurrently. Each interview was approximately 45 minutes in length. The first interview focused on what Seidman (1991) refers to as "life history." The questions asked the participant to discuss the process he or she went through to make a career choice. The second interview focused on contemporary experience and meaning (Seidman, 1991). The questions asked the participants to discuss the specific choice made, the factors influencing the choice, and general feelings about it.

Interview guides were used (Appendix C). The research questions were open-ended in design, allowing participants to answer in a number of ways or to take whatever direction made sense to them. They were encouraged to tell their stories in their own words. The participants were encouraged to stay focused on the purpose of the interview. The researcher encouraged them to share concrete details of their experiences and perceptions (Seidman, 1991).

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher introduced the study and the interview process following these steps that Loomis adapted from Lofland & Lofland (as cited in Loomis, 1992):

1. The researcher explained the purpose of the interviews as a means to elicit the participants' perceptions of the process the student went through to make his or her career choice. It was stressed that their personal reflections of this experience were of importance.
2. The participants were assured that their anonymity would be protected to the greatest degree possible, and that any reporting of the information from the interviews would be done in the context of the study as a whole.
3. The participants were encouraged to tell their stories in their own words. They were assured that there were no right or wrong answers.

4. The participants were encouraged to ask for clarification anytime a question was unclear to them.
5. The researcher briefly discussed the problem the study intended to explore.
6. The researcher discussed the purpose of tape recording the interviews and emphasized how the researcher would guarantee the confidentiality of the interviews.

### Confidentiality

By the nature of the in-depth interview, the researcher is purposefully developing a relationship with the participants in which the participants may share parts of their lives that, if misused in any way, could leave them vulnerable. The intimate nature of this relationship requires that the researcher provide every assurance possible to the participants that their names will be kept confidential and that the information they will share for the purposes of the study will not in any way be linked to them.

The anonymity of the participants is a priority. Although their anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed, the researcher took the following steps at each stage of the research process to protect the anonymity of the participants to the greatest degree possible (adapted from Seidman, 1991).

1. Access to participants was gained through recommendation of a school counselor. Initial contact with the participant was by the counselor. Participants indicating interest in the study were then contacted by the researcher through a letter of introduction and invitation to participate. The counselor addressed the letters to the recommended participants. The potential participants were asked to contact the high school counselor within 7 days of receipt of the letter of invitation. The response options provided to the potential participants included a telephone call, written response, or personal contact with the counselor. Those potential participants responding positively to the letter of introduction

were contacted in person by the researcher. The participants then met the researcher to discuss the specifics of the study, and the researcher explained and obtained informed consent at that time.

2. The school counselor and the teacher member of each participant team were required to agree to guard the anonymity of the student and parent members of the participant team.

3. The interviews took place at the high school in locations that guarded the anonymity of the participant.

4. The names of the participants and the specific high school will not be discussed with any member of the researcher's doctoral committee, with the exception of the researcher's major professor.

5. The interview tapes were transcribed by two people: the researcher and a reputable professional transcriptionist. The researcher erased all names and identifying information before submitting them for transcription.

6. Pseudonyms were substituted in the transcripts for all names of persons, schools and school districts, cities, counties, and other identifying locations.

7. After transcription, the transcripts and audiotapes were placed in the direct physical possession of the researcher. Upon completion of the study, the transcripts and tape recordings were destroyed, or, upon the participant's request, were returned to the participant.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis, as described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), is "the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and enable you

to present what you have discovered to others" (p. 153). The products of this analysis will include the organization of data into manageable units, the synthesis of the data where patterns and themes have been identified, the identification of important information and what will be learned through a study, and the identification of what information will be presented (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The sources of data for this study were the interviews with each member of the participant team. The researcher interviewed each participant twice, with the exception of one participant who requested that the interviews take place concurrently. The two-interview format was used to develop rapport and to gather as detailed information as possible. Each interview was tape-recorded. The result of the interviews were 24, 45-minute tape-recorded interviews the researcher and a professional transcriptionist transcribed.

The researcher used a constant comparative method of analysis. Interviews were transcribed immediately following the interview. The analysis began upon completion of the transcription. The use of the constant comparative method allowed the researcher to look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that became categories of focus. It was anticipated the collection would provide many instances of the categories of focus. The researcher then wrote about the categories being explored, attempting to describe and account for all the instances the researcher had discovered in the data while continually searching for new instances (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The data were analyzed looking at two sets of relationships. The first set of relationships explored was within and among the participant teams. The second set of relationships explored was within and among (a) the student participants, (b) the parent participants, and (c) the teacher participants.

### Data Reduction

The coding procedure described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) is integral in the development of grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify the importance of the coding procedure by discussing what these analytical procedures are designed to do.

1. Build rather than test theory.
2. Give the research process the rigor necessary to make the theory "good" science.
3. Help the analyst to break through the biases and assumptions brought to, and that can develop during, the research process.
4. Provide the grounding, build the density, and develop the sensitivity and integration needed to generate a rich, tightly woven, explanatory theory that closely approximates the reality it represents.  
(Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57)

A process of open coding was used as the first step in analyzing the data. "Open coding is the part of the analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62). The researcher examined and carefully scrutinized the data. To begin the process, the researcher read the transcripts several times. Each transcript was then marked, highlighting areas of interest. After the transcripts were highlighted, the researcher began naming each discrete incident, idea, or event as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Categories were developed, where concepts pertaining to the same phenomenon appeared. The categories were tentatively named. The categories were then developed in terms of their properties (Seidman, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The next process in the analysis of the data is referred to as axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher puts the data back together at this point in the analysis. Connections were made between a category and any subcategories that had been identified. This is the time in the analysis when the development of a category goes beyond its

properties and dimensions. This process allowed the researcher to look at the data by "linking subcategories to a category in a set of relationships" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 99). Any proposed relationships discovered through this process were supported by the data.

A computer software program, *QSR NUD\*IST*, (Qualitative Solutions & Research Pty Ltd, 1995) was utilized to facilitate both open and axial coding.

### Theory Development

The final step in the coding process as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) is selective coding. At this point in the analysis of the data, the researcher must make the "final leap between creating a list of concepts and producing a theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). This is the time in the analysis when the researcher presents the interpretation of the data in a form consistent with the development of a grounded theory. Grounded theory develops inductively and is "derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents . . . it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). It is at this time in the data analysis the researcher answered the question, "what has this research meant to me?" (Seidman, 1991).

### Triangulation

Triangulation is a strategy used by the researcher to verify that what one perceived to have happened, has actually occurred. Verification may be difficult to obtain, and what the researcher may gain instead is a deeper and richer perspective of the research in progress. Triangulation can increase the probability that the researcher's perceptions are accurate. Typically, the researcher will utilize multiple methods and sources of data outside of the actual research to support the findings by showing that independent measures agree

or disagree with the findings. Researchers have found that, "it is essentially a strategy that will aid in the elimination of bias and allow the dismissal of plausible rival explanations such that a truthful proposition about some social phenomenon can be made (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Denzin, 1978; Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966)" (Mathison, 1988, p. 13). Two strategies were used for triangulating this study: comparison with the literature and an examination of student records and documents to include student career portfolios.

### Comparison with the Literature

The literature was used as a resource to compare and contrast what discoveries were made through this study with what is already known about readiness to make career choices in adolescents. Strauss and Corbin (1990) discuss the use of literature in a qualitative study and supply a number of ways that it can provide a perspective from which to examine, question, and validate the researcher's interpretation of the data.

During open and axial coding, the analysis of the data can generate categories or themes related to possible factors influencing readiness to make career choices. The literature was used, at this point in the analysis, to explore the potential of other relevant categories and relationships that existed among the categories. The literature also provided the researcher with new ways of looking at the categories discovered through the coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1990) warn not to begin with this examination, in that it may lead the researcher to categorize or look for themes in the data, rather than discover the themes presented in the study.

Theory development is a product of qualitative research. The literature was used to explain phenomena in light of the theoretical framework that evolved during the study. A second caution of Strauss and Corbin (1990) is not to allow past theory to influence or

dampen the discovery of new theory. The literature, however, may be able to provide answers to questions or guidance to the researcher in the development of theory.

Triangulation is an important step in verifying the study's findings. The researcher compared and contrasted the research and the subsequent theory found in the literature, with the findings of this study. It is important to note that the researcher discovered factors of readiness to make career choices not present in the current literature. This does not mean that the findings are less valid. It is also important to note that little research has been conducted specifically examining the perceptions of eleventh grade students' readiness to make career choices. The researcher used the literature in the process of triangulation, incorporating relevant elements of previous theories as they proved relevant to this study.

#### Student Records and Documents

A second method for triangulating this study was the examination of student records and documents that included the students' career portfolio, held by the high school career center coordinator. This information was examined in light of the information related to the researcher, through the interviewing process. The researcher looked for similarities, differences, reasonableness, and consistency in the student record when compared to the student report obtained through the in-depth interviewing.

#### Summary of Methods

Qualitative research, in-depth interviewing specifically, provides the researcher with the opportunity to explore and "understand the details of people's experience from their point of view" (Seidman, 1991, p. 103). This study examined the perceptions of selected eleventh grade students, parents, and teachers of the factors that influenced the student's readiness to make a career choice. The data were collected through 24 semi-structured



interviews. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The researcher analyzed the data through a constant comparative method, using a coding system presented by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The reduction of the data produced themes exploring the perceived factors influencing readiness to make career choices. The perceptions were explored in two ways. The first analysis explored the themes discovered among participant teams, comprised of a student, his or her parent, and the teacher from the chosen career area. The second analysis explored the themes discovered among each group which made up a participant team: the four students, the four parents, and the four teachers. A qualitative data analysis computer software program was used to facilitate this process. The study was triangulated through a comparison and contrast with the literature, and through examination of student records and documents. This grounded theory approach resulted in the development of a theory, promoting a better understanding of the meaning of readiness to make a career choice and the perceptions of the factors influencing that choice, for the participants of this study.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DATA TRANSFORMED**

The intent of this study was to present perceptions held by students and their respective parents and teachers of the factors that affected the students' readiness to make a career choice. The study's research questions were addressed through the analysis and provided a focus from which the data were explored. The study is a snapshot of four students' journeys which will be a lifelong process as defined by Donald Super (Super et al., 1957) as lifelong. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a picture of the participants and a glimpse into their insights regarding their readiness to make a career choice.

#### **The Participants**

This study was conducted with the cooperation of the counseling department at an Oregon high school that has been implementing a Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) program for at least 2 years. The researcher worked with an individual counselor assigned to the project by the vice principal of the high school. The counselor was provided information about the study and the student participant selection criteria. The counselor's responsibility was then to discuss the study with possible student participants and select four students. Each identified student then shared the information about the study with his or her parents, who then, in conjunction with the student, agreed to participate in the study. Next, the student discussed the study with a teacher in their CAM area and asked for their agreement to participate. Each participant then signed a letter of interest to participate, at which time the researcher contacted each of the study's participants.

In reporting the information about the student participants, pseudonyms have been given to each student. The first participant is Michael. He is a 17-year-old who lives with

both of his parents and a younger brother and sister. Michael has been in the study's school district since elementary school. Michael's mother was the parent participant in the study. She works in the food services industry. Michael's father works for a tire company. Both parents are high school graduates. Michael works at a large grocery store after school and enjoys the work because of the independence it gives him. His career goal is to be an architect. This career area is a part of the Industrial and Engineering Systems CAM. His teacher instructs the woodworking classes at the high school. He has known the student for one and one half years. He has been a teacher for 17 years and was involved in the creation of his CAM area.

Joanne is 16 years old and lives with her grandmother. Her father and mother have been divorced since she was a small child. She has lived with her grandmother for most of her life, although her father has recently moved into the home. Joanne has little contact with her mother, who works in the food service industry in a managerial position. Her father is a lawyer and has had a number of jobs in the past 16 years. He is currently working two jobs, one of which is in the collections department of a large company. Joanne's career goal is to be a chef, although she is currently reexamining this goal. This career area is a part of the Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation CAM. Her teacher instructs culinary arts classes and coordinates a student operated restaurant. She has been a teacher for 6 years and was in the Hospitality industry prior to becoming a teacher. She created the Hospitality, Tourism, and Recreation CAM for the high school. She has known Joanne for one year.

Eve wants to be an actress. She is 17 years old and is very active in sports and theater at the high school. Her chosen career is part of the Arts and Communications CAM. Eve lives with her mother and younger sister. Her parents are divorced, although her parents remain friends and she sees her father frequently. Her mother has worked for the same bank, in an administrative support position, for the past 25 years. Her father works in the

business field. He has a college degree and her mother is high school graduate. Her mother agreed to participate in the study. Eve asked her theater arts teacher to participate in the study. He has been a teacher for 18 years. He initially took the lead in the development of the Arts and Communications CAM, but is now taking a less active role.

The career of choice for Sue is an elementary school teacher. Sue is 17 years old and is also very involved in student leadership at the high school. She and her younger, natural sister, have lived with their adoptive parents since Sue was 4 years old. Her parents are both elementary school teachers. Her mother agreed to participate in the study. Sue's mother has been in education for 25 years. Sue's CAM is Human Resources. The high school does not, however, provide specific classes for students interested in elementary education. Consequently, Sue has been enrolled in college preparatory and advanced placement classes since her freshman year. Because Sue did not have a CAM class, she chose her leadership teacher to participate in the study. Her teacher has been in education for 27 years and has participated as a member of the Arts and Communication CAM. She has known Sue for one and one half years.

#### Framework for Data Transformation

Wolcott (1994) has presented ways in which qualitative data can be transformed and analyzed. One suggestion was to utilize an analytical framework. The data for this study were analyzed using two constructs to form a framework from which the researcher explored the transcribed interview data. First, the interview questions were developed using the work of Gribbons and Lohnes (1968), and Super et al. (1957). Gribbons and Lohnes, in the Career Development Study, examined the dimensions of career maturity through eight factors: factors in curriculum choice, factors in occupational choice, verbalized strengths and weaknesses, accuracy of self-appraisal, evidence for self-rating, interests, values, and

independence of choice. These dimensions were used as the guide for the creation of the interview questions. These questions were then compared to the interview questions used by Super et al. in the Career Pattern Study. Adjustments were made for parent and teacher questions, and three interview guides were created (Appendix C). Data were then examined using these dimensions. Next, the researcher identified the work of (Savickas, 1990) in which he examined career choice readiness in high school students. His definition of readiness included four elements: the display of concern for and a sense of control over the career decision-making process; holding a viable view of how to make a career choice; expressing intrinsic criteria for the choice; and basing a choice on a synthesis of one's needs, interests, abilities and values (Savickas, 1990). These components provided a structure for reporting the study's findings.

#### Data Transformed

As was discovered through the literature review presented in Chapter II, it has been a social norm in American culture that people, in late adolescence or early adulthood, will make choices that will guide their future careers. The Oregon Education Act for the 21st Century, House Bill 3565 (1991), and subsequently, House Bill 2991 (1995), may change those social expectations and consequently the career development and related career behaviors of Oregon's youth. Super (1957) stated that there is a relationship between career development and associated behaviors. Career development stages define a person's behavioral characteristics and behavioral expectations (Jepson, 1974). It can be expected that our educational system will control the transition from one career developmental task to the next by requiring that a career choice be made at the end of grade 10. As Harris (1974) presented, stage transition may be defined by changed societal expectations. Super (1953) agreed with this as he discussed career development. His belief was that the career

development journey could be guided; partly by aiding the person with reality testing and also by supporting the development of the self-concept.

Each student in this study was working within the exploratory stage of career development as defined by Super. The first stage of exploration is crystallization or the notion that one will go to work:

I heard about this thing called Architecture. I thought, well, it sounds interesting, so I looked into it a little bit more. I thought this was kind of something that I'd be willing to study more. Architecture is just one of those things, you know, where everyone is going to need one. It pays well and it interests me a lot. (Michael)

The next stage is specification. It is during this time that the person narrows the choice down and eventually presents what the choice will be:

And so, I kind of knew that I wanted to help people and so I was in the Social and Human Services [CAM] in eighth grade. I've been thinking about becoming a lawyer, a teacher, a social worker . . . a psychologist. Just working with people and their daily, every life things. I went into that. (Sue)

Finally, the person implements a choice by receiving training in the area of his or her future career:

My freshman year, I forecasted for all four of our years and I ended up, I'm on a 4-year drama major right now in high school . . . By the time that I will graduate, I will have taken every single drama class there is available. (Eve)

The implementation of one's choice is easier for some students than for others. High schools cannot possibly have career specific classes in every field. Consequently, students, such as Sue, must create their own ways of implementing their choice:

I'm taking the basic classes . . . Advanced English . . . Advanced Chemistry . . . Next year, I'm going to be taking Children's Literature. . . . I'm taking an early release next year so I can be a teacher's assistant with my mom. (Sue)

### Self-Concept

The intent of this study was not to specifically examine self-concept as a factor in career choice. The literature provides strong evidence that career choice is the implementation of one's self-concept as presented by Super et al. (1957). It became evident early in the analysis of the data that three of the students — Michael, Eve, and Sue — described themselves as having strong and well-developed self-concepts. As an example, Eve talked about herself in this way:

What I like is my basic personality . . . That means I like myself . . . I have a very strong self-concept. People have a hard time cutting me down to their level.

This view of herself was reinforced by both her mother and teacher:

She's willing to try, you know, I think she's willing to go out on a limb to a certain degree. And then, if she feels it cracking underneath her, she's at least strong enough to think it through before going out further. . . . She's very independent. . . . She's definitely a leader.

I would say one of her strongest traits is positive energy. Upbeat, a willingness to try anything. She's fun to be around, not only as the teacher, but I noticed her peers are real comfortable around her. She is relaxed, yet takes things seriously and works. She has a good work ethic. She's very even keeled and focused. A good head on her shoulders.

In contrast to this, one student, Joanne, does not have this positive perception of herself:

My self-esteem can get pretty low. . . . I might cook something and I'll probably think it wasn't good enough and I'd probably get discouraged and just throw it out. I'd get so stressed out that I'd just probably break down and cry. . . . I honestly don't know what I'm going to do with the rest of my life now. Now, that I don't know if I'm going to be a chef or not. I get those really bad feelings that I'm going to end up being a loser because I don't know what I want to do with the rest of my life. I don't know where I'm going to go. I don't know . . . I have this nightmare about being unsuccessful in my life and being on welfare and it's really scary because I don't want to do that, but I don't know what I'm going to do with the rest of my life.

Joanne's father and teacher reinforce this view Joanne has of herself:

Joanne has a couple of strikes against her . . . she's very petite, very tiny. I think that's going to be a detriment in the area of cooking. Chefs are, still

its a very very male dominated society. . . . Just watching her around the house, she likes experimenting with her cooking, but she doesn't really like to cook. She's lazy, can't stay focused. Rather be on the phone talking.

First of the year, she wanted to be a chef. I don't see her in that role. I don't see the focus and I don't see the knowing that you're just going to have to work 12 hours standing cutting vegetables for a few years. I think she needs a little bit more maturity.

Super (1963a) discussed the effects of adolescent parent-identifications as related to vocational interests. The agreement between the person's self-concept and the concept the parent has of the child influences the career choice the child makes. Super's observations are evidenced in this study through comparisons between the participant teams of students with self-described, strong self-concepts, their perceptions of the students' self-concepts, and the stated influences to career choice identified by them, and the participant team of the student with self-described low self-esteem. Savickas (1985) and Blustein et al. (1989) similarly found that adolescents had made more progress in strengthening their self concept if they also had a clear picture of their career goals, abilities, and talents.

As the data transformation expanded, it was deemed essential that the analysis must include a comparison of the students with strong, well-developed self-concepts to the student who did not see her self-concept in that way.

#### Displays Concern for and Sense of Control Over the Career Decision-Making Process

The choice. Although career choice is presented as a process verses a single event, eighth grade forecasting is a significant event for both students and parents in the career guidance program of this study. In one sense, the student loses control of when his or her career choice is made known to significant adults. However, the school district attempts to maintain the student's sense of control over the decision-making process by means of eighth



grade career exploration activities and the district's guarantee that the student may change his or her mind at any time in the process.

The students of this study each talked about the early age in which their career decision was made:

Well, I decided when I was probably 10 . . . I had a friend that was in the bowling league with me. He was telling me about it. It was kind of interesting because this friend that I was real good friends with at the time, he was telling me about it. I was like, its interesting. (Michael)

I started wanting to be an astronaut, then I wanted to be a marine biologist, and then when I was 8 years old, I wanted to be a chef. That was my dream to own my own restaurant and run the whole thing. (Joanne)

Ever since I was in about seventh grade, I think, I saw a production of Grease here at the high school and it changed my life forever. I had always known that I wanted to act but I didn't know how I wanted to act. (Eve)

I knew in fourth grade I was going to become a teacher. My mom's like, "no, you can do so much better." They knew, my mom will tell you this, they knew in the back of their minds that I was going to become a teacher. They just didn't want to admit it because that whole thing of parents and pay is just really over worked and under paid. (Sue)

The literature explores the factor that many adolescents change their minds a number of times before settling on a career (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Pratt, 1989). Joanne and Sue both noted other careers they had considered. Joanne considered becoming a marine biologist and an astronaut before the age of 8. Sue considered becoming a teacher, and with the encouragement of her parents, continued her exploration until her junior year in high school, when she came back to elementary school teaching. Each of the students in this study appeared to have decided early in their lives what general career area they would pursue, and they have remained consistent in those choices. This consistency is supported in each of the student's career portfolios, in which they had previously identified their top three job titles. Each student again identified those same career goals through the interviews.

Each student and parent met with a high school counselor at the end of the eighth grade year to discuss possible career goals, select a CAM area, and forecast the student's classes for the next 4 years. At this meeting, each parent said that this was the first time he or she had heard, from the student, his or her actual career choice:

Well, Joanne for a lot of years, wanted to be a veterinarian. And then, for some reason, she switched to this cooking thing. And I'm not sure at what point that happened. I missed that one. (Joanne's father)

She told me, when we went to eighth grade forecasting. She said that she wanted to be an actress. I can't say that I was totally surprised, but it wasn't what I had expected either. I think I expected more to hear, "I'm not sure." At eighth grade, my goodness! (Eve's mother)

In most cases, teachers did not meet their respective students until the end of tenth or beginning of eleventh grade. Teachers knew what their students career choices were either because of enrollment in a particular CAM class, or by the student telling the teacher. In one case, the teacher did not have any idea of the student's choice until after the first interview of the study, when the teacher asked the student, spurred to do so by his inability to answer that question for the interviewer.

The parents and students were told that this decision, made at age 14, could be changed at any time. They were also told that if the student changed career direction, his or her class forecast would be adjusted:

They told us this. I'm glad that they told us this. They did tell us, "you're young and you're going to be changing your mind a lot, so it's okay if you change your mind." (Sue)

I've just never seen it where it's been forecasted out for 4 years. Obviously, you can change anything you want to, other than the requirements. (Eve's mother)

Even with this stated flexibility, there were different perceptions among students, parents, and teachers of the value and appropriateness of asking eighth grade students what their

career choice was, and acting on that choice by forecasting 4 years of courses. Students reactions spanned excitement to dread:

When I went in to do my forecasting for that 4 years. I had never met him [her counselor] and he ended up looking at my thing and he goes, "you're going to be a drama major, aren't you?" And I'm like, you know what, I am. Okay, let's do this! (Eve)

For me, it was no one could tell me what to do. I think that was the hardest thing for me. It was such an open thing. I mean, having a job is for the rest of my life and so I was just like, how come they're asking us now? I haven't even thought about what I'm going to eat for lunch, or what I'm going to wear tomorrow. How can I pick what I want to do in the future? (Sue)

Similarly, parents expressed positive reactions to early forecasting, as well as deep concern for the student having to voice a choice that would be acted on by the school at an age earlier than they were accustomed to:

I think it is kind of neat to see that at eighth grade and look at what you think you're going to do. You'll know your freshman year, most of the time, if that's even the direction you're wanting to go. (Eve's mother)

I think part of this whole decision — talking about looking at the district — I remember when she came home, I think, at the beginning of eighth grade . . . she came home and cried for 2 days because she thought she had to make this decision. And she was so upset. She was so upset because she didn't know what she wanted to do. She felt all along the pressure that she had to decide. Everybody else knew what they wanted to do and she didn't know what she wanted to do . . . I think she made some decisions early on . . . because she had to say something. (Sue's mother)

Teachers expressed concern for the idea of making a decision as early as the students were being asked to:

I think that is the challenge with career focused education. We want to be sure they can change their minds. The way I hear students talk, more and more, even though we say we provide that opportunity [to change their minds], the environment we're creating, the climate we're creating is that you'd better decide now. They're losing their flexibility and their youth. (Eve's teacher)

I think we are missing the boat. I think we're pushing them too young. I hate to see education go in the direction that it's going in right now. They need to be kids. They need to experience all kind of things. I have to go

with this. I'm forced to go with it and accept it. But I just don't agree with it. (Sue's teacher)

Parents had varied reactions to the choices expressed by their son or daughters. In examining parental reactions, it became obvious that the parents of the children with strong self-concepts reacted differently than the parent of the child who stated that her self-esteem was low. Eve's mother's reaction was positive in light of her daughter announcing that she was going to be an actress:

I must admit when eighth grade forecast came up and it was, "I want to act." Okay. So, we went along with that and we had a big discussion afterwards. It worried me, quite honestly . . . It didn't worry me that she knew what she wanted to be, it worried me that the profession she was choosing . . . [has] a lot of let down in that type of field . . . I think it's giving her strength, making it so that even if she's not an actress, I think she can get up in front of people at least . . . It's building her character.

Joanne's father reacted differently to her daughter's choice of being a chef:

I remember when I came in and we set up for her freshman year . . . met with the counselors and she said this was what she wanted to do. I was trying to push her toward computers, that kind of stuff because we are in an age of computers. I wasn't going to discourage her, but I wasn't going to encourage her. I knew by what she wanted to be, I knew there were certain ways I could motivate her . . . she's too small in stature, both in height and body weight and mass, to be a chef.

Student activities. Research has shown a positive relationship between a student's participation in activities (inside or outside of school and after-school employment), and career maturity and career choice (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979). Each student in this study was involved in school activities including drama, student government, wrestling, swimming, Key Club, choir, Young Life, dance, and others. Two of the four students were also working at part-time jobs. Participation in these types of activities by young people has been related to career development, in that individuals with these kinds of experiences are farther along in the choice process, make decisions with better information, and show more career mature behaviors (Jordaan & Heyde, 1979).

The CAM directs that once a career choice has been made, students will enroll in courses that support that choice. Many of the CAM areas have clusters of classes students may take in support of that choice. Three of the students in this study were in CAM courses specifically targeted for their individual career choices. (One student, was unable to take CAM specific courses due to a lack of offerings in that area. Consequently, this student was enrolled in a general college preparatory curriculum.) The CAM classes provided exposure to activities that would be representative of their career fields:

So, these classes that I've been taking are real interesting. I've been taking drafting and all the math classes that I can. I've taken some art classes and done some perspective and stuff like that. And, I'm working in the woods shops because that helps also. So, classes and then every time we've had to do research for, like, jobs in other classes, I've always chose architecture as one of the choices. (Michael)

Students saw the link between the courses they had enrolled in and the career choice they had made. However, there was no indication that the student saw the relationship between extracurricular activities and career choice.

Parents were aware of the classes their students were taking and also saw the relationship between the course and career selection:

He had to take, they put him in a college preparatory field, why not? Four years of English, 2 or 3 years of Science. He did a year and a half of PE and, I think a half a year of health or something. Four years of math . . . 2 years of art . . . he's into the woods and fitting things together . . . he's in his second year of drafting. (Michael's mother)

Teachers were aware of the courses students were taking, being exposed to the student each day in their own classes, and how those classes fit the student's career goals or interacted with the students' other activities. For example, Eve's drama teacher was aware of her swimming because of decisions Eve was having to make related to participation in school theater productions or participating in school swimming.

The research also states that there is an unstated importance in curriculum choice as related to career choice. Whether students understand it or not, the choices they make in high school may either include them or exclude them from certain career fields or training and educational programs (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979). Eve's teacher expressed a similar concern:

And then, along with that, certain elective classes the student chooses both help to decide and to turn away from possible career paths.

Certainty. When asked a question about how certain the student was of a career choice, every student, every parent, and every teacher agreed that the student was certain of the choice. For example, when questioned about how certain she was, Eve's response was, "99%." Eve's mother said, "I think she is quite certain." And her teacher said, "I'll give you a one-to-ten. Ten being very certain, one being just all over the map. I'd say she is a six."

The students exhibited more certainty in their individual decisions than the literature on career maturity would suggest for persons of this age (Jordaan, 1974; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Pratt, 1989, March). The age at which these students appear to have made their choices is also not supported by the literature.

Students provided three general areas for where the certainty of their individual career choices emulated from: interest, experience and information, and a feeling of competence:

I have gone to many, many professional auditions and every time I do the casting directors just kind of go "wow." They just kind of sit there. (Eve)

Because its something that I like to do. I like to be around people . . .  
Knowing I'd be good at it. And it will be fun. (Joanne)

Teachers and parents all mentioned those factors related to certainty that the students did. In addition they offered self-knowledge:

I think she's certain because I think she feels that she can do the job, so to speak. That she can succeed . . . deep in her heart. (Eve's mother)

And he'll be a good one [architect] because he has the self-esteem to put into the work, the effort to keep him at the top. To do what is necessary to be at the top because he's that self-motivated. His certainty comes from his motivation . . . he's packing the skills. (Michael's teacher)

Interestingly, there were few commonalities found in the reasons a student was certain and where the teacher or parent saw the certainty coming from. For example, if a student indicated the certainty came from experience, the parent would say it came from a feeling of competence.

### Holding a Viable View of How to Make a Career Choice

Savickas (1990) found in adolescents that a factor in readiness to make a career choice was their ability to understand the process by which that choice would be made. The process, as described in the literature, is lifelong and involves not one decision, but is the culmination of many decisions. These decisions are oriented by one's school, work, and life experiences (Roth et al., 1970; Super, 1953). More specifically, Crites (1969) described choice encompassing trait and factor theory (abilities, limitations, interests), self-concept theory (who am I and how can I translate that view into a career), choice as developmental (choice becomes more specific and is based more in reality as one moves towards implementation), and strong career guidance.

How did I make my choice? The students of the study found it difficult to articulate an actual process they followed or used in making their individual career choices. This may be due in part to the early age at which the students appeared to have made their decisions. When asked how the student made a career choice, he or she would respond in this way:

I guess there was, like, nothing else that I heard of that interested me. So I just kept sticking with one thing and hoped for the best. And I still am.  
(Michael)

It was, like, I just came to just kind of sit here and watch, but I ended up, it got me right here, right in the heart, because it was like a whole other world that you can easily jump into. And, that's what totally intrigued me about it, because I don't have to be myself when I'm acting . . . It just filled me with this awesome excitement because it gave me energy that I didn't have . . . I went home that night and I had a dream. I dreamt that I was Sandy in the play. I ended up getting a standing ovation in my play. And so, I woke up that morning and . . . Whoopie Goldberg says, in her movie, "if you wake up in the morning and the first thing you think about is acting and you go to bed and the first thing you think of is acting, then, you're going to be an actress." Well, that kept ringing in my ears because every time I thought about anything, I'd think about acting. And so, I knew that's just what I'm going to have to do. So, I ended up pursuing it. (Eve)

Sue described her process as a journey that started at being a teacher, continued through much personal reflection and soul searching, and this year, brought her back to elementary education:

Last year, it was really hard for me because I was, like, "what should I be." That's when I went through all these career changes . . . Actually I knew in fourth grade, but it's just going through the motions of, like, knowing that's the one thing that I wanted to do. My parents knew one of their kids would become a teacher.

Sue's mother emphasized that Sue's process was not a smooth one, nor one without it's emotional trials:

I think [the process was] agony, actually. You know, she just kept looking at herself and saying, "I want to do something I really enjoy." . . . She really thought about it a lot. I mean, she really agonized over the whole thing of what she was going to do with her life. . . . Since, she sort of focused on this [teaching] she's a lot calmer now. Before it was, like, "what am I going to do"

The importance of experience. The students identified the importance of job or career-related experience in the process of decision-making. They talked about the value of the experience they were gaining through their CAM classes, and how that experience was affecting their process, personally.

Research it enough to where you have enough background on it. Find some people that know about it to tell you about it. Like . . . do a job shadow or



just find people that are in it too . . . talk to them about it and see what they think about it. (Michael)

I want to call around this summer. I'm going to get a job this summer. And see what I can do about catering and see how it works. See if my dad knows any caterers that he could possibly hook me up with and show me how it goes and let me know if this is what I want to do. (Joanne)

I would say, go out and, almost kind of, like, meet with the people and, like, maybe spend a day around what they do, where they work and stuff like that to get a feel for it if you actually . . . a sit down job, you don't like the sit down jobs — well, you wouldn't know that unless you went and looked at them and asked them questions about how they feel about their job and stuff like that. Just getting personal feedback from people, not necessarily your counselor or your teacher, telling you about a job. But people who are actually in the field. (Sue)

That was my dream to run the whole thing. Now its just too hard. . . . Because the stuff that we do in the student operated restaurant. It's just pressure, pressure, pressure. Drill and rush. Drill and rush. You know, you're always getting something in the oven, you're taking it out, you're checking the time. The restaurant is pretty fun but it's . . . I hate being in the front of the house. I cannot stand it . . . I'm nervous . . . I spill water. I'm a people person, but not when it comes to serving . . . I like being in the back of the house. Having that rush to get it out and make sure it's perfect. (Joanne)

It was interesting that experience was identified repeatedly, even though only one of the students, Eve, had actual paid work experience in the field of her choice:

I've done some film. . . . And a lot of kids around here, they're like, "oh, but I want to do film." And I'm like well, have you done film? No. Then, you don't know. See, I wouldn't be able to make that decision if I hadn't been in those films.

Television. The literature does not speak to the significance of television in the career decision-making process. The students mentioned television as a means of gathering information and of identification with television and film celebrities:

And on Nickelodeon, there was this show, its called *Clarissa* and her dad's an architect. And, he designs these weird building because he's an architect. One time I was watching it, and he designed one that looked like a beehive. I thought that guy is pretty amazing because he gets to design these weird buildings that nobody would ever think of. (Michael)

I used to sit, like on Summer vacations, I'd lay in bed and watch cooking shows every day. Oh, I wish I could make that. Oh, that'd be so cool to make. I tried thinking who would be my favorite cooking host. Probably, the Urban Peasant, James Farber. He makes really good food and it's really simple and really easy. . . . I used to sit in my kitchen, and tell what I was doing, like I was on a cooking show. Like I had my own cooking show. (Joanne)

I saw her [Meg Ryan] in a movie . . . she portrayed a character, that is close to me . . . this character was very strong and it was like she was the character . . . It's knowing something so well that you can be that person. It's like you've lived that life your entire life. It's just like how she looked like she did. Like she knew everything about this character. It just totally intrigued me. I just, I wanted to do that, like, right away . . . It's, like, I could turn off the TV and see her walk right by me. (Eve)

Although the students talked about television and its role in their career decision-making processes, only two parents acknowledged television as a factor, and teachers did not discuss television in any way.

Career Classes. Super (1980), Crites (1969), Jordaan (1974), and Phillips and Strohmer (1983) describe the importance of career guidance in the career decision-making process. The primary means of providing career guidance to the students in this study was through career activities that were a part of another class, or as a stand-alone class. The first structured career activities for the students in this study were in the eighth grade, and were a section of a social studies class. The students participated in a number of activities such as interest inventories and skills identification activities. This information was then made available to the high school counselor for review and utilization in eighth grade forecasting. The information gathered in eighth grade was maintained in individual student career portfolios, which followed each student to the high school.

Three of the students did not see the value in the career class activities they had participated in. There did not appear to be a connection made between the activities of the class and the decision-making process:

To tell you the truth, my freshman year, I thought career class was just kind of a blow-off course. It was, it didn't help me at all really because you did a lot of paperwork out of books and it's, like, its great for you if you want to know down to the bottom base information, but it doesn't give you any more than that. . . . And most of the kids, I mean, they didn't even pay attention to the answers, they just found them in the book and wrote it down. . . . Nobody would think about that [what does this mean to me], because they just wanted to get it done and hand it in and not have any homework. I mean, that was about the only point of those. So, finding more about my occupation, it really didn't help at all. (Eve)

But in eighth grade, we had that career thing . . . we did in History. I went through that and that was totally bogus because they said that the only job that would fit me was like a garbage worker because I wanted to stay inside, have a 9 to 5 job, and that was pretty funny. I was after hours changing all my answers so I could get some better jobs. (Sue)

Michael did find value in the class activities. Throughout the interview, Michael indicated that information was vital to his process. He enjoyed the research and saw value in it:

Well, I narrowed it down, really, doing the reports and stuff for my [career] classes because we did two. We had to come up with four occupations that we would be interested in . . . the career classes helped.

Parents understood that their students were involved in formal career exploration activities; however, they did not have a clear picture of how their children made their decisions, or what those career activities were, or of the benefit to the students:

For Sue, there hasn't really been a whole lot going on, to be truthful. They've had a few times that they've talked about careers, but it hasn't really meant a lot. It's been mainly a survey type thing where she filled out things and came back feeling like "why am I filling this survey out?" (It really doesn't . . . It tells me some things, but doesn't get to who I am.) She didn't feel like the survey gave her any personal knowledge . . . and she didn't feel like anybody ever answered her questions. (Sue's mother)

In the booklets that they hand the children, they have all the different kinds of selections, I'm thinking that they must go over that a certain amount with the kids prior to, or at least in eighth grade, to make them understand where they think they might have some interests themselves. (Eve's mother)

Similarly, the teachers did not know how their students made their choices. The teachers shared the lack of understanding of the role the career classes were intended to play in the students decision process:

And they're given brochures that talk about, or they're told when they get to high school things are going to be focused, and they get to high school and it may or may not be as focused as they think in real life, but as you go through the counseling track — and I don't mean the counseling office necessarily — but Career Ed. . . . They're given tests and I think there's a program that they fill out, a survey. It has some initials that closely resemble CIM but I don't know them. But I observe frequently kids coming back after getting results of that and being confused. (Eve's teacher)

Teachers, in describing the student's process, would use their personal career decision-making process as a guide or point of reference:

And so, a lot of this, I guess, is colored by my personal experience. I started out with the same sort of thing I just described. August, after I graduated, being in the parking lot of Dairy Queen with my best friend and asking each other, "what are you going to do now?" "I don't know." "Should we go to college?" "Yea, let's go to college." Well, let's be roommates. . . . He was Wildlife Management. I was General Forestry. We were both heavily involved in theater at the high school, but that wasn't a career option. And so, we went in after the first semester, we had gotten involved in theater and spent all of our time there. Our counselors . . . called us in and said, "you're not coming to these classes and we noticed that you've signed up for all these theater classes. Are you in the right field?" No we're not. He's designing sets for a community college and now I'm teaching theater. I think that still can happen today. I know it's harder. But I think discoveries of where you really enjoy fitting in as a career, happen later. (Eve's teacher)

There was an agreement among the teachers that the career choice one actually implements comes later in life, as mentioned above. One of the teachers voiced the concern that a career choice is not, as presented to students, a planned event:

I don't think you have to sit down and plan your career. I think that's a misconception. I think we're putting too much into that. . . . I think what they've done is found that they really have an interest. . . . They've found that they love it and they're pulled together as a group. They like being with each other. They're interested in the curriculum. So, off they go in that direction. I think they make that decision on their own. I don't think that there's a whole lot we're going to do except maybe introduce them to some things that are possible. . . . I just think we are pushing it. . . . There's no hurry. (Sue's teacher)

Parents and teachers were asked what they believed prepared the student to make his or her career choice. Experience and information were presented by each person. This

was also discussed by the students when addressing how they came to their individual career choices. Parents and teachers also talked about the students' preparation including an affirmation of their skills and abilities:

Experience. Making mistakes. Learning from mistakes and then, as that's going along, realizing what makes me happy. What I enjoy doing and, we all learn what we enjoy doing is what we're good at, and pretty soon that all comes together. And maturity mixes in with that. Then you realize, now I need to do this, this, and this, and I'll get there. (Eve's teacher)

Parents and teachers stated a belief that parents had a role in preparing the student to make his or her career choice. The role was not well-defined, other than to describe such things as support and influence. The importance of this support and influence will be presented later in this discussion.

Factors considered in making a career choice. Considerable research has been conducted exploring what factors influence a person's career choice and his or her readiness to make that choice. This literature is summarized in Chapter II. The students, parents, and teachers of this study echoed many of the factors identified in earlier research. The difference was the emphasis placed on the factor of experience, by all participants, and the importance of parental support as identified by the students.

The factors repeatedly perceived by students, parents, and teachers were experience, earning a livable wage, love of the career field, and environment. Additionally, satisfaction was identified by parents and students; skills and abilities were identified by students and teachers; and the support of parents, family, and teachers were identified solely by students.

Experience and information. Jordaan (1974) discussed the implications of experience on career choice as it related to the Career Pattern Study. There were indications from this study that subjects who had certain kinds of work experiences were likely to be better informed about certain aspects of their preferred career, were more likely to weigh a wider

variety of alternatives, and to be further along in crystallizing and specifying a career preference than subjects who had not had such experiences. Roth et al. (1970) summarizing the work of Super and Overstreet and Crites discuss the value of career related information in the choice process as well.

Experience and information, as factors in career choice, were discussed by each participant. This emphasis has already been addressed by the students as key components in the process of career choice. This was repeated in their discussions of factors. Similarly, parents and teachers saw experience as a vital factor in readiness to make an informed career choice. Eve's mother described experience this way:

Well, you know, sometimes you make a choice and you're just kind of on the outside of a circle, you're just kind of thinking this is something I'd like to do. And then, you try a little bit, and you try a little bit more, and you're getting closer to the middle of the circle at this point. And you keep trying a little bit more, little bit more, little bit more, until you get to a point and you say "you know what? I like this, I can do this, this is what I'm going to do."

Joanne's father illustrated his concern this way:

And I think that if a child chooses to be a mechanic, then I think the schools need to set something up with the surrounding community that says, "I would like this child to spend one week." It's work experience. I want hands on. I want them to see what it's really like. Don't pull any punches. The child says, "I want to be a chef." The schools set it up with the surrounding area that says, "fine, this child is going to come in for one week and is going to spend a week with you in the kitchen." And I want this child to find out what it's really like.

Michael's teacher believes that experience is a key element in the process. He also presents a caution:

Oh yes. They need to experience everything. That's the hard one because when you lock them into CAMs, you're dealing with interests and talents, but you eliminate experiences. So you really have to watch that. That's why we try to make it so we don't lock them in so tight that they can't say, "well, wait a minute, I want to go over here and try this." And even at that, even if I was pursuing a degree to become a doctor, I'd probably want to play over here on the fringe, too. And I think we counsel them not to in the

high school. No, you're going to be a doctor, you aren't going into the shops.

The participants each spoke of the certainty of the student in his or her career choice. They did not express concern related to this certainty, and, in fact, were comfortable with it. It is interesting to note that although experience and information are emphasized by students in both the process of making a decision and as a factor in the decision, and likewise by parents and teachers, only one student in this study has direct experience in her field of choice. Students, however, did note a desire for the opportunity to job shadow, an option now available only for seniors:

Well not yet [had an opportunity to spend time with an architect], but there's a thing that we have called job shadowing where we sign up to go and visit an architect. So I plan to do that pretty soon. (Michael)

Ability to support oneself. Gribbons and Lohnes (1968; 1970) researched adolescent vocational values extensively through the Career Development Study. The responses of the study's participants were classified into 12 general categories of values. Of the categories identified, salary, or the ability to support oneself and one's family, was ranked ninth among tenth grade females and third among tenth grade males.

Each participant of this study mentioned the ability to 'put food on the table' as a factor in making a career choice. It was not identified as the number one factor, but it was emphasized in some way by each participant:

I think income would be. I don't think that it should be completely . . . I think it has to be a stable income. Something that you know that . . . I think it has to be like that, because if you're comfortable living from one pay check to another then that's okay. But if you have a family and stuff, I wouldn't recommend that. Something that has like stability, not so you can buy this humongous new house or the newest car or the best little toys or the cutest little dresses and stuff. But like things that are just real and you have clothes and you're able to feed your family. (Sue)

If it'll put food on the table. If it'll give you a quality of life that you're going to enjoy and not hate. (Eve's mother)

So, they have to take a good look at what kind of lifestyle they want to lead. What's important to them and to their own values. And if money is one of the things that is important then they have to look for a job that they're going to make big bucks. (Sue's teacher)

Love of the career area. The participants of the study believed that interest in an area was an essential factor in career choice. It is interesting to note, however, that not a single student used the word interest in describing this value. The students talked about having a "passion" for what they were doing:

I guess the other factor would be the passion of living in another world. That'd be another one. (Eve)

Most important, I think would have to be if you're passionate about it. That, I think, is the most important because like when I said I knew that if it's something that you love. . . . It has to be something that you know that, no matter what, you'll be happy waking up in the morning. (Sue)

Parents and teachers spoke of interest as a love, in a similar way to the students.

So I would say, number one in a career choice would be something that you think that you're going to enjoy the rest of your life. . . . Well, number one, she loves it. That goes without saying. (Eve's mother)

Boy, I guess I'm really tied to that if you enjoy it and want to do it, that is the most important thing, and then find out what's required to get there. (Eve's teacher)

Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) described interest as liking the work or finding enjoyment in the work. Tenth grade females rated interest number one and males rated it number two.

Environment. A value addressed by each participant, but not specifically mentioned by Gribbons and Lohnes (1968), was the environment in which one works. Students, parents, and teachers alike discussed the need for the person to understand the environment he or she would be working in, and compare that to their personal value system:

I sit there in class, even now, and just, like, "oh my goodness!" Just the whole loss of respect for teachers is just incredibly amazing. It's just really sad. I just sit there, like, "they're an adult, they're a teacher" and you're a



student . . . I don't know. [*And you still want to be a teacher?*] And I still want to be a teacher. (Sue)

You've got to have a certain stature. I mean, you've got to be large, you've got to be in charge, and you've got to be in control. That's the bottom line. You're dealing with a lot of different people. You put in a lot of hours for very little amount of money. Most of these kids that come out of cooking schools wind up as short-order cooks at Wendy's or at Denny's or whatever. (Joanne's father)

A carpenter living in the Northwest that doesn't want to work when it's raining. If you don't want to work when its raining, don't become a carpenter in the Northwest. Now, if you want to go down to Arizona and be carpenter and put up with 110 degree heat, then go do it. But in the Northwest, we work, I work, when it's raining and it's snowing and it's sleeting and it's miserable. (Michael's teacher)

Satisfaction. Parents and students mentioned personal satisfaction with a chosen career as important to the choice process. This particular value was mentioned by only two of the teachers. Sue and her mother spoke of the need for satisfaction this way:

I need something that I feel good about myself. It has to be, like, I think inner peace. I think it has to be something you know that you're good at. When you feel that you're good at something then you're going to do a better job because you know, "oh, I'm doing something good."

Enjoy doing year after year. Or, in a field where you can have some movement to maybe not start in something that you have to retrain yourself to do something totally. I think self-satisfaction has to come up there pretty high or you won't stay in it very long. You can't be motivated strictly by money. I think you think about that, but I don't think its the highest motivation. It's got to be self-satisfaction.

Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) describe satisfaction as being happy with one's work, fulfilling oneself, or doing something worthwhile. Satisfaction was rated number two among tenth grade females and number one among males.

Skills and abilities. The students and teachers of this study stated that what people are good at, what they are competent in, is a major factor in their career choices. Skills and abilities were noted by only two of the parents in this study. Gribbons and Lohnes (1968)

examined skills and abilities in the context of being "a value." They looked at this factor as preparation, where one's abilities lie, "what am I good at," or suited to do. Michael and his teacher agreed that skills play a major role in examining career choice:

They do pretty much, like, the designing of buildings was interesting because you could design something that nobody else would design . . . in like one of my art classes, I drew a building in perspective where like two buildings were on the side of the street and there was, like, a glass bridge going over the street. Because I'd like to design that building. That was real fun for me because it gave me the chance to do something that I would not normally be able to do. Nobody else would have come up with the same idea. . . . I like to draw. I like to build things. I'm good with my hands.

Talent-wise, there might be some things that you enjoy doing but there's no way in the world that you have the talents to be able to do it. So, then you have to do a reality check and say, "am I capable of doing that over time if somebody's willing to pay me?" . . . He [Michael] is what I described. He has the confidence and the talents in more than one area.

Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) found that tenth grade females rated abilities number nine and males rated them number six. This is interesting to note in that to make realistic career choices, one must be realistic about one's skills and abilities. A person's skills and abilities may be innate in some cases, but may also be a function of training and experience. If the student is making a career choice based on skills and experiences he or she has had up to that time, the decision may be made without complete consideration of the potential for future skill development. Skills and abilities were not top priorities in the Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) study, nor was it a priority for the parents in this study. Parents are often key in addressing reality issues with children. Michael's teacher voiced the concern this way:

It depends on the parent. . . . Every parent wants the greatest for little Johnny. . . . Every counselor wants Johnny to be the best that he can be. Nobody wants to tell Johnny that he just doesn't have the skills to do that. Very few counselors, very few parents will do a reality check. And this is tough.

Values. Gribbons and Lohnes (1968; 1970) identified other values which coincided with the values mentioned by the study's participants. The values described by the students were personal in nature. Joanne stated she wanted to "work close to home." Sue described not wanting to work in a "big city and community." Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) identified this as "geographic location" which ranked fifth among tenth grade females and ninth among tenth grade males. Michael talked about his priority, "Where you get to work with people." Sue described her desire, "I wanted to do something for the world." Gribbons and Lohnes presented "personal contact" and "social service" as two values identified by their study's participants. Personal Contact rated number three among tenth grade females and number five among males. Social Service ranked number four among females and number eight among males. Values in the Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) study, not mentioned by the participants in this study, included advancement, demand, marriage and family, personal contact, prestige, and personal goals.

Parents and teachers of the study talked about values in a more general way than did the students. Eve's mother and Sue's teacher described values this way:

And maybe three, will it stay in line with your morals. Will it actually make you remember how you grew up and what you learned when you grew up and not change those values and views.

So they have to take a good look at what kind of lifestyle they want to lead. What's important to them and to their own values . . . I think they need to look at their family values and find out how much do I want to be with my family, how important is family to me.

It appears, from the student's career portfolios, that the students have started to explore their personal values, but that there is additional work to be completed in the area of values clarification. Michael noted that his values included using his talents, helping others, using his mind, finding a challenge, and making his own decisions. Eve presented her values as making her own decisions, self-satisfaction, using special talents and good

benefits. Sue's values were described as, "letting me use my mind, feeling good about what I do, security, and helping others make the world a better place." Joanne did not present her values as a part of her career portfolio. The values presented by the students through values clarification exercises in their career classes were representative of the values discussed in the interviews.

Parental support. The connection of perceived parental support as a factor in career choice was made evident by the discussions the researcher had with each student. The literature has touched on the significance of this support in studies by Khan and Alvi (1983), Penick and Jepson (1992), and Young and Friesen (1992) as outlined in Chapter II. Khan and Alvi (1983) further summarized the work of Breton who found that "support for high educational attainment from significant others was critically related to both educational intentions and occupational preferences" (p. 357). Anisef's study, also detailed by Khan and Alvi (1983), examined the educational and career intentions of twelfth grade students in Ontario, Canada and "found that socioeconomic status, home environment, and parental support were significant factors in choice" (p. 357).

Interestingly, parents and teachers did not specifically identify parental support in the same fashion or with the same intensity as did the students. Parents and teachers did identify themselves as influences to the process, as will be presented later, but this was not in the same vein as the students' descriptions of the importance of their parents' support and acceptance of them as people and their individual choices. Following are examples of the value students presented in relation to the need for parental support. Eve described her parental support in this way:

I'd have to say above all else, my mother. Once I started kind of getting into the field of it, she'd always take me. She would take me everywhere. She'd drop whatever she was doing and take me to an audition or to an agency sign up or whatever. And whenever I'd do bad in an audition and

she knew that I did bad, she wouldn't say, you know, "that kind of sucked." She just pick me right up and I'd be bouncing off the next minute ready for the next audition. And I think I would have given it up early on if she wasn't there.

This is the same mother who discussed her concern with her daughter's choice when she found out about it in eighth grade. The mother discussed her concerns with her daughter, but supported Eve in her dream to be an actress.

Sue similarly describes the support she received from her parents as she explored many career options before returning to the choice of elementary school teacher.

I think I'm really fortunate to have parents who gave me a choice. And they have given me a choice. In life, they've tried to influence my choice, because they know the negative and positive aspects of certain jobs, just 'cause they know. You're just like, "what if." They're just like "Okay." My parents, they've been, like, really supportive of anything that I do. When I told my dad I wanted to go to the Naval Academy, he drove me up to the airport and we listened in on a little meeting they had at the Red Lion there. He called there and found out the requirements. When I was interested in the interior design, my dad was really excited. He called U or O for this internship. I was just like, "wow!" So, they've been supportive of any decision that I make. . . . They also supported me when I changed my decision. They supported whatever I chose. [And when I came back to teaching] they were like, "yea, we knew that." We knew you were going to come back to teaching. I was just like "really." And so my parents were just like, "Okay." They were really excited about that.

Sue's parents encouraged her to explore. At grade 4, when Sue first announced that she was going to be a teacher, her parents provided her the freedom and support to look at other options. They supported her during her eighth grade forecasting when she was feeling lost and dismayed because she did not feel prepared to make a *final* career choice.

In contrast to the positive emphasis put upon parental support by the students with strong, well-developed self-concepts, Joanne presented herself as being overpowered by her father and his ideas about her and her career choice:

My dad . . . he told me that I would never make it. And that it's not the job for me because I need my time, flexible hours and stuff. . . . At first he said that he wanted me to be a lawyer. I'm not good with my math at all. I gave up on math. I don't know. He wanted me to go into the hospitality business.

But I told him I'm not leaving Oregon. I don't want to go to Nevada. . . . I had this dream about owning my own restaurant and being the head chef. My dad knows people that have a kid who is a chef. . . . He said its really hard. He doesn't make a lot of money. And it's not all that it's cut up to be. . . . My dad basically made me change my mind. It wasn't good for me to do because my height and you're lifting things and you're under so much stress that you just can't do it. My dad wants me to strive for the best I can do. He said that I could do way better.

In examining parental perceptions of the importance of their support, the parents of the children with strong self-concept saw their role as providing a stable home for their children. As Michael, Eve, and Sue's mothers described:

I wanted to work here because that way I could be home when my kids are home and I know what they're doing, where they are doing it, and who they're doing it with. I think that is important.

I just try to keep the home front stable. If I do that then at least she has a chance to do the things that she wants to do and she doesn't have to worry about what's going on.

I probably helped guide her and talk to her and listen to her. Whatever she wanted to do, I kind of encouraged her and talked about things to her. I supposed I've always said you need to find something that you're really happy with, something you really want to do. You know, no matter who says you should do something else, including us, if we discourage you from something, you still have to make your own decisions. I think she just knew that she could go ahead and say what she wanted to do. Look at life. You know, we talk a lot.

In contrast, Joanne's father was more outspoken about his role in her career decision process. His support took on a different tone:

Right, exactly. I jump on her case about that [grades]. She's doing very good. In fact, its probably one of her better classes [French]. She really enjoys it. But like I said, again, she's too small in stature both in height and body weight and mass to be a chef. . . . She is not chef material. Trust me. I know chefs. I've been around chefs. She's not chef material. You know, she's not going to have that imposing . . . if she had it in her personality, her stature is going to take it away from her. It's not her cup of tea. So, we've talked and I told her, "look, you want to be in that, that's fine, but why don't you move toward the catering and management. . . . That's where the money is. Get out there, you've got a good personality. You're cute, you're charming, people like you, you talk easily with people. Use that skill" . . . But I'm just trying to channel it to something that's going to be more, that would fit her. It's not that I don't want her to break in. I mean,

I'm sure there are small gals like her that are chefs somewhere out there, but they are so much in the minority that her chances of surviving are not good. And I am damned if I'm going to put out a lot of money.

Joanne answered, when asked what advice she would give a freshman coming into high school about making their career choice:

Don't listen to your parents. Do what you want to do. And if it's not good enough for them, which it should be. They can help you and they can guide you into the right direction but . . . see what you want to do and if it's not what you're certain about or if it's not what you think is going to satisfy you or our parents, then rethink it.

There may be a connection between perceived parental support, student self-concept, and certainty of career choice. Michael, Eve, and Sue all exhibited characteristics of strong, well-developed self-concepts. Their parents appeared to view their children in a positive light, focusing on the positive aspects of their children's personalities without ignoring the weaknesses. The students' career choices were accepted and supported in the same light. Contrastingly, Joanne exhibits characteristics of a person with a weakly developed self-concept. Her father focused superficially on positive aspects of Joanne as a person, "you're cute," "people like you," and emphasized perceived weaknesses: her height, for example. Joanne's father also stated that a reason she chose culinary arts as a career field was, he perceived, she thought it would be "easy." He did not see that Joanne had the skills or a real interest in the field. Joanne stated numerous times that she "loved to cook" and that she felt she was talented in the area. Young and Friesen (1992) found in their study of parental intentions, associated with critical incidents they undertook in the career development of their children that:

The content of the intentions also revealed that parents attempted to influence the development of a wide range of skills and attitudes in their children. They considered such a wide range important as a means of enhancing their children's ability to choose appropriate career aspirations and make decisions consistent with those aspirations. Other parent's intentions represented the view that if the child is happy and well adjusted and can engage in satisfactory relationships, then the child's specific career

development will be based on important personal characteristics and will ensue appropriately. (p. 204)

Young and Friensen (1992) noted that the parents in their research substantiated the research findings in the literature that focused on "self-concept as an important dimension of career development (e.g., Crook, Healy, & O'Shay, 1984; Kidd, 1984)" (p. 204).

Influential people. The connection between parental support and who influenced the student was made evident through the student interviews. Students would state both that parental support was a factor in career choice, and note that their parents were influential to them as they made career choices. Parents and teachers agreed that parents were influences in their children's career choice process. Sue talked about her parents in this way:

Okay. I'd have to say my parents and my family, my sister, just because I'm around them all the time. They're like my support and they're my backbone. More than that, they are my friends. I can tell them anything and everything and I do. I tell them what is going on at school, my grades, and I know that whatever I do they'll always be there for me. I mean, they're not going to approve of everything I do.

Sue's mother saw her support as guiding and encouraging her child to make independent choices. Sue's teacher also talked about the support Sue has in her parents:

Her environment has been all education. So, it's all facets of her growing up. Her parents, seeing what her teachers do. She's been successful, so all of her other teachers have contributed to that success. I would say that everybody that has come in contact with her in education. I don't think any one person, maybe her parents would probably be the two people.

Students and teachers agreed that teachers and counselors were also influential in the career decision-making process. Michael described the people who were most influential to him, as he crystallized his choice, as his counselor, his woodworking teacher, and his drafting teacher.

I guess [my counselor] was, because he helped me choose classes that would fit my CAM. And [my woodworking teacher], because I've learned through him how to, like, make diagrams and read diagrams of how to plot,



put stuff on paper, or read stuff on paper. And [my drafting teacher], because she showed me the correct way to draw on paper.

Eve talked about the support and encouragement she received from her theater teacher:

"[He] has given me so much encouragement. It's been amazing." Teachers were not able to discuss specifically who the student may have seen as influential. The teachers did, however, identify their role in the career decision-making process:

I think we model. I think we model success. Most teachers are successful. They've proven themselves through the bell curve, in spite of the bell curve. And, I think, the way we react to our environment as perceived by my students. (Michael's teacher)

I think elective teachers have strong influences on kids because the kid has selected the elective because of an interest. And then, maybe that's the seed that was planted to grow into a career path or at least an exploration. I think, from my own experience as a teacher, I usually hear the influence I've been 2, 3, 4 years after, you know, when the students come back and wants to student teach. (Eve's teacher)

Students also mentioned the importance of family and friends in the career decision-making process. This was either as the person who introduced them to their career field or as a person who was particularly influential:

I just heard about it from a friend. . . . I probably would have kept on going with, like, the cartooning thing because I hadn't even ever heard of a thing called architecture until I heard him saying something about it. (Michael)

It was kind of funny 'cause my sister is the one who pointed that out to me. She's like, "what are you going to be when you grow up, Sue?" I'm like, "I want to be an interior designer." She's like, "you're not going to help people?" That really offended me at the time. I was, like, "how dare you say that?" (Sue)

Television has already been mentioned as having a part in providing students with information related to making a career choice. Television also provided role models for them. Eve discussed the many television and film stars she identified as influential in her career choice, as did Joanne. Both parents of these children were also able to identify the

specific television personalities their respective children had discussed with the researcher.

As an example, Eve's mom said:

Bridgette Fonda. I mean, she fell in love with her the first time she saw her on the screen . . . she's got some real idols. In her bedroom, she has got posters that she has gotten from different places, whether they've been theaters, and she's asked them if she could have the posters afterwards . . . she's got some real big posters in her bedroom of these people and obviously the plays that she's been in. Yea, she's looked at those people on the screen and said, "I want to be there someday."

The participant teams all agreed the parents were very influential in the student's career choice. However, beyond that, students identified many more people who were influential in their process of deciding on a career than the parents or teachers knew about.

The reasons for choice. The students identified interest or love of a field, supporting oneself, environment, experience, personal satisfaction, skills, and parental support as the key factors in career choice. When asked why they made the choices they did, the answers were somewhat different. Students agreed that supporting oneself, interest or love of their chosen field, and personal values were the reasons behind their career choices. Overall, parents and teachers did not know the specific reasons why the students chose the careers they did, or their reasoning did not match that of the students. "I have absolutely no idea." The parents agreed with the students, in that they identified supporting oneself, interest, and love of an area as the reasons one would choose a career. Teachers only identified interest. Students and parents also mentioned that their goals included training at a community college with the intent to complete a bachelors or masters degree.

In comparing the factors identified as necessary in considering a career choice, with the student's stated reasons for making his or her choice, it does not appear that the students generally considered all of the factors they identified as being necessary for career choice. The teachers and parents were also not able to identify why their respective students had

made their individual choices, with the exception of interest in the area. Interest, was however, the common thread between all participants. Phillips and Strohmer (1983) studied the relationship among factors influencing career development and the decision-making process in college students. Their findings indicated:

Individuals who are engaged in making decisions about the choice of a major or occupation, and who do so with the benefit of using available resources and integrating information from those resources according to principles of decision-making, are likely to devote excess time and effort in the prechoice portion of the decision-making process. Conversely, those who employ these strategies appear to have a clearer sense of their preferred alternatives [regarding occupational choice] and are less involved in undifferentiated exploration of majors. (p. 400)

The students of this study did not appear to use all the available information, yet they did not expend excessive time or effort in making their choices. The exception to this would be Sue, who continued to explore possible careers until her junior year, at which time a choice was made.

#### Express Intrinsic Criteria for Choice

Self-knowledge may be defined by the extent to which a person knows his or her interests, strengths, weaknesses, limitations, aptitudes, skills and talents, values and needs. This knowledge is often reflected in one's self concept. To look realistically into oneself is difficult, particularly for the adolescent, and this process has been examined in the literature by such researchers as Gribbons and Lohnes (1968), Crites (1969), Super (1963a), Jordaan (1974), and Blustein (1987), to name only a few. As Blustein (1987) summarized, "one of the major tasks for adolescents and young adults is to obtain knowledge about themselves and the occupational world in order to specify, clarify and implement career plans" (p. 64).

The participants of this study were asked to describe their interests, strengths, and weaknesses. Comparisons were made between the students' perceptions and parents' and teachers' perceptions of these characteristics.

Interests. As presented in Chapter II, interests have long been associated with, and are a consideration made, in career choice. The students of this study freely identified those activities or areas of interest to them. Each student presented interests that were related to their respective career choices: "I like to draw," "I like to cook," "I have a passion of art and poetry." As the literature indicates (Crites, 1969; Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968, 1970; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Roth et al., 1970), and as was reported by the students of this study in naming interest and love of an area as a factor to consider in career choice, the students of this study often connected that interest to their individual career choices. Parents of the children who had strong, well-developed self-concepts had a better understanding of their students' overall interests. These parents discussed their student's interests as they related to his or her career choice:

She obviously loves acting. She's very good at it even if, for no other reason, because she makes you believe when she acts something at home.  
(Eve's mother)

Her first love is probably art, teaching art. . . . She loves to do art work, craft work, any of that kind of stuff. (Sue's mother)

He's very involved in drawing. He'll sit down with a sketch pad and just sketch and draw and he designs things. (Michael's mother)

Contrastingly, the parent of the student with self-described low self-esteem did not identify interests related to her career choice, but rather interests that directly impacted him.

She loves to dance, . . . we open our wallets and we give you the money to go, . . . She likes her clothes. She likes to have nice things, . . . she feels money grows on trees, . . . you do nothing to earn that money."

The father also listed interests of the student not identified by her. Finally, he stated about the student's love of cooking: "just watching her around the house, oh, she likes experimenting with her cooking, but she doesn't like to cook."

Teachers did not identify interests of the student unless the interest related to the class the student was taking from that teacher. An example would be, "he likes to build things and he is a student in my woodworking class."

The interests noted in the students' career portfolios were almost identical to the interests that students discussed with the researcher, and were consistent with the career choices presented in the portfolio.

Strengths and weaknesses. As one's self-concepts grows and develops, one is better able to examine the areas in which one can do well. Those activities that we excel in are then added to the idea of who one is and who one wants to become. The students identified strengths freely and openly throughout the interviews. Some of the strengths were related directly to their careers, other were personal in nature:

I think of myself as an artistic person. I like to draw. I like to build things. I think I'm really good with my hands. As far as strengths, artistic ability, being able to use my mind very well to come up with ideas. I'm able to make friends easily, I have a lot of math skills, that, I think, would be some of my strengths. I know a lot about the outdoors. (Michael)

My friends like to call me a counselor a lot of times because I do have, you know, this compassionate, the woman's side or whatever, where I'm a very, very good listener. And, I'll sit down and I will listen to everything somebody says and I'll remember everything. I'm really good at just sitting down and calming people down and easing people if they're agitated or whatever. (Eve)

Parents and teachers echoed many of the strengths; parents tended to focus on the strengths that described the overall person and teachers explored the strengths as they saw them in their classrooms. Michael's mother and his teacher describe his strengths in this way:

Independence a lot. He's just like, "mom, I'm a big boy, I can get up and go to work by myself. I can get up and go to school by myself, whatever if I have to leave early" . . . He's just gotten to be a good all-around kid, you know. So many parents of teenagers these days, you have to worry about

the drugs and the alcohol. And he's just like, "how can kids do that to themselves?"

He has an excitement. He enjoys doing what he's doing. I don't know that I'd ever be able to keep up with him in class because he just moves at break point. He really wants to create something and he wants to do it quickly. That's why I indicated that I would hire him at the drop of a heartbeat because I would never have to worry about what he's doing. I'd always know he'd be doing something that needed to be done.

In identifying weaknesses, the students appeared to struggle. The weaknesses presented to the researcher were not as completely described, were very personal in nature, and alluded to the students' emotional make-up:

I'm not a very angry person, but when I do get angry, it's kind of like watch out, because when I get angry I lash out. I have a really bad reputation. It doesn't happen hardly ever, but when I do get angry, I get very physical. It's not a good thing. (Eve)

So, that's one thing I wish sometimes I would have a little bit more confidence in the things I could do ability wise. We just had like this . . . We're reading the *Old Man and the Sea* in English and we were doing this oral discussion and I knew all of the answers and I knew that I knew that. But for some reason, I didn't speak out. Sometimes, I think that I'm just like afraid of what people will say. That inner fear. (Sue)

The students' career portfolios did not fully explore the students' individual strengths and weaknesses. They were asked what they liked about themselves, what they would improve, and what they saw as their "strong abilities," and they were asked to prioritize these perceived strengths. Each student's prioritized strengths and perceived areas for improvement were consistent with the strengths and weaknesses presented during the interviews.

Parents presented the weaknesses of their children, but to a much lesser degree than they discussed the students' strengths. The weaknesses were explored in a holistic way, more so than were the students' strengths.

She likes seeing what she is doing, but I think she's always afraid that finishing something is that then she has to be evaluated. She's not real good about that. . . . So, she probably takes on too much some times. You know

she wants to do everything for everybody. . . . Weaknesses? Probably never knowing when to say "enough, I have to have some time for myself." (Sue's mother)

Teachers had very limited perceptions of the weaknesses of their students. Two of the teachers specifically noted that they were not aware of any weaknesses their student possessed. Michael's teacher responded, "Yeah, he doesn't have typical weaknesses."

The literature questions the ability of adolescents to accurately appraise themselves (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968). It also emphasizes the importance of identifying one's abilities and linking those abilities or traits to career decision-making (Crites, 1969; Galinsky & Fast, 1970; Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968; Jordaan & Heyde, 1979; Khan & Alvi, 1983; Raskin, 1985; Roth et al., 1970). Since two of the measures of career maturity are considered to be the ability to verbalize strengths and weaknesses and evidence of self-rating (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968), one may wonder if the student's description of the weaknesses is a complete account, or whether the student has not reached the point in the development of self-identity to examine those weaknesses completely and realistically.

The researcher noted a relationship between students with self-reported strong self-concepts and the student with low self-concept. In comparing the responses of participant teams, the students with self-described strong self-concepts shared many more strengths than weaknesses. They also appeared to have a good sense of what their strengths were. The parents' description of the children's strengths and weaknesses were quite personal in nature. The parents talked of their children with respect and a sincere appreciation for them as individuals. Eve's mother spoke of her and their relationship in this way:

She's very warm. She's very intellectual. . . . Both of my children are really like my best friends. They're very, very close to me, and I to them. She, I think, feels that she could tell me anything and I won't get too weird on her. I enjoy my children. I truly do. I enjoy Eve at the age she's at because there's so many new and interesting emotional, as well as physical things happening to her, as well intellectually. She's growing at such a wonderful rate. It's fun to sit back and watch it and know that you had a part in

putting it together. I just enjoy being around her. She's fun to talk to. She's fun to play games with and yet she'll get silly.

Teachers of these students appeared to really like their students. The strengths presented by the teachers focused primarily on what the teacher observed in class. The strengths discussed by the teachers were often tied to future employment. The teachers found it easy to discuss their students' strengths and struggled with finding weaknesses. Sue's teacher talked about her in this way:

She is a self-starter. She can do things on her own. She doesn't need to have guidance every little step of the way. That's really important because a lot of kids ask, "Now what should I do next?" "Is this okay?" And they just aren't independent enough just to take the ball and run with it. And Sue does. Sometimes too much . . . I think she'll come through just fine.

These students did express fewer weaknesses and they were of a very personal nature. The weaknesses noted by parents were those weaknesses commonly found by parents of their teenage children: "get him off the couch and more active" or, "learning to accept responsibility without being asked." Sue's mother talked about her weaknesses this way:

Her disorganization. It drives me crazy . . . I'm a very organized person. . . . And so, I'm a very analytical person, and she's a very emotional person. . . . But she just needs a little more balance because, it's like, she gets down to the end and gets very frustrated. I think if she could . . . you know, I don't really worry about her going away to college but some of me . . . if she was to go and live someplace, I could see Sue just running herself and getting sick because she's really very fragile.

Teachers found it difficult to specify weaknesses of the student they worked with. It was more common for a teacher to refer to accepting people for who they are and that any weaknesses the student had would be addressed through time and experience.

In contrast, the student with self-described low self-esteem noted two-thirds more weaknesses than strengths. Joanne found it difficult to talk about strengths unless it related to social interactions with friends or in very general terms. In talking with her about her



strengths, her first response was, "My strong point is, I naturally don't have any. . . . I have a really good personality." In discussing her strengths, the conversation quickly moved to her perceived weaknesses without being asked what she saw as her weaknesses:

My personalities range from really, really hyper or really, really mellow, or really, really depressed. . . . Right now its really, really depressed. I have difficulty with my height. I hate being short. It's hard to deal with because people look at me like I'm a little girl, like little one.

It also appeared that Joanne's father found it difficult to focus on her strengths rather than her weaknesses. The strengths presented by her father were centered on Joanne's ability to be social: "personable," "friendly," "warm," "sensitive." He would begin talking about a strength Joanne possessed, but transition to a perceived weakness and back again:

Personality, very, very personable. That's a good strength in her. Again, it's a reason I have tried to steer her away from trying to be a chef. She doesn't have the wherewithal for being a chef. She likes to cook. She does good in home ec here and her culinary arts classes and stuff here, but this is high school setting. This is not the real world. I don't see her being able to assert herself in that kind of area. . . . She's got stubbornness and fortitude to hang in there and make it work. . . . But again, I don't see her running a kitchen. . . . She's got the personality to be able to go out and sell the service or talk about it. Marketing, I think that's where her strengths are going to lie.

Similarly, Joanne's teacher began with a description of her weaknesses. The teacher described half as many more weaknesses than strengths. She discussed Joanne's weaknesses in this way:

Yes, inappropriate. Just doesn't understand, will not take responsibility for her own actions. You know, it's other people's, like the problem with the catering event. It was, well, I have problems. You know, trying to do that. But then, when she realized it, after I nailed her on it, you know, she was mad at herself because she knows what she did. . . . She can't always be saying, "well, I have family problems" and such. You know, the social immaturity. That really scares me. I'm glad she found a little niche here. I'm glad she feels comfortable here. I'm glad that we can work through this. She's really looking forward to coming back next year as a leader. You know, she's looking forward to that second year because she knows how I respond to the second-year students this year. Now, their skill level is a lot higher than Joanne's skill level, but yet, I still think that she will really need to assume that role as a leader next year. Hopefully, she will. So I'm

gearing her up. That I will expect, I will not expect these temper tantrums from her next year.

It was interesting to note that all three members of this participant team discussed Joanne's social attributes as her only strengths. Her teacher used words like, "friendly," "very social," "she gets along with a wide variety of people," and "really good social skills." There were no other strengths presented.

Crites (1969) states, "to make a choice, the person must be aware of himself and be able to relate consciously to occupations" (p. 120). As presented in Chapter II, Super (1963a) discussed the metadimensions of the self-concept and their relationship to career choice. Examining these metadimensions more specifically, there appear to be significant differences between those students with strong self-concepts and the student who presents herself as not possessing a clear, accurate, realistic self-concept. The first metadimension presented by Super (1963a) was self-esteem. Three of the students of this study presented information that led the researcher to believe that they liked themselves as people. Joanne, contrastingly, stated she had low self-esteem and described specific things that she did not like about herself, most specifically things related to her body-image.

The second metadimension of self-concept is clarity (Super, 1963a). This is described as an awareness of the nature of one's attributes. This may be expected to increase with age and be related to intelligence and to adjustment. The students with strong self-concepts were aware of their strengths, and related those strengths to their future careers, family, and social relationships. However, Joanne appeared to have a limited knowledge of her strengths and focused to a greater degree on the perceived strengths and weaknesses her father had presented to her.

The third metadimension of abstraction was observed in all students of this study (Super, 1963a). Abstraction is the ability to describe oneself in the abstract or general,

rather than only in concrete or specific terms. Each student described emotional components to their self-concept and identified relationships of self-described attributes, values, and needs to their chosen career areas.

Refinement is the degree of elaboration of the traits a person ascribes to himself or herself (Super, 1963a). It appeared to the researcher that the students were more complete and comfortable in their descriptions of their strengths than of their weaknesses.

The confidence with which a person attributes traits to himself or herself, one's conviction as to the kind of person he or she is, was defined by Super (1963a) as certainty. One must have a confidence in oneself and in the type of person one believes oneself to be. The three students in this study described as having strong self-concepts presented that certainty; they presented a truthful and consistent view of themselves to the researcher. The fourth student, Joanne, did not appear to possess this certainty, and in fact, wavered in the description of certain attributes and values used to describe herself.

Stability is the consistency of one's self-descriptions over time (Super, 1963a). From the information presented in the career portfolios, the students, whether presenting strong self-concept characteristics or not, did present stable self-descriptions between the eighth grade and the present.

The final metadimension of self-concept is realism (Super, 1963a). This is described as the degree of agreement between a person's picture of himself or herself and external, objective evidence of the view one has of the characteristics one has used in self-description. It appears that Michael, Eve, and Sue have realistic views of themselves. The strengths and weaknesses offered by these three students were echoed to some degree by their parents and to some degree by their teachers. The tone of the descriptors used by the parents and teachers were positive and affirming in nature. Joanne, however, may not have had as realistic a view of herself as the other three students. Much of the information she

had about herself appeared to closely mirror information her father had given the researcher related to such things as her height, her sex, and personality characteristics. The tone of the descriptors used by Joanne's father and her teacher were less positive and more discouraging than the other three parents and teachers. This appeared to be reflected in Joanne's view of herself.

Blustein (1987) summarized some of the research that has been conducted exploring the relationship between self-concept and career development (Harren; Super, Starishevsky, Matlin, & Jordaan; and Super). He stated that, "little empirical research on the role of [the] self-concept system in career development" (Blustein, 1987, p. 64) has been undertaken. There is a link between one's view of self and the view one believes others have of oneself (Super, 1957). Each person makes a choice of what information, gathered through life experiences, will be integrated into who "I" will become. Parental influence is a vital factor in the development of the adolescents' perception of self (Super, 1963a). It is during adolescence that the young adult moves away from the parent as a source of this information and looks to other adults as important alternative sources for information on, "who am I becoming?" If the parent and other adult role models do not present realistic and useful information to the adolescent, there may be a negative effect on the development of a clear, realistic, consistent, and stable self-concept.

#### Choice is Based on a Synthesis of Needs, Interests, Abilities, and Values

"The importance of self-knowledge is based on the assumption that individuals with accurate and accessible knowledge about themselves should be able to clarify, specify, and implement their career plans (Crites, 1981; Super 1984)" (as cited in Blustein, 1987). The students of this study identified their views of what their needs, interests, abilities, and values were. Each student perceived these factors personally, applying them to their unique

situations. They were then asked to consider what they believed a person needs to know about his or herself in making a career decision.

Students presented interests, strengths and weaknesses, skills, abilities and talents, and work environment as the information important in one's career choice. Michael stated what he believed:

I think that they need to know what interests them. It's the main part. What they would like to do? Where they would like to work at? Who they would like to work with? And, just that if they don't find that their job category, or job field, isn't something that would fit these standards, they should probably look for a job in a different field.

Parents similarly noted skills, strengths, and weaknesses. Eve's mother answered this way:

Maybe what you're good at. If you want to be a singer and you can't carry a note, it doesn't seem like that might be the right direction to go. But if you're good at something and people are telling you you're good at something, you kind of got to believe them because they are people listening to you or watching whatever it is that you're doing, whether you think you're necessarily good or not.

Teachers discussed the need to identify interests and limitations. Eve's teacher responded:

So, personal awareness of your strengths and weaknesses and what it takes to get where you want to go and do you have what it takes.

The participant teams did not show comparability among the factors identified.

Parents and teachers may have added such factors as enjoyment, advancement, or values, none of which were identified by the student of the team. Students, through the interviews, identified factors that would be classified as a need or a value, yet they did not specifically state that needs and values should be considered when questioned.

Parents and teachers were questioned as to whether they believed their student possessed an awareness of the factors they had identified as important in career choice. Each adult stated that they indeed did believe that the students were aware of these factors about themselves. Michael's teacher responded this way:

I don't know if I'm in touch with them in myself. I know about it. Michael exhibits those things.

Strong evidence was not presented, through the interviews, that the students were making a connection between the importance of one's self-knowledge as related to interests, skills, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, values and needs, and the selection of one's future career. This was evident in the responses to the questions regarding what one needs to know about oneself, what the students discussed about themselves through the interviews, the statements made concerning the career education classes the students were required to take, and the absence of value attributed to the classes in the choice process.

### Summary

The intent of this chapter was to take the data, which represented 24, 45-minute interviews, and transform this information into themes that described the perceived factors influencing eleventh grade students' readiness to make career choices. The data were presented blending two frameworks; the first presented by Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) through their Career Development Study, and the second by Savickas (1990) through his research on developing career choice readiness.

This chapter presented the participants' views of the students' career goals, their certainty of those goals, and the process each student journeyed through to make a career choice. These perceptions were presented in the context of where the students were in relation to career developmental stage theory and self-concept theory.

It was found that each student had identified his or her career choice as a young child and had remained fairly constant in that decision. The participants of the study emphasized the value of direct experience and information related to their individual career choices and the importance of this occurring early in the students' structured career

development process. Television was identified by students as a significant factor in their choice process. Students also identified the importance of unconditional parental support in their career decision-making process. Parents identified themselves as influences in their children's career decisions, but did not emphasize their support as strongly as did their children. Students did not value the career education they had participated in, and there was little indication that they had made significant connections between the activities of the career classes and their individual career decision-making process.

Participants identified experience, ability to support oneself, love of career area, and work environment as the factors considered when making a career choice. Additionally, personal satisfaction was identified by students and parents, skills and abilities were identified by students and teachers, and parental support was identified solely by the students. Parents did not identify their own support as a factor, but did discuss "values" specifically.

The importance of self-knowledge was explored through questions related to students' interests, strengths, and weaknesses. The analysis appeared to identify a relationship between the student's self-concept, type of parental support and career choice. Students with strong, well-developed self-concepts and strong parental support, appeared to be more aware of their interests, strengths, and weaknesses than the student with self-described low self-esteem. The data did not support the notion that students were linking the importance one's self-knowledge as related to interests, skills, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, values and needs, and the selection of their future individual careers.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The future seems so far off now. I wish I could stop time and live this period of my life forever. I know that this could never happen, so I must choose a job, and it must be now that I choose it. I think of all that I could do in this world and there are a million possibilities. Life is like an endless hallway, that leads to an infinite amount of closed doors. It appears that all I have to do is walk down the hall and open the right door. But it isn't that simple. There are obstacles in the path and I must overcome them. When I finally get to the doors, I find there are too many to choose from. Right now, I'm trying to decide what door is the right door; the one that will lead to my destiny. Knowing that I can choose, I must take hours, days, months, trying to make the right decision. That's the problem, no one can help me, and even if they do, in the end it is my decision. (Sue)

The intent of this study was to explore, through in-depth interviews, the perceptions of four eleventh grade students and their respective parents and teachers, of the factors thought to influence their readiness to make individual career choices. It was hoped that through this investigation, the perceptions would provide information to career development educators in Oregon about how better to address the needs of students, through their career decision-making process, as the environment in which those decisions are made, and our societal expectations of them, change. Further, it was the intent of the researcher that this information be examined in light of current practices and the changing needs of our future students.

#### The Factors Perceived to Influence the Readiness to Make a Career Choice

The perceived factors that influenced the participant's readiness to make a career choice, and which were common to each participant included: experience and information, interest in the area or activities related to the area, and personal values. Students and parents identified the need for personal satisfaction as a factor. Students and teachers identified



skills and abilities. Students, solely, identified the importance of parental support as a factor in their readiness to make a career choice.

The participants developed a number of areas of emphasis or themes related to these perceived factors.

### Experience and Information

A strong thread presented and woven throughout the study was each participant's emphasis on the importance of direct, career-related experience. Currently, the CAM speaks of both study and work-related activities as requirements for its completion. The literature speaks of work-related experiences as a tool to crystallize one's career choice. The value placed upon this type of experience became evident over and over again in the responses of the participants. The students spoke specifically of wanting the opportunity to observe or shadow people in their chosen career fields. Parents and teachers also emphasized the value in career-related experience.

The CAM has brought with it a new interest in activities such as job shadowing, workplace mentoring, cooperative education, and on-the-job training. The participants of this study indicated that the timing of such experiences should be explored. They saw a value in these experiences being offered to students in their freshman year and then again later on in high school. They further indicated that this experience must be job-specific; when the student shows an interest in architecture, the experiential activity should focus in that specific area. The participants were not referring to general work experience activities.

In conjunction with direct experience, information was also a common thread throughout the data analysis. Students presented their main sources of information as being their teachers and counselors, television, parents, and structured career-related activities.

Teachers indicated a particular concern about the kinds of information students were receiving, who they were receiving it from, and how they were receiving it. One of the teachers put it this way:

And so, getting the information out . . . and making it unbiased and making it equal and giving every CAM an opportunity to show the diversity and the glitz. . . . This whole recruiting thing for CAMs and the kids making choices in that way . . . it really concerns me. Like I said, I'm at the mercy of an eighth grade counselor or home ec teacher that I have never met. . . . I was never given the opportunity to do that when those kids are making those choices because I have to wait until they're juniors and seniors.  
(Joanne's teacher)

The students, parents, and teachers further indicated that counselors played a significant role in the provision of career-related information. Students valued this relationship. Teachers and parents tended to be more reserved in their view of the counselor's role. It was presented that counselors had a kind of power in their ability to provide, or not provide, information to the student regarding a particular career area:

I don't think the counselors realize the power that they have. I mean, they have really nice counselors here. But I don't think they realize the power that they have. They have the power for me to have a job because I'm an elective teacher. You know, because as an elective teacher, we're only as good as our numbers. . . . You know, I have some counselors that come over here fairly regularly for lunch, and I have some that have never been here. How are those ones, that have never been here. . . . I mean, I know they're familiar because we've done a couple of counseling breakfasts and lunches. But I mean, I can look at my class list, when they show the counselor I see it. (Joanne's teacher)

This perceived importance of the counselor as a source of information and support by the students, and the expressed reservation of the counselor in this role, may indicate a need to explore more fully the role of the counselor, and define and publicize what this role will be in the future.

### Television

Society is aware of the impact television has on its young people. It was not the intent of this study to explore the value or viability of using television as a means of providing information to young people exploring careers. However, through this study, it was evident that the students in this study saw television as a method for gathering information, and that television provided three of the students with significant role models, specifically related to their individual career choices. Television is not specifically mentioned in the literature as a source for information related to career choice. It is indicated that this may be an area where the value and viability of using television in this way could be further explored.

### Structured Career Development Activities

Those in career education value career classes, career counseling, and structured career exploration and decision-making strategies as tools in the career decision-making process. The students in this study did not value the structured career activities they had participated in between the eighth grade and the time of this study. Parents and teachers did not have a clear understanding of what career development activities the students had participated in prior to making their career choices. Students were not provided with decision-making strategies and, consequently, did not find the connections between each discreet exploration activity and a final career choice.

As Oregon moves ahead with the implementation of educational reform, a new emphasis may be needed, and new tools used, to provide assistance and guidance to students during their career exploration. It may be a time to examine how career activities are structured and how best to meet the changing needs of the student. The state now requires the student to make a decision at an earlier age than ever before. A fresh look at

career development theory and practices may need to accompany the newly-created expectation that young people choose a career by age 15. Super stresses the importance of strong and consistent career guidance to the success of an individual's career exploration and eventual implementation of career choice. As Campbell and Parsons (1972) stated of their research of 2,370 junior high school students:

Since the majority of the students perceive school as the major pathway to achieving their vocational plans and exhibit a readiness for planning, education should give more effort to tightening the relevance of these pathways. Too often the relationship between what is taught in school and future life needs is foggy to the student. The currently increasing development of vocational exploration courses should be expanded and polished. These courses can be tailored to accomplish a number of objectives such as the expansion of occupational horizons, development of self-knowledge, anticipation of problems, development of personal resources and practical implications of various school subjects. (p. 416)

To this, the researcher would add the need to teach clear, well-defined decision-making strategies to students.

### The Relationship to Self-Concept

Super's theory of career development is based on the presence of self-concept as a contributing factor to one's career choice. Career choice is the implementation of one's self-concept into vocational terms. The students of this study were not chosen with self-concept as a selection criteria. However, once the interviews were well underway, it became evident to the researcher that the self-concept of each student was a factor in career choice. Students with self-described strong, well-developed self-concepts had a stronger sense of self and acceptance of self. These students described themselves fully and in more positive terms. They had a good sense of their interests, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. These self-perceptions were substantiated by both their parents and their teachers.

In comparison, one student described herself as having low self-esteem and she had a difficult time describing herself in a positive way. Her feelings of inadequateness were

reflected in responses given to the researcher by her parent and teacher, when asked to describe the student's strengths and weaknesses. The student described her strengths only within a social domain. No other strengths were noted.

The relationships between self-awareness, self-concept, and career choice is well documented in the literature. This study did, however, provide another relationship to self-concept and career choice that is not as well researched. This relationship was evident between self-concept, perceived parental support, and career choice. The students with strong self-concepts also viewed unconditional parental support as essential to the successful implementation of their individual choices. This support, as described by the students, did not necessarily include acceptance of the student's career choice, but an unconditional acceptance and respect for the student as a person. This kind of support encouraged individuality and personal self-actualization. This support encouraged exploration and provided an environment that enhanced the development of a strong self-concept. The students with strong self-concepts described their parental support in this way.

In a distinct contrast to this, the student with self-described low self-esteem was confused about her career choice. She felt she knew what she wanted to do, but did not feel supported by her parent or her teacher. She stated that pleasing her parent was a significant factor in her choice. She did not feel supported by her father in an unconditional way; she felt his support was conditional. When asked why she was changing her career choice, she responded, "because of my father." This is not to say that the father did not want the best for his child. To the contrary, the father was very concerned that his daughter fulfill her potential. It appeared to the researcher that the parent's ideas and the daughter's ideas of what was a reasonable career choice may not have been based on realistic information about the student, her interests, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and values. It did not appear that the

student had a clear understanding and acceptance of who she was and how that translated into a career choice.

Self-concept and its multidimensions are not normally factors that are explored through structured career-related activities. The importance of this, in relation to this study, cannot be disregarded. Today, our youth are confronted with many challenges to the healthy development of their self-concepts. It appears that self-concept is not a factor that can be ignored as we examine how career development and guidance programs are made available to today's students.

The teacher and parent participants of this study indicated an interest in being more involved in the process of career exploration and career decision-making of their students. These adults discussed the concept of a team, beginning in junior high school, and continuing through to high school graduation. The interest expressed by the parents came from the concern that the first time they were exposed, formally, to their child's career choice was at an eighth grade forecasting meeting. The teachers' interest developed from their concern that students were making their choices using the best information possible and that these choices were realistic. They saw that exploring the reality of a career choice must happen through the support of both the parent and the teacher working together. The teams would also include the high school counselor, and would function in support of the student and his or her choice.

### Readiness

Readiness to make a career choice is simply defined as the degree to which a person is prepared to make that choice. It is vital that choice be placed in the context of a process and not a single event. It is equally important to acknowledge the great individual

differences in the career maturity when exploring the construct of readiness. Jordaan (1974)

describes a typical high school student considered to have career maturity thusly:

He tends to come from a home which is higher rather than lower on the socioeconomic scale, to be a good student, to be active in school activities, to have hobbies and pastimes that he pursues out of school, to have worked after school, to have displayed initiative and independence in finding a part time or summer job, to have goals which are in keeping with his interests and intellectual ability, and to be informed about the occupation which he thinks he might follow, In short, he is an achiever, a doer; he is active and involved, in school and also out of school, and is not only engaging his environment, but is also exploring it. (p. 289)

This study observed three students who exhibited the career mature behaviors described above and one student who probably had some growth to experience before she would feel the same level of comfort and certainty in her decision as the other students. The readiness to make a career choice in students with strong self-concepts was evidenced by their self-knowledge, the depth of information from which they had made their decisions, and the type of parental support. In contrast, the absence of a true understanding of self was the factor missing in the other student's readiness.

This readiness, however, was conditional in that all participants of this study stressed the importance of the opportunity to change one's career direction if one desired to do so. The students understood clearly that if they desired to change their career choice, they had the flexibility to do so. Parents also were clearly aware that this was the case. Teachers, however, were more skeptical of the perceived flexibility and encouraged the district to maintain an atmosphere where students were welcome to change their minds and that there should be no penalty for changing one's mind. There was the fear that we are putting too much pressure on our youth, and that we may be requiring them to make these decisions when they are too young.

### Implications for Further Research

This study has provided a snapshot in time of 12 people's perceptions of the factors that influence readiness to make a career choice. A number of issues and concerns have been discussed that require further investigation.

There is a need to explore the most valuable and appropriate time or times for the student to participate in career-related, job-specific work experience. At the high school in this study, experience of this type was not available until the senior year in high school. Developing opportunities for students to job shadow or participate in work-related activities, addressing the student's individual career development needs, may provide the experience necessary for the student to fully implement a reasonable career choice.

There is also a need to examine the importance of the information students are using to make their decisions, where this information is coming from, who is providing this information, and how unbiased and current it is. The roles of teachers and counselors in this process must be closely examined to determine what the needs of the professionals closest to the student are, enabling the efficient and effective dissemination of information to students, beginning in elementary school and continuing through implementation of the student's career choice.

Television appears to be developing as a factor influencing career choice. Consequently, there is a need to determine the significance of this influence and the practicality of television being used in a positive and productive manner. Education has used television, and other methods of mass communication, to reach people and provide information and learning experiences. It may be time to examine the effect television is playing in the process of career choice, and use this medium in a positive manner.



- Research has shown the value in structured career development activities. The data of this study indicate that the students do not value this experience and are not making the necessary connection between self-knowledge and career choice. If students are unable to blend personal self-knowledge into career information and accommodate their own choices, the energy being spent is for naught. There is a current need to evaluate how prevailing career development and guidance activities facilitate career choice within the confines of new educational reform mandates.

The relationship between self-concept, perceived parental support, and career choice is clear. There is now a need to revisit these relationships' significance to the process of career choice, and to develop ways to support the evolving self-concepts of our students. Self-concept and the role of parental support must also be a consideration in how career guidance and career development activities will look in the future. As career development professionals, the assumptions we make about self-concept and that a person is ready to make a choice, must be evaluated and blended into a new focus on lifelong career development and planning. It has been suggested in this study that this may include a greater involvement of parents and teachers, in the form of career development teams.

Lastly, the need will always exist to acknowledge individual differences in readiness, by guaranteeing continuous flexibility in the process of career choice, designed by the school and the state. Donald Super (1963c) said this about career readiness:

Readiness to do something is increased by recognition of the need to do it. . . . This awareness may come as a result of confrontation of the developmental task, as parents, peers, school authorities, and others ask the adolescent what he wants to do when he grows up, what curriculum he wants to pursue in high school, what specific courses with vocational labels or implications he wants to take. Society has a number of awareness-developing experiences built into its institutions and processes, elements in the rites of passage from adolescence into adulthood. (p. 85)

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## **APPENDICES**



## **APPENDIX A**

### **LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION**

Dear Student:

My name is Debbie Derr and I am a doctoral candidate at Oregon State University. I am conducting a study of student, parent and teacher perceptions of the factors influencing student's readiness to make career choices.

You are invited to participate in this study. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an eleventh grade student, who has chosen a career area, and indicated an interest in the study when asked by your high school counselor.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will participate in two, 45-minute personal interviews, which will be tape-recorded. You will be asked questions related to your career choice. These interviews will be scheduled at your convenience with the assistance of your high school counselor.

Information gathered from your participation will be kept in strict confidence at all times. Only the researcher, a reputable professional transcriptionist, and supervising professor will have access to the information. Following the collection of the data, your individual identity will be removed from all records. In this way, information regarding your participation will be kept confidential.

My supervising professor is Dr. Lance Haddon. If you have any questions, you may contact me through the high school counselor, or Dr. Haddon at (503) 737-5956.

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate in this study (with the support and approval of your parent or guardian). Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary and refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits that you may otherwise be entitled to. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you very much for your interest in this area. Please return this letter to your high school counselor within 7 days of receiving it. I appreciate you time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Debbie Derr, MS, LPC

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Participant's Signature

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Researcher's Signature

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Date

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Date

Dear Parent:

My name is Debbie Derr and I am a doctoral candidate at Oregon State University. I am conducting a study of student, parent and teacher perceptions of the factors influencing students' readiness to make career choices. This information will be valuable in the design of future career guidance programs in Oregon high schools and community colleges.

The design of this study requires the formation of participant teams. Each team consists of a student, his or her parent, and the lead instructor is his or her career (CAM endorsement) area. Consequently, I am inviting you to participate in this study, and I will require your permission for your student to participate. You and your student have been asked to participate in this study because your son or daughter is an eleventh grade student, who has chosen a career area, and indicated an interest in the study when asked by his or her high school counselor.

Each participant in this study will participate in two 45-minute personal interviews, which will be tape-recorded. You will be asked questions related to your student and his/her career choice. These interviews will be scheduled at your convenience and will take place at (the) high school.

Information gathered from the student's and your participation will be kept in strict confidence at all times. Only the researcher, a reputable professional transcriptionist, and supervising professor will have access to the information. Following the collection of the data, all individual identities will be removed from all records. In this way, information regarding participation will be kept confidential.

My supervising professor is Dr. Lance Haddon. If you have any questions, you may contact me through the high school counselor or Dr. Haddon at (503) 737-5956.

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate in this study. A separate consent form for your student is attached. Please sign both forms. Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary and refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits that you may otherwise be entitled to. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you very much for your interest. Please return this letter, and the parental consent to participate to the high school counselor within 7 days of receiving it. A self-addressed stamped envelope is included. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Debbie Derr, MS, LPC

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Researcher's Signature

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Date

Dear Teacher:

My name is Debbie Derr and I am a doctoral candidate at Oregon State University. I am conducting a study of student, parent and teacher perceptions of the factors influencing student's readiness to make career choices.

You are invited to participate in this study. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a lead instructor of an eleventh grade student, who has chosen a career area, and has agreed to participate in this study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will participate in two, 45-minute personal interviews, which will be tape-recorded. You will be asked questions related to the student and his/her career choice. These interviews will be scheduled at your convenience at (the) high school.

Information gathered from your participation will be kept in strict confidence at all times. Only the researcher, a reputable professional transcriptionist, and supervising professor will have access to the information. Following the collection of the data, your individual identity will be removed from all records. In this way, information regarding your participation will be kept confidential.

My supervising professor is Dr. Lance Haddon. If you have any questions, you may contact me through the high school counselor or Dr. Haddon at (503) 737-5956.

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate in this study. Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary and refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits that you may otherwise be entitled to. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you very much for your interest in this area. Please return this letter to the high school counselor, in the Counseling Office, within 7 days of receiving it. I appreciate you time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Debbie Derr, MS, LPC

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Participant's Signature

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Researcher's Signature

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Date

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Date

**APPENDIX B****INFORMED CONSENT**

## INFORMED CONSENT

### STUDENT AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I agree to participate in the research project titled, "Selected Oregon Student, Parent, and Teacher Perceptions of the Factors That Influenced Eleventh Grade Students' Readiness to Make Career Choices," conducted by Debbie Derr, a doctoral candidate at Oregon State University. The purpose of the study is to examine the perceived factors influencing career choice by students, and their parents and teachers. I understand that my involvement must be with the written approval of my parents. My involvement will include participating in two, 45-minute personal interviews, which will be tape-recorded. I also understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that data will be reported in such a way that I will not be identifiable. I understand that the interview transcripts will be completed by two people: Debbie Derr and/or a reputable professional transcriptionist. If someone other than the researcher transcribes the tape recorded interviews, she will erase all names and identifying information before submitting them for transcription. Dr. Lance Haddon, major professor and principal investigator, will be the only other person who will have access to the tapes and transcripts of the interviews. You, or your parent, may request and receive a copy of the transcript. You, or your parent, may also request that the tape be returned upon completion of the research.

Participation in this study is voluntary and a refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or any loss of benefits that I might otherwise be entitled to. I may decide not to participate in this study at any time.

Questions about this study or my rights should be directed to Dr. Lance Haddon, School of Education, Oregon State University at (503) 737-5956 or Debbie Derr, through your high school counselor.

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Name (Please Print)

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Signature

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Date

White Copy: Researcher

Yellow Copy: Participant

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I agree to participate in the research project titled, "Selected Oregon Student, Parent, and Teacher Perceptions of the Factors That Influenced Eleventh Grade Students' Readiness to Make Career Choices," conducted by Debbie Derr, a doctoral candidate at Oregon State University. The purpose of the study is to examine the perceived factors influencing career choice by students, and their parents and teachers. I understand that my involvement will include participating in two, 45-minute personal interviews, which will be tape recorded. I also understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that data will be reported in such a way that I will not be identifiable. I understand that the interview transcripts will be completed by two people: Debbie Derr and/or a reputable professional transcriptionist. If someone other than the researcher transcribes the tape recorded interviews, she will erase all names and identifying information before submitting them for transcription. Dr. Lance Haddon, major professor and principal investigator, will be the only other person who will have access to the tapes and transcripts of the interviews. You may request and receive a copy of the transcript. You may also request that the tape be returned upon completion of the research.

Participation in this study is voluntary and a refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or any loss of benefits that I might otherwise be entitled to. I may decide not to participate in this study at any time.

Questions about this study or my rights should be directed to Dr. Lance Haddon, School of Education, Oregon State University at (503) 737-5956 or Debbie Derr, the high school counselor at your high school.

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Name (Please Print)

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Signature

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Date

White Copy: Researcher

Yellow Copy: Participant

### PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT

I agree to allow my student to participate in the research project titled, "Selected Oregon Student, Parent, and Teacher Perceptions of the Factors That Influenced Eleventh Grade Students' Readiness to Make Career Choices," conducted by Debbie Derr, a doctoral candidate at Oregon State University. The purpose of the study is to examine the perceived factors influencing career choice by students, and their parents and teachers. I understand that my student's involvement will include: (1) participating in two, 45-minute personal interviews, which will be tape recorded; and (2) granting the researcher permission to examine my student's school records and documents, that may include, his or her cumulative file, career portfolio and student portfolio held by the student's high school counselor. I also understand that his or her participation in this study is confidential and that data will be reported in such a way that he or she will not be identifiable. I understand that the interview transcripts will be completed by two people: Debbie Derr and/or a reputable professional transcriptionist. If someone other than the researcher transcribes the tape recorded interviews, she will erase all names and identifying information before submitting them for transcription. Dr. Lance Haddon, supervising professor and principal investigator, will be the only other person who will have access to the tapes and transcripts of the interviews. The parent may request and receive a copy of the transcript. The parent may also request that the tape be returned upon completion of the research.

Participation in this study is voluntary and a refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or any loss of benefits that the student might otherwise be entitled to. I or my student may decided not participate in this study at any time.

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Student's Name

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Parent's Name

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Parent's Signature



## **APPENDIX C**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDES**

## INTERVIEW 1 — STUDENT

Review the purpose of the study with the student. Discuss how confidentiality will be maintained. Introduce myself and discuss my interest in this study.

1. Ask the student to introduce him/herself to me.

Probe: I want to get to know a little about you. Please tell me about yourself.

2. What career goals do you have? What do you want to be?

3. What career area are you participating in at your high school?

Probe: Tell me about it? (classes, activities, etc.)

4. What made you decide to choose this career area?

Probe: Why do you want to go into this field?

5. How did you decide on this career area?

Probe: What process did you go through to make this decision?

6. What was the most important factor you considered in making your career choice?

Probe: Why do you think so?

7. What other factors did you consider?

## INTERVIEW 2 — STUDENT

Welcome the student back. Discuss how confidentiality will be maintained in the study. Ask the student if there are any questions that he or she has regarding the first interview.

1. I would like to talk a little more about you. What sort of person do you think you are?

Probe: Tell me about your strong points and weak points. What do you like about yourself and what don't you like?

2. What do you think people need to know about themselves before they make a career choice?

3. Who was especially influential in helping you make your career choice?

Probe: Why do you think so?

4. How certain are you about your career choice?

Probe: Why do you feel certain (uncertain)?

5. What advice would you give someone, just entering high school, about making a career choice that you wish someone would have given you?

6. Is there any other information that you would like to share with me that you feel is important that we haven't talked about?

Thank the student for his or her time and for agreeing to participate in the study.

## INTERVIEW 1 – PARENT

Review the purpose of the study with the parent. Discuss how confidentiality will be maintained. Introduce myself and discuss my interest in this study.

1. I would like to know a little bit about you. Tell me something about yourself.
2. What is your understanding of \_\_\_\_\_ career goals?
3. Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ chose this career field?
4. How did \_\_\_\_\_ decide on this career?  
Probe: What process did he/she go through to make this decision?
5. What do you see as the most important factor in making a career choice?  
Probe: Why do you think so?
6. What other factors should a person consider in making a career choice?

## INTERVIEW 2 — PARENT

Welcome the parent back. Discuss how confidentiality will be maintained in the study. Ask the parent if there are any questions that he or she has regarding the first interview.

1. I would like to talk about your student. Tell me about \_\_\_\_\_. What does s/he like to do?

Probe: What do you see as his/her strengths and weaknesses?

2. What do you like best about \_\_\_\_\_?

Probe: Are there important ways you would like \_\_\_\_\_ to change?

3. What do you believe people need to know about themselves before they make a career choice?

Probe: Do you feel \_\_\_\_\_ knows these things about him/herself? Why?

4. Who do you feel was especially influential in helping \_\_\_\_\_ make his/her career choice?

5. How certain is \_\_\_\_\_ about the choice s/he make?

Probe: Why is s/he certain (uncertain)?

6. What prepared \_\_\_\_\_ to make his/her career choice?

7. Is there anything else you feel is important that we haven't talked about?

Thank the parent for his or her time and for agreeing to participate in the study.

## INTERVIEW 1 - TEACHER

Review the purpose of the study with the teacher. Discuss how confidentiality will be maintained. Introduce myself and discuss my interest in this study.

1. I would like to know more about your work at the high school. Tell me a little about yourself and your involvement in the CAM.
2. Describe your understanding of \_\_\_\_\_ career goals.
3. Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ chose this field?
4. Describe your understanding of how \_\_\_\_\_ made this career choice?  
Probe: What process did \_\_\_\_\_ go through to make this choice?
5. What do you see as the most important factor in making a career choice?  
Probe: Why do you think so?
6. What other factors should a person consider?

## INTERVIEW 2 - TEACHER

Welcome the teacher back. Discuss how confidentiality will be maintained in the study. Ask the teacher if there are any questions that he or she has regarding the first interview.

1. I would like to talk about your student. Tell me about \_\_\_\_\_. What does s/he like to do?

Probe: What do you see as his/her strengths and weaknesses?

2. What do you like best about \_\_\_\_\_?

Probe: Are there important ways you would like \_\_\_\_\_ to change?

3. What do you believe people need to know about themselves before they make a career choice?

Probe: Do you feel \_\_\_\_\_ knows these things about him/herself? Why?

4. Who do you feel was especially influential in helping \_\_\_\_\_ make his/her career choice?

5. How certain is \_\_\_\_\_ about the choice s/he make?

Probe: Why is s/he certain (uncertain)?

6. What prepared \_\_\_\_\_ to make his/her career choice?

7. Is there anything else you feel is important that we haven't talked about?

Thank the teacher for his or her time and for agreeing to participate in the study.