A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF HOW ADOLESCENTS CONSTRUCT CAREER

by

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Abstract

Currently, the concept of career is evolving. While the concept of career is changing, the developmental stage of adolescence is being prolonged. Within this context, this study focused on the adolescent experience; specifically, how are grade 12's constructing their careers according to this new vision of career and adulthood? The purpose of this study was to learn more about the adolescent experience to be better able to support them throughout this transition.

This study used semi-structured interviews to gather narratives from seven grade 12 students. Through a holistic-content analysis, four main themes emerged from the data. There were three main themes around identity. The first explained how participants relied on their identity to make career decisions. The second theme was how participants expressed a need to explore who they are to be able to commit to career plans. The participants saw exploration as meeting new people and having new experiences. The activities involved were mostly travelling and living away from home. Once the participants felt that their exploration was over, they then felt that they would make a career choice. For the fourth theme, the career choice was discussed in terms of having formed a stable career identity, which would allow them to think about other parts of their lives, such as a family. The last theme addressed in this thesis was emotions that were present in the participants' narratives, which were fear and excitement. From these findings, it is my hope that we continue to study career development through the use of narrative methodology to be able to learn more about the adolescent experience.

Preface

This study was approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) of the

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In developed nations, making career decisions is an important task for adolescents who are between the ages of 16 and 18 (Arnett, 2000; Seginer & Halabi-Kheir, 1998). They are expected to have career plans that will guide them in their transition out of high school (Arnett, 2000). Over the last 30 years, the process of choosing a career at this age has changed (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). Mortimer (2009) claimed that careers for young people have evolved due to the changes in the transition into adulthood, the economy, and the occupational structure.

In regards to changes in the transition into adulthood, in the past, many students left high school, went on to pursue post-secondary educations, joined the military or the workforce, and were married with children by the time they reached their early to mid twenties. During this time, adulthood came immediately after late adolescence (Arnett, 2000). Now, it has been postulated that there is a new stage of development after adolescence: emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). This stage is specific to developed, wealthier nations, where youth are afforded the option of delaying entry into adulthood, with its associated roles and responsibilities (Arnett, 2000). Now, during late adolescence and emerging adulthood, youth have more freedom to explore and 'try on' potential career choices and explore future directions. As a result, there is more heterogeneity after late adolescence (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). More choices are available: many students may choose to travel, work, or go directly to a post-secondary institution (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). With respect to post-secondary institutions, there are also more choices: people can attend school part-time, full-time or through distance education (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000; Kerckhoff, 2002). There are also different types of technical institutions, colleges, and universities offering a wide range of certificates, titles and degrees (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000; Kerckhoff, 2002). Finally, gender expectations have

changed, as more and more women are acquiring greater education and higher paying jobs (Watson, Quatman, & Edler, 2002) and work patterns of men and women are becoming more similar (Kerckhoff, 2002.).

In terms of the economy, there is currently a scarcity of careers that require only a high school education (Mortimer, 2009). Many employers are now looking for some sort of post-secondary education (Mortimer, 2009). The careers that only require a high school education are typically perceived as low paying, unstable jobs (Mortimer, 2009). As a result, this has lead to many adolescents making plans to attend post-secondary institutions to achieve a desirable career (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009).

Finally, the occupational structure has changed (Mortimer, 2009). With new technologies and globalization, careers are not as secure as they used to be (Mortimer, 2009). As well, in the past, careers were seen to develop vertically where people would be promoted, and they would remain working for the same company or organization (Meijers, 2002). However, this is no longer the case; careers are now less stable (Meijers, 2002). Due to these changes, young people are now discouraged from choosing only one career path (Mortimer, 2009). As jobs are unstable, individuals will now change their line of work often. With these changes, adolescents are now expected to acquire even more education to be better candidates for a variety of careers – not just one (Mortimer, 2009).

To learn more about the changing world of career and how it affects adolescents, the purpose of this study is to explore how grade 12 adolescents construct their career narratives. Career narratives are stories that one tells about how he or she reached his or her career (Christensen & Johnston, 2003). These stories contain details from the past, present, and future. Someone who does not have a clear career plan can also tell a career narrative. Career narratives

may look at career as a whole, where every event and decision made are all a part of career (Abbot, 1990). Therefore, career narratives are never complete, as our stories constantly change and evolve as we grow.

Bujold (2004) has argued that narrative is an effective way to study career because with a narrative approach the researcher can understand more about how the participant is making career decisions. He claimed that one could learn about the social, economic, and cultural influences that affect an individual's decisions. This may stem from the fact that when someone is able to share a story, rather than fill out a survey or answer specific questions, he or she may share more details than the researcher may have anticipated and, consequently, produce richer data. Cochran (1990) also considered personal narrative ideal for career research. He explained that when one talks about his or her career, he or she typically talks about it in narrative form. Cochran argued that this happens because one lives life as a story, views life as a story, explains his or her life through a story, and finally understands life through a story.

Although narrative methodology is relatively new for career research, this method has a history as a prescription for career counseling (e.g., Brott, 2004; Chen 1997; Christensen & Johnston, 2003). Brott (2004) found that using narrative in counseling allows for a more detailed and holistic account of a client's experience. Chen (1997) also argued for narrative in career counseling as career is synonymous with one's life story. Career is not something that we can separate from our life development, as a career is something that becomes part of who we are. Finally, Christensen and Johnston (2003) expressed a need for narrative in career counseling in the post-industrial era. They suggested that it is a way to see how and why someone chooses a specific career because through narrative, the client is able to speak freely. Through this process, one is also able to learn how different events are connected.

Although there are articles in the career literature that argue for the use of narrative as a research methodology, there is a paucity of published career studies that use a narrative methodology. When employed as a research methodology, narrative is typically used to find out something specific. For example, Young, Friesen, and Borycki (1994) analyzed the narrative structure of the participants in their study to learn about parental influences on career development. In another example, Neilson and Lauder (2008) used narrative to learn why high achieving students were not choosing careers in nursing. The current study has a more general focus, which allows for a more general exploration of late adolescents' career narratives, thereby adding to our understanding of career development.

Zarret and Eccles (2006) claimed that it is essential to study late adolescents to learn more about how they are experiencing the transition into adulthood. Given that this demographic face many more options than the previous generation, Zarret and Eccles were interested in understanding how late adolescents cope with their increased levels of freedom. They stressed that in order to properly support adolescents' developmental trajectories, we need to examine how late adolescents now make choices about their careers and their lives. Meijers (2002) also claimed that late adolescents are more likely to report low self-confidence for the future and a pessimistic outlook on career aspirations, which is problematic from a societal level. Finally, Mortimer (2009) suggested that it is important to learn more about how adolescents are transitioning into the world of work because this successful transition affects many other aspects of the individual's life. He connected this successful transition to financial independence, personal well-being, and success in forming a family.

With this in mind, the following research question is explored in this study: What do narratives of grade 12 students reveal about how they construct career development? With this

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research question forming the foundation for the research, some of the following questions were also addressed: How do these students perceive their career stories to unfold? What emotions are present in their narratives? In what ways do they go about making career decisions? What language do they use as they discuss their career plans?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following is a review of current and relevant literature to provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how grade 12's construct their career development. I begin by explaining the meaning of key terms for my research. Then, I discuss the current research related to late adolescence and career development. Following this discussion, I provide a brief summary.

The Meaning of Career Development

Career

In the following section, I clarify the use of the construct career. This clarification is a way to orient the study, so that readers know how I perceive career. However, it is important to note that I do not assume that my participants view career in the way I define it. With my methodology, I am open to hearing about how participants discuss their future and what language they use to express themselves.

The career literature can be confusing as the actual term career is defined in many ways (Young & Collin, 2000). Additionally, there are many other terms, such as occupation and vocation, which all have distinct meanings, but may be treated synonymously with career (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, & Witko, 2006; Helwig, 2008; Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). For this study, career is seen as an occupation that participants perceive to be something that they are working towards (Young & Collin, 2000). It may not be a lifelong career, as they may see themselves changing careers many times (Young & Collin, 2000). However, it could be something that they connect to their identity, something that they are planning for in the future, and something that may give meaning to their lives (Young &

Collin, 2000). It is important to note that this definition is context specific, and may not apply to other societies (Blustein, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004).

For career development, Gordon, Couture, and Drefs (2000) suggested that it can encompass the whole development of the individual, including the physical, social, psychological, and occupational development. To further understand how grade 12's construct career development, this study focuses on career development, relying on Gordon et al.'s definition. With this focus, the participants' narratives were analyzed holistically, taking into account the many factors in career development, not just simply looking at one aspect.

Constructionism

There are many theories used to discuss career development (Patton & McMahon, 1999). In the last 20 years, constructionism has become prevalent in the career literature (Young & Collin, 2004). This theory functions under several assumptions. First, we must be reflective and critical of knowledge that is "taken-for-granted" (Blustein, et al., 2004, p. 427). For example, while we may see gender in a certain way, this view is constructed through our social and cultural experiences; it does not transcend all cultures, and it may not even be consistent with our neighbours' views (Gergen, 1985). The next assumption is that knowledge is socially and culturally embedded (Blustein et al., 2004). Knowledge, then, is not driven by nature (Gergen, 1985). Moreover, no person's knowledge is more superior (Blustein et al., 2004). The third assumption is that knowledge is not constructed through objective observations; rather, it is constructed through social interactions (Blustein et al., 2004). This means that our understanding of the world is constantly evolving – it is not static (Gergen, 1985). Finally, the fourth assumption is that our socially constructed views can take on a variety of actions (Blustein et al., 2004). For example, when we typically say hello to someone, there are certain culturally

appropriate words and gestures that take place (Gergen, 1985). These cultural rituals serve to reinforce our social patterns. However, a challenge to these rituals can suggest new possibilities for action. Therefore, through these assumptions, the focus is not on the individual and the objective truth; rather, it is on the processes of social and cultural interactions. It is important to note that within the constructionist lens, culture is not seen as something that is static. Culture is co-constructed through the relationships between people (Stead, 2004). Culture is also not something that is handed down from generation to generation in an authoritative way; it is socially constructed.

Career development, when viewed through a social constructionist lens, is a multifaceted process that is influenced by many factors of a person's life (Blustein et al., 2004). More specifically, social constructionists recognize that when one is constructing his or her career plans it is through interactions with the world and the individual. It is not something that is inherent – something that someone is born to be (Young & Collin, 2004). Rather, career becomes a construction of the individual within his or her society. With this in mind, career development is a complicated and fluid process (Blustein et al., 2004).

There is a still a strong need for the social constructionist perspective in career research (Stead, 2004). Cohen, Duberlely, and Mallon (2004) explained that constructionism was needed to study the evolving concept of career to elucidate how people negotiate through it. They argued that a positivistic approach could not do this, as this theoretical paradigm does not focus on the social and cultural interactions. Stead (2004) argued that many career studies address culture, but through a positivistic approach, where there is an emphasis on one truth. Through this view, we limit our findings. Using a social constructionist framework, career development is seen as having many truths which are embedded in social and cultural relationships (Stead,

2004). By using the social constructionist perspective then, the research is able to provide a

wider view of the unfolding human experience, which "will more accurately capture the real

world of people as they negotiate life tasks and responsibilities" (Blustein et al., 2004, p.437).

Late Adolescence

To explain how adolescents may construct career development, it is important to first

discuss what is happening developmentally in adolescence. During this time, there is a focus on

an increase in independence (specifically from parents); an exploration of social and sexual

roles; an exploration of intimate relationships, identity formation, planning for the future; and

finally, the acquisition of skills to make a successful transition into adulthood (Zarrett & Eccles,

2006). Biologically, adolescents are going through pubertal changes, neurological

developments, and developing higher-level cognitive abilities (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). All of

these changes in the adolescent work together to allow the individual to progress

developmentally. To further explain this in terms of career, as one is acquiring higher level

cognitive abilities, he or she is able to make more detailed and feasible career plans. These plans

are created through interactions of the individual and his or her society (Stead, 2004).

Many adolescents may be at different places in their career narratives. For example,

some students find choosing a career daunting and may wait for someone in their lives to make

that decision for them, while some may already have detailed plans (Witko, Bernes, Magnusson,

& Bardick, 2005). Regardless, forming life narratives is developmentally appropriate for late

adolescents. Brooks and Dallos (2009) interviewed five female adolescents (ages 15-17) to learn

how they make meaning out of important experiences in their lives. The participants shared

detailed narratives through the following prompt: "'Can you tell me about the important

experiences that you have had that have led you to this point in your life?'" (p. 105). Most

participants were able to begin a story and only two participants asked for clarification after the prompt was given. This study illustrates how, developmentally, late adolescents can reflect and make sense of their experiences and share their experiences with others, regardless of the vantage point in their career narratives from which they are speaking.

Career Concerns for Late Adolescents

Clearly, it is important to learn more about how late adolescents are constructing career, as career is something that is developmentally and culturally important to them. It is also important to study this group, as there are many concerns present in the adolescent career research (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). First, adolescents may not have enough information when making career decisions (Witko et al., 2005). This is not only a concern for researchers, but also for adolescents (Witko et al., 2005). Adolescents may not be able to acquire enough information when making career-related decisions because those who work with youth typically rely on outdated information (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). This outdated information may be caused by the breakdown of family of supports (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). It may also be due to the world of careers changing too quickly for people working with adolescents to be able to be well informed (Meijers, 2002).

Indecisiveness is also seen as pervasive concern for adolescent career development (Germeijs, Verschueren, Soenens, 2006). Germeijs et al. (2006) found that those who struggled to make career decisions were less likely to engage in exploring careers. They also connected this indecision to higher levels of anxiety, which could then lead to further impediments in career decision making. Meijers (2002) discussed career emotions in general, and claimed that anxiety was quite common in adolescents when making career choices. This may be due to the change in the idea of career, where there is less job stability, and more expectations for workers to be

flexible and mobile (Meijers, 2002). Adolescents may also feel anxious as they may lack the

knowledge and understanding to construct career plans (Julien, 1999).

It is not only important to support adolescents in their career development for the sake of

their career development. An unsuccessful transition into the world of work can negatively

affect the individual in other areas of his or her life, such as family life and mental health

(Mortimer, 2009). Through this study, then, one goal is to learn more about the adolescent

experience in constructing career to be able to better support this group through this process. In

the following section, I continue to discuss adolescent career development with a specific focus

on identity.

Identity

In late adolescence, identity formation is an important developmental task (Erikson,

1968). This may be due to a higher level of mental functioning (Erikson, 1968) and societal

factors (Arnett, 2000). In the identity literature, many rely on Erikson (1968) to define identity

as he is seen as the one of the founders of conceptualizing this construct (e.g., Berzonsky & Kuk,

2000; Marcia, 1966). Erikson saw identity formation as the following:

> a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges
>
> himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in
>
> comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their
>
> way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to
>
> types that have become relevant to him. (Erikson, 1968, p. 22-23)

Using this definition, identity formation is based on the interactions within the individual's

society and his and her mental functioning. Identity is not something that happens to an

individual; rather, it is something that is constructed through the interactions of the individual and of his or her culture (Meijers, 2002).

Identity Status

Marcia (1966) saw exploration and commitment as the two dimensions for identity formation. Identity exploration is a consideration of alternatives, related to ideologies, such as religion and career, and related to interpersonal issues, such as sexuality and friendships (Blustein, Devenis & Kidney, 1989). It is a way for one to clarify who he or she is (Blustein et al., 1989) through a consideration of those alternatives. Identity commitment "refers to the degree of personal investment" in the formation of identity that "the individual exhibits" (Marcia, 1966, p. 551). This term implies that one has committed to who he or she is. With exploration and commitment, Marcia conceptualized four different phases that people could be in when they were forming their identities: moratorium (people who are exploring, but not committing), diffusion (people who are neither exploring nor committing), foreclosure (people who have committed without exploring), and achievement (people who have explored and who are now committed). These states may be connected; for example, one who reaches identity achievement does so by first passing through the moratorium state (Blustein et al., 1989). Additionally, an identity status is not static (Sankey & Young, 1996). Throughout life, as the individual is being introduced to new experiences, his or her status may change (Kroger & Green, 1996). Finally, identity statuses may be domain-related (McLean & Pratt, 2006). For example, someone may be exploring his or her religious views but may be demonstrating commitment to a specific career path.

Erikson (1968) claimed that career identity is one of the main challenges of the identity formation process in late adolescence. Vondracek, Schulenberg, Skorikov, Gillespie, and

Wahlheim (1995) claimed that this was a process specific to Western societies. As career

identity is an important task for adolescents, it may be a reason why identity statuses are

researched in the career literature (e.g., Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Blustein et al., 1989).

Berzonsky and Kuk (2000) looked at adolescents' identity statuses to see how they would

transition into post-secondary education. They found that adolescents who had reached high

levels in identity achievement or moratorium were able to transition better into post-secondary

education. This result was due to their higher levels of exploration, which allowed them to be

more autonomous, needing less outside support for the transition.

Identity Forms

Guichard (2005) conceptualized the idea of identity forms to explain adolescent career

choices in the twenty-first century. Identity forms are how the individual constructs his or her

identity. These forms are constructed through an individual's social context and his or her

interactions with others. Identity forms are based on the conception of identity frames, which are,

basically, social stereotypes. Guichard gives the example of the western stereotype of

engineering being a career for men. People also construct identity using subjective identity

forms, which are the ways that the individual sees him or herself. For example, a female could

choose to be an engineer as she subjectively identifies with this career. According to Guichard,

people use the identity and subjective identity forms to make career plans when they are

constructing identity.

As with the construct career, this review of identity is a way to frame how identity is

treated in my study. It is important for my research because it plays such an integral role in

adolescent development and, specifically, in career development. Through this literature, I am

also able to clarify the complexity of identity in regards to commitment, exploration, and also in

regards to how one constructs identity. While I have defined identity, I do not see it as a construct that my participants will necessarily use. However, they may still discuss it, just not refer to it as *identity.*

Career Development Process: Career Planning

While I have explained how the role of identity development plays a large role in career development, in this section, I focus more on explaining how people may form career plans. Career planning is a process "through which students come to make career-related decisions" (Witko et al., 2005, p. 35). The career planning process may involve informal means such as considering a number of different occupations based on interests and skills, as well as discussing one's career plans with a variety of individuals, such as parents, peers, teachers, or other people working in the field (Witko et al., 2005). As cited in Witko et al. (2005), Super (1990) claimed that career planning is particularly important for senior high school students. During this time, they are seeking career information and becoming aware of their career interests. Witko et al. (2005) did, in fact, find that the importance of career planning increased with age, with students in grades 11 and 12 reporting the highest scores. However, this was not universal, as some late adolescents (grades 11 and 12) reported that career planning was not important for them.

In the career literature, career planning is discussed in many different ways; for example, it may be seen as a part of career exploration (Bardick et al., 2006), or, career exploration and decision making together may be seen as a part of the career planning process (e.g., Julien, 1999; Witko et al., 2005). As I mentioned in the beginning, the career literature is quite segmented as different career constructs are used in different ways. However, for this review, I treat career exploration and career decision making as part of the career planning process in accordance with Julien (1999) and Witko et al. (2005).

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Exploration

Career exploration occurs when students start exploring themselves as well as their potential career options (Witko et al., 2005). During this exploration, people are able to create possible career plans and learn more about possible future careers (Bardick et al., 2006; Taveira, Silva, Rodriguez, & Maia, 1998). Career exploration can be done in many ways, such as through self-reflection or through the investigation of the many potential careers. Exploration occurs at any age; however, it is most apparent in late adolescence (Gianakos, 1999). Taveira et al. (1998) found that even students who were not committed to a specific career were still engaged in exploring possible future career options. It should be noted, though, that not everyone goes through an exploration process. Bardick et al. (2006) commented that participation in career exploration may be connected to peer and maternal closeness, higher self-esteem, and higher socioeconomic background. This suggests that there are differences in the amount of time and the extent to which different individuals will spend exploring potential career paths.

Career exploration and identity exploration seem to be treated as separate constructs in the literature. In this study, I see career exploration as being inextricably tied to identity exploration. This is because I see career development as something that pertains to the development of the entire person, so it would be impossible to separate identity and career exploration. For example, if one is going travelling, while they may be exploring who they are, this exploration will most likely connect to who they will become, in terms of their identity in general, and in terms of their career.

Career Decision Making

Career decision-making is also a process, which takes place during career planning (Witko et al., 2005). While one is making career plans, he or she is also making decisions on

what those plans will look like. The decision-making may not necessarily lead to a final decision, and this may be an ongoing process for some. In the literature, there are many theories, which discuss how people make career decisions (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). According to a social constructionist approach, adolescents construct career through the interactions between society and the individual. Many factors, such as gender, family, socioeconomic status, and academic achievement, may influence decisions (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Julien, 1999). The economy and current events may also play a role (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997).

This review of planning, exploration, and decision-making illustrates how there may be differing experiences of adolescents' throughout the development of their careers. It is important to note that these three constructs are quite fluid; a participant may have created plans, and then continued with more decision-making and further exploration. Therefore, when I use the word career development, it is viewed as an ongoing process rather than as a means for reaching an endpoint.

Career Research in Adolescence

Late adolescence has a strong presence in the career literature (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005). In the next section, I review this literature, highlighting prevalent topics, and then discuss common research methodologies. At the end of this section, I explain where my study fits into this extensive body of literature.

Prevalent Topics

While I was looking for articles on adolescence and career development, I found that most studies focused on the following topics: self-efficacy, demographic factors, and relational influences. It is important to note that I have not exhausted the research topics on adolescent

career development. However, for the scope of this review, I narrowed the topics to what was most prevalent.

Self-efficacy

In the career research, there is a strong presence of the idea of self-efficacy and how that affects how people make career decisions (Anderson & Betz, 2001; Chartrand & Camp, 1991). Self-efficacy is the level at which one perceives his or her own abilities (Bandura, 1982). In regard to career, self-efficacy can be seen as the self-confidence to be able to commit to the career planning process (Anderson & Betz, 2001). Self-efficacy is typically measured through a variety of instruments (e.g., Anderson & Betz, 2001; Blustein, 1989) and is a concern for adolescents' career development for many reasons (e.g., Anderson & Betz, 2001; Bandura, 1982; Blustein, 1989). For example, individuals who score low on self-efficacy typically have problems forming career plans (Blustein, 1989).

Demographic Factors

Within the category of demographic factors, those most commonly studied were gender, school achievement, and socioeconomic status. Concerning the topic of gender, many of the studies seemed to focus on the difference in career development between men and women. Specifically, there has been an interest in why women and men choose different careers. However, in current research, it seems as though there is gender equalization in career aspirations (Shapka, Domene, & Keating, 2006; Watson et al., 2002). As well, there has been a focus on the career development experience. For example, Paa and McWhirter (2000) looked at the different influences that gender could have on career development. Through surveys, they discovered that girls felt that mothers were more helpful when making career decisions, and that boys were more focused on earning money when choosing a career. School achievement is also

a strong factor in making career plans as many studies have found that low achievement in school can lead to low career aspirations (Watson et al., 2000). Shapka et al. (2006) looked particularly at math achievement to measure career aspirations and found that low math achievers had lower status career aspirations. In the career literature, socioeconomic status (SES) also seemed to be a concern (Ali, McWhirter, & Chronister, 2005). Rojewski and Kim (2003) had participants who were two years out of high school and found that many from a lower SES were typically working or out of jobs, whereas the participants from a higher SES were in post-secondary institutions.

Relational Influences

Relational support is seen to be imperative for a successful transition for adolescents out of high school (Wall, Covell, & MacIntyre, 1999). In the literature, there are many career relational influences that have been researched. The most prevalent influences on adolescents' career development are parents, peers, career counselors, and teachers.

While researching, I found that out of all the relational influences, the parental influence was the most researched. Although adolescents tend to distance themselves from their parents, the latter play an important role in career development (Brown, 2004; Helwig, 2008; Middleton & Loughead, 1993; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Helwig (2008) claimed that parents were the largest influence on children when forming career plans because they provided them with the most advice and guidance. It is because of this that there is also a trend in the research to learn more about how to help parents better support their children in constructing career plans (Helwig, 2008).

An adolescent's peer group also plays an important role. This group typically shares views on school, achievements, and aspirations (Young, Antal, Bassett, Post, DeVries, & Valach,

1999). Felsman and Blustein (1999) found that adolescents who reported higher levels of attachment to peers engaged in higher levels of exploration often made greater progress in committing to careers.

Finally, career counselors (Albion, 2000) and classroom teachers (Helwig, 2008; Wall et al, 1999; Witko et al., 2005) also have a place in students' career development. Albion (2000) claimed that during times of job insecurity and instability, the role of career counselors supporting young people was imperative. Helwig (2008) conducted a longitudinal study and found that the participants (when in grade 12, as well as five years after graduation) reported that after parents, teachers played the most important role in adolescent career development.

The purpose of this review of prevalent topics in the literature was to highlight what is being discussed in the literature on career and adolescence. However, it is important to note that my study is not an attempt to focus on one of these topics. As I mentioned before, this is a qualitative, social constructionist study, so I did not look for dependent and independent variables. Rather, this study is an attempt to learn more about the general construction of career. However, I was aware of these topics when gathering data. For the section on self-efficacy, though, I never examined the data for efficacious statements. While taking a closer look at the current literature on self-efficacy, it seems as though this construct may have been difficult to capture in a qualitative study, as it is mostly measured using specific self-efficacy instruments. I did, however, gather demographic information by asking the participants specific questions. That said, none of this information was salient, as I did not have a large enough number of participants to generalize my findings to a specific group of people. Finally, in the data, the participants did discuss relational influences; however, it was never in enough detail to establish

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specific themes. It seems as though these constructs address very specific aspects of career development, where my research has a more general focus on how career is constructed.

Methodologies in Career Research

Quantitative

In the career literature there is a large breadth of quantitative studies, which use many different measures to assess the many constructs in career research (Chartrand & Camp, 1991). While Chartrand and Camp saw a convergence of those measures in 1991, currently, it seems that many different ones are being used. This may be because many researchers are relying on those tools already created by other researchers (e.g., Gianakos, 1999; Kracke, 2002; Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010; Wall et al., 1999) while others are using their own (Kracke, 2002; Paa & McWhirter, 2000; Wall et al., 1999). Bardick et al. (2006) claimed that they needed to develop a specific measure for their own study on career needs, as there was not one present in the literature. Most measures seem to rely on a Likert scale (Chartrand & Camp, 1991; Gordon et al., 2000; Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010) and seem to be matched against other demographic data, such as school achievement (Shapka et al., 2006) gender (Helwig, 2008; Shapka et al., 2006; Paa & McWhirter, 2000) socioeconomic status (Helwig, 2008; Paa & McWhirter, 2000), parental education (Shapka et al., 2006; Paa & McWhirter, 2000) and race and ethnicity (Helwig, 2008; Paa & McWhirter, 2000). Finally, many of the quantitative studies are longitudinal studies, as it is believed that career development may change over time (e.g., Helwig, 2008; Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010; Rojewski & Kim, 2003; Shapka et al., 2006). For example, Porfeli and Skorikov (2010) looked at how adolescent career preparation could impact adjusting to life after graduation. They surveyed their participants in grade 11 and six months after graduation. They found that career preparation and career decisiveness increased with time. When conducting

research on late adolescence and career, many of the participants were typically high school students (e.g., Rogers et al., 2008) or undergraduate students (e.g., Gianakos, 1999). As many of the participants were enrolled in school, most of the research was conducted at their academic institutions (e.g., Gianakos, 1999, Wall et al., 1999).

The quantitative research plays a large role in the career research. However, through the use of instruments, this research lacks information on the complexities of the adolescent experience. This research also lacks the language of the adolescents. By providing instruments, participants are not able to share how they construct career development. Rather, they must rely on the researchers' words to express themselves. This type of research may also be missing information, as participants are not always able to discuss a topic that is not listed on the questionnaire. For this current study, I hope that my findings will complement the quantitative findings. Additionally, by relying on a narrative methodology, I hope to share the language that grades 12's are using as they construct career development. In the next section, I review the qualitative methodology in career research.

Qualitative

As I was researching career and adolescence, I found that quantitative studies greatly outnumbered qualitative studies. As most of the career literature on adolescence is quantitative, many of the qualitative studies relied on quantitative findings to explain the purpose of their study and their findings. Many qualitative studies in the career literature seemed to gather data by using semi-structured interviews (e.g., Packard & Nguyen, 2003; Pummell, Harwood, & Lavallee, 2008). They differed from quantitative studies because they were able to add a rich and deep understanding of the adolescent experience by allowing the participants to use their own words and to express themselves more freely (Pummell et al., 2008). For example,

Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi, & Glassock (2001) conducted interviews to learn more about the effect of relational influences on career development. Along with the interview, they provided a demographic questionnaire. Through their findings, they were able to build on existing literature, and add to this literature by providing language, which communicates the connection between our relationships and our career lives. Through the accounts of the participants, Schultheiss et al. also reported on how complicated and multifaceted these relationships can be, and it was through the use of the interviews that they claimed that they were able to reveal the complexities of these relationships.

Packard and Nguyen (2003) conducted semi-structured phone interviews to understand more about the transition into university and how it would affect adolescent girls' decisions to pursue careers in sciences. In particular, they were looking at how the role of a mentor would help in establishing careers in science for females. Through the interviews, they were able to understand why some females continued to pursue careers in the sciences and why some women chose not to. Based on the success of their findings, it follows that qualitative career studies are better able to elaborate on the experience of the adolescent and discuss the complexities of career development – conclusions that are not present in the quantitative data.

Narrative

In this section, I focus specifically on one type of qualitative methodology – narrative. In Chapter 1, I explained that there was a need for a stronger presence of narrative methodology in career research (Bujold, 2004). In this body of literature, narrative methodology seems to be used in different ways for a variety of research questions. For example, Hill, Ramirez, and Dumka (2003) used narrative to learn more about the connection between SES and ethnic minorities and barriers to career aspirations. Through this methodology, the participants were

able to discuss how the complexities of their transition into junior high school and their tumultuous living situations affected their views of the future. Hill et al. gleaned themes from these participants' narratives and found that there were many differences between gender and ethnicity. For example, they found that Mexican females had more traditional career goals (e.g., teacher) than other females in the study. No males expressed traditional career goals. Young (1994) used narrative methodology to learn more about parental influence on young adults' career development. He used semi-structured interviews to look at critical events and narrative structures of the participants. He found that parents had a strong influence on career development, and that participants discussed this support in different ways. For example, for some adolescents these differences could be due to the nature of the parent-child relationship or the value and amount of support received from the parent. It is clear that narrative is used in many different ways to look a variety of different aspects in adolescent career research. With this study, I hope to add to this body of literature on narrative by providing a more general focus on adolescent career development.

Conclusion

Career is an occupation that adolescents plan and work towards to be able to achieve in the future. Career development encompasses the identity and the development of the individual. This development is not static; it evolves as the individual develops and grows. From a social constructionist perspective, career develops through interactions between the individual and society. Late adolescence is an important time to look at career. At this stage, this group is transitioning out of high school and is faced with many options for its next steps. Because career decisions can be quite difficult, as there are many variations in career plans, career narratives for late adolescents will vary in objectives and development. Some may have no plans for the

future, while some may have detailed outlines. It is important to study this group as career choices are more imminent and they may experience many challenges in forming their career plans.

In the career literature, there are many studies on late adolescence, which focus on many topics, such as self-efficacy, demographic indicators, and relational influences. However, there are very few studies that report on the voice of these participants. Most studies are quantitative, and so the way the adolescents get to report their experience is through the language of the measures. Through this method, no information then is gathered on the actual experience of how adolescents construct career development. With my study, I hope to add to the career literature on adolescence by discussing their experience using their language. I also hope to add to the qualitative literature by specifically focusing on the narrative methodology. This is a method that is currently believed to fit with studying career; however, there are still few studies that use narrative methodology. By answering, "What do narratives of grade 12 students reveal about how they construct career development?" this study attempts to provide a detailed illustration of the participants' career narratives in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 3: Methodology

To answer the research question – What do grade 12 students' narratives reveal about how they construct career development? – I relied on narrative inquiry as a methodology. I used two interviews and a journal to gather the data, and then I analyzed the texts for salient themes. In the following section, I discuss the importance of narrative methodology for my study, and then I detail my research location and participant selection. Following this explanation, I discuss my research procedures and my analysis. I then explain issues of representation and ways to evaluate the value of my study. I end this chapter with ethical considerations.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a way to gather information about how humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This is because as human beings, we make sense of our lives through story structures (Bell, 2002). In fact, when we share information about ourselves, we select events and organize them in a narrative structure. Narrative, then, is a way for people to construct their past, present, and future, and to understand the complexities of their lived experience.

The stories gathered from narrative inquiry are temporal (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, someone's narrative may not necessarily be told chronologically. When recounting experiences, it is not always done in an orderly manner. For example, someone may tell a story starting from the conclusion, jumping to the beginning and then finishing off with the middle. However, it is assumed that humans are all storytellers, and when we recount what has happened in our life, we do so through stories (Moen, 2006; Polkinghorne, 1988).

This methodology is integral for my research question as I attempt to shed light on the experience of grade 12's constructing their career development. I chose narrative as it not only

captures the individual's experience, but it also captures the social and cultural interactions present in the narrator's story. It is important to note that I use the word "capture" to imply that I have captured a moment in the participants' lives – a snapshot. The usage of this word in my thesis does not connote that I see their narratives as permanent, nor that I have some sort of ownership of them. Rather, this word expresses that I have gathered their language at a certain time in their lives in a very specific context of the interview.

Career, Constructionism, and Narrative

A constructionist approach looks at the relationship between the person and his or her social context (Chen, 2003). Narrative inquiry views the experience of individuals as "products of social interchange" (Gergen & Gergen, 1988, p.18). This quotation implies that the individual constructs his or her narrative through social and cultural interactions. It also implies that participants do not share an already formed story with the researcher; rather, they construct their narratives through the interactions with the researcher and the lived experience (Moen, 2006). Narrative research, then, not only captures someone's story, but it also captures social and cultural information (Blustein et al., 2004). Therefore, narrative methodology and social constructionism complement each other.

Narrative and Late Adolescence

Narrative inquiry is also important for my research as a way to give voice to a marginalized or underrepresented group (Bell, 2002). In educational research, it is essential to listen to the underrepresented perspective of students (Cook-Sather, 2002). Currently, there has been a shift in career literature where researchers are now representing the adolescent perspective rather than solely the adult perspective (Hiebert, Collins, & Robinson, 2001; Pyne, Bernes, Magnusson, & Poulsen, 2002). Hearing directly from the students, rather than inferring

what they are experiencing, helps to shed light on how late adolescents are constructing their

career development (Hiebert et al., 2001). By giving a voice to adolescents speaking in their own

words, this study, then, helps to inform researchers and practitioners, who can then better serve

adolescents in their career development.

Location of the Research

Greater Vancouver School District

The schools that I used for this study were from the lower mainland of British Columbia,

Canada. To provide some background and context for this district, it is considered to have a high

immigrant population; most come from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Due to the high level

of immigrants, there is also a high level of need for courses in English as a Second Language

(ESL).

All the upper-level students in this district have taken a career education program called

Planning 10. It is mandatory for graduation and is typically taken in grade 10 or 11. This is

relevant as career education programs may play a role in career narratives (McWhirter, Rasheed,

& Crothers, 2000).

Recruitment

The selection of my participants was purposeful. A purposeful strategy is used when

specific people are needed for the study, which is typical of qualitative research (Maxwell,

2005). The sample was non-probabilistic, as I was not concerned with statistical generalizability

(Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Narrative inquiry can involve a large time commitment. For this study, there were long

detailed interviews and differing narratives, which required many hours for transcribing and

analyzing; this is typical of narrative research (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber 1998;

Riessman, 1993). Guest et al. (2006) looked at how many participants it would take to establish credible variability and to obtain a strong sense of thematic exhaustion. Although, in total, they interviewed 60 women in depth, by the time they had interviewed just six participants, they realized that the major themes were already present. They used non-probabilistic and purposive sampling. With this in mind, I limited the number of participants to seven. If I had not found salient themes amongst the seven participants, I would have recruited more grade 12's.

When choosing participants, Moen (2006) claimed that there should be some equality between the researcher and the participant, so that the participant does not feel intimidated or judged. Therefore, the participants selected for my study were from schools where the students only knew me as a researcher. To recruit these students, I asked teachers and administrators to ask their students to participate in the study. My only criterion was that the students had to be in grade 12. I sent teachers and administrators an e-mail, and spoke to a few teachers whom I happened to see. In the e-mail, I spoke briefly about the study and the time commitment it would require of the students, and I attached the consent form (see Appendix A). Through this recruitment process, I had three teachers in three different high schools respond.

Each teacher recruited students in different ways. At one school, the teacher asked one class of grade 12's for two volunteers, and two girls volunteered. At another school, the teacher chose students based on their progress in school, their personal history, and their reliability. She asked if they wanted to participate, and they answered that they did. Finally, the teacher from the third school explained that she picked the three participants because they were always in her classroom, and she had easy access to them. Also, when she asked who wanted to participate in my research, these students were the first to respond and were excited to be a part of the study.

Once the participants were chosen, they had to fill out an assent form, and as they were minors, their caregivers had to fill out a consent form (see Appendix A). With these forms, there was also information about the study (see Appendix A). I sent these forms to the coordinating teachers as an attachment in an e-mail, and ensured that the participant and a legal guardian signed the forms before I conducted the interviews.

For the study, there were six females and one male. Five of the participants came from European decent, and two were part European and part Middle Eastern. All of the participants were Canadian. Two of the participants were from a high school alternative program for students at-risk of not graduating; two participants were in a program for highly motivated students; and the other three participants were in mainstream high school programs. I was able to gather this demographic information by asking specific questions at the beginning of the first interview (Appendix B). I discuss my participants in more detail at the beginning of my Chapter on Findings.

Research Procedures

To collect the data for this study, I conducted interviews and created a research journal. The strategy for using more than one method of collecting data is referred to as triangulation (Maxwell, 2005). It is an effective way to reduce erroneous conclusions that may stem from biases or limitations of a specific method (Maxwell, 2005).

Active Interview

Narrative inquiry is meant to be a collaboration between the researcher and the participant. Through the dialogue between the researcher and the participant, the latter is able to "untangle the complex personal, social, and cultural forces that framed and shaped . . . life" (Larson, 1997, p. 458). The active interview is not structured under the assumption that the

researcher will get the desired information if he or she asks the right questions (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). Rather, the interview functions under the belief that the participant is as active as the interviewer. The participant is constantly assembling and modifying his or her story, and the same applies to his or her answers to the interviewer's questions (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). When we answer questions about ourselves, we may change and learn; as a result, our stories will grow and change depending on the situation. We are constantly reflecting on our experiences and gaining new understanding about our lives. When we are participants, then, we are not passive beings; we are active agents who are continuously creating subjective stories about our lived experiences. Therefore, the interview process is active because the interviewer is actively looking for information, and the participant is actively sharing information.

Due to the fact that the participant is constantly reflecting and altering his or her narrative, the data from the interview is not seen in terms of reliability or validity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). Rather, the interview is a dynamic, meaning making process, where the researcher is interested in "how meaning is constructed, the circumstances of construction, and the meaningful linkages that are assembled for the occasion" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 145). Therefore, the active interview is simply acknowledging the participants as ever-evolving beings who may always recount their stories with variations based on context.

First Interview

The purpose of the first interview was to record the participants' career narratives. I interviewed the students and audio recorded all the interviews. The first interviews were set up through the coordinating teachers and were conducted from the beginning of January to the middle of February, 2010. These interviews were approximately 30 to 60 minutes each. They

were typically done during school time, when the students did not have class; however, many ran over a few minutes after school. None of the participants seemed to have problems staying after school to complete the interview, as I always asked them for permission once I heard the final bell ring, and they all agreed to stay longer. All the first interviews were conducted in offices near or connected to the coordinating teachers' classrooms. Because school was in session, there were interruptions, but they were typically brief, and we were always able to refocus quickly.

The interview was semi-structured. I wanted to be able to gather some demographic information, so at the beginning, I asked specific questions (see Appendix B). After addressing the demographic questions, I asked about their career plans. When they started discussing their career plans, I let them talk freely. When they had finished expressing a thought, I would ask another question, based on what they had said. In my interview protocol (see Appendix B) I have included some guiding questions. I only used some of these questions to prompt more detailed answers. This type of interview structure is quite common for narrative research (e.g., Brooks & Dallos, 2009; Lieblich et al., 1998). It was particularly suited for this study, as I was looking for the participants to share a story, with details and thoughts. If I had asked only planned questions, which may not have directly connected to what the participants were saying, I would have missed the detailed narratives that were collected through my chosen method.

Second Interview

Before conducting the second interview, I summarized each transcript from the first interview for the corresponding participant. I did this because the purpose of the second interview was to ensure that there was consistency between what I had included in the summary and what the participants felt represented who they were and portrayed who they wanted to be in this study. This is a suggested practice in narrative research (Larson, 1997). An abridged

version of these stories can be found in the Findings Chapter. I conducted the second interview from April to May, 2010. The time-gap between the first and second interviews was needed in order to transcribe all the interviews and then create a summary for each participant. I audio recorded all of the second interviews. These interviews took place after school, at lunchtime in empty classrooms, and outside – one even took place in a restaurant, as the student had already graduated. During the second round of interviews there were interruptions, such as a fire alarm going off, and a server coming back and forth to our table. These interruptions did not prevent the students from reading the summaries, nor did they limit them in what they would share. The participants did not seem to hold back any information, and in some cases, actually disclosed more personal information than in the first interview.

In the second interview, I contacted the students through their e-mail accounts, which they had given me during the first interview. I did not have e-mail addresses for two participants. To obtain one, I contacted the appropriate recruiting teacher. As for the other participant, I heeded her teacher's suggestion that I contact her through Facebook, seeing as she had since graduated. I did that, but received no response. Fortunately, while I was at the school to interview one participant, a student was talking on the phone with the participant who I could not get a hold of, so I worked out a time to meet with her then.

During the second interview, I gave the students a written copy of their summary, a pen, and then I turned on the recorder. I did not have any specific questions planned for the interview, as it was a time for me to ensure that they were satisfied with what I had written about them. I simply told them to make changes if something in the summary was inaccurate. They could make changes on the paper or dictate into the audio recorder. I told them to take their time and to only change facts and words that did not represent them at the time of the first interview.

Therefore, if something had changed since the interview, I would not record that change, since the study was based on the first interview. Many made minor changes. After the second interview, I made the corrections and e-mailed each participant his or her completed summary.

Mandy happened to speak a lot more in the second interview than she did in the first. I decided to use some of the data from that second interview. I did not, however, use any information that was based on changes since the first interview. For example, she discussed some changes to her post-secondary aspirations, but these were not included, as I only used plans based on the first interview. However, in the second interview, she discussed her family in more detail and discussed travelling aspirations. If I was to analyze Mandy's data, without using the second interview, I would have recorded that she did not discuss any travel aspirations, which would have misrepresented her, so I chose to include that data.

Research Journal

Throughout the data collection, I kept a journal. Journaling can be a tool for recording thoughts during fieldwork (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It is integral to record these thoughts, as they are the beginning of the qualitative analysis (Patton, 2002). I used the journal at different times, with no specific pattern, to document observations that I had about the data. For example, while I was transcribing, I would record my initial feelings about the data, listing similarities between the participants, and possible themes for my Findings section. I also recorded concerns about me as a researcher and about the actual research. When journaling, I would take the time to record my questions and my conclusions regarding what the participants had said. By doing this, I was able to document and, consequently, be more aware of my own voice, and thus separate it from the participant's voice. This was integral, as I wanted the study to be from the adolescent's perspective.

Data Analysis

Interviews

I recorded the interviews and listened to them on my computer. Riessman (1993) suggested first transcribing everything. I transcribed all interviews, at the latest, a week after each meeting, so that my memory was fresh. I used the transcribing conventions found in Appendix C. To protect the privacy of the participants, I gave them pseudonyms.

When I analyzed my data, I relied on Lieblich et al.'s (1998) holistic-content perspective. This method of analysis is quite prevalent in the narrative literature (e.g., Bell, 2002; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). To engage in this form of analysis, Lieblich et al. (1998) laid out five steps. First, the researcher needs to read the transcripts many times to see how the participant is discussing the research topic, specifically, whether the participants are applying negative or positive language when sharing their narratives. For this step, I read the transcripts several times, and then put the information into a cohesive story for the participants to review. This was important for the next step, when the researcher is expected to form an initial impression of the data. By reviewing the summaries, I was able to form a global impression of each narrative. This impression allowed me to better understand each story, and to start to think about the data that I would need for my Findings Chapter. After I formed these impressions, I went back to the transcripts to look for themes from the participants' narratives. I already had an idea of some themes, as they started to emerge while I was transcribing. The next steps in the holistic-content perspective are to choose themes and to highlight them in the transcriptions. I looked through the transcripts and pulled themes that were common in the narratives. I highlighted, then labeled them, and circled important words. I used consistent labels for each transcription. From the highlighting, I recorded all the themes for each participant. I printed off my notes, and compared

the themes in order to find the most common and striking themes. Themes were considered

salient if two or more participants discussed them. In my analysis, I also included a discussion

around why some participants may not have discussed the most important themes. At first, the

themes that I chose were quite superficial. I discussed these themes with other people, including

a professor and some peers, and from those conversations, I was able to create themes that

provided a deeper analysis. While discussion with others was not listed as a step in Lieblich et

al.'s method, I highly recommend it. It allowed me to think about my data out loud and gain a

better understanding of what was being said. For the last step, I looked at other parts of the story

to ensure that they did not contradict the main themes.

Research Journal

The journal was analyzed to ensure that the participants' voices were being represented

and to add detail to the research findings. When reading the journal, I looked for my initial

observations from the interviews, and then looked again at the transcripts to ensure that my

initial observations actually matched what the participants were saying. If I could not find direct

quotations from the transcripts that could substantiate my initial observations, then I did not

record these observations in my Findings section.

<center>*Issue of Representation*</center>

Multivoiced Text

Narrative inquiry is a collaboration between the researcher and the participant, so in the

data there are many voices, including those that are deemed social and cultural (Riessman,

1993). Capturing many voices in this research, though, is not necessarily a limitation. Using a

social constructionist approach, I see my participants as constructing their narratives within

society. Therefore, if I were to attempt to separate the social cultural voices, then I would not capture the whole lived experience (Moen, 2006).

While the participants' narratives included many voices, I tried to separate my voice from the findings. This turned out to be a concern because I was as active in the interview process as the participants; moreover, I was analyzing all the data. To accurately represent the participants' voices, I diligently reviewed the transcripts, ensuring that my analysis was based on the participants' words – using direct quotations – and not only on my judgments. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) also suggested that a researcher could clarify his or her voice by declaring in the research who he or she is as a researcher. Based on this suggestion, I have included my narrative in the following section.

Location of the Researcher

I have been a high school teacher for over seven years, and I have always been interested in youth who are at risk of not graduating. The students who baffle me are those who have the intellectual capacity to pass courses but are failing. I have often wondered what I can do as a teacher to help them succeed.

I have also been questioning the idea of success. I am in a study group at my school. In this group my colleagues and I read articles and relate them to our school, our students, our classrooms, and our practices. When I began my research, we were talking about student success and trying to define what that means for us and for the school. I have come to realize that my concern does not lie in whether the students are passing or not; it is centered more on whether they have a plan when they leave school. I believe that this is an important measure of school success.

I have experiences with two specific students who have really helped in solidifying my definition of student success. There is one student whom I taught for three years (grade 10 to grade 12). In grade 12, he had a plan to own a Panago Pizza franchise. I talked about it with him often. In grade 12, he ended up failing many courses due to poor attendance, and he did not end up graduating. When I spoke to him about his academic achievement, he told me that he was working to save money and gain experience for his career plans. He knew that he needed to get his high school diploma, so following his grade 12 year, he enrolled in night school.

When he was in my class, I never worried about him. While he was failing many courses and not attending school regularly, I knew that he would be okay. I am not concerned about him and his success for the future because he has a plan.

Similarly, I had a grade 11 student who was failing many courses. I spoke to him, his parents, and many colleagues. Through these discussions, I found that he was very lost. He did not see how school would help him in the future, nor did he have any career plans. In his grade 11 year, he was focused on his girlfriend and that seemed to be it. Even though he had a good attendance record and was always engaged in classroom discussions, he handed in very little work.

I worry about this former student. In his grade 12 year he was still failing many classes, and he still seemed to lack a clear plan on what he was going to do when he left school. I feel that the system failed him. I feel that if schools can help support students in making career decisions, students may see more of a purpose in school and not feel so lost when they are in the building, nor when they leave it.

Drawing on my teaching experience, I enter the field as one familiar with adolescents and their career stories. However, as a researcher, I am new to this whole process. Therefore, when I

conducted this study, I tried to make the familiar strange. I attempted to observe and listen with new ears and eyes, so that I could gain a deeper understanding of what was being said, and not fill in the holes of the participants' stories with my own assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting this study, I obtained approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB). This study was considered of minimal risk, so there was very little concern. However, as my participants were minors, I had to ensure that their caregivers had given consent before conducting the study. As well, I used pseudonyms and changed identifying markers of the participants to ensure confidentiality. I also did not disclose what was said to anyone who would know the participants, such as other participants and the recruiting teachers. Some of the participants shared that they were in the study with their peers, so when I went to the schools to conduct the interviews, some peers knew why I was there. None of them seemed to have an issue with their peers knowing that they were in a study. In fact, the participants seemed to enjoy the idea of being part of a university study.

An ethical consideration that arose during the study was that I happened to share with a participant's peer that the participant was a part of the study. This happened because the participant had graduated from high school, and I was struggling to contact her. When I was at her school, one of her friends happened to be talking to her on a cell phone, and so I asked the friend if I could speak to her. This may have breached the confidentiality agreement that I had with the participant, as I exposed that she was in the study. However, this was something that could not be hidden from the school community. My first initial meetings with my participants were typically in a full classroom during class time, or in a busy school hallway during lunchtime. From these initial meetings, we would typically move into a quieter space, which

was in offices that were visible and accessible to other students. Therefore, many peers of the participants were aware that I was in the school to conduct research. Nolen and Putten (2007) discussed the issues of confidentiality in conducting research in a school setting. They claimed that keeping participants totally anonymous was challenging, as the community members of the school were aware that research was being conducted in the school.

To address this issue of confidentiality, I have taken many steps to conceal the identity of my participants. I have given them all pseudonyms and edited their narratives that are in the thesis many times to ensure that their information does not expose who they are. Another way that I have ensured that my participants would be comfortable with the information published in this study was by asking them if I could include certain information, and by presenting the corresponding narratives to the participants in the second interview. I told them that this information would be in the study and available to the public, and I gave them the chance to change or take out information. Some students changed some details, but most participants were comfortable with what I had written. Even though they accepted what I had written, to further conceal their identity, I reviewed these summaries and deleted more information that I thought might be revealing.

Another concern that could have arisen from this study is the possibility that my participants might have required help based on what we had discussed. For example, they could have asked for career guidance. In this case, I would have suggested they talk to the career counselor in their school. If participants would have displayed serious problems, I would have suggested they talk to their school counselors. All the counselors in the schools are bound by strict codes of ethics, and so the students would have had the safety of confidentiality.

Additionally, the students are already known to these counselors, so the participants would not have had to expose themselves to an outside group of people.

Criteria for Evaluating the Worth of My Study

By using narrative inquiry, I am not looking for the truth in participants' narratives, nor am I claiming reliability (Bell, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Lieblich et al., 1998), because although the participants' narratives may have been constructed around facts, they were recounted subjectively, where the narrator decided (consciously or subconsciously) what to share and what not to share (Lieblich et al., 1998). Additionally, the study cannot be seen as being scientifically reliable as it is unlikely that the story told by the narrator will be able to be duplicated (Gudmundsdottir, 1996; Lieblich et al., 1998). It solely exists in the context of the interview.

However, the narratives still are significant as they represent personal, as well as cultural meanings (Lieblich et al., 1998). After all, humans draw on the influences within their culture and their lived experiences when constructing stories (Lieblich et al., 1998). It follows that, through the narratives, the researcher is able to hear the participants' story and also learn about his or her society. This is particularly important for my research because my theoretical background is grounded in the idea that we are social beings. Therefore, my methods for gathering data need to capture the social level of the individual.

To measure the worth of this study, then, I relied on Lieblich et al.'s (1998) criteria: width and coherence. Width refers to the quality in gathering and analyzing the data. To obtain this level of quality, Lieblich et al. suggested that the researcher include many direct quotations from the participants, and provide several explanations so that the reader is able to create his or her own judgment of what the participants are saying. In the Findings section, I presented many

quotations from my participants and attempted to provide several interpretations of those quotations. Also, through my second interview with my participants, I was able to check with them that my data matched what they felt that they had shared. Coherence is when all the parts of the narrative fit together and are connected to previous research. To satisfy this criterion, I provided a brief summary of the participants' narratives in my Findings Chapter, and ensured that the themes presented in their narratives did not contradict each other. In the Discussions Chapter, I connected my findings to the current literature.

Conclusion

For this study, I relied on narrative methodology to be able to learn more about how grade 12's are constructing career development. I chose narrative methodology as it fits with my research question and the constructionist framework. It is also a strong method to represent the adolescent voice. To gather data, I relied on interviews and journaling, and I analyzed all this data to find salient themes. I took steps to ensure that this study was ethical, considering options for participants who may show signs of distress. I also considered ways to evaluate my study to ensure that it was conducted in a meaningful way. Through these methods, I was able to inform my practice as a teacher and as a researcher, and contribute to bodies of literature on narrative methodology, career, and late adolescence.

Chapter 4: Findings

The narratives gathered from the interviews with the seven participants were analyzed to answer the following research question: What do narratives of grade 12 students reveal about how they construct career development? By analyzing their narratives using the holistic-content perspective (Lieblich et al., 1998) key themes emerged. The first one I discuss is identity. Many of the participants seemed to make career plans based on how they saw themselves at the time of the interview – i.e., their current identity. However, while many had career plans, very few had committed to a clear path toward realizing those plans. An obstacle that stood in the way of many students' commitment seemed to be the numerous options for reaching those career plans. The second theme discussed is exploration: many students felt that they would be able to commit to career plans once they had the chance for self-exploration. They saw exploration as a way to escape their current lives or as an opportunity to be around new people and places, which would allow them to further develop their identity. Many participants felt that they could explore by travelling and living away from home. Through those experiences, they expressed that they would also be able to gain independence and maturity.

Following exploration, the next theme discussed in this chapter is formation, the process whereby participants, having concluded their exploration, saw themselves as being able to form an identity. Through this formation, they perceived that they would be able to commit to a career. The last theme is emotions that were present in the participants' narratives. Throughout their narratives, many participants discussed being scared of the uncertainty that the future brings, while also being excited for all the new experiences.

I divided this chapter into two sections. First, I present the participants to the reader. I have included a brief summary of each of their transcripts. The purpose of including this

information is for the reader to gain a broader understanding of who the participants are. Once I have presented all their stories, I continue with a discussion of the themes.

Narratives

Susan

Susan is a grade 12 female. She believes that people are destined to do something when they are born. She has always known that she wanted to open up a preschool daycare in her own house. She wants to do this because she loves kids – "they're the future, so might as well make good ones." She feels that most people her age are "idiots." When Susan sees kids misbehaving, she feels that teaching kids at a young age would help make them better people. Susan wants to work with preschool age children because they are "so innocent."

Susan has had many part-time jobs. If she remained at the job, she was typically promoted, but was always expected to do paperwork, something at which she is "horrible." So eventually, she would leave the job because she felt that she could not meet the expectations.

She is enjoying her last year of school. However, she is also a little frustrated because she is taking an extra year to graduate. This year is also kind of weird as it is a half year; she graduates at the end of the first semester, in January.

For post-secondary education, Susan plans to get her Early Childhood Education (ECE) diploma. She is excited to learn what *she wants* to learn. She is tired of learning math, science, and marketing. However, she is scared that she will fail. Once she is finished school, she wants to go to England, get a work visa, and be a nanny for a year.

During the interview, she talked a lot about wanting to have a baby. Susan wants to have three kids. She plans to start having kids after she has saved some money. The idea of being a mom makes Susan really happy because "nothing can love you as much as a baby does." Susan

explains this statement with how she feels about her mom. She never talks to her now, but she loves her more than "anything else in the entire world."

Allison

Allison is a grade 12 female who was positive when sharing her narrative. She is very active, playing basketball and volleyball at school and in the community. This summer, she is planning to travel with a friend to England, Ireland and France.

Grade 12 is a lot more fun than Allison anticipated. She was scared that everyone would be focused on studying, or skipping a lot of classes, but people have come together. Academically, grade 12 is going well. She was originally scared of her course load. However, now Allison feels good about grade 12 because she has all her courses, and she knows that she can graduate and get into university.

For post-secondary education, she was accepted to University of Victoria (UVic). At UVic, Allison plans to study social sciences – "human nature." She really likes hearing what people think and "seeing like [her] opinion versus someone else's opinion."

For a career, she is not really sure what she wants to do; however, she knows that she would like to care for people. It is connected to her passion for listening to people and their opinions. She is keeping teaching as a back-up. She has experience as a teacher as she works at community centres coaching girls' basketball (since grade 10), and teaching an art class (she just started this past summer). She really likes teaching the kids because they do the "craziest stuff." She also babysits a lot. She enjoys taking care of people – "even if it's just like teaching them something or being able to help somebody."

Allison is more interested in building her experiences as she feels that we are not put on earth to just "study all the time." Allison's parents are going to pay for her schooling, but she

needs to earn money to pay for her travelling. When Allison thinks about her future, she feels

"unsure." In the next ten years, she plans to have a career. She doesn't want to work in a formal

setting. She would rather wear jeans and a sweater and work in a community centre, perhaps

being a youth worker. In ten years, she will probably be married (between the ages of 28 and 36).

However, in the next 10 years, she does not plan to have kids and a house.

Carol

        During the interview, Carol, a grade 12 female student, seemed quite serious when

discussing her future. She is finding grade 12 "fun" because of the grad events and being the

oldest in the school. However, it is stressful because of university applications and lots of school

work. Grade 12 is also challenging because Carol needs to balance all this school work with her

extracurricular activities. She is on the school's soccer team and is student council president.

She says that it can be fun, but that people expect a lot from her. Currently, Carol does not work,

but she did last year. She quit the job because she knew that she would have too much to do this

year in school. She also did not really need the money. She just wanted the experience of

having a job.

        For careers, Carol is considering becoming a teacher, but thinks it could be boring

teaching the same thing every day. She also feels that her parents would rather she go into

business. Her dad is in business. Currently, she is applying to business schools. Her parents

want her to go to a local business school. However, Carol would like to go abroad. Living at

home during university could be difficult as her parents are strict. In university, she looks

forward to studying what she wants to study. She also looks forward to being able to be more

selective in choosing friends.

She really wants to travel and study in Europe. This summer, she plans to go to South America to build houses. She feels that if she witnesses what is going on in other parts of the world, she could use that as a reminder to not take her life for granted, and it could motivate her to work harder in school.

In the next five years, she sees herself finishing off school somewhere abroad. She will be figuring out what she wants to do and "having a plan." She is "the type of person that . . . [has] everything figured out and . . . [thinks] really far ahead." She thinks about her future a lot and she has lately been thinking about it even more, and she's "kinda like freakin' out." However, she believes that there is a job out there that she will enjoy and plans to try out different things until she finds it. Even though she may not know what she wants to do, she envisions herself working in an office. In the beginning of her career, when she is still young, she hopes that her job will give her opportunities to travel. However, as she gets older (30 or 35), she hopes to be more settled, as she plans to have a family.

Lana

Lana is a grade 12 female who has been involved in many sports because she has wanted to be good at something. Lana is also involved with her church through youth programs, teaching, athletics, and volunteer opportunities. She "love[s]" grade 12, as she is doing a lot better than in her grade 11 year. In grade 11, she did not put in enough effort. But then she saw her report card, and she realized this needed to change. In school, Human Services would probably be her favourite course because most of the work is done outside of school. She also likes math, biology and chemistry, as she is more of a "two plus two equals four and this is the right answer" kind of person.

During the interview, Lana spoke of all the numerous career and education paths. This variety helps her to see that if her plans don't work, there is always a "Plan B." Lana plans to go to UBC and/or Langara. She is feeling good about her future because her parents have set aside money for her. However, she is scared that what she wants may not happen. For next year, she is concerned because many of her friends are going away. However, she knows that she will get over it "because everyone does" and she will make new friends.

Lana originally wanted to be a dietician as she is interested in nutrition. However, through her Human Services class, she volunteered in an elementary classroom and realized that she wanted to be a teacher. She enjoys working with little kids. "They're fun and they're polite, and it's kind of the age where you can mold into whichever way you want."

Lana wants to travel to the next World Youth Day in Madrid and plans to finance this trip by taking out a student loan. She questions, though, if it is worth borrowing the money – "to finish school and already be in negative money." With every decision, Lana is constantly thinking about costs.

Lana doesn't want to be in school for too long as she doesn't want to always depend on her parents. In 10 years, she hopes to be married – "between 25 and 35 and start having kids before . . . 40." She'd also like to live in a super expensive house or apartment and be working.

Mandy

Mandy is a grade 12 female who likes to learn about the "the realities of the world." She likes to understand what is happening in other countries: "sweatshops and child prostitution and things like that." She is also interested in finding ways to fix these issues. Mandy has always enjoyed helping other people. This is why she wants to be a social worker or a child protection

worker. She is interested in helping youth. She wants to take them out of bad situations and help them find more stable places to live. Mandy has had many experiences with social workers.

Through Mandy's volunteer experience, she mentioned that she enjoyed meeting people from the community, as they were "cool." This is because they chose to follow "the right path in life." "They had careers and chose to be smart, going to school." They put their careers before their social lives and succeeded in what they wanted to do. "The majority of them are living the life they wanted to live."

When I interviewed Mandy, she was excited because a school youth worker was taking her to a community college to register for courses. When Mandy graduates, she plans to go to a community college and then transfer to UBC or go to Langara College for a separate program. She is unsure as to what she is going to do. She plans to just "go with the flow." She is looking forward to going to college because the people there want to be there. She feels that this environment will help her succeed; there will be fewer distractions than in high school where "everyone goofs around."

She is scared about her future – she doesn't want to "mess up." She also mentions that graduation is scary because now she is no longer a child, and it is a huge transition to go from a kid to an adult. She also wants a "very good life" – a house and a family. She is really looking forward to getting her career and trying "to make something of [herself]."

Marci

Marci is a grade 12 student who seemed very optimistic about her future. She spoke a lot about her family. Marci and her sister are really close, even though they are far apart in age. Her older sister is currently on a cruise ship as a photographer. Her parents were also mentioned numerous times in terms of advice and support that they have given her. For example, her

parents always stress that you should "take a job in life that you'd like to do every day." Marci's mother also gives Marci career advice sharing possible career opportunities and post-secondary options.

This year she is taking Advanced Placement (AP) Art. Grade 12 for her has become "a bit of an adventure." She feels that, "[t]here's some bumps and stuff" to try and figure out what to do after high school. For extracurricular activities, she plays soccer. She is the team captain, which she finds "nerve-wracking." She hopes to get on to a college team. She has also spent the last three years on student council.

This summer, she is going to South America to build a school. This is not her first time travelling. In grade 10 she went with the school to Europe – her first time in Europe. To fund the South America trip, she has been working different part-time jobs.

Marci is interested in a career in fine arts. She may want to get into film as she enjoys playing with a video camera, making little short films for her friends. She is also interested in fashion as she enjoys taking pictures. For post-secondary schools, Marci plans to go to either UVic or Emily Carr. She is torn between the schools, but is leaning more towards a university education, so that she doesn't limit her career options by just studying fine arts.

Marci feels that the future is scary, and mentions the idea of 2012, when the Mayan calendar ends, which could signal the end of humanity. By next year, she pictures herself as more mature, more aware. She hopes to have more figured out than she has right now. She is also really excited to meet new people, specifically from different places.

Mercutio

Mercutio is a grade 12 male and seemed laid back when talking about his future. However, he did mention that he is finding grade 12 to be stressful. There's a lot of work being "piled on" and this work at times makes him feel like he may have a "panic attack."

In school, he is interested in the social studies courses. He enjoys learning how the world works and how the past can change the future. He is also interested in current issues around human rights and global warming. Mercutio is enjoying the social aspect of grade 12. Everyone's coming together, hanging out, and there are many parties.

For extracurricular activities, Mercutio has been playing hockey since he was four. He hopes to be playing for the rest of his life. In his grade 12 year, he decided to cut back so he had time for his studies. He is also a big Canucks fan and has season's tickets with other family members.

Mercutio has worked at a hockey store since he was in grade 10. He used to work at a restaurant, but he didn't enjoy the late hours. Having a job gives Mercutio more financial freedom; however, he still struggles to save money.

Mercutio recognizes that a lot of kids are "freaking out" about what they want to do, but he is pretty sure that he will be either a firefighter or a teacher. He is also not "super worried about making tons of money," and feels that either job will be good enough. With these two possible careers, he won't be "so limited," like his parents, who have jobs that Mercutio thinks they do not like.

When Mercutio graduates, he will probably take some post-secondary courses, but does not want to go right away. He wants to get a job and live up in Whistler for the year. He has to pay for university, so he plans on getting a student loan. He sees post-secondary as "another step

to the rest of [his] life." He is "really keen on going away" for university as he sees the kids who are going to UBC who are "still like babies." He also likes going to new places. However, he is aware that it is expensive to study Arts right away, so he will "probably suck it up and stay [at home] for a year."

In the next five years, he plans on "finding himself" so that he can figure out what he wants to do. During these five years, he will be going to school and/or working. In the next ten years, he hopes to be happy. He wants to finish the adolescent years and be more mature – an adult. He is not looking forward to turning 30 or 40, though. He doesn't want to look like his parents who he thinks look old.

Themes

When participants shared their career narratives, they did not list their plans in chronological order. However, when I reviewed the data, it seemed as though they had created a linear story. When discussing their career choices, they relied on their current identity – who they are now. From their career choices, they saw the next step as being exploration. During this stage, they perceived that they would learn more about themselves. From exploration, they saw themselves as forming their identity, which they discussed as being synonymous with making a career decision. Once they had made a decision, many believed that they would be more settled and focus on family life.

Many of these issues were discussed in terms of dichotomies. For example, participants expressed some sort of commitment to how they perceived themselves; however, they lacked commitment for their future plans. As well, when they described exploration, they expressed their desire for something "new," but seemed to want to hold on to something familiar. At the end of their narratives, they felt that they would make a career decision, and with this decision,

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they would finish the exploration stage. The emotions present in this process were a mixture of excitement for the new experiences, yet fear related to the uncertainties ahead. I elaborate on these findings in the following sections.

Current Identity

When planning for their future careers, participants relied on their current identities to make decisions. I use the word "current" as it was how they saw themselves at the time of the interview. While they never used the word "identity," I decided to attach this construct to talk about how the participants saw themselves. In this section, I felt that they were discussing identity when they talked about their personalities, values, and past experiences. For example, when Carol discussed her career plans, she relied on her current identity:

> I took a course [in high school], Bus. Ed., and I also took Marketing. And, I really enjoyed, um, the activities that we did and the things that I learned, I was actually interested in it . . . I guess the things that I like to do, sort of, relate to that. Like I like organizing things and . . . I guess I'm good at coming up with ideas for things, like if I went into marketing, I'd be able to be creative.

These experiences in high school business courses helped in guiding her decision to study business in university. When she was discussing "organizing things" she may have been referring to her experiences on student council and organizing citywide events, which she discussed in the interview. It appeared that through her past experiences, she constructed an identity, based on what she is good at – "I'm good at coming up with ideas" – and what she likes, and she used that knowledge to create a career path. Allison did the same, expressing her career plans as follows: "I wanna learn more about why people think the way they do or why people have the emotions that they do." Then, she connected her career plans to her current identity.

A: I guess I'm always the first one to, like, tell my friends that I love them even if, like, they're like, "I know, you told me that, like, an hour ago." "Like, yah, I love you guys. You're so great." Like [brief laughter]. Or, like, if my friend's sad, I'm always like, you know, talk to me if there's a problem. I'm here. That's what I'm here for [brief laughter]. I'm your friend sort of thing.

Elaina: And you want to do that as a career as well?

A: Um, I guess so. I mean I think it – it would be nice [brief laughter] . . . 'Cause that kind of – yah, it kinda goes back to the whole, um, I like, you know, listening to people and listening to their opinions and just hearing things from other people and their thoughts. I think it would be great.

By connecting how she sees herself – as a caring person – to what she feels should be her professional purpose or role, Allison concluded that she would enjoy listening to people for her career. Marci talked about forming her career plans based on subjects she was good at in school: "I know that I'd really like to do art" and "I really like languages . . . I guess I'm just good at it." Mercutio also demonstrated how his chosen career path was reliant on his current identity:

A lot of, like, what I'm doing now. Getting up, going to school . . . I like . . . high school kids. Like, just I think I'd get along a lot easier with the kids. With kids more than adults. 'Cause, I mean, I still am a high school kid. But like, I don't know, I don't think my personality's gonna change much. Like, I will like mature more, but. Not – I don't think I'll ever sell out of who I am to be something else, right?

Based on how Mercutio identified himself – as someone who gets along with "kids more than adults" – he believed that he was suited for teaching. He also believed that he would not change, in terms of being a "sell-out." When asked what he meant by that, he responded:

M: Just ah, boring, I guess [laughs].

Elaina: Can you give me examples of boring?

M: Mmm, examples. Just very . . . like monotone or some very like monotone teachers that just talk and talk and there's no expression in their voice. And . . . they're just boring themselves 'cause it's so boring what they're talking about. But um . . . yah. I guess that's the best that I could explain that.

He relied on his current identity to conclude that he would be a strong and engaging teacher. Susan and Mandy also relied on their current identities to describe their career plans; however, they both mentioned that they had formed these plans at a younger age. Susan said:

Well, I always . . . knew what I wanted to be. Like, since I was a kid . . . I want to open up my own, like, daycare and then, like, be, like, I don't know. I want to have, like, my own pre-school daycare in my own house. Pretty much. Like, I'm going to get my ECE. And then I'm gonna go to this program. It's called Good Beginners. And it then gets you started, like, teaches you to how, like, run your own kinda daycare, in your own house, and, like, it gets you all the requirements like First Aid and all that jazz. And then, I wanna eventually, like, open up my own daycare. And then maybe upgrade to get my teaching license or something, and then become a pre-school teacher in my own house.

In the above quote, Susan revealed that she always knew that she wanted to have her own daycare, and she had a clear idea of how she would reach that goal. Similarly, Mandy said:

Ever since I was a kid, I've always had – I've always been interested in, like, things that you know, could possibly help people or give them resources, or things like that. And like, you know. I wanna be a social worker, so [laughs]. I love helping people. I don't even know, 'cause so many people have helped me, so I think that's why. And, like, I

understand it. And, you know. I know what it feels like, I guess, to need support from others, and, I know how helpful it is. So, I wanna do the same . . . I think [social work] would be the ideal job for me. You know, child protection worker.

Mandy's plans differed from Susan's, as at a young age, she only knew that she wanted to help people, not specifically how. She still had some sort of plan, though, that carried through her adolescence. In the above quote, Mandy also connected her career choice to what she experienced and to whom she is right now, as she said "the ideal job for me."

Therefore, it seemed like the participants had a sense of who they are and used that information to make career plans. It appears that the participants achieved a certain level of commitment to their career identities, as they were making plans based on those identities. However, in the following section, I show how they also lacked commitment to who they are.

Lack of Commitment

I have labeled this section Lack of Commitment as a subheading to the Current Identity section to highlight the dichotomy in how the participants were able to commit to a career plan, but were not able to commit to how they would achieve it. It seemed as though the awareness of options was an obstacle that stood in the way of them committing to a career path. For example, Mandy talked about the many steps required to obtain her social work qualifications:

So many steps I can take to be a social worker. Like, I could stay at Kwantlen [to] get enough credits to be able to go to UBC. Or I can take a course at Langara. There're so many different steps. I have no idea what I'm gonna do. Just kinda like go with the flow, I guess [brief laughter]. Get myself into Kwantlen first [brief laughter]. And then figure it out from there.

While she had a clear goal – to become a social worker – she was unclear on how she would reach this goal. She seemed to ease her fears of uncertainty by not committing, as she said that she would simply "go with the flow." She went on to say:

> I can be a youth worker first and get paid while I go to school. And kinda get the experience working with people. Or, I can just go through school and just, you know. But I'd rather get paid and be going to school. Makes more sense. Get a degree in soca [sic] I mean in youth working so I could do that. And, still be able to go to school to be a social worker.

As revealed in the above quote, Mandy was torn between earning money before becoming a social worker, or just going through the whole program. This decision seemed to be an obstacle for Mandy in committing to a career path. Money is a serious issue for Mandy. Currently, her mother is receiving assistance from the Ministry, but she will no longer receive it once Mandy turns 18. Money also seemed to be an issue in Lana's decision-making process:

> I've applied to UBC and Langara. If I don't get into UBC, I'm gonna go to Langara for two years, and I've applied to both of them . . . But I don't really know what I want to study for the four years yet, before to become the elementary school teacher . . . So, I don't know . . . But, um, if I get into UBC, I'll go straight there. Well, I actually don't know if I would go straight there. 'Cause everyone keeps telling me that since it's more expensive and more stressful and it's another hour to my commute every day. So, I haven't decided yet. But it's one of those two schools and it's gonna eventually lead me to the Education.

Lana's focus on money was not as strong as Mandy's; however, it was still a factor in making a decision. She seemed to be weighing her options based on what other people were telling her, as

she said, "everyone keeps telling me." While I chose only one quote to show Lana's lack of commitment, she had many that were based on other people's experiences and advice. The awareness of all her post-secondary options was quite new to her, as she said:

> So, then in the summer, it was like - um, watching all my friends – 'cause I have a lot of older friends. So watching them choose to go to university, college, not go at all, to travel or something. It was kind of weird to watch everyone make different decisions.

While she had formed strong career plans – to become a teacher – her path to get there seemed uncertain and that uncertainty seemed to come from watching the choices made by the people around her.

Marci's lack of commitment seemed to be related to her not knowing exactly what she wanted to do as a career. While in the Current Identity section she knew it would be something to do with art or languages, in the following quote she appeared to be undecided about which path to take:

> So, I've been looking at getting, um, my Fine Arts degree. But, I don't really know from there where I'm gonna branch out. But I know if I, like, start in that area, I can probably find like. 'Cause I like to do photography and just like painting. Or, I'm really into like making like short little films. Yah, cause I like – I don't know, I like to play with video camera a lot. And then I make little videos like for my friends, and stuff like that. And they really like them. So, I kind of like that kind of stuff. So, like. I don't know, there's so many things that like – like jobs that like I could do. Like, um, an Art teacher. I would like to be like an Art teacher. Or, in the movie industry. I was always thinking of that. 'Cause I like movies.

In the above quote, Marci revealed that she was faced with many career choices, as she was interested in many aspects of fine arts. She was also faced with school decisions, as she would like to study at an art school, but may want to keep her options open by having another concentration – a language: "Basically, I'm just gonna see what school I get into . . . I know I want to go into like Fine Arts, but I, like, change my mind a lot. And, I wouldn't mind taking maybe a language." She explained that she wanted to keep her options open as she said, "people say you go to university or something or you change your mind three times before what you really want to be. So, I just kind of want to have those options open. Just in case, so." She was not committing to a career path as she perceived that she would change her mind. She further explained this sentiment when she discussed a book about someone in the fashion industry. The protagonist was studying business and did not like it, so he switched and studied Home Economics. Marci interpreted his experience with this sentiment: "So, just kind of like having options open like that 'cause you never know when you realize, 'Oh my g-d[1], I can't do this anymore.' I need to try something else." As seen in this quote, it seemed like Marci did not want to commit to a particular path for fear that she would get herself into something that she did not want to be in. Carol was also non-committal with her career plans. She seemed to feel it is important to have a plan; however, she recognized that that plan could change: "I'm applying to business school but, um, that could change, but for now that's kind of like a plan that I have." While she was aware that her plan could change, it is almost as if she felt that it was important to have a direction, so that she would know where she was headed.

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[1] For religious purposes, I never write out the word g-d.

Mercutio expressed a clear plan to be either a teacher or a firefighter, but he also felt that, "I'm not gonna decide by the end of high school, what I want to do." Mercutio felt that at the end of high school he should not have a plan. Perhaps at this stage he felt that he had too little experience or personal growth to be able to make that decision. He was also unsure of the timeline to reach his career goal: "next 5 years maybe I'll go to school or maybe I'll be working, but I don't know yet."

It seemed as though many of the participants were unable to commit to a clear career path as they were facing many options. They were also non-committal as they were perhaps still developing their identities, and therefore, their actual career plans. While there were some plans in place, many saw those plans as changing in the future.

To deal with these indecision, many had backup plans. Allison said, "I'm not really sure what I wanna do. I'm keeping teaching as a back-up." Similarly, Lana saw planning as the following: "there's always, like, a plan B." Carol had a back-up plan too:

'Cause I feel like . . . I don't know, I feel like my plan . . . I feel like it could change 'cause . . . I'm sort of second guessing it. And, it's sort of just more of a thing to fall back on. Like, I'm going into business because I thought I wanted to go into it. And now that I'm not sure, I'm gonna just do it anyways because until I figure it out. It's a good thing to fall back on. But, I don't know if it's for sure what I want to do.

These participants seemed to have loose plans with some sort of a backup plan as a safety net. It is almost as if they had created a back-up plan to deal with the uncertainty surrounding their career plans. Therefore, if their loose plans were to fall apart, they would have something to "fall back on."

In the Current Identity section, I attempted to show how the participants relied on how they see themselves as the basis for making career choices. I contrasted that section with the Lack of Commitment section to show how they had also created loose plans, showing that they lacked commitment in how they would actually reach their career goals. This lack of commitment may come from uncertainty regarding the future and the need to have options to be able to change career plans. The lack of commitment may also exist because, while the participants have a sense of who they are (their current identity), they may feel that they need to develop a more mature and experienced identity to commit to a career decision. In the next section, I show how exploration was perceived by many participants as a way to reach this identity formation.

Exploration

For the participants, exploration seemed to be integral for making career decisions. Identity exploration was a way for participants to explore who they are. In the data, exploration was discussed in terms of travel and post-secondary education. These activities allowed for exploration as the participants were travelling to new places, meeting new people, and moving away from their parents. In this section, I first discuss how the participants expressed exploration, then I present three subthemes of exploration: Freedom, Familiarity, and Restrictions.

Allison discussed exploration in the following quote:

A: I really wanna - I wanna go somewhere that I haven't been before. And I wanna meet new people and I don't wanna be stuck with the people that I graduate with. That are all gonna be in [her hometown]. They're all gonna be doing this. And I wanna go out, meet

new people, learn new things, and just like do something new. That I haven't done

before.

Elaina: And so, you – by going to Victoria you'll get that opportunity?

A: Um, I – well – I definitely think I'll meet more people that way, just being away from

school and everyone's like –and people who come there – it'll be sort of easier to

approach people 'cause they're new too, or something, so.

She believed that by staying in her hometown, she would be "stuck." The use of the word

"stuck" seemed to have a negative connotation. Perhaps she feared that by living at home, she

would not grow or change, which is something that she perceived as being negative. She also

expressed that by leaving her current surroundings, it would be "easier" for her to be exposed to

something new. It is almost as if it would be too difficult to explore if she stayed at home.

Susan also expressed that she wanted to be exposed to something new:

[In Amsterdam they] treat [marijuana] differently rather than we would treat it here.

'Cause to them more, it's more like culture. Right? It's more to a culture. And here it's

just like "let's get high" kinda thing. And, I don't wanna just "let's get high." I wanna

see what it means. Like it's more meaningful up there . . . Like this is home. There's no

meaning. It's just home.

Susan attached "meaning" and "culture" to foreign countries. This was reason for her to explore

in another country, so that she could be exposed to something new, rather than just simply

"get[ting] high" here. She was not only looking for a new experience, but she was also looking

for something more meaningful, which seemed achievable only in a new surrounding. Striving

to find new meaning in something with which she identifies, such as smoking marijuana, may be

a way for her to grow and gain a new perspective on herself. Carol also discussed gaining a new

perspective on her life through travel:

> I just feel like we have so many opportunities, like in Canada and like. . . I guess to give
>
> back because . . . I forget about like, what's going on in the world. And I feel like I take
>
> things for granted, so I think seeing [the Dominican Republic] will make me realize that,
>
> like, I'm lucky. And hopefully, like, I'll use that in life for motivation.

She planned to go to the Dominican Republic to help build a school and learn about the politics

in that area. It was almost like she felt that she needed to experience poverty firsthand, in a

foreign country, to truly appreciate her opportunities in Canada, even though she acknowledged

how lucky she was before going. It seemed as though this growth could not happen as easily for

her if she stayed at home. Mercutio also felt that a change in setting would help him grow:

> M: I do wanna go away. If – If I'm going to school here, I don't think I will be that
>
> interested but if I'm going away to live that kinda college university life – lifestyle. Like
>
> my sister lived on her own going right out of high school. So, and she really li – she
>
> really enjoys it now. So, she's a lot more independent than she used to be. And so
>
> something like that, but, um, the kids who go to UBC here, they're still living at home,
>
> they're still like babies, right? So. I think if I live on my own, I'll – I'll be uh, a little
>
> more independent. It's what I really, really want, to kinda be more independent.
>
> Elaina: What do you mean by independent?
>
> M: Not so much relying on my parents. Basically stuff like that. Um, I can do
>
> everything on my own but I mean, at home it just happens. 'Cause my mom's always
>
> there or something to cook my meals [brief laughter] or she even does my laundry still.

Mercutio saw staying at home as a stagnation of his identity growth, as he saw that the kids who did stay home remain as "babies." As shown in this above quote, he seemed to equate independence with personal growth, as people are able to grow up if they move out, like his sister who gained "independence." He felt that he could not grow if he stayed at home as his mom was still doing things for him, like his laundry. He thought that spending a year in Whistler would give him the chance for independence and growth.

> M: I love the people that go [to Whistler] . . . Really cool that, um – people from all over the world come there to work. So, I think something like that would be cool. Just living with, uh – being around people like that. Not so kinda boxed-in here in [town where he lives].
>
> E: What do you mean by boxed-in?
>
> M: Uh, everyone's kinda . . . the same. It's just pretty black and white. Um, I don't know, I guess just a little more colourful in Whistler. As to the lifestyle. The people live there. It's just – it's just a lot different.

If he went to Whistler, he could grow, as he would not be "boxed in." He would not be living at home, and he would be exposed to new people, which would also help him grow. He could gain independence like his sister and not feel like a "baby."

> Mandy was looking forward to meeting new people once she graduated:
>
> I think [going to college will] be a lot different 'cause it's a totally different environment. With – You know, I guess the people are mo- you know. They're there 'cause they wanna be there. So it's – It's much different. Everyone, I think, is more focused, I think.

She was looking forward to going to post-secondary to be around people who take school more seriously, and perhaps she felt that these new peers would help her be more successful in school.

Maybe new peers would give her the opportunity to be someone different – a stronger student – as they are "more focused." Carol was also looking forward to meeting new peers in university: "Um, I think if I'm in university I'll be around people that sort of like, want to be there. 'Cause sometimes in high school you're around a lot of people that you don't want to." Carol felt that high school did not offer enough choice of peers. It is almost as if she had grown out of old friendships. She was ready to move on and meet new people. It was clear that after graduation, participants were looking forward to new people and new experiences. It is possibly through the new that they would be able to explore and construct their identities.

Finally, through exploration, participants saw themselves as being able to make career choices. Carol believed that after exploration she would have a plan:

Um, when I want to go to school, I wanna travel. So hopefully, I'll be um, learning abroad somewhere. Um, sort of, I guess, figuring out what I want to do by then. And then, having a plan, I guess.

It appeared that Carol saw that a plan could be achieved once she was done travelling and her post-secondary education. Mercutio felt the same: "So, next 5 years it'll probably be a little more finding myself. That makes sense? Like figuring it out. And then after that, I'll kinda be more on set for the rest of my life." In the above quote, Mercutio seemed to see his time to explore as five years, where he would be "finding" himself. Then from there, he would be "set." "Set" seemed to imply that he would be able to make decisions about his adult life that he could not make without that exploration stage.

Freedom

Freedom is a subtheme, which emerged from the idea of exploration. This section is called Freedom as the participants discussed freedom from their current lives through

exploration. This freedom was expressed as an escape from who they are currently. This is

apparent in a quote by Lana when she discussed her friend's travel experiences: "And he loves

all the youth hostels of just like meeting random people and not like worrying about anything.

Just like leave everything in Vancouver and just like go." For Lana, exploration was a way to

"leave everything." By being in a new surrounding, she thought she could break free and do

what she wants, worry-free. Allison also shared this feeling. She narrated about a time when she

felt like travelling:

> I don't know. It's usually when I'm like bogged down with homework and I'm just like,
>
> "Aaahh." Like so frustrated with ev – like life and I just wanna like, "You know, I'm just
>
> gonna leave all my stuff here. I'm gonna take a backpack and I'm gonna go away and just
>
> leave [brief laughter] and just go on vacation."

Like Lana, Allison craved a new place to be able to shed her current life. In these quotes by

Lana and Allison, it is important to note that these desires to explore and gain freedom were

temporary. Both Lana and Allison discussed the experience as taking a sort of vacation, not as

something permanent. They just wanted an experience that would give them temporary relief

from the burdens of their everyday lives. Mercutio was also looking for freedom:

> I'm thinking about getting a job in Whistler and living there for a year. Just to kinda live
>
> that lifestyle that – I think it's pretty cool . . . So, I think something like that would be
>
> really cool to do for a year. I got my whole life to figure stuff out. So. Jumping into
>
> school right away is just, I don't know.

For Mercutio, going to post-secondary school seemed like a major commitment that, if made,

would leave him with little time for other activities, as he used the word "jumping." He saw a

year of living the Whistler lifestyle as an opportunity to be free before having to "jump" into

something more demanding. While, through exploration, the participants perceived that they would be able to develop their identities and make career decisions, they also saw the explorative process as a way to delay moving on in life, like in Mercutio's case, where moving to Whistler, became a break from his current life. However, the participants may also have seen this freedom as a way to gain life experience and a new perspective. It is like they needed to take a step away from school or something related to career to be able to figure out who they are and what they want to do. This is made apparent in the following quote by Allison:

> [W]ell, I guess I don't wanna be stuck somewhere. Like I don't wanna be stuck after a few years . . . you know, in a job that I'm not gonna like anymore. And I wanna go out and experience things and then learn what I don't wanna do so I can go and do what I actually want to do. And like go to school and just be able to . . . earn money and go to school and have fun and go to school [brief laughter]. And not just go to school [brief laughter] . . . 'Cause I wanna go travelling . . . And I don't expect my parents to pay for me to go travelling all the time [brief laughter] so, I'd like to work and go around the world [brief laughter].

In the above quote, Allison expressed how she did not want to just study; she wanted to continue exploring while she was in school. Perhaps she was trying to delay having to commit to a career. However, she also expressed trepidation in being "stuck" someplace. It is almost as if she needed the freedom to travel and do what she wants, to feel like she would be equipped with the knowledge and life experience to make a career decision that would not make her feel "stuck."

Another way participants thought they would gain freedom was by living away from home for school. For example, Marci expressed how she wanted to live on her own: "I would like to live on my – like own. So, that would be like why UVic." By using the word "own" it is

almost as if freedom is equated with independence. This independence may be from her parents, like in Mercutio's case, where if he moved, his mom would no longer be doing his laundry. Or perhaps, the freedom and independence were derived simply by being in a new place. She may be looking to be independent from whom she is now. Carol also shared this sentiment:

> [J]ust like, to do things – well, like do things for myself and um. Like if I wanted to go out or something, I wouldn't have to worry about like, asking permission or I wouldn't have to like . . . worry about, I don't know. Not being allowed to go, or um. I guess living by myself would, I don't know. Living by myself would just be better because like, I feel like I'd learn more about myself 'cause like sometimes I like being alone. But, in my – I don't know, my parents wouldn't bother me as much sort of. Like nag me to do things, and – like tell me to do things. Like I usually will do something but if someone like, keeps nagging me about it, then sometimes I tend like, not to.

For Carol, it seemed like living on her own would give her a chance to break free from what she saw as her parents' control, and possibly continue her identity development by being able to make her own decisions. The participants seemed to see living on their own as a chance to explore who they are without their parents doing things for them or "nag[ging]" them. It seemed like living with their parents almost impeded their growth.

Finally, participants perceived that they could gain freedom through post-secondary education. Carol felt that at university she would have the freedom to study what she wanted.

> I guess studying the things that I want to study. And taking courses that I want to. Like I wouldn't have to worry about, "Oh, I have to take this course to graduate, and I have to do" like different things. I guess I wouldn't have to worry about doing courses that I

have to do. I could just do things that interest me. Instead of having to take things that I don't really want to take.

Susan shared similar views: "So, I'm just excited to learn what I wanna learn. That's what everybody told me. 'You wait. You keep going 'cause college, you're gonna do what you wanna do.'" These girls seemed to find freedom in being at a post-secondary institution choosing what they want to study, after being in high school, where they felt that they had less choice. This freedom may also be a way of allowing them to feel more autonomous, as they are now able to make course choices. Through these choices, they may be able to develop their own interests and get a better sense of who they are, instead of having to submit to a prescribed curriculum that may have been impeding their personal growth.

Familiarity

Familiarity was another subtheme of exploration. While many strove for new experiences and looked to gain independence and autonomy through exploration, many still wanted an element of familiarity in their plans. This familiarity seemed to be connected to their current identities. For example, many participants discussed wanting to travel to places, but the destinations seemed to be connected to something in their lives. Susan wanted to travel to the United Kingdom because of her family heritage:

> 'Cause I have family up in like the United Kingdom area and everything like that. And
> like, I just think I'd – I'd fit in, I guess. 'Cause like my family's all Scottish and English
> and Irish and I just think I'd fit in. Like I think it would be very homey to me.

By mentioning this idea of "fit[ting] in" it could be said that Susan was choosing a place where she would be comfortable. While she wanted to explore, it seemed as though she did not want to be someplace entirely unknown to her. She was also hoping to meet a man there and have his

children. While she said that she would like to be with a foreign man, she still wanted him to

come back home to Canada with her. "Well, I wanna find my man and then, like, be with my

man for a little bit. And then make him move back home and then make him have my babies."

While she wanted something new and different, she still needed something familiar – something

that connected to her current identity. Similarly, Allison chose to explore in places that she

could identify with: "I'm in French Immersion, so, France is because I speak French and I've

never been. I've always wanted to go. England because I – my family lives there and I've

always wanted to go." Carol chose to return to places in Europe where she had already been

with friends and teachers on a school trip and with her parents on family trips: "I really like

Europe. I've been there before. Um, I'd like to study like in England, or, um. Maybe in Spain.

I went there in the summer and it was really nice."

Mercutio chose to travel to Whistler because of his cousins' experiences: "I know the

lifestyle they live up there. Um, my cousin – my older cousins were instructors there and stuff,

so. I know what goes on." Mercutio was planning to go to Whistler because he could be in a

new place, but a place that he knew. Perhaps he identified with his cousins, and because they

had lived up there, he saw himself as being able to do the same. While in the previous sections

he was adamant that he wanted to be some place new, he still held on to what was familiar. Lana

also made travel plans based on what was familiar to her:

> So [World Youth Day] was in Sydney, Australia in 2008. So, it was right after grade 10,
>
> and we – we went for a month. And we just kind of like went around Sydney . . . World
>
> Youth Day's a weeklong [we both laugh]. That seems funny [laughs]. And you do a
>
> whole bunch of different, um, events, and you meet people from all around the world.

From Italy and Spain and it was just a really good experience. So, the next World Youth

Day is in Madrid. So, I really want to go there.

Lana wanted to recreate her positive experience of World Youth Day. While she was looking

forward to the freedom to explore, she still wanted to hold on to what she knew – that she had a

great time at her first World Youth Day.

Mandy made her travel plans based on where her brother had been: "My brother's been

to Amsterdam" and "[m]y brother has all these crazy pictures. It looks really, really cool." She

was intrigued by Amsterdam as her brother had had such a positive experience. Perhaps because

someone close to her had gone to Amsterdam, she could see herself going. Or maybe by seeing

his images, she felt that it was something that she could do. In a similar way, Allison wanted to

be far away, yet in a place where her friends had been: "I've never been [to Australia] and it's far

away and it's hot all the time [brief laughter]. And, um, my friends have been and said it's like,

really fun." While Allison wanted to explore someplace foreign, she still mentioned that her

friends had been there, which may show that she needed some reassurance that where she was

planning to go would be "fun." She may also have identified with her friends and felt that if they

could go and have "fun," so could she.

Finally, when Marci and Allison were talking about going away to school, they

mentioned that they would like to go to UVic, as it is close to home. This is shown in the

following quote by Marci.

I don't wanna go too far . . . Um, and like other schools in Canada, um, I haven't really

looked at because it's just the fact of staying close to home again. Because I am close to

my family. 'Cause UVic is only a ferry ride away.

Allison said something similar: "And I like – I like the idea 'cause [UVic is] far enough away that I can be away from home, but close enough that I can come back when I like, need to do my laundry or something." She went on to say that, "my brother goes [to UVic] and he really likes it." Through her brother's experience, she saw herself having an enjoyable experience similar to the one he was having. Participants may look for a connection to whom they are while exploring so that they have some sort of safety net. They may want to go where they, or their friends and family have gone because they and those people had positive experiences, and because they wanted to recreate something positive.

While many of the participants wanted to explore new places and meet new people, they seemed to look for some sort of connection to these places. This may be because they could not see past their current identities. They may not be able to fathom going to a place or doing something that has no connection to how they see themselves. On the other hand, they may be making these choices due to lack of information. They may not be thinking of other opportunities to explore because no one around them has engaged in those activities. This lack of innovation may also stem from the fact that many of them may not want to go to a place they are unsure they will enjoy. They may also want to stay close to home, like in Marci and Allison's cases, because it is safe. They can hold on to whom they are currently, by being close to their parents and peers. Perhaps they are wanting to explore, but are a little nervous to do so and, consequently, are looking to hold on to an element of their current identities to be able to explore in a way that allows them to grow and gain independence without losing those elements that make them whom they are now.

Restrictions

Participants were also aware that the extent of their exploration was largely controlled by two factors: money and time. Susan talked about how money was a deciding factor in travelling: "If you have the money, do it. If I have the money, I'm gonna do it. If I don't have the money, I'm shit out of luck [brief laughter]." She believed that if you did not have enough money to explore, you were an unlucky person. Money caused Lana stress when it came to her travel plans:

> To finish school and already be in negative money, and I don't know if it's worth it. I really wanna travel, but I don't know if uh, the extra stress of owing money is gonna do anything. But, and then I also have to raise money for my fourth year, I guess and fifth year. So, I would be like, around twenty thousand dollars in debt when I finish but which is what is normal for a lot of my friends that are already twenty thousand dollars in debt and they're in their fourth year. So, I guess it would be doable once I start working, but I don't know. It would kinda suck to finish and already be in the hole.

While she did raise the possibility of going into debt to travel to Madrid, she still wavered, recognizing that the debt from such a trip might be too much of a burden. She also calculated the costs of going away to school in her Human Services class and learned that it would be too expensive for her: "It's just so much money to go away for school as well, so. I'd – I'd rather live at home." While she may want to go away and get the opportunity to live on her own, she decided that she could not afford it. Money to go away to school seemed to be a restricting factor for many participants. When Marci told me about art schools in the United States of America that she wanted to go to, money appeared to be a barrier.

There's a lot of schools in, um, California for Art Schools. And same with New York.

There's an expensive school called Parsons, um the New School of Design. And in this –

the book that I'm reading, the Teen Vogue one. Like, Mark Jacobs went there and just a

lot of big name designers went there. So, it's really expensive, though [laughs].

Especially, if I lived in New York. So, that's why I don't think I would go there. Because

of the money, I think.

Similarly, Allison said:

[I]f I could have – could go anywhere like, if I had the opportunity to go to like a school,

like go to university in London or something like that, I probably would. But, it's just –

it's a money issue sort of thing. Like UVic's, you know, close enough that it's not like,

billions of dollars just to go to school [brief laughter]. But I think if I had the – the option

and the funds to be able to go like far away to school, I probably would.

Allison made this comment at the end of the interview when I asked if there was anything that

she would like to add. It seemed as though her aspirations to study in Europe were quite

important to her, and it was only money that was standing in her way. However, she did also

mention that she liked the idea of going to UVic as it was close to home. Therefore, it is unclear

how important studying in London was for her. Regardless, she mentioned that money was

restricting her from studying in a foreign place. Finally, Mercutio also expressed that money

was stopping him from living on his own:

Well, if I'm going to school here, I'll still live at home. So, I don't have to pay for

residence. Um, that's a big thing that's kinda keeping me from Victoria. It's kinda

whether it makes or breaks is that it's that much more to live on my own.

While moving away seemed to be important for participants, it seemed like many could not afford to do it. From this, it seemed that exploration could not happen without the appropriate funds. This is true as many participants saw exploration as doing something that required money, like travelling or living away from home. Perhaps if they sought cheaper activities to allow them to explore, they would not have felt as restricted. Regardless, it seemed like their plans allowed them to do an amount of exploration that was sufficient for them. For example, Allison could not go to Europe to study, but it still seemed like she would get the chance to live away from home in Victoria. It seemed like they were making do with their actual funds, but continuing to dream beyond their parents' and their bank accounts.

Time was also a restriction. Even though the exploration stage seemed an imperative prerequisite to making a career decision, participants saw it as something that ended once the career decision was made. This is shown when Marci was making the decision to travel to the Dominican Republic. She decided to go as she felt that she may never get the chance to go again:

> You know you say you're going to do it, like, "Oh, maybe after high school. I'll go to college for a little bit, and then I'll do it. Maybe on some time I have." But then you never get around to it, so this is the time I can actually get around to it and do it.

Perhaps she saw her life as getting too busy when she has a career, or perhaps she will not want to go on this sort of trip at all by that time. Lana also discussed not being able to travel after a certain period in her life: "I want to travel and I didn't want to take time away from school . . . So, it's something that I wanna do because I don't think that once I finish school I'm gonna end up doing it." In coming to this conclusion, she told me about the experiences of her mother and grandmother:

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[M]y mom regrets [not travelling] because she's forty, I guess now, and she has never
really been anywhere except for across Canada. So, she still wishes she could travel, but
– I guess once I finish school and then if I become a teacher, it will kind of be like, oh,
well, when do I go? Do I go now or do I wait? And then if you have kids, it's like, you
take your kids with you. And I know that's so far ahead, but then once your kids are
gone or something, you're fifty and sixty, and then I don't want to – to go travelling
when I'm sixty [laughs] . . . 'Cause I see my grandparents and my grandma wants to
travel but my grandpa doesn't at all. He just like sits at home and doesn't wanna travel
and doesn't wanna – I don't think the whole backpacking experience when you're like a
lot older would be the same as if you're like nineteen years old and you're . . . clubbing
or I don't know, meeting people in youth hostels. It would – I don't think it would be the
same if you were like, in your like forty year anniversary marriage and you're going
around with a huge backpack and your husband doesn't wanna be there and [we both
laugh]. It's just – I wanna do it while I'm like not married and kinda can just go
wherever and it wouldn't matter . . . Kinda just get a plane ticket and have money and
just do whatever you want before you kinda settle down, I guess.

It appears that Lana's definition of travel included "clubbing" and meeting new people in
hostels, and perhaps with that view, it was hard for her to imagine travelling at an older age.
With a different view of travel, this may not have been the case. Susan also believed that she
might not get another chance to travel: "like I wanna travel 'cause I don't think, personally, like I
don't think I'll ever have the chance to travel." Perhaps participants felt that once they made
career decisions, they would have to commit to them and would not be able to take time out to
explore.

Exploration seemed to be very important in the participants' narratives. It gave them an opportunity to be exposed to new surroundings and experience freedom. Through this exposure, they felt that they would learn something about their identities that would allow them to make career plans. However, while they looked for something new, many wanted to hold on to their current identities. They wanted to travel to faraway places, but places that friends and family had been. They also wanted to go away to school, but were choosing places that were not too far from home. While many had plans to explore, they all felt that these plans were restricted. In the next section, I discuss how they saw their lives once their career plans had formed.

Formation

In this section, I use the word "Formation," to refer to identity formation. The participants did not explicitly discuss identity formation – they did not use the word identity nor did they use formation. However, they did discuss finishing exploration at a certain time and then having a career decision, which they seemed to equate with knowing who they are – i.e. forming a career identity.

They discussed this stage as "settling down." Allison brought up this phrase in the interview and when I asked what she meant, she said the following: "[settling down is] [w]ith a house and like a white picket fence and a husband and like four kids." She viewed it as marriage, kids, and the idyllic image of a white picket fence. However, she then went on to say that she would be "just stuck [brief laughter] . . . I guess settling down is just picking where I wanna stay for the rest of my life." She saw it as a permanent state, as she said it would be where she wants to "stay for the rest of my life." To her, "settling down" almost sounded negative, as she used the word "stuck." Even though it appeared as something negative, she still put settling down in her career narrative. She could have created a different future for herself. Perhaps she

saw it as something inevitable, or something that she may want to do once she completed her exploration. Lana only focused on the idyllic image of settling down:

> I don't know, twenty-five years setting up for your life, kind of. And then once you hit -
> like you graduate. It's kinda like, okay, I've spent time so much of this time to kinda lay
> out my life. So now I'm here, and now I get to like do this for real, right? So, you try to
> like, get a job and a house and a husband and then, kinda put it all together and then just
> look at it. It's like a Barbie House, and just happy.

In the above quote, Lana saw her identity formation as complete at age twenty-five, where she would be done school, and have certain things in place: a home, husband, and a job. Like Allison, she used idyllic language to describe her future – "like a Barbie House." Finally, Mandy clearly stated that she perceived her career narrative to end in an idyllic way: "I wanna have a very good life [laughs]. Like, I don't know. Like a house [laughs], like a family. I wanna have the ideal life. I guess everyone does, of course." She acknowledged that this aspiration is common in her culture, as she said, "everyone does, of course." She also stressed that she wanted "the ideal life," and that entailed a family and a house.

Carol also talked about her future as having a house and family; however, she did not include the fairy-tale-like language that the participants above used:

> C: Um, like maybe when I'm younger I would wanna work, but I'd wanna work
> somewhere that I can travel. But then when I'm older, I wouldn't want to travel as much.
> I'd wanna stay like in a certain place. If that makes sense?
>
> Elaina: Why?
>
> C: 'Cause – 'cause I know when I'm older, like, I wanna have a family and stuff and so.

In Carol's narrative, she saw herself as having a career and possibly travelling, but only when she was younger. She then saw herself staying in one place once she had a family. While she did not use the idyllic language like the other participants, she still prescribed to the cultural expectation to want to have a family. Perhaps, she was also prescribing to the cultural expectations of women by focusing less on her career once she had a family. The last participant who put family in the career narrative was Susan: "And I wanna find an Irish man with red hair and I wanna have . . . red haired babies." In this statement, Susan did not use the word family, but it was clear that she wanted to have a partner and children. In her narrative, the children came after her education and exploration.

For participants, their career narratives seemed to be finding a career, and then "settling down" to have a family. It is interesting that many participants used idyllic language to describe their futures. However, what is even more interesting is that Allison used this idyllic language, and then used the word "stuck." Perhaps, these idyllic images are so engrained in our culture, that the participants almost follow them blindly, even if they do not, like in Allison's case, want to have them. Another interesting point is that when Marci and Mercutio were discussing their career narratives, they did not include having a family. This does not necessarily mean that they do not want a family, or that they do not subscribe to the cultural expectations. Perhaps if I would have asked them if they wanted a family, they would have said they did. However, it is interesting that all the other participants included family in their narratives, yet it was not something that came up in Mercutio and Marci's narratives.

Happiness

When participants were discussing how they perceived their future careers, they relied mostly on the value of happiness. For example, Mandy chose to be a social worker because she

thinks that she will enjoy the job: "I wanna be a social worker, so [laughs]. I love helping people." In her interview, she also expressed that in the future, she wants to, "[j]ust be happy." "Fun" seemed to be a strong value in making a career decision. For example, when Lana was describing her future career she said: "[The young students are] fun and they're polite, and it's kinda that age where you can mold into whichever way you want . . . So. Yah, I like working with them." Marci also relied on this value when she was talking about a possible career:

> I just really like making short films, like. And I like – I like also like to make people laugh, so, like comedies. And, I just like to see people's expression of watching it. And, um, every time like I make a video my parents just think, "Oh, these are really good." And, I'm – I'm not even using like, a program that's really meant for it. It's just kind of like, a fun thing I do. And if like – If I enjoy it – If it's a fun thing I like to do, and I think it would be good to go into that.

Allison also wanted a job that will make her happy. "Probably French or if I could teach an art class, that would be . . . really fun . . . I think it would be great to be able to . . . you know, teach kids." Allison used the word "fun" to describe her possible future career. She also perceived her working conditions to offer happiness.

> A: [Working in an office] just seems so boring and like, I don't wanna have to sit there and then have to go to work from this time to this time every single day, you know. I wanna be able to take a few weeks off and – or if I need to or just being able to just be relaxed at work and yah. Sort of thing.
>
> Elaina: Do you see other people who work in offices?
>
> A: [sighs] Um, not really. My dad used to – used to work in an office, but he works from home now. And he used to go to work, you know. He used to get up at five am every

day, and drive downtown with his suit and tie, and come home at five and then fall asleep on the couch. And it's just like, I don't wanna do that.

It appeared that she learned what she does not want by seeing what her dad used to have. Now that he works from home, she has seen a positive change in him: "He looks more relaxed at home. I mean he wears jeans and a shirt [laughs]. Like doesn't have to wear a tie and suit and just." Perhaps she would strive to have that happiness through flexibility in a work place.

Mercutio also strove for "fun" and happiness: "I've always wanted to kinda be a um, a firefighter too. Um, my uncle's a firefighter and so something like that, I think, is really fun." Mercutio also felt that through his career choice, his life would remain exciting. This is clear when he spoke about being a firefighter: "just that it's an exciting job. It's not a desk job. I think that would be kinda cool. That I actually get to do something and not um, be so limited." He used his parents to illustrate what he meant by "limited.". He said that they "do the same thing every day. They go to work – or my dad goes to work. He comes home and watches TV. That's just not fun." Again, the idea of "fun" arose. In this instance, fun was used to describe how he pictured his adult life in the future. Susan also wanted a "fun" future: "I don't want to be old and go home after work and just doing nothing. I wanna hang out with my friends still. I want to be fifty years old going to the bar. Like, be a good time, right?" Perhaps she saw this as a way to remain youthful and continue to go drinking. Or perhaps she did not want to lose touch with her friends and get caught up in her adult life. It seems like Mercutio and Susan had an aversion to being older and not having the social life that they currently have.

"Fun" is an interesting value for career as it is not commonly associated with "working." It is typically connected to leisure activities. "Fun" also seemed to be a juvenile descriptor. I feel this way because many adults do not typically use the word "fun" to describe their career. These

participants may possibly use this word to match their current values or their inexperience to a career setting. However, it is clear that "fun" was very important to the participants when making career decisions. Perhaps, in the future, if they were to discuss their careers, they would not use this word. They may still use words that are positive, but not use "fun" specifically.

In the data, surprisingly, many did not discuss making money when they were describing their future careers. The only participant who explicitly said that she needed to make money in the future was Mandy: "And you have to go into the real world, which is nerve wracking. You need to make money." However, she did not discuss money when she was discussing why she wanted to be a social worker. Perhaps this is because she saw the idea of money as being implicit to why she would want that career.

Marci also mentioned wanting to make money, but then almost took back that statement:

Like I would like to find a job that makes a lot money [brief laughter], but I guess who doesn't? But then my parents always tell me, "It's not about the money, it's 'bout if you're happy." So, they don't care, I'm like still living at home, but as long as I'm happy.

While Marci would like to make a lot of money, she discussed how her parents stressed that it was not about money; it was about happiness. It is almost as if she acknowledged that her money aspirations were wrong, so she corrected them with her parents' advice. Or, perhaps she was still unclear on her career values. Finally, Mercutio discussed money but just to state that money did not worry him when he was making career plans.

Um, I'm not super worried about making tons of money, when I grow up. Um, it doesn't really matter. Um, as long as I can live um – as long as I can like get by, I'll be okay. So, I'm not super worried about having a super high paying job. So, like a teacher or firefighter would be enough.

While he was not worried about making money, he still said that he would like enough to live. In this statement it is unclear how important money is to him because it is unclear how much he would need to "live." However, he did make a point to mention that he did not need to have "a super high paying job." This implies that he did not see money as a top priority when making career plans.

It is clear that many of the participants valued fun and happiness when they were forming their career narratives. Through these values, it seemed like they were trying to hold on to what they perceived as youthful and thus, remaining true to their current identities. It is interesting that many did not mention money when they were describing why they had chosen a career. This may be, though, because they may perceive it to be implicit – a career is for making money.

Maturity and Independence

While many hoped to achieve happiness and fun in their careers, many also hoped to gain maturity and independence. Maturity seemed to be moving beyond who they are right now and independence seemed to be having control. First, I discuss maturity. Mercutio seemed to see maturity as the next stage in his development. He looked forward to, "[j]ust actually finishing the kinda adolescent years and really moving on to being a little more mature. I think that's what I'm looking forward to the most." Marci also hoped to be more mature: "I do picture myself like, a little bit more mature. Um, and more aware of things, kind of. Like right now, I don't know, I'm trying to figure things out. But, hopefully, I'll have stuff figured out." While Marci hoped for maturity, she also wanted to be "more aware." Perhaps she felt that she needed that awareness to make decisions as she said that she hoped to "have stuff figured out."

Mandy discussed being more independent; "To be more responsible and independent. Have a life of my own [laughs] . . . Away from my mom [we both laugh]. Not living at home."

In this quote, she seemed to express a desire to separate herself from her mother. It is clear that she wanted her "own" life. "Own" may imply that she can make decisions and have some sort of autonomy. She also talked about "own" in terms of money: "being responsible, independent, having your own money. Um, buying your own things. Having a car, a house." Allison felt the same way as she said that she wanted to do "what I wanna do." She too wanted independence. Lana also talked about striving for independence when she was talking about her future career: "Having like, my own classroom and decorating the walls and putting stuff on the walls. Having kids and writing their names on cards and putting them on the desks and stuff." Lana was in many other people's classrooms, and perhaps was looking forward to having her own classroom where she would have autonomy, independence, and control.

The participants seemed to be looking forward to their identity formation stage, where they would have concluded their exploration, and have their career decisions made. Their quotes in the Formation section showed how they viewed exploration as a way to reach a career decision. Once they reached this decision, many saw themselves as being settled, with kids, a partner, and a house. They also valued fun when they were discussing their future careers, and they hoped to have some sort of freedom in these careers. This freedom seemed to imply that they wanted to remain youthful. For example, Susan wanted to continue going drinking with her friends, something that she was currently doing now. Or, like in Mercutio's case, perhaps they just did not want to be old like their parents. While they wanted to continue to have fun, they also hoped to gain maturity and independence so that they could move beyond their current identity.

Emotions

I wanted to discuss how the participants felt about their career narratives in a separate section to emphasize the emotional component of their narratives. The most common emotions were fear and excitement. I address fear in the following section.

Scared

I labeled this section Scared as that was the word that many participants used. They expressed fear in many aspects of their career narratives. Carol was scared because she was unsure of her future plans.

> Uum, a little worried 'cause I'm the type of person that I have to have everything figured out and I think like, really far ahead. So, like everything has to be, "Okay, I'm gonna to do this." But, then I started thinking about it the other day and I was like, well, do I really wanna to do that? So now that I don't know, I kinda feel uneasy about it. 'Cause I like to know like, my future and what I'm gonna be doing. So, it's kinda scary . . . Um . . . I guess I'm worried – I don't know, I just like to know that . . . what direction I'm going in 'cause I don't feel like reassured. Like if I had a plan of what I was going to do, I would be like, feel okay with it. But if I don't know what I'm going to do, I don't know. I guess it's just my personality.

Carol seemed scared because she perceived herself as not having a plan. She attributed this emotion to her current identity – "I have to have everything figured out." This state may have been unsettling to her because she had never experienced uncertainty of this sort. Mercutio talked about his fears that manifested into physical symptoms:

> Elaina: When you think about the future, how do you feel?

M: Um . . . well, yesterday, I thought I was gonna have a panic attack. I took a couple of

Advils and I was okay. But, um. . . . I was at hockey. It was really late at night. No, I

was at hockey last night but when I came home, I was just like, oh, I have a massive

headache and I just like, "What am I gonna do next year?" What am I gonna do, what am

I gonna do. And then, uh. Took a couple of Advils and then I fell asleep . . . Um, yah

sometimes I get stressed out a little. It's just a lot to think about. Um, but in the end I –

I'll be okay. Um, I'm not too worried about it.

During most of the interview, he talked about how he knew what he wanted to do, and he seemed

so laid back that I was surprised that he was experiencing anxiety over his future. Earlier in the

in the interview, he even contrasted his state of calm with his friends' state of anxiety to

emphasize how he was not stressed: "I know a lot of kids are kinda freakin' out about what they

wanna do, but I'm pretty sure I know." However, like Carol, he seemed to be stressed that he

did not know exactly what he wanted to do, even though he stated earlier that he knew he would

be either a firefighter or a teacher. Perhaps he experienced anxiety, but it was short-lived. He

also seemed to be able to calm himself by saying that he would "be okay." On the other hand, it

could be that he saw being scared as a weakness, and when he expressed it, he then retracted it

and tried to recoup his laid back persona. Lana also expressed fear in a similar way:

Kind of scared that what I want doesn't happen. But, I guess if it doesn't then, just kinda

go with it. If I don't become a teacher, try for something else. If I don't even make it to

school, I could be a stay-at-home mom and just marry a doctor or something [laughing].

But I don't know. There's al – there's always gonna be ways around a crappy situation, I

guess.

Like Mercutio, she expressed fear, and then offered words of encouragement, such as there were "always gonna be ways around a crappy situation." She also made a joke – she could "marry a doctor." Regardless of her fears, she made it clear that she could find an alternative plan. She also expressed fear, as she was unsure of what she wanted to study in college:

> But I don't really know what I want to study for the four years yet, before to become the elementary school teacher. So, I don't know. I'm kind of nervous about that because I don't wanna take – like I don't wanna pay five hundred dollars for a course that won't –I won't need. So, I have to figure that out and sit down and think about it.

Like Carol and Mercutio, uncertainty made her scared. However, unlike them, she was worried that this indecisiveness could lead to her wasting money. Mandy was also concerned about money:

> M: It's scary. I'm scared. Like, you know, of course I don't wanna mess up. And, I don't know. Mm. Graduation's pretty scary too 'Cause then you're – you know, you're not a kid anymore. And you have to go into the real world, which is nerve wracking. You need to make money and [brief laughter]. And you need to apply yourself, which is scary. It's a huge transition, you know. Going from like a kid to like an adult. So, pretty nervous about it, but it's – everyone has to do it, so.
>
> Elaina: What makes you scared?
>
> M: Not succeeding [laughs]. Failing [laughs]. Not doing well. Mmm, getting side tracked, which I tend to do a lot and not being able to – to actually pass and. It scares me a little bit [brief laughter]. 'Cause in school – like, in high school it's like, "Oh, I didn't pass." But, when you're in college you're like, "Oh, I just wasted all that money and I didn't pass." [laughs] So, that would really suck.

Mandy was scared to fail and to have wasted money. This may be because of her family's lack of funds. She was also scared of not succeeding. In the past, Mandy has had failure in the school system, as she dropped out temporarily in grade 7. Perhaps, she was nervous to be in a post-secondary institution. At the time of the interview, she was in an alternative high school program, and perhaps she was worried that the transition in to college might be more challenging, as she would not be coming from a mainstream program. Another interesting point is that she was nervous to be an adult. Being in high school, she felt safety in familiarity. Perhaps leaving that comfort was scary. She saw herself as walking into the unknown. Like Carol, they both may have been struggling because they did not know what to expect. Susan was also in the alternative program with Mandy and she too expressed fear of failure:

S: Failing [brief laughter]. But I like what I'm gonna be learning so it's probably gonna be hard to fail. But like my friend, she's really, really, really smart, and as soon she turned 19 she went crazy and then she got dropped out of school like college and everything. I'm scared that's gonna happen to me [brief laughter].

Elaina: Why?

S: Because I'm a party animal and I'm scared it's gonna catch up with me [brief laughter]. So I'm trying not to be a party animal so it won't catch up with me.

E: What does it mean "go crazy"?

S: Go crazy, like she went to the bar every night. She'd like do stupid stuff. And like not go to school 'cause she's too hungover and like. She just fail her sh – failed her classes [brief laughter]. I'm scared it's gonna happen to me. 'Cause my work, like I'm not that smart. Like, really, like I can do like the work like the constructing the pages. Like this is stuff – like this is not easy. Like you do, you learn so much. But the way it's taught to

you and the way you do it is so easy. For me because I have my routine of how I do it

here. And going to something completely different like that's pretty much like coming

from here to going back to mainstream. I dunno the hell – the hell to do mainstream

anymore. Like if I can make a book of ECE alright, I'm down. But I can't do that. Like

[laughs]. So that's what scares me. It's completely different. And I have no idea what to

expect.

In the above quote, Susan talked about how she was worried that she would not be able to be

successful in her post-secondary program as it was more like mainstream education, not like her

alternative program. Her alternative program was specifically geared for students who struggled

academically and socially in mainstream education. To address these struggles, the assigned

work, the support, and the expectations are different than the mainstream classes. When she

mentioned "constructing the pages" she was talking about how she was assessed in her

alternative program. For each unit taught, the students constructed pages with the information

from their classroom lessons. These pages were formatted by the teacher and were put together

to create a sort of textbook for each subject. By the end of the course, they were expected to

have a textbook for each subject that they had completed. Susan was worried that she may not

be successful at other forms of evaluation. She attributed this fear to loss of the familiar – she

would be losing her routine – and also her perceived lack of intelligence – "I'm not that smart."

She demonstrated that she could be successful in her alternative program, as she graduated and

saw the work as "easy." Perhaps she was worried that her current skills would not be

transferable to a post-secondary program. Another reason for her fear may be because she saw

her friend, whom she described as smart, be unsuccessful in college. Susan was also afraid of

losing her friends.

Susan: I couldn't imagine not having my friends. Like, I love my friends even more than anything in the entire world. And like, going away for a year. Like, I can go away for a year, you know, as long as I see them, visit them, you know, whatever. But if I was there and they – like I – they couldn't be with me, like by my side and stuff like that. That scares the shit out of me. Like, my – 'kay, we're just going through like, the transition of growing up. And I've seen the transition, like I'm w – wa – watching it, noticing it now, and it's scary. Like, I used to see [my friend] every day, every day. Now she works full time, I see her once a week. Do you know how upsetting that is? Like, do you remember that transition of seeing your friends every day and then "Oh my g-d! I'm at school. I'm at work." There's no time. Ahh, scares me. Like, I don't know.

Elaina: What's scary about that?

S: I don't know {said in a whisper} Like they are my blanket, like my safety blanket.

Susan may have relied on her friends a lot as she does not live with her parents, nor does she often talk to them. However, Lana, who spoke about her parents' support quite a bit was also fearful of losing friends: "Just losing so many friends [laughs], 'cause they're all going away, so . . . Like I know they'll still be people here and if there isn't, I can always make new friends. And there's always my mom [laughs]." Like in her previous quote, she made a joke after expressing fear. Perhaps the participants were afraid of losing their current friends because peers are a part of their current identity. And so, perhaps, they are scared that if they lose these friends, they may lose a part of their current identity. They may also be afraid that they will not make new friends or that they will not make new friends who will be as close to them as their current friends.

It is important to note that only Marci and Allison did not express fear in their career narratives. Perhaps they were able to embrace uncertainty more than their peers. While they did express that money limited their school choices, money was not a fear for them like it was for other participants. Perhaps they have grown up with an adequate amount of money, or they just do not worry about it like the other participants do. Or maybe they did have fears, but did not share them. It is unclear why their fears were not present in the data.

The Scared section shows that there are many fears associated with leaving high school and moving on to the next stage in life. High school offered many friends and routine, and now they are travelling into a world where they perceived themselves as expected to be adults and to change. By change, I mean that they are expected to develop. While they mentioned that they were looking forward to several aspects of this change, such as freedom and autonomy, perhaps they were at the same time scared of those very same aspects. Regardless of this fear, many participants were still excited when discussing their career narratives.

Excited

Throughout the Findings chapter, excitement was present in many of the quotations. For example, when participants were discussing the positive aspects of their career and exploration plans, they each had a certain level of excitement in discussing those plans. I created a specific section on Excitement to emphasize this emotion. I titled it Excitement, as many participants used that specific word when narrating. I created this section as a contrast to the one on fear because I wanted to clarify the fact that participants were not only experiencing fear. I also created this section because there is a strong body of literature that focuses only on the fear and anxiety that late adolescents experience during this stage in their lives. I discuss this literature in more detail in the Discussions chapter.

In this section, the participants expressed excitement about being able to move on to the next stage in their lives, meeting new people, and personal growth. In talking about moving to the next stage, Susan voiced excitement about the prospect of growing up.

> Excited. I just wanna like – I think I wanna grow up. And like see what there is. Like what's gonna happen five years from now. Who's gonna be the first one to get married? Who's gonna be the first one to have babies?

Susan was eager to move beyond her current stage. While she expressed fear in the last section, she was also excited for what was to come. Mandy also expressed a lot of fear in developing a career; however, she too was excited for the future:

> M: Grad events, and move on to college. So, I'm excited about that.
>
> Elaina: Yah. What – When you think about it, what excites you the most?
>
> M: Mmm, getting on with my career and trying to make something of myself.

While the career process was frightening to her, it was also exciting as she would get to "make something" of herself. This statement may mean that she was eager to actually achieve her career goals and become something respectable, and not just a young teenager. She may have also meant that she could make money, as this was something that she needed at the time. Carol was also excited for the future:

> I look forward to more the people that I'm gonna meet instead of like the things I'll do. So, hopefully, I'll meet a lot of interesting people in university or wherever I go. And, yah. I just wanna . . . be able to balance both. So, once I get more freedom and I grow up then I can do more things and like, travel and stuff like that.

Carol was looking forward to moving on from her old life. She was mostly looking forward to gaining new friends, but she was also eager for new experiences. As well, she wanted freedom

so that she could experience more than what she was currently experiencing. Carol expressed a lot of fear in the previous section, but regardless of her fear of the unknown, she was still looking forward to the new. She also seemed to embrace the future: "sort of maybe be more like spontaneous than I usually would be and just sort of be more laid back and kinda think, okay well . . . I'll see where life leads me more." In the previous section, she recognized that she was the type of person who needed a plan, and that this personality was probably a contributing factor to her fear. However, as revealed in the above quote, she was looking to change that. She wanted to be "spontaneous" and "see where life leads her." Perhaps she saw her current identity as flawed, causing her unnecessary fear. Spontaneity could be a remedy for her current fear. Perhaps Carol was looking forward to changing and thus, no longer fearing the unknown. Finally, Allison expressed excitement in her anticipated independence.

> I guess I'm excited. I'm – I'm excited for the near future like getting school done with. I'm excited to be able to . . . do what I wanna do. Like, when school's over, kinda, figure things out during school and then when it's over, be able to do what I . . . want.

Like Carol, Allison was excited for the future and being able to move on to the next stage in her life. She was excited, as she perceived this stage as bringing autonomy and independence. Like many of the other participants, Allison wanted her future to be filled with independence, so that she could start making her own decisions. This section on excitement demonstrates the positive emotions, which are present in the grade 12's career narratives.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to show the many dichotomies in the data. Many participants expressed a desire for freedom and something new, whether it was in post-secondary education, career choices or travel plans. However, many still held on to their current identity by choosing

to stay near home or go someplace familiar. While they talked about future plans, they were torn between being scared and excited for the unknown.

The participants told their stories in a linear way. They discussed their current identities and connected them to their career aspirations. They talked about how they did not know exactly what they wanted to do and that they needed to explore. They believed that through exploration they would be able to make career decisions. This may be because they felt that they would be able to get a better sense of who they are and be better equipped to decide. Many believed that the exploration stage only lasted until they had made a career decision, and then it was over. Once they had decided, many discussed that they would then focus on building a family. When they reached this identity formation, they saw it as permanent, where they would be done with exploring and be "stuck," and "settled." In the following section I connect the findings to the literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study attempted to address the following research question: What do narratives of grade 12 students reveal about how they construct career development? With this question, the intent was to learn more about the experience of grade 12's in forming their career plans in the twenty-first century, as they were facing many options that were not available in the past. Through an in-depth analysis of the data, it was clear that many of the participants were forming career plans based on their current identity, but they were also relying on new experiences to help them solidify their plans. Therefore, on some level they exhibited career commitment, but on another, they revealed an eagerness to explore their options. They were also eager to explore the world and themselves through travelling, meeting new people, and living away from home. This exploration was a way for them to form and commit to career plans. Many discussed their future plans in a linear way, so that they would first explore, then make a career decision, and then be able to focus on building a family. In the following sections, I connect these findings to relevant literature. Following that, I highlight the limitations in this study, and then end this chapter with implications for researchers and practitioners.

Contributions to the Literature

Identity

For this section on identity, I first explain how my findings have contributed to the identity literature. Then I discuss more specifically identity exploration. I conclude the identity discussion by explaining how my participants described independence and connect this to the literature on identity formation and independence.

Many of the participants in this study first formed career plans based on the perception of their current identity. This is similar to Guichard's (2005) notion of identity forms. He claimed

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that people made career decisions based on how they saw themselves. However, it is unclear if and how the participants in this study were relying on Guichard's notion of identity frames as the number of participants was too low to see how they might have relied on social stereotypes. However, with more participants, it is unclear if I would still be able to learn about identity frames in career choices. One reason may be that in current research, there has been less of a divide in career choices for males and females (Shapka et al., 2006).

While the participants discussed their career plans, they did not commit to them. This commitment was discussed as coming at a later stage, when they were able to solidify their identity. This is consistent with the career literature on identity that claims that identity formation is integral in committing to career plans (Blustein et al., 1989). I continue my discussion on identity in the next section by discussing exploration.

Identity Exploration

Many career studies have found that for individuals to crystallize career goals, they had to first explore who they were, and then they would be able to commit to career plans (e.g., Blustein et al., 1989). Marcia (1966) measured identity exploration through semi-structured interviews, looking for participants' discussions on considering options. For my study, I did the same. Susan, Mandy, and Lana seemed to be the only participants who were committed to their career goals, while the others were still exploring their options. Mercutio had also committed; however, he had committed to two possible career choices. Even though these participants had expressed commitment to their careers, all of them were considering options on how to achieve their careers, and thus would be deemed to be exploring. Therefore, according to Marcia, the participants in this study would have reached the moratorium status, as they were exploring and not really committing. However, it seems like they were at different levels of this phase – some

participants demonstrated more commitment than others while some participants demonstrated more exploration than others.

In the literature, the moratorium status seems to affect career development in many different ways. For example, Berzonsky and Kuk (2000) found that adolescents who scored in the moratorium status were able to transition better into post-secondary education institutions. The reason was due to their higher levels of exploration, which allowed them to be more autonomous, needing less outside support for the transition.

On the other hand, the moratorium stage has been found to be negatively correlated to career decision. Nauta and Kahn (2007) surveyed 111 American university students, and they found that the higher the participants scored on the moratorium status, the more the participants experienced career indecision. Taveira and Moreno (2003) conducted their research in Portugal and came to the same conclusions. In both studies, indecision was said to cause anxiety. In the present study, Susan, Mandy, and Lana seemed to have the clearest career goals, and seemed to express higher levels of anxiety than Allison and Marci, who expressed no anxiety and did not have commitment to career goals. However, Carol did not demonstrate clear career goals either and she expressed fear when discussing the uncertainty of her future. Nauta and Kahn (2007) and Taveira and Moreno (2003) used surveys to gather their data and perhaps my participants would have answered differently had they been surveyed. Consequently, more research may be needed in this area, as it is possible that the current body of literature may be oversimplifying the moratorium-indecision correlation. On the other hand, by not using other methods, such as surveys, I may have failed to pick up on other emotions and attitudes held by my participants.

Independence

In this study, many participants were looking for independence. This is seen as quite typical for their developmental age group (e.g. Arnett, 1998). Arnett (1998) claimed that one of the most important markers for an adolescent transitioning to adulthood is becoming independent, specifically from one's parents. He claimed that this independence could be achieved in three ways: accepting responsibility for him or herself, financial independence, and making decisions on his or her own. For this study, when participants discussed independence, it was both during their exploration stage and once they had achieved their identity formation.

For the exploration stage, many were looking to gain independence through living on their own while at school and through travelling. However, I would argue that they were only looking for partial independence as many chose to travel to places where they could be with family. Many also chose to go to schools that would allow them to live on their own, but still be close to home. Also, during the exploration stage, many did not discuss being financially independent as they were planning on attending a post-secondary institution or travelling – not earning a salary to support themselves. Most participants seemed to expect some financial help from their parents or from the government through student loans. This would be consistent with Arnett's (2000) claims, as the participants seemed to be in a transition period during their exploration stage, and not looking for full independence. When they discussed their identity formation stage, many focused more on Arnett's (1998) idea of adulthood, as many participants discussed being mature, having autonomy, having a career, and Mercutio, Marci, and Mandy all discussed wanting to have money, or enough to live.

Career

In this section on career, I first discuss the participants' career plans and then I connect these plans to the current literature. From there, I use the idea of work values to explain the values of my participants when they were describing their career plans. Finally, I discuss emotions present in the career development literature and relate these findings to my observations.

Many of the participants discussed attending a post-secondary institution to achieve their career plans. This is consistent with the claim that many more adolescents are enrolling in post-secondary education (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009). As well, many of the participants were choosing careers, which required a certain level of post-secondary education. Careers that require post-secondary education typically have higher wages and are more stable (Mortimer, 2009). It is unclear if the participants chose these careers for those reasons. However, it is interesting that all my participants perceived post-secondary education as the way to achieve a career.

When participants were describing their future career plans, many listed several options for achieving these plans. In the literature, this is seen as an effective way to plan for a future career to be able to adapt to the constant changing world of work (Mortimer, 2009). Currently, those who enter the workforce will be expected to change their careers more than once (Mortimer, 2009). There is no longer the idea of a lifelong career. Therefore, if the participants form loose plans, with backup plans, perhaps they will be better equipped to deal with the changes of the workforce.

Work Values

In this study, many participants shared their work values when they were discussing possible career choices. Work values are what people value when choosing a career (Johnson & Elder Jr., 2002). As work values are viewed as changing over time, there have been longitudinal studies conducted in this area (e.g., Johnson & Elder Jr., 2002). Duffy and Sedlacek (2007) looked at a sample of 31,731 first-year college students to learn what they valued when choosing a career. They surveyed these students from 1995 to 2004 and found that women placed a greater emphasis on working with people and contributing to society, and men placed a greater emphasis on making money. In my study, only one male was interviewed and he actually stated that money was not important to him when choosing a career. This is not necessarily a salient finding, though, as my study featured just one male. With more males in the study, perhaps I would have had more conclusive findings.

Most of my participants used the word "fun" when describing their future careers, which is not present in the literature. The studies listed above have all relied on surveys, and so perhaps if those participants would have been able to talk freely about their choices, they would have used the word "fun." Also, if my participants would have filled out surveys, I may have gotten different results. Currently, work-values is an understudied field (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Hirshi, 2010). It may be beneficial to conduct a qualitative work-values study to focus on the language being used to discuss these values. Additionally, it may be interesting to provide a survey to the same group of participants to compare results.

Career Emotions

In my findings, many of the participants expressed fear when discussing their future careers. Currently, many studies claim that adolescents have negative emotions toward their

future careers (e.g., Meijers, 2002; Vignoli, Croity-Belz, Chapeland, Fillipis, & Garcia, 2005). Meijers (2002) attributed this negativity to the adolescents being fearful of the instability present in the constant changing of current society. He claimed that this was a concern as the negative attitudes could impede the construction of a career identity. In this study, I found that many of the participants, when faced with many choices, were anxious to choose the right path. However, in my data, it is unclear whether this fear would prevent the participants from developing a career identity.

Vignoli et al. (2005) also claimed that fear was a pervasive emotion in adolescents when they were transitioning out of high school and making career decisions. One strong fear is that of failure. This fear of failure was also present in my findings. In Vignoli et al., a way to alleviate negative emotions was through exploration. All of the participants in my study seemed to be exploring on some level. However, all, except for two, expressed some kind of fear. Perhaps, the fear would have been more intense had they not been exploring at all.

I tried to search for literature that discussed adolescents' positive attitudes toward future careers and found nothing. In this study, many of my participants discussed being "excited" for their futures, and so I wonder why this finding is not present elsewhere. I strongly encourage more research in this area as it is important to learn more about the excitement that adolescents experience and to find ways to foster such excitement in adolescents, specifically those who are experiencing high levels of anxiety.

Cultural Life Script

Similar to other research, this present study evidenced that adolescents are able to provide rich life narratives (Bohn & Bernsten, 2008; Habermas & Bluck, 2000). When the participants were discussing their plans, many shared an idealized vision of what was to come. In the

literature, this is called a cultural life script (Bohn and Bernsten, 2008). Cultural life scripts are the culturally shared representations of an idealized life (Bernsten & Rubin, 2004). Through these scripts, children learn how a life in their culture should be lived (Bernsten & Rubin, 2004). An example of a cultural life script would have people talking about finishing school before getting married. Life scripts may also be time-specific; for example, marriage may be discussed as happening around the age of 28 (Bernsten & Rubin, 2004). The cultural life script is typically a stereotypical view of the life narrative that children model when creating their own life stories (Bohn & Bernsten, 2008). Through these scripts, children can learn what to expect from life and view their futures through these cultural expectations (Bohn & Bernsten, 2008). The cultural life script does not need to be grounded in life experience (Bohn & Bernsten, 2008).

In the current study, many of the participants shared narratives that were quite stereotypical. They all discussed attending post-secondary institutions and then finding careers. Once finding a career, many discussed having families. In past findings, there were no differences in gender and cultural life scripts (Bohn & Bernsten, 2008; Habermas & Bluck, 2000). In my study, there were differences in the cultural life script, but this was not due to gender as Mercutio and Marci both did not discuss family. However, as I only had one male, this should not be considered a significant finding.

Cultural life scripts may explain why the participants used "Barbie House," "ideal," and "white picket fence" to discuss their futures. These are common, idealized visions that are engrained in our culture, and from the above literature, it seems like this is how children discuss their future. Similarly, the participants discussed their futures as unfolding in a linear way: first they would attend post-secondary school; second, they would make their career choices; and finally, they would focus on creating families. This is the common order for our society, and so

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my findings seemed to reinforce this idea of a cultural life script. Another interesting point is that Allison discussed her future as having a home with a "white picket fence" and also used the word "stuck." In her case, it seemed like she was following the cultural life script whether she wanted to or not. It was almost as if she saw the cultural life script as being inevitable. More research is needed in this area to learn how adolescents feel about the cultural life script.

This study was able to contribute to the career research on adolescence by reinforcing present findings, and offering alternative results to those exhibited in the existing literature. It is perhaps due to a different methodology and broader focus on career development that I was able to add to this literature. In the following section, I highlight the limitations of this study.

Limitations

Participants

The selection of my participants may be seen as a limitation of this study. Some of my recruiting teachers took volunteers and some teachers picked students. This could prove to be a limitation as there may have been tacit coercion. However, at no point when I was conducting both sets of interviews did the students seem unwilling to be in the study. Most interviews went over 30 minutes because participants were eager to share their stories. They also took the time to ask me questions to further their understanding of future options. Finally, none of them received extra credits from teachers.

A limitation from the participant who no longer went to high school was that the second interview with her had to be conducted at a restaurant. This can be seen as a limitation as we were in a public place, which could have limited what she said. If after arriving at the restaurant, I would have felt that the location was inhibiting the participant, I would have suggested we change our location. However, at no time did it seem that she was uncomfortable. During the

interview, she made many changes on the actual transcript and dictated them into the audio recorder. Even when the food came, she continued to make changes.

Finally, my findings may have been limited by the fact that only one male was featured in the study. For example, Duffy and Sedlacek (2007) found that males typically valued money more than females when choosing a career. In my study, the male discussed money as not being important. However, perhaps with more males, themes such as valuing money could have become more salient.

Racially and culturally, the participants did not represent the school district where I conducted the research. This district is predominantly Chinese, and in my study, there were no Chinese participants. Finally, the sample was small as there were only seven participants. However, I was able to find enough commonalties between my participants to be able to discuss significant themes.

With all these limitations, I cannot generalize that my findings are what all students in the Greater Vancouver School district are experiencing. However, that was never my goal. This study aimed to gain insight into what some students were experiencing when constructing career narratives and to encourage more research, using the narrative methodology in this area.

Methodology

The narrative method with semi-structured interviews may also be a limitation. Participants had to share their career narratives with a person, rather than being able to anonymously write out their plans. With my presence, they may have censored themselves or said things to impress me. Additionally, there were discrepancies with my findings and what was found in literature when it came to work values and identity exploration. More qualitative research is needed in those areas to gain a deeper understanding of the adolescent experience.

Researcher

My role as a researcher may also be seen as a limitation. This was my first time conducting research. However, I took many steps to ensure that I was always ethical, following the standards of my university. I also took guidance from my professors to help me in this research. Time and resources also limited me. With more of both, I could have had more participants and with financial incentives, perhaps recruited different types of participants.

While I have listed many limitations, I was still able to find significant themes in my data. With these findings, I was able to contribute to the career research by providing observations that reinforce current findings in career research and observations that challenge the research. In the next section, I continue to explain the contributions of my study by highlighting suggestions for researchers and practitioners.

Implications for Researchers

I have divided this section into two parts: content and methodology. The content section provides information based on the actual content of my findings while the methodology section offers suggestions for different ways to research career. I have organized this section in this way to highlight two separate areas of career literature that need more research.

Content

Exploration

In the literature, exploration seemed to be measured by the degree to which participants considered their options (Blustein et al., 1989; Marcia, 1966). In the present study, many of the participants were considering their options, and I did consider this as exploration. However, the participants seemed to be quite specific on how they would gain clarity on who they are and what they want to be in the future – by travelling and living on their own while at university. In

the identity literature, these activities are not discussed. I agree with Schwartz, Kurtines and Montgomery (2005) in stating that a deeper understanding of the processes involved in forming an identity are needed.

Frandberg (2010) has studied travel in young people. She claimed that in prosperous countries, it had become "ordinary, necessary, and expected" (p. 102). She studied adolescent Swedes to further understand their motivation for making travel plans. She surveyed several high school students and asked them to write in a small space on a page about their travel plans in the next six months and to explain why they had those plans. She found that many had travel plans. Some reasons listed were to shop, ski, or just vacation. My findings differed as it did not seem like the participants were looking for skiing or shopping; however, that may have been part of it, like in Mercutio's case, as he wanted to live in Whistler – a ski resort. Most of my participants seemed to feel that travel would allow them to explore who they are, by meeting new people and having freedom. Perhaps the findings differed because my participants were able to talk freely about why they wanted to travel, and they were not limited by space on a piece of paper. Due to the discrepancy between my research and Frandberg's, I believe that it is important to continue researching travel in this age group and to further understand the role that it plays in identity exploration and in career development.

Methodology

In Chapter One and Chapter Two, I stated that this study was important, as there were very few adolescent career studies using the narrative methodology. With the use of narrative, there is typically richer data highlighting the complexities of the lived experience that cannot necessarily be reported through the use of quantitative methods (Lieblich et al., 1998; Polkinghorne, 2005). When filling out surveys, one may also miss the language that adolescents

use when discussing their future. This language is important to understand their experience (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Beyond using the narrative methodology, I believe that there is a need to use a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. Currently, in the career research, there is a presence of studies, which use quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g., Heinz 2002; Mortimer, Zimmer-Gembeck, Holmes, & Shanahan, 2002). In Watson et al.'s (2002) study, they claimed that, based on the survey findings, they would have liked to return to the participants to ask them why they answered the way they did. They explained that by adding qualitative methods to their quantitative study, they would be able to provide a more detailed analysis. When I compared the quantitative studies to my research, I found that there were discrepancies. Perhaps with a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, we would be able to learn more about the adolescent experience in constructing career.

Implications for Practitioners

Social support is important for an adolescent to successfully transition out of high school (Wall et al., 1999) therefore, it is important for people working with grade 12's to be properly equipped to assist these students. Luckily, in British Columbia, we have a course committed to supporting students in making career plans: Planning 10. However, to teach this course, there are no career education requirements. It is typically given to teachers who need extra courses to fill their loads. Luckily, UBC has just started to offer a course - EDCP 497: Career Education & Curriculum - to better prepare pre-service teachers to teach Planning 10.

While my participants did express fear, many seemed able to calm it, with words that stated that they knew things would work out. However, many of them were also engaged in some sort of exploration, which may be why their levels of anxiety were perceived to be of no

concern. Perhaps, teachers need to strongly stress the importance of exploration to be able to calm students' fears (Vignoli et al., 2005). As well, they should emphasize that career decisions can change, so that participants are not anxious about making the "right decision." Many of my participants seemed to be aware that they had many career options and they had back-up plans just in case something did not work. Perhaps when working with adolescents, we must also stress having many plans. Borgen and Hiebert (2006) explained that forming many career plans would allow students to be more flexible and adaptable when their original plans did not work out.

The only two participants who did not express fear were Allison and Marci, and those two participants had loose career plans: Allison wanted to help people and Marci wanted to pursue a career in fine arts or languages. Perhaps a way to lower anxiety is by having plans that focus on an area, like fine arts, but are not as specific as becoming a fine arts teacher. This may be another way to enable adolescents to be more flexible and adaptable to changing career plans.

My participants also seemed anxious over the plethora of post-secondary options; however, I would argue that students need this information. It is important as it gives them choices; for example, Mandy was aware that she could gain a diploma as a youth worker, so that she could earn money and then be able to finance a degree in social work. This may be a strong option for her, as she needs to earn money, and may not want to go into debt while working towards her degree. It is also important to note that career related anxiety is not necessarily negative (Vignoli et al., 2005). Vignoli et al. (2005) found that participants who had career related anxiety were more motivated to engage in exploratory activities to research career. Therefore, as practitioners, we need to recognize when anxiety is unhealthy and actually impedes

career development, and when it can act as a motivator for students to engage in career exploration.

Finally, another area that practitioners need to focus on is exploration. Schwartz, Kurtines, and Montgomery (2005) stated that more information is needed to be able to provide better interventions to encourage more exploration in this age group. In particular, through this current study, I believe that more conversations need to happen so that the adolescents know that exploration does not need to end, as identity is not static (Erikson, 1968). Many of my participants seemed to believe that once they had found a career, they were "settled" or "stuck." Perhaps by talking about exploration as being a life-long process, they would not feel as stuck or anxious about making decisions.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a unique look at how grade 12's may construct career development. It is interesting to note that, by allowing grade 12's to speak, it was found that much of what they were saying matched current research. For example, they discussed the importance of identity and exploration in choosing career, which is consistent with the literature. However, the language that they used differed from what is in the published research. This finding shows how important it is to conduct more narrative or even qualitative studies where this age group is able to talk freely about career. By not doing so, we will miss out on how grade 12's are experiencing career development in the twenty-first century.

It is my hope that this study will encourage more research in adolescent career development by using narrative methodology and, possibly, by pairing it with quantitative methods. While in the career research these methods are being used together, there is still a need

to use them more frequently. By doing so, we can possibly create more of a consensus in the career literature, which I consider to be a form of progress in this discipline.

By continuing to research this age group, we can also better inform practitioners. This is integral as adolescents rely on them for support through their career development. If practitioners are better informed, then perhaps in the future we will not need to worry as much about adolescents and their experiences in constructing career.

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Appendices

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Participant Consent Form
Listening to Grade 12's Share their Future Plans
_____

Principal Investigator: This study is being conducted by the Associate Professor Jennifer Shapka, from the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education, at the University of British Columbia..

Co-Investigator: Under the supervision of Dr. Shapka, Elaina Wolinsky, will also be conducting this study. This study is in partial fulfillment towards a Master's Thesis in the department of Human Development, Learning, and Culture.

Purpose: Your child is being invited to take part in this study because he or she is in grade 12 and is about to leave high school. During this time, grade 12's may be thinking a lot about their future, and we would like to listen to what they have to say about forming future plans.

Procedure: With your agreement, your child may be asked to participate in one or two one-hour interviews with the graduate student. The interviews will take place in an available classroom in your child's school. Questions that will be asked during this interview will focus on your child's past and present career plans. An example of the first interview question might be "Have you ever thought about your future career? Tell me about it." Once your child begins discussing career plans, the interviewer may ask other questions, such as "What excited you about this career?" or "Why do you no longer want this career?" Some questions may also be asked to obtain basic demographic information, for example, "How are you doing in school?" or "Where were you born?" The interview will be audio taped, so that the interviewer can transcribe what is being said. Your child will not be named on the tape, nor in any other place in the study.

Confidentiality: All names, identities, and comments gathered in this study will be held in confidence. All data collected will be coded and kept in a locked filing cabinet, and all electronic data will be password protected for a period of five years

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while this data is still being used. It will be destroyed thereafter. This data will only be accessible to the graduate student and the faculty advisor.

Contact for concerns about the rights of participants: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 1-604-822-8598.

Consent: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and one may refuse to participate and/or withdraw from the study without jeopardy at any time by simply informing the researcher of his or her decision.

Your signature on the next page indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

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CONSENT FORM

Listening to Grade 12's Share their Future Plans

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

"I assent/ I do not assent (please circle one) to participate in this study."

_____   ____ _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____

Printed Name

"I consent/ I do not consent (please circle one) to my child's participation in this study."

_____   _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

_____

Printed Name

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Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. The participant has been asked to be identified as _____. This interview should take 30 minutes to one hour. It is _____ (date) at _____ (time).

I am taping this interview so that I can copy it out. I might also take notes to add to what we have discussed. The information that you give me will be used for my master's thesis, which is basically a big research paper. Throughout the interview please feel free to ask me to clarify any of my questions.

I am going to start out with some basic questions to gather some information on you. *Feel free to answer or not answer any questions.* There are no right or wrong answers in this study. All the information that you give me will be helpful.

Demographic questions
Where were you born?
Where were your parents born?
Are you enjoying grade 12?
Do you work?
Do you volunteer?
What are your extra-curricular activities?
What's your favourite course?

Questions if participant does not have a specific career
What are you interested in?
What do you plan to do when you graduate?

Possible facilitating questions:
Thinking of a particular incident:
Can you think of a particular day when you had that feeling?
When was it?
What was happening?
Who was around you?
What were they saying?
Fill in all the aspects of the incident.
How long did last?

Emotion
Explain how you picture your life in the next 5 years? What about 10 years?
How do you feel about your future?

Thank you for answering these questions. This helps me out a lot with my research. Do you have any questions for me? I will be putting together a copy of your interview and then setting up another meeting with you. Is that okay?

Appendix C: Transcript Conventions

Symbol		Meaning
.	period	Termination, whether grammatically complete or not, marked by falling intonation. Absence indicates interruption or trailing off.
,	comma	Speaker parceling of talk.
?	question mark	Used to indicate question or uncertainty.
!	exclamation mark	Expression of shock or surprise.
" "	quotation marks	Used to mark a change in voice quality, as when the speaker uses another person's words.
[ ]	square brackets	Relevant non-verbal body language, including gaze, gesture and body position.
…	three dots	Used to note hesitation or brief pause.
-	dash	Indicates a false start, or rewording, by the speaker.
{ }	squiggle brackets	Additional information to clarify text.
n..i..c..e..	double dots	Indicates a word that is dragged out.
= =	overlap	Overlapping utterances. When second speaker begins talking is marked by = = in the first person's turn.
WOW	capitals	Used to mark a word or part of a word that is stated emphatically.
1, 2	Arabic #s	Indication of turn-taking and number.
A	First Initial	Indication of who has "the floor."

Ideas for this set of transcript conventions were borrowed from Eggins and Slade (1997).