

THE EXPERIENCE
OF MAKING
A CAREER DECISION
IN YOUNG ADULthood

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming
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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine how young adults frame the experience of making a career decision.

Eight persons between the ages of 18 and 25 years, who were enrolled in a post secondary program which on completion could lead directly into an occupation, volunteered to take part in the study. Participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire and were interviewed twice.

The narratives were transcribed and then analyzed using a phenomenological method (Giorgi, 1975; Gurwitsch, 1968). Independent elements of the stories, called meaning units (Giorgi, 1975), were identified and sorted into 40 theme clusters that reflected the young adults' experience of making career decisions. The theme clusters were collapsed into 11 categories representing the noematic nucleus (Gurwitsch, 1968), which lead to the structure of the experience: the relationship of self in deciding, volition, the experience of high school, outside influences, the role of family, applying to a program, feelings about being accepted, observation about others, self-talk, other

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decisions, and thoughts about the future.

The narratives were then re-read and two questions were asked: "What does this statement tell us about the experience?" and "How is the statement framed?".

It was found that young adults respond to personal stimulus that activates the career decision process. Application to a post secondary program was seen as synonymous with commitment to a career path. The anxiety of waiting, was followed by a feeling of freedom and empowerment when the individual had been accepted to the program of choice. The experience was marked by strong emotions, self-knowledge, and a stated as well as tacit understanding of the environmental factors that influenced the decision.

The study illustrates the need for practitioners to examine their modes of, as well as their expected outcomes for career counselling. The young adults interviewed expressed varying levels of dissatisfaction with the career counselling they received in school. They were articulate about what might have helped them and tended to believe that drifting into a career was equally valid as making a career choice.

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In memory of my father who gave me the courage to become anything that I wanted to become.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

In the past much of the British Columbia school counsellor's task has been devoted to educational planning and career counselling. The Royal Commission on Education, 1988, stated that this was an important, and possibly the major task of school counsellors; the new School Act appears to have enshrined that task as part of the educational services provided by the schools. However, no direction is given in either the Royal Commission or the new School Act on how to fulfil that mandate. My own experience as a secondary school counsellor suggests that career guidance in British Columbia relies largely on vocational developmental theories and the use of trait and factor and computerized guidance activities.

Vocational developmental theorists such as Hoyt, Evans, Magnum, Bowen and Gale (1977) believe that career decision making is enhanced when educational opportunities to explore careers are linked to school curricula. The coupling of trait and factor theories (Holland, 1973) to vocational development theories (Super, 1953) provided school counsellors with a wide

variety of activities for career guidance programs such as interest inventories, temperament inventories, trait and factor matching activities as for example Holland's (1973) personality inventory, and so on. These activities met some of the objectives of career education while at the same time seemed to satisfy some of the adolescent developmental tasks including the formation of work-related attitudes and values, reality testing of self to various vocational role models, and the exploration of work related interests (Pietrofesa & Splete, 1975; Schein, 1978).

In speaking with young adults, I have, however, found that they frequently do not relate the guidance that they received in schools to the career decisions that they make. There is also little in the way of research to suggest that individuals make career decisions based on decision making models or interest and aptitude inventories. On the contrary, inventories often lead to confusion because students attempt to match their image of themselves with their image of a career. Their career image is often stereotyped (Schein, 1978) and seen in terms of life-style (Gottfredson, 1981) rather than in the realistic task

descriptions used by the authors of programs such as CHOICES (1982). Furthermore, methods that are based on matching traits and factors of occupations with persons (Holland, 1973), do not acknowledge the influence of family in vocational development (Rosen, 1959; Sewell & Shaw, 1968; Young, Friesen, & Pearson, 1988) and assume that people make major life decisions in a rational and predictable manner (Janis & Mann, 1977; Morris, 1977). Sloan's (1986) long term research project on decision process demonstrated that people often do not make obviously rational choices in major life decisions and he seriously calls into question the use of trait and factor methods especially in the form of computerized counselling programs. If the methods that are currently being used by school counsellors are called into question, there is need to consider alternative approaches.

A review of decision making literature revealed five major strands of research: first, models of decision making (Janis & Mann, 1977; Morris, 1977; Simon, 1983; White, 1970) which attempt to identify the factors and actions leading to a decision and to chart these; second, cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger,

1957) which suggests that we are driven to decide when levels of discomfort in a situation lead us to make a choice; third, decision making with limited choices (Messick & Brayfield, 1964) which are generally more "laboratory" type choices lacking the multiplicity of options that are faced in major life decisions; four, decision making with limited knowledge (Kmietowicz, 1981; Kroll, Dinklage, Morley & Wilson, 1970; Simon, 1983) which look at the complexity of factors in major decisions; and fifth, self-deception in decision making (Sloan, 1986) a relatively new concept, that acknowledges the psychological defense mechanisms and blocks that often prevent individuals from understanding the real reasons for their actions.

Research specific to career decision making can be broken down into principal strands of thought. Descriptive models of vocational behaviour (Dudley & Tiedeman, 1977; Walsh & Osipow, 1988) describe the process of making a career decision. Prescriptive models (Holland, 1973; Hoyt, 1977) attempt to "prescribe" how individuals can make the correct choice. Developmental theories (Kroll, 1970; Pietrofesa & Splete, 1975; Super, 1957; Tinsley &

Tinsley, 1988) identify the stages of vocational development beginning with childhood and continuing through to old age. Finally individual and situational differences in vocational decision making (Dodge & Swan, 1971; Harren, 1979; Mortimer, Lorence & Kumka, 1986; Stephan & Corder, 1985; Tittle, 1981; Wilks, 1986) consider such things as the influence of age, gender, ethnic background and specific situations (as for example, availability of education or vocational options) when individuals make career choices. It appears that decision making has been studied in terms of process and factors, developmental and situational differences, but not in terms of experience, with the exception of Sloan (1987).

Sloan's (1987) study suggests that the realities of individual decisions may not always be explained in theoretical terms. Major life decisions appear to be comprised of past, present and future. They are made within a multiplicity of roles that each individual plays and occur as part of a number of simultaneous decisions which are made with varying amounts of knowledge, varying levels of predictable outcomes and varying degrees of self-awareness.

In view of the mandate given to British Columbia school counsellors (Minister of Education, 1990) and in view that vocational guidance in schools relies heavily on computerized activities, it is time to consider the experience of making an occupational decision from the young adults' perspective. By returning to the source, the decision maker, we may begin to understand what such a decision means to a young person and how we as school counsellors might effectively assist the student in educational and career planning.

Purpose

The aim of this study is to consider career decision making in early adulthood in terms of the decision maker's experience. The purpose is to discover what commitment to an educational program that can lead into an occupation means for the young adult. The main question that is answered by this study is: How do young adults describe (frame) their experience of making a career decision? Within that questions lie a number of other key questions.

1. Process and Influence

- a. How did the person make his/her

career choice over alternate options?

- b. What prior experiences, situations, people, and so on, contributed to the choice?

2. Affective Aspects of Experience

- a. What feelings surround such a major life decision?
- b. How does the individual account for these feelings?

3. Cognitive Aspects of Experience

How are past, present and future perceived and described by the individual in terms of the decision?

4. Comparisons

- a. How similar/different are the affective or cognitive aspects of the experiences of young adult career decision makers?
- b. What aspects of the experiences appear to be unique for individual career decision makers?

To discover the meaning of the commitment and to answer the question posed by this research, a phenomenological method was chosen.

Definitions

This section defines the terms used in the study and discusses the guiding principles used by me in thinking about the data.

Career decision makers have been limited to young adults living in the greater Vancouver area, who have for the first time made a commitment to, and are enrolled in, a career program at a community college, university, vocational or technical institute, which upon completion could lead to an entry occupation in the area of study. Commitment to a course of studies for this research means making a decision for an occupation. This criterion conforms to Schein (1978) as one of the stages and tasks of a career cycle; the step of obtaining appropriate education in or training for a career prior to entering paid work. It also conforms to Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad and Herma's (1951) stage of "specification", the last of three developmental stages, that is characterized by a willingness to specialize and confine to a relatively narrow field of work.

The study uses Linschoten's (1968) definition of experience, that is, a personal act of consciousness.

Linschoten (1968) describes five characteristics of experience, that can be summarized as follows:

1. experience is personal and conforms to personal consciousness, and
2. it constantly changes in consciousness,
3. personal consciousness is experienced as a continuous stream,
4. we think in terms of independent thoughts rather than a stream, and
5. thoughts are selected from the stream so that some things are excluded when we think about experience.

The definition implies that our experiences are fluid and that all our impressions are coloured by our own history of experiences. However, we describe experience in terms of independent thoughts by way of sensory perceptions (I feel, I saw, I heard, etc.). These perceptions or sensations are not representations of the real things, but selected presentations which are constructs of individual reality (Linschoten, 1968). It is this reality that is verbalized in narration and constitutes the building blocks for understanding the experience.

The word "frame" in this study follows Turner and Bruner's (1986) definition as the "arbitrary construction of beginnings and endings" (p.7) which constructs limits to the experience; and Linschoten's (1968) definition of "margin" as forming "the context for the 'theme'" (p.161). Relating that definition to Linschoten's (1968) concept of experience as a stream, the frame then lifts from the stream that which it perceives to be important and separates the experience into units that have identifiable beginnings and endings and gives "causative significance" (Linschoten, 1968, p.161) to the experience. How the participants of this study "frame" their experience of career decision making means which sensory perceptions they choose to lift from that continuous stream and verbalize. It includes the time space coordinates and descriptions (of self and others, the programs and future dreams and goals and so on). The margin or frame is "causative" not in the sense that it makes the event happen, but that it imbues an experience with personal meaning and becomes a part of the history of a person.

The concept which guided my thinking in the analysis of the data follows Gurwitsch's (1964) description of noema, perceptual noema and central noematic nucleus (or noematic nucleus). Gurwitsch's (1964) use of the term noema is inclusive and permits us to understand that experience has multiple presentations. The perceptual noema is defined by Gurwitsch (1964) as the way that something presents itself to the beholder. For example, if two people are witnessing the same accident, their stories of the accident will contain differences in perception. Perceptual noema relates to Linschoten's (1968) fifth characteristic of experience -- the perceived sensation including only those aspects which enable the individual to understand his/her experience. Noema is all the possible ways that the experience might have been perceived or spoken about.

The central noematic nucleus, or noematic nucleus, (Gurwitsch, 1964) is the experience reduced to its fundamental structure, devoid of presentation. For example, when during successive interviews, young adults spoke about receiving valuable help from school counsellors, not wanting help from school counsellors,

or receiving no help from school counsellors, the noematic nucleus of the experience was "help from school counsellors".

In using the concept of the noema, Gurwitsch (1964) clearly demonstrates phenomenological reduction, the principle which underpins the examination of the narratives in order to arrive at the meaning of the experience.

Significance of the Research

The purpose of social research is to do one of three things: to classify, to explain or to understand. It is designed to be exploratory, to be cross-sectional or to survey (Sanders & Pinhey, 1983). The present study was designed to be exploratory and is directed to the task of understanding. While a variety of methods were available to me for the collection and interpretation of data, descriptive phenomenology which seeks "to describe the schemata or themes that constitute experience" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p.213) was chosen as the method most appropriate to the understanding of human action especially in matters concerning choice among a variety of alternatives.

Changing Trends

The value of this study lies in our learning to understand the experience of career decision making from the perspective of young men and women who have made such a decision for the first time. By entering into dialogue with young people who have just committed to an occupation, we can reflect upon the significance that the experience has for young adults. Shulman (1984) states that a shared understanding of an experience frees the client to assume responsibility of what is helpful in a counselling relationship. Thus if we are to be more helpful in career counselling, we need to first share the young adult's experience of committing to a career program in a culture that is rapidly redefining occupations by means of technological change.

Knowledge Extended

Research should not only verify or question what is already known, but add information to the total body of knowledge in some manner. This study meets that goal. It questions what is known on the basis that impersonal instruments of measurement cannot measure

the meaning of career decision making, because "each of us has access only to our own realm of meaning" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.8). It adds information to the total body of knowledge by enlarging our understanding of human decision making. That understanding is applicable not only to school counsellors but to other members of the human science disciplines.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are numerous theories on how people arrive at career decisions. Hoyt (1977) wrote that many people in the past have "fallen" into their careers due to lack of information and guidance. Super (1957) and Ginzberg, et al. (1951) suggest that career choice is part of a developmental process that begins in early childhood with fantasy and develops into a realistic goal as individuals increasingly differentiate between occupations and begin to identify with various role models that may be literary or real. While some assent is given to social influences on career choice by the developmental proponents (Super, Starishevsky, Matlin & Jordaan, 1963), more recent studies appear to tie the influence of family and familial social class to career choice (Spenner, 1988; "When I grow up...", 1986; Wilks, 1986). Still other studies cite the influence of sex and ethnic background on career aspirations and outcomes (Crites, 1962; Stephan & Corder, 1985; Tittle, 1981; Woelfel, 1975).

While there does not appear to be a unified theory of career decision making (Collin, 1985), the theories

that seem to underpin the career guidance programs at high school, and which have been part of the educational experience of most school counsellors, affect our present understanding and perception of how occupations are chosen. Using the generic headings that approximate those used by Osipow (1983), the literature of decision making focusing on occupational decisions was reviewed as follows:

1. Decision making models
2. Developmental and personal identity theories
3. Social learning theories and sociological influences.

Decision Making Models

Morris (1977) states that decision making theory deals with two types of decisions, psychosocial decisions and business-mathematical decisions. For this study, theories dealing with psychosocial decisions were of interest.

One of the earliest examinations of decision making was done by James (1890). He, like Festinger (1957) and Sloan (1987) defined decision as action after deliberation. Sloan (1987) expanded on the

definition by adding that decisions "are not arbitrary--they have meanings... [and] strive to fulfil intentions, desires, wishes" (p.12).

James (1890) identified five types of decisions that are reflective of the spectrum of decision making discussed by Morris (1977). At one end of the spectrum is the "reasonable", systematic type of decision that leaves in balance one of several alternatives after deliberate weighing of the alternatives in the mind. While this does not happen in a lock-step fashion as suggested by Simon's (1983) SEU (subjective expected utility) model, it leaves the decider feeling "free" (James, 1890) when the decision has been acted on. At the other end of the spectrum are located the decisions which are inspirational (Morris, 1977), which "feel right", and when acted on, also leave the decider feeling free.

Between the two extremes are decisions which are made with some residual feelings of dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Some of these decisions are made by drifting towards something so that eventually the decision is made for the individual by external circumstances; others are also made by drifting but

when something comes along that excites the individual, he/she catapults into the decision (James, 1890). This type of decision is most often open to being revoked or changed if the choice conflicts with values held by the individual or is in conflict with expectations of the significant social group the individual belongs to (Janis & Mann, 1977). Another type of decision may also come abruptly but is initiated by changes in events such as a marriage, death, and so on, which produces new views of life (James, 1890).

To examine how people make decisions or to investigate process, a number of models have been developed. Decision models are frequently represented by charts or decision trees, which are useful tools primarily for the analysis of those decisions that can be classified as systematic (Morris, 1977). However, Morris (1977) suggests that most decisions are not systematic but rely on individual intuition.

In his examination of three decision models, Simon (1983) stated that while the SEU model is more often used in business, the behavioral model is probably the way that most people make decisions. Simon's (1983) arguments in favour of the behavioral model are well

supported by example, but it seems that what he calls the intuitive rational model is more closely related to the theories of developmental career decision making (Ginzberg et al., 1951; Super, 1957) and phenomenological understanding of deciding (Landgrebe, 1981).

The intuitive rational model is so named because research has demonstrated that people seem to make decisions based on intuition or judgment (Landgrebe, 1981; Morris, 1977; Simon, 1983). Husserl (Landgrebe, 1981) believed that which is grasped for the first time is something that is familiar because it has always been there; part of a prior experience (hence developmental). This is the "aha" experience that Simon (1983) refers to when he states that it can "happen only to people who possess the appropriate knowledge" (p.27).

There appears to be insufficient documentation to propose that any decision model can provide us with a perspective suggested by Fishburn (1964):

The first element of a decision situation is an individual decision maker ... He acts and reacts in the context of his internal and external worlds, and what he does will presumably have an effect on both. His internal world is a world of motivations,

interpretations and judgments. His links with his external world are in the form of sense perceptions, actions and reactions. (p.19)

Models attempt to explain the decision process, they do not contribute to our understanding of the inner and outer world of the decider at the time of decision making. Thus decision models may help to illustrate certain aspects of the decision of the first time career decider, but they do not give us a picture of the complexity, richness or depth of the experience of deciding.

Career Decision Theories

Career decision theories, fall into two major categories, theories reflecting a psychological perspective (developmental and identity theories) and theories reflecting a sociological-anthropological perspective (social learning and sociological influence theories).

Developmental and Identity Theories

Career development theories include developmental theories and models (Ginzberg et al., 1951; Super, 1957; Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1963) which follow the

developmental perspective taken by psychologists in the early 1950's (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1988). Pietrofesa and Splete (1975) broadly defined career development as

a process that occurs over a life span and is significantly influenced by self-concept and by social, physical and psychological forces in one's world. (p.1)

Developmental theories tend to be descriptive and have undergone some changes. Super et al. (1963) became interested in the role of the self-concept on career development, and Tiedeman (Dudley & Tiedeman, 1977)) continued to examine personal perception in career development; first developing a model of decision making (Miller & Tiedeman, 1972) and then examining the structure of career decision making based on two elements, environment and individual and three relationships, systems, function and structure (Dudley & Tiedeman, 1977).

Personal identity theories have two major perspectives, prescriptive models and self-actualization. Unlike developmental models which are descriptive and ask "how" career decisions are made, prescriptive models are based on the theory that there is a best choice for every individual and therefore ask "what" choice should be made. Prescriptive theories

are often referred to as trait and factor theories (Crites, 1962; Holland, 1973) and have given impetus to the development of such counselling tools as interest, personality and temperament inventories.

Self-concept theories on the other hand, make the assumptions that

in expressing a vocational preference a person puts into occupational terminology his idea of the kind of person he is; that in entering an occupation, he seeks to implement a concept of himself; ...[and] achieves self actualization. (Super et al., 1963, p.1)

Mortimer, et al. (1986) cite studies that give evidence of the validity of those assumptions. They indicate a relationship between occupational aspiration and striving for achievement and high adolescents' self-esteem. Self-concept theories have enjoyed a continuous interest, not only from a career development perspective (Ginzberg et al., 1951; Super et al., 1963) but also from a psychoanalytic perspective (Osipow, 1983).

Leadership in developing a behavioral perspective in vocational choice and personality theory has been credited to Roe (1957) and Holland (1957) (Osipow, 1983). Behavioral theories appear to be related to personal identity theories as for example Holland's

Code (Holland, 1973) and Roe's (1957) work related to personality which linked heredity and parenting styles to energy expended in fulfilling occupational aspirations.

Social Learning Theories and Sociological Influence

Social learning and sociological influences are closely linked. Osipow (1983) writes that "one's self-expectations are not independent of society's expectations" (p.225). Picou and Campbell (1975) describe race, sex and family socio-economic status as antecedent to social learning and in that sense normative.

Social learning theories deal with the influence of family, social and ethnic norms and the availability of education in the development of the individual. The effects of social learning on career choice has been well documented in research, although Osipow (1983) criticizes the theory on the basis that there is insufficient research in any one area, and that research has focused on choice and not enough on the adjustments that lead to choice. Osipow (1983)

includes under the heading of social learning, research in the following areas:

inherited attributes such as race, gender and physical appearance and with special, apparently inherited abilities... environmental events and settings in which the events occur...perceived outcomes and payoffs of various career possibilities, family resources, role models, social and climatic events such as war, natural disasters, technological developments, and educational opportunities and achievements.
(p.144)

Closely related to social learning is social influence. Sociological anchor points include heredity, culture, geography and to some degree education which is seen as having an ameliorating effect on those anchor points as it increases occupational mobility and aspiration. Schein (1978) states that society influences people by legislation, education and other social institutions, and Kinnier, Brigman & Noble (1990) and Spenner (1988) show the effect of family enmeshment and child rearing values and behaviours on the development of personality and socialization of the individual.

We are social beings, born and raised in a social environment that becomes increasingly larger as we grow into adulthood. We are given certain genetic traits--height, colour of skin and so on--are limited to a

degree by our geography and are immersed in a culture which we accept as normal. In this milieu we receive our social learning that shapes our views on sex role, status, and amongst other things occupational values. These elements come together in the person making a career decision and affect that decision. In that sense people make social rather than individual decisions (Sloan, 1986). They gather information from their own social space and tend to compromise their goals on the basis of accommodating their choices to what seems to be acceptable to their social milieu (Festinger, 1957; Gottfredson, 1981).

Ecological Perspective

More recently, an ecological perspective (Young, 1984) has been introduced which offers hope to bring together the diverse theories of career choice. It acknowledges that career theories have been studied from varying perspectives with the result that there appears to be a fragmentation of information. A model based on the ecological perspective (Collin & Young, 1986) describes the interaction of the individual and his/her environment and recognizes the reciprocal

effects of one on another. It expands on the work done by Tiedeman and Tiedeman (Dudley & Tiedeman, 1977) whose continued investigation of career theories and vocational psychology lead them to view the individual as the "marvellous organism which manages to disarticulate while simultaneously managing to relate parts so that they function as wholes" (Dudley & Tiedman, 1977, p.274). The structure of career decision making introduced in Dudley and Tiedeman (1977) could well act as a prologue to Young's (1984) ecological perspective that sees the individual as the "producer of his or her own development...[and] offers the concept of niche, which addresses the way in which an organism lives in a given environment" (p.154).

Summary

This chapter examined literature concerning general decision making as well as vocational decision making. It provides the background against which the present research was undertaken.

Decision making models were found to be useful in examining the process of decision making and in understanding how people arrive at decisions. They do

not answer the questions about the inner world of the decision maker or the links between his/her inner and outer worlds.

Most of the research on career choice has been conducted with young adults. A body of literature examines occupational choice from a sociological and social learning point of view, but the bulk of the research is based on career development theories which use the psychological perspective. Under this umbrella heading appear readings in career development theories and models, personal identity theories, trait factor theories, and personality theories. It was found however that there was no unifying theory of career choice (Collin, 1985), albeit, there is some hope that this lack may be ameliorated by the ecological systems approach described by Young (1984), or research that focused on the experience of career choice. We are therefore left to ask "How is the decision perceived by the decider?"

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter discusses the parameters of the research and describes how the research was done. It also contains the demographic information of the participants and a brief description of the pilot project which was done prior to the actual study.

Pilot Study

The pilot was conducted using 8 volunteers who met the age (18 - 25 yrs.) and program (first time commitment to a post secondary program which on completion could lead directly into an occupation) criteria used in the present research. The purpose of the pilot was fourfold.

First, it was necessary to establish whether the present research project was feasible; whether it met the major assumption that young adults are capable of articulating their experience of career decision making; and whether the sub-assumption (that there is sufficient narrative material available for a phenomenological analysis) was sound.

Second, it permitted the development of an interview schedule which would allow a full story to develop while maintaining a focus and yet be loose enough to give the narrators permission to tell their story as they experienced it.

Third, it permitted me to practice interviewing skills which were similar in style to those used in an initial counselling stage (gathering information), but with sufficient focus to allow the major part of the story to be told in one interview.

Fourth, it permitted the development of a demographic questionnaire that was easy to understand, quick to complete and which enabled me to ascertain whether the candidates met the criteria described by the study.

Each candidate was interviewed, the taped interviews were transcribed and analyzed, and summaries were prepared. During a follow-up interview candidates were asked to comment on the summary, the questions and the demographic questionnaire. Over the course of two months, the question schedule and the demographic questionnaire evolved to their present state. Key questions asked in the follow up interview were:

1) "Did the summary represent your experience of deciding as you had told it to me?"

2) "Were the questions phrased so that you were able to tell your story without feeling restricted or led to answer in any way?"

3) "Were the questions on the demographic questionnaire clear and easy to answer?"

The question schedule developed from questions which were too vague and required a lot of prompting to the present form. For example, after an introduction I had first asked, "Would you begin your story at the point where you had your first childhood dreams about what you would like to be when you grow up?" It was difficult for people to start their story because they were unsure at what point they had begun to dream. The question was then revised to "Start wherever it seems most appropriate. You can start with the present and work backwards or start with your childhood dreams and work forward." This seemed too vague and didn't focus the intent of the narrative. Through several changes I arrived at the present question, "Could you tell me how you came to enrol in the (name of) program at (name of institution)?" This provided sufficient direction for

focus and also was open enough for people to begin telling their story with as much detail as they chose.

The demographic questionnaire underwent similar changes as the focus of the questions shifted to reflect the needs of the study. For example, the initial questionnaire had three questions regarding educational status focused on high school, in comparison to the present questionnaire which has four questions of educational status designed to aid in screening. At the conclusion of the pilot, the information gathered from the interviews was used to develop the questionnaire to its present form.

An issue that arose as result of the pilot was the need to continue getting feedback on my questioning and interviewing skills. It was important to ensure that each person felt their story was new, was essential and was being heard in detail. I became very alert to enter into each interview as if it were the first and to check back after each interview on my techniques.

A second issue that arose was the need to reflect on the interview several days after it had occurred but before I had read the transcript or listened to the tape. While I made notes on the interview immediately

afterward to retain the freshness of my observations, the need to reflect was quite different and permitted me to explore my feelings in relation to the narrator, the setting and the general tone of the interview. This was helpful in assessing the interviews and how my interaction with the narrators may have impacted the stories.

In retrospect I feel that eight interviews were excessive for a pilot project, however, I learned much which I believe has enriched the present study.

Principal Study

Participants

Demographic Information

This study was completed using volunteer respondents between the ages of 18 to 25 years which conforms to Dudley and Tiedeman (1977) and Super (1957) as the stage in career development where exploration ceases and a stage of commitment begins. Other studies (Ginzberg et al., 1963; Kroll et al., 1970; Schein, 1978) agree that during this age a willingness to specialize and to confine to a relatively narrow field of interests becomes increasingly evident.

Volunteers for the study were first asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire (Appendix III) which served two purposes: first, to ascertain whether the candidate met the criteria for this study, and second, to provide descriptive information about the participant. While only age and program being attended were essential to this study, to provide a fuller picture of the persons interviewed, additional demographic data were collected: gender, marital status, ethnic origin, educational status, occupation of members of immediate family, size of community participant was raised in, distance of community from the institution being attended, and average family income. A full description of the demographic details is found in Appendix IV.

Three men and six women were interviewed. (Only eight of these are part of the documentation as during the first interview it became apparent that one of the participants really had not narrowed down the option although the initial questionnaire seemed to indicate that a decision had been made. To maintain the integrity of the research all nine initial interviews and follow ups were completed.) The ages of the

eight participants were as follows: 18(1), 19(2), 20(4), 21(1).

Programs and Institutions

The institutions that the candidates attended were University of British Columbia (3), Simon Fraser University (1), British Columbia Institute of Technology (1), Douglas College (1), Kwantlen College (1), Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (1). The programs included Medical School (1), Commerce (1), Occupational Health and Safety (1), Interior Design (1), Engineering (1), Arts leading to business (1), General Nursing (1), Computer Information Systems (1).

Two candidates had been admitted and enrolled in the program but had not yet started and six had completed one year or less of their program. For the eight candidates this had been the first program they had applied to. All candidates stated that if they were to re-decide, they would make the same occupational choice at this time.

To protect their privacy while at the same time personalizing the narratives, fictional names have been given to the volunteers in this study. They are

Joyce, medicine; Mary, business administration;
Surinder, Occupational Health and Safety Officer;
James, engineer; Wayne, Computer Information Systems;
Susan, Interior Design; Janice, Registered Nurse; Bill,
commerce.

Accessibility was the reason for using persons who are enroled in, or who have just completed, the first year of a program in a post secondary institution which on completion can lead to occupational entry. While this choice eliminates individuals who may also have made career decisions in areas that do not require formal education, (such as apprenticeships, on-the-job training and job entry without training) a sample drawn from a limited, specified population is in keeping with previous research in career choice (Crites, 1962; Dodge & Swan, 1971; Dudley & Tiedeman, 1977). The time span ranging from students who have just enroled in, to those who may already have completed their first year in the program, assured that the experience of making the decision was fresh in memory (Festinger, 1957) and provided me with a time frame that was workable.

Procedures

Sampling

Two methods of sampling were combined for this study, strategic sampling (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) and technical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The goal of strategic sampling is to choose cases which will "generate as many categories and properties of categories as possible" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p.44). Two conditions contribute to achieving that goal: the minimizing of differences between cases which for this study was accomplished by choosing only students in the first year of a career program; and the maximizing of differences within the cases, which was accomplished by choosing participants from different institutions and disciplines.

Technical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is a method of continuous sampling. Rather than beginning research with a predetermined sample, the researcher combines sampling with analysis until sufficient information has been gathered. Sufficiency is determined by saturation, that is, when patterns of similarity emerge.

It was possible to combine the two methods of sampling because of the demographic questionnaire. The information from the questionnaire ensured that strategic sampling was used; the taped interviews were transcribed and analyzed after each interview and material combined with previous interviews until sufficient data were collected and no more interviews were needed.

The Interviews

The study incorporated three phases of interaction with the participants. The first was the completion of a questionnaire and a brief discussion of the purpose of the research. The second phase was the interview which focused on the participants' story of their experience of making the career decision, which yielded the raw data for this research. During this interview the narrators were encouraged to provide as much detail as possible without being lead. This interview also provided me with the opportunity to take note of the non-verbal responses of the narrator and of my own feelings towards the narrator and the story.

The third phase was a second interview which focused on the my interpretation of the data and was intended to clarify and/or expand on the description of the experience of career decision making. During this interview the candidates received a printed summary and interpretation of their own story. I read the summary to them after having instructed them to interrupt at anytime to inquire about a statement, make corrections or further reflect on what was stated. This interview was important to establish if I had understood their story as they had narrated it, and if I had been able to identify the main threads of their experience so that the experiences would be rendered "true" in the analysis. Three questions were also asked as part of the second interview:

1. "Do you feel that this summary captures your experience of making a career decision?"
2. "Were there any other thoughts or feelings that came up for you since we last met which you would like to add to your story?"
3. "Was the interview technique and the questions used, conducive to your telling your story in as much detail as you might have wanted?"

Interview question schedule.

The question schedule for the main interview, which had been developed during the pilot project, was analyzed using Van Dalen and Meyer's (1966) criteria for evaluating questionnaires and interviews. Three main considerations comprise the criteria:

1. An analysis of the content of the questions.

Included in this are considerations about the necessity of a question; decisions regarding the concreteness or generality of the data requested; and wording questions to permit respondents to express themselves accurately and completely.

2. Analysis of the language of questions. This included wording the questions in nontechnical, straightforward (as opposed to leading or misleading) language and framing them so as to elicit more information without causing respondents to become angry or to falsify the answers.

3. Sequencing of questions so that each question sets the stage for the next one.

The questions used and the questioning techniques conformed to these considerations.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) discussing the questioning techniques of ethnographers state that non-directive interviewing appears to be favoured by ethnographers in order "to minimize ... the influence of the researcher on what is said" (p.110). This style of interviewing is marked by active listening, reflecting what is said, asking for details, expressing emotions when appropriate and generally shaping the interview so that as much detail as possible is generated. With this in mind, I entered into each interview with the question schedule, but did not always use the specific questions. It was more important for me to cover the issues. If the narrator had already spoken sufficiently on the subject a question might not be included. Other questions were asked if I believed that the narrator had entered into a part of the story that was essential to his/her experience.

Interview methods.

To meet the objective of this research--recording the experience of career decision making--a focused, nondirective interview style was chosen. Such an

interview relies on the interviewer covering a series of topics in the form of open ended questions (a full description of the introduction and questions is given in Appendix V), to elicit information. By using well placed probes, minimal encouragers, summary statements, and so on, rather than relying on a question-answer technique, the story is kept flowing "in a clear, understandable way with nothing essential omitted" (Wiersma, 1980, p.70).

Location of interview.

While the choice of location for the interview was left to the candidate as much as possible, the pilot project had alerted me to the need to have a place where I too felt comfortable and assured of a reasonable degree of freedom from interruptions. As a result, most of the interviews were conducted in an office.

Length of interview.

The volunteers were made aware during the initial contact that it would take approximately 1 1/2 to 2 hours to complete the first interview, and that a

follow up session of about 1/2 hour would be needed to review the summary of the story and to conduct a check of accuracy. The actual interviews ranged from just over an hour to almost three hours, and the follow-ups from 1/2 hour to one hour.

Establishing rapport.

Good rapport was established between the interviewer and the candidate following the suggestions of Wiersma (1980) and Gordon (1980) which can be summed up as professional, friendly and conducted in a business like manner (see Appendix V). Body language skills such as good eye contact, nodding of head, open posture were used to maintain rapport.

Protocol

The purpose of the interview was to record the experience of first time career decision makers. The first part of the interview was structured to ensure that good rapport was established. I reiterated the purpose of the interview, how it would be recorded and read the Participant Informed Consent Form to the candidate. I also answered any questions that the

participants had about me or the thesis. The second part of the interview relied on nondirective interviewing techniques in order that a fully "fleshed-out" story of the participant's experience was obtained.

Recording of data.

In order to retain the full story of the candidate, and to permit the interviewer to be minimally intrusive, (Wiersma, 1980) I chose to audio tape each of the interviews.

Analysis and Interpretation

Description of phenomenology.

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief description of phenomenology and to demonstrate that it is an appropriate method for research that examines the meaning of an experience.

According to Gurwitsch (1964) "Phenomenology is concerned ...with phenomena" (p.167) in the sense that individuals transform their perceptual world into language and thereby disclose their actions and thoughts so that we, the listener and the reader, are

present to it. Phenomenology permits us to express our understanding of the interpretation placed on an event "as it exists for the subject" (Giorgi, 1975, p.74) so that others may share in it.

An underlying principle of phenomenology is the understanding that for each of us our body is our reality and that the world is where all experience takes place. Each of us has a "home world" (Landgrebe, 1981), a known community of geography, manners customs, laws, people and so on where we experience bodily sensations, memories, thoughts or feelings in various combinations. We arrange these experiences by means of reflection and we communicate them by means of language. While experience is fluid, changing and personal in character (Linschoten, 1968), language is social and concrete and permits us to share the experience.

A second principle of phenomenology is the assumption that all humans have experiences and that this permits us to share in the third person, what was experienced in the first person (Linschoten, 1978). To understand and explain the experience of another, we need to keep in mind what Linschoten (1968) describes

as the five characteristics of experience which are here summarized:

1. it is personal and conforms to personal consciousness
2. it constantly changes in our consciousness
3. it is a continuous stream in consciousness
4. it is changed by thought and language so that it appears to be a series of isolated objects
5. it is shaped by the interest we bestow on some ideas and thoughts while excluding others.

It is the task of the phenomenologist to "let the world of the describer ... reveal itself through the description in an unbiased way" (Giorgi, 1975, p.74). To do that, the researcher must rediscover the "Life World" (or "home world") of the source of information (Linschoten, 1968). Examining the stories of individuals to discover that world, leads to, what Polkinghorne (1988) describes as "narrative knowing". We can "know" by examining the stories so as to illumine the phenomena; transcending beyond the words to draw out the isolated objects which have been identified by the narrator as his/her reality. These isolated objects are grouped and arranged by the

researcher into a meaningful description which remains faithful to the phenomena as it was lived, and presents us with an understanding of the experience which we can communicate to other people. It is that characteristic that makes it an appropriate method to use for a study that proposes to understand the experience of making a career commitment in young adulthood.

Phenomenological analysis.

After each interview, the narrative was transcribed with both the interviewer's as well as the narrator's words, and interpreted by a method of phenomenological reduction as described by Gurwitsch (1964, pp. 155-420), and Giorgi (1975, pp. 72-79). Phenomenological reduction permits us to examine all the possible presentations of the events that make up an experience (which may appear different from one another because of time, space or person) and demonstrate their structural unity.

The examination of the phenomena of the experience of making a career choice in young adulthood conformed to the steps discussed by Gurwitsch (1964) and Giorgi (1975).

1. Each audio tape was transcribed. Symbols for pauses, change in voice tone, volume and so on were developed and included in the transcripts so that in reading, the meaning would not be lost.

2. The protocols (transcripts of the taped interviews) were read and re-read and the content reflected on.

3. Every time a new thought was perceived, the words were highlighted. This was done without reference to the questions asked by the interviewer. For example Joyce began by stating:

I had a tough time actually deciding that
that was what I wanted to do.

"a tough time actually deciding" was highlighted as one thought. Joyce then went on in the next sentence:

In this program in particular, something
where you have to go through a lot of loop
holes to get to.

"to go through a lot of loop holes" is different in thought than "actually deciding" so it was also highlighted.

Giorgi (1975) refers to this process as identifying the elements that will comprise the "meaning units".

4. The highlighted phrases and words were written on 3"x5" cards, identified with page numbers from the protocols, and sorted in piles reflecting statements similar in meaning and intent. The natural phrases and sentences were paraphrased (Sandello, 1975) in order to begin the "dialogue" between the researcher and the narrator which is the essence of phenomenology and leads us to understand the experience from the point of view of the narrator. This step contributed the information for the interpretive summary that was read to the candidate in the second interview; it also supplied the thematic units for the analysis of the experience. For example, Joyce's third statement returns to her opening remark of having a "tough" time deciding:

but to come to the actual decision itself,
I went through a lot of analyzing...

Both statements reflect the same meaning and intent and therefore were indexed as related and became part of the same meaning unit. In all, 41 index headings were identified. The cards were reviewed and checked against the original protocol.

5. Using the concept of the noematic nucleus (Gurwitsch, 1964) - the core of what is perceived - the

index headings were collapsed into 11 categories (see Appendix VI). For example Surinder's statement, "I don't know what the future holds", was indexed as : "Future - ambiguous feelings" while Wayne's statement,

I want to become a writer [in the future] that is my dream,

was indexed as: "Future dreams and plans". The nucleus of both statements is the future, therefore these two statements were placed into the same category. Both expressions were concerned with the same theme (future) and contributed to a greater understanding of future as something unknown but also open to dreams and goals.

6. The categories were then assembled and the protocols re-read in light of the categories. Two questions were asked in this step: What is the experience? How is it framed?

The purpose of this step was to examine the data in terms of the original question: What is the experience of career decision making in early adulthood? Giorgi (1975) refers to this step as examining the expression of the central themes. The structure of the experience is answered by the "What"

question: "What does this tell me about the experience of making a career decision in young adulthood?" The frame of the experience is answered by the "How" question: "How does this statement or theme illustrate the experience?"

These steps allowed me to organize individual perceptual experiences into groups of categories which could be synthesized into a consistent structure of the experience of career decision making in early adulthood.

Summaries.

A summary of the protocols was prepared for each narrative reflecting the meaning of the experience for the narrator. Each summary was a distillation of what was said by the narrator and was tied to his or her exact words. No attempt was made to place the narrative into a historical context outside of what had been told to me. Information that was related was grouped so that the story flowed naturally. Assumptions I had made or clarifications I needed were added to the summary.

Although a printed copy was given to the authors of the narratives, I read the summaries to them as part of the second interview. I explained how I had arrived at the summary and they were asked to interrupt, interject or comment at any point as I read. We subsequently discussed the summary in terms of accuracy in representing the experience, with particular heed given to areas where I had bridged gaps in information or where there were questions of meaning for the respondent. For example, the summary for Susan states:

The visit to Ryerson appeared to happen some time in the year after Susan had started a program at Langara. Susan applied to Langara because she felt she did not have 'enough confidence' to right away apply to Ryerson. At Langara she took design and art history courses. However I am not quite clear how long the stay at Langara was, since during that time the visit to Ryerson took place. That visit resulted in Susan upgrading many of her grade 12 courses in order to get the 'B' average which someone in the Registrar's office in Ryerson said she would need to get in.

I stopped the reading at this point in the follow-up interview to clarify the gap in information. The new information was added to the summary in italic print to separate it from the initial interview. In this manner information from the second interview was integrated into the protocol and into the summary of the first interview without changing the original words.

Reliability and Validity

Polkinghorne (1983) states:

'Knowledge' is fallible. It merely represents the best explanation available,.... The ultimate standard for determining the accuracy of the researcher's proposals is the intuition that people have about their everyday experience. (pp.242, 251)

This statement is perhaps most applicable to phenomenological investigation. Agnew and Brown (1989) state that the variety of human experience is present because we construe our own reality in as many ways as we can imagine. The researcher needs to limit his/her attention to what is relevant, but paradoxically, it is difficult to answer what is relevant. In a subsequent paper Agnew and Brown (1989) wrote, "The ultimate signal that we have indeed seized reality over and above personal conviction, is consensus" (p. 174).

Reliability can be achieved in narrative research primarily through the dependability of the data. Dependability relies on the trustworthiness of the taping, the notes taken, the transcripts made and the ability of the interviewer to elicit as much data as possible without leading the narrator. Polkinghorne (1988) states that reliability in narrative studies do

"not have formal proofs of reliability, relying instead on the details of their procedures to evoke an acceptance of trustworthiness of the data" (p.177).

This is echoed by Sandelowski (1986) who suggests that qualitative research, although non-repeatable, derives a measure of reliability from what he names "auditability", that is a trail left by the researcher that can be clearly followed so that a second researcher, using the same perspectives and similar data would arrive at similar conclusions. The degree to which a trail has been left by me in this study and the degree to which the reader would arrive at similar conclusions as I have, is the measure of reliability for this research.

Validity depends on "the strength of the analysis of the data" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 176) which in a phenomenological study means the ethical use of phenomenological methods and the recognition of the researcher's own attitudes and perceptions both during the interview and in the analysis of the data. The task of the researcher is to accurately report the meaning of the experience as it was described by the narrators.

To ensure a reasonably high degree of accuracy in analysis and reporting, and thereby increase the strength of the validity, two methods of triangulation were used - respondent validation and technique triangulation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

Respondent validation was achieved through the second interview by reading the summary of the narrative to the respondent, discussing the summary and asking the three questions (cited in "The Interview").

Technique triangulation was accomplished by using a second method of analysis of the same data using the questions in the interview as a basis for this investigation. The protocols were read in terms of the questions asked and the major ideas addressed within the framework of each question were identified. These were then sorted into common themes. This method identified eleven major themes which corresponded closely to the eleven categories identified by the phenomenological method of reduction (Appendix VII). Both methods lead to the core information from two separate approaches.

Limitations

The value of much research lies in its ability to be generalized. This research as it is presented, has some limitations. First the sample is limited to young adults who have committed themselves to a post secondary career course so that the information cannot be generalized to all groups of people making career decisions. Second, because of the large volume of data generated from interviews, qualitative research, uses relatively small samples. Generalizability is therefore gauged on a 'goodness of fit' (Guba & Lincoln cited in Sandelowski, 1986) principle, rather than on a large sample. It is the reader who gauges whether the findings are "meaningful and applicable, in terms of [his/her] own experience" (Sandelowski, 1986, p.32). Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that because social research is conducted in an everyday setting rather than one set up purposely for research "the danger that the findings will apply only to the research situation is generally lessened" (p.24).

A third limitation arises from the nature of the research itself. Experience is private and changes continuously. As such, narrative research is not

repeatable in the traditional sense. The retelling of a story is coloured by the experience of the first telling and is no longer the same. This limits the reproduction of the study to the ability of the researcher to engage the reader in a dialogue on the experience of career decision making in young adulthood and to the "auditability" of the research method.

Finally, there is a measure of error in gathering and interpreting the data that also sets limits to the research. While the use of audio-taped interviews permitted continuous referral to the original voice, there are other aspects of the interview which are available only to the interviewer's memory: body language, non-verbal communication and so on. Even though field notes were made after each interview and a diary of reflections kept, the degree of my involvement in the research cannot be objectively measured.

Because of these limitations, the results of the study can be stated only as approximations that tend towards truth.

Assumptions

All scientific research rests on basic assumptions which include the acceptance of a certain uniformity of nature and of psychological processes (Van Dalen & Meyer, 1966). The examination of the narratives of first time career decision making relies on two major assumptions and several subassumptions.

1. Major assumption: Young adults are able to articulate their individual stories of how they arrived at their present course of studies which, upon completion, may lead to an occupation.

Subassumptions: a. There is sufficient material in the narratives to permit phenomenological analysis.

b. Young adults are able to express the experience of their decision making with all its attendant emotions.

2. Major assumption: The examination of first time career decision making narratives will enrich our understanding of how young adults experience this major life decision.

Subassumptions: a. The knowledge we currently possess of career decision making is incomplete.

b. The examination of narratives using

phenomenological method is an effective means of accessing career decision making experience.

The implication of these assumptions is that people are able to narrate their experiences in sufficient detail that we might learn from them. Polkinghorne (1988) writes that such narration is not only feasible but natural to all ages and all cultures. Watson and Watson-Franke (1985) suggest that the individual is becoming lost in research that is based on models, experiments or quantification and that we need to return to research that deals with the "insider's" point of view. It appears then that the assumptions that people can effectively tell their own stories and that the present knowledge we possess of career decision making is incomplete, have a basis in current literature. It was on the basis of that literature, my own feelings grounded in experience in the field and my acceptance of those assumptions that this research was undertaken.

Ethical Considerations

In addition to the initial discussion on purpose, the volunteers who fit the criteria were given the opportunity to choose not to participate throughout the study. To ensure that there was no sense of coercion, the Participant Informed Consent form was read to the volunteers prior to the initial interview and a copy of the form was left with the volunteer.

Anonymity was protected by identifying the audiotapes and the questionnaires with corresponding code numbers. In transcribing the tapes, only code numbers were used which were replaced by fictional names in the research discussion.

Care was given that the candidates had sufficient time to deal with sensitive issues that arose as a result of the narration. Time was also given at the end of each interviewing session to debrief.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss the method used in collecting the data, sampling techniques and recording of data as well as explaining the method of phenomenology which determined the data collection and the sampling. Research was cited in examining the measures of validity and reliability as well as in determining the need for this type of research. It is the soundness of the methodology chosen for the purpose of a study, and the clarity of articulation of the method that permits the reader to enter into the discussion of the results and the conclusion. Unless both researcher and reader enter the discussion with the same understanding of purpose and method, there can be no meaningful dialogue of results.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the information gathered by the research and to examine the experience of coming to a career decision as defined for this study. Three main parts will comprise this chapter. First, because the parameters of phenomenological research include the researcher as an integral part of his/her research (Valle & King, 1978), the role of the interviewer in this research is addressed. Secondly, a full discussion of the themes and categories that emerged from the analysis of the protocols will be presented. Thirdly, the themes and categories will be discussed in relation to the original question and to the current research in career decision making.

The Role of the Interviewer

There is no process of enlightenment, discipline, or purification by virtue of which the critical thinker can escape all bias, since to escape these would amount to an escape from one's situation in the world. (Schroder, 1987, p. 65)

Phenomenological research accepts the biases of the researcher as an integral part of the research;

the objectivity in terms of his/her experience of what is being observed. Literature that discusses research methodology cautions that it is futile to attempt to eliminate the effects of the researcher on the research. Instead, it suggests, that the researcher should begin by examining his/her own biases and reasons for doing the research (Agnew & Brown, 1989; From, 1971; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

My own biases stem from my practice as a high school counsellor where much of my time was spent helping students with educational and career planning. I observed a discrepancy between what students said about themselves in individual counselling and what happened in the guidance programs. Furthermore, I noted that students did not generally act on the results of guidance activities in either educational or vocational planning.

When I entered the master's program in counselling psychology, I was challenged to look at how I had come to make that decision. I had acted on what I believed were my strengths; what others had confirmed to be my strengths. I had not made use of the tools I had taught students to use in guidance classes. At the

same time, as a mother of two young adults I watched them struggle with their career decisions. Certainly career decision making has been more than just a passing interest for me. I realized that I was vulnerable to reading into the transcripts more than what was there (From, 1971). Therefore I kept two journals. The first I completed as soon after the interview as possible, writing down everything that I remembered about the interview. The second I wrote several days later, reflecting on how I felt about that interview and my role in it.

The journals became the initial dialogue. For example, I soon began to observe that I experienced some anxiety during each interview although the source of anxiety seemed to vary. On the tapes that anxiety was not apparent; but in reading the transcripts I observed myself stuttering, repeating words and on occasion making a comment that seemed "chatty". The second interview let me check how the narrators felt about this. It seemed that my personal anxiety did not detract from their ability to tell their stories. Most of the narrators responded to my question about my techniques as Janice had:

I thought it was good. It set me off, got me going. Instead of asking something really general, having to bring it all out. [It seemed] more organized that way and then I could add anything I wanted to it too.

Just as most of the participants stated that they had learned a lot about themselves just by telling their story, I learned a lot about myself. I came to see that in spite of all the theories about human actions, the individual person is truly unique. I learned that I was not always able to stand back and just listen; that on occasion I entered into the experience of the individual. It was for those moments that the dialogue in my journal became especially important. It prevented me from misinterpreting the narrators' experiences and cautioned me to be vigilant in the use of their words when describing the experiences. It was also important for that reason to have built into the research method a second interview.

Finally, I found that the narrative still elicits inside of me the curious child that can't wait to hear what comes next and hopes that the story will never end. When it finally ended, it was with a sense of regret that I packed up my tape recorder and went home. This feeling was most underlined by the story of James.

James phoned several times between the two interviews and once more after the final interview in order to share the good news of a happy ending to his story. Each phone call for me was like an instalment of a serial movie. I had secretly hoped that the story would have a happy ending and when the last phone call came to let me know he had made it, I was more than just elated. Each of the volunteers became more than just narrators. They became co-researchers, interested in me and my work just as I was interested in them and their work; people who had for a short time invited me into the intimacy of their world trusting that this intimacy would be respected.

Theme Clusters and Categories

Definition of Theme Clusters and Categories

The purpose of transcribing the protocols was to identify and integrate the descriptions of the experience of making a career choice "into an exhaustive description" (Valle & King, 1978, p.60) that would lead to the meaning of the experience, or what is called, the fundamental structure. While experience is idiographic, the structure of experience

is pluralistic. To reveal the structure of the experience of making a career decision in early adulthood, situational experiences, or "meaning units" (Girgi, 1975), were first identified and then sorted into "clusters of themes" (Colaizzi, 1978). For example, one theme cluster was made up of 14 different sentences, expressing 14 individual meaning units, taken from 6 narratives. All of the sentences had one thing in common, that the individual believed in him/herself and the decision that he/she had made. The aggregate formulated meaning for these sentences was stated as "Making a decision to commit to a career program is affirming a belief in oneself." Therefore I titled the theme cluster as "Decision making: believing in yourself." In all, 40 theme clusters emerged from the readings of the protocols. Gurwitsch (1964) and Linschoten (1968) wrote that individual experience is one-sided. By grouping the contents of a particular experience into theme clusters, the one-sidedness of individual experience is eliminated and we can begin to speak of an inclusive experience.

The theme clusters were then collapsed to reflect the nucleus of the experience. This step reduced the

data to their most fundamental form, devoid of individual presentation. For example, one category is named "Volition". This category is made up of seven theme clusters: 1. Choice is a personal thing, 2. Individuals experience internal and external pressures to make a choice, 3. Career choice is difficult because there are so many different kinds of careers and so little knowledge about them, 4. Personal descriptions of a career choice, 5. Expressing need for personal guidance in making a choice, 6. Relating high school experiences to career choice, and 7. Giving advice to others about making a career choice. While each of the theme clusters dealt with a different aspect of making a career decision, the core of the experience stripped of all modes of presentation was concerning "volition". In this way, theme clusters were reduced to 11 categories which were titled to reflect the nucleus of the experience (Appendix VI). The original words that the narrators used and which are the basis for forming the categories, were then examined to answer the questions that lead to the structure: "What does this statement tell us about the experience?" and "How is the statement framed?"

An Examination of the Categories and Theme Clusters

In this section the categories are named and discussed in terms of the theme clusters that make up each category. Each sub-heading reflects one or more categories. The dialogue focuses on the two questions that lead to the structure of the experience.

The Relationship of Self to the Decision

This category was comprised of eight theme clusters that focused on the individual coming to a decision. The theme clusters were made up of statements which dealt with the concept of believing in oneself; and with the understanding of one's history, (when and how "career" became part of thought and then action). There were also themes about the self in relationship to others, and how well the individuals knew themselves. Still other theme clusters were made up of statements that reflected the narrators' stance on what they wanted in life and the confidence that they felt once they had made the decision. Finally two theme clusters dealt with times of agony and indecision prior to committing to a program and while waiting for a response to the application.

Career decision making is seen as a continuum by young adults. While some of the respondents attempted to define a beginning, the memories do not seem so much a factor in the experience of deciding but rather part of the frame delimiting the scope of the experience.

For example, Wayne reflected on his beginnings:

I've never decided I'm going to do computers. I've just always known that I was going to do computers. Soon as I saw my first computer, I just **knew** I'm a computer person.

In a similar statement Janice recalls her early memories:

One event that I remember is when I got my tonsils out. The nurses were really nice and I think that's where I first made my decision I wanted to be a nurse.

Just as these statements did not provide a sense of a decision having been made at that time, subsequent statements did not imply that choosing an occupation was the end of career decision making. The commitment to their respective programs was very real; the implementation of their decision continues to unfold into the future. Mary knew that business is the area for her. Still she had no definite plans beyond working for a few years.

I'm not sure. I'll work for a few years and then I'll get my M.B.A. That is, my bachelors will

just be administration, it's just a step towards, [my goal]...My real goal is my masters in business administration, but Law is always something I considered. I looked into doing a joint M.B.A. and my Law degree, 'cause you can do that at U.B.C. Ahm, I was looking all through the options. I'm still not sure I'll do it. I think it's just something that's always been there but it's nothing like the business is to me now.

Wayne replying to a question of whether he sees himself doing computers for the rest of his life, stated:

Ahm, it might be. I, guess it probably will be. I enjoy it now, so I don't see why I shouldn't enjoy it in five, ten years. What I want to do is to ah become a writer, just like part time and try to do that because I do like writing.

The descriptions of the jobs they would actually do at the end of their training were rendered in broad and sweeping terms. Bill spoke about some of his future plans which may include politics:

The path of business is sort of the mainstay. As my life will go on, my career will go on. That'll be the central focal point whether I will take a branch off that periodically or a branch that leads me away from it completely, I'm happy with that.

For Janice going into nursing fulfilled a childhood dream; yet the unfolding of that dream was told in words that implied that her decision was open to change:

I really want to travel. You could go and do nursing anywhere, there's such a shortage of them. ... There's so many different things you could do

with it [nursing], I think. You know, if I wasn't happy with it I could switch without getting out of it altogether.

It is this continuum of a decision with non-definable beginnings and non-definable ends that Linschoten (1968) calls a "continuous stream". The narrators' stories defied asking the question of "When did you come to this decision and what will you be at the end of the program?" and instead forced me to ask "How did you come to this decision and what expectations do you have for your future that this career program will lead you towards?"

While there was an attempt by Wayne and Janice to place their decisions into their history, for most of the narrators the need to make a career decision began about grade 11. Part of the stimulation for dealing with career plans at that grade level may have come from school guidance programs that the respondents either participated in, or were cognizant of being available to them in their respective schools. In some cases, as for example, in the narratives of Bill and Surinder, parents also became involved.

Without exception, each of the narrators experienced the need to face career decision making

between grades 10 and 12 even though a number of them did not make a commitment to a career program until after they had already entered post-secondary education. Joyce states "I first started considering careers about grade 11."

Mary believed that

by grade 11 if I wasn't enjoying sciences I probably shouldn't go into it for the rest of my life. ...All of a sudden in grade 12 it just hit me like a lightning bolt.

Surinder explored physiotherapy in grade 12 as an option because her parents "want their children to have made a career decision." And Bill recalled that while he began toying with the idea of business in grade 10

by the end of grade 12 I had decided that I was going into [a] more liberal area of business, dealing with people rather than with numbers.

Each of the respondents spoke in similar terms with the exception of Wayne and James who believed that their decision had always been there, even though they were not sure how their interests would be implemented as a career choice until they were in grade 12.

There seemed to be explicit or implicit recognition by the individual respondents that the decision to enter their respective program was done for themselves and by themselves. Part of the experience

of committing to a career program included an understanding that they had autonomously made that decision. No one made the decision for them. And at some level, they recognized the aspect of aloneness that making a decision brings with it. Reflecting on her choice, Mary spoke of that aloneness when she made her decision.

But really nobody in the business world or anything like that. Never had anybody that worked in business. I mean my dad does, but you know, he never said anything. But nobody was there saying 'Oh this would be a really good idea, this is what it's like.' Nobody. I just sort of entered it.

Joyce echoed those words, "No one forced me to do it", as did Susan, "It was really all from myself", and James:

Everything I did, I did by myself. There wasn't anyone in my family as such that worked with electronics.

There was also a tension between the need to be affirmed in the choice and the need to have made the choice by oneself. Mary articulated this tension as follows:

The only doubts I had [about going into business] was because my dad didn't accept it when I told him I was going into business. He just wasn't going to speak to me. ... It took a lot to stand up to my dad and say 'Hey I want to take this. This is what I'm enrolling in. I'm paying for it. You don't have control over it.' ... I obviously

wanted it enough to stand up to something I had never done before and I think that emphasized how much I wanted it. And it was, you know a relief to me once I got it. But it was even more of a relief to me once dad accepted it and realized that's what I should be.

Susan phrased it more succinctly. In relating a story about a fellow student at Ryerson who was unhappy in the program he was in, she states:

You know that's your life. No matter what your parents--yeah sure, you want to please them because they are supporting you financially or emotionally, but they're not going to be around for your entire life, and you have to make a decision that you're going to be happy with and that you can live with.

Even with very supportive parents, making a career decision presents difficulties for young adults. Surinder spoke highly of her well educated parents and their desire for their children also to have a good career. But she continued:

My parents never influenced me as to what I want, what I should do. And sometimes I got a little frustrated because I didn't get any--they left it all to me. ...Ahm and I sort of wanted some assistance. But no, they left it all up to me.

Parental help was not always seen as desirable. Bill, who felt he was pushed into business by his parents and his school, spoke about what was happening to him and to some of his friends who also had experienced a similar push. Being pushed into a career

direction was expressed in terms of feelings of self-doubt.

Students that are my age or a little younger or a little older are finally finding out 'Hey maybe this is not what I want'. I've noticed a lot of my friends and their grades have slipped and they're sort of stepping back and become very disillusioned 'cause they've always along the way been told 'Yes, you'll do very well in this, you'll be very happy with this'; been told but never really felt. ...Some of them may be strong enough to overcome that and keep on with their direction. ...I'm not saying what I did [change faculties to one that permitted him the flexibility of courses which he sought] is right. Ah, some people could say, well, I gave up on my initial direction. I was too weak.

The narrators also described the experience of making a career decision in terms of self-knowledge. In their stories they became three dimensional persons with a history, with values stemming out of family interactions and with personal resources for achieving their goals. Susan gave a very complete picture of her childhood and teenage years.

Art is a really important thing in my life. ...I've went to plays overseas, I've gone to art galleries. She [mother] has memberships in England and in Ontario, in Germany. ...And then as we grew up we were always taken to the ballet, always taken to concerts. She's [mother] had memberships to series everywhere, [and] always to art galleries. Every country that we went [to] when we go to Europe once or twice a year [we went] to the art galleries. There are so many exhibitions that I've been to. I don't remember,

but I suppose somewhere in the back of my mind it still keeps that feeling going.

Wayne revealed himself as a person who understood himself in terms of his goals. Replying to a question on whether his future aims were those that his parents might have wanted for him, he stated that he didn't think they had a goal in mind for him and:

even if they did have a goal, I wouldn't really want to pursue, even want to **know** what that goal is. It's up to me what my goal is. It doesn't matter what my parents think my goal should be. A lot of parents, when a kid's ahm graduating or ahm finishing like their grade 10, their parents will come with them and they'll both sit down and they'll pick out their electives, but I always picked out mine myself.

Later in the interview he continued:

I think that career decisions should be pretty obvious. A job like Safeway [he is employed there on week-ends] is not a career decision. It's a job. That's it. ...I think that you should go in[to] expanded fields. It's obvious you should like go into engineering, you should go into sciences, computer sciences, engineering and electronics.

James's self-knowledge exhibited itself in a genuine appreciation of his interests. Over and over again in different words, he would say:

I always start these little projects that start small and then get fancier. I just get an idea and then just expand it. I like to work on electronics. I get more structured as I go along actually. ...I actually apply all the stuff I've been messing around with to practical applications

and it's nice being able to do that. Another good thing about engineering is the whole point of it is the definition of the faculty, it's called applied science. You're applying the scientific stuff to actual practise which is why I like it.

While they were not able to detail the job descriptions for the careers that they had chosen to pursue, all of the respondents were very articulate on what they liked or did not like in work. Surinder stated her needs quite specifically:

I didn't want to go into business because it seems like you know, everyone is going into business. I thought I wanted to do something different. ...I didn't want to do any typical jobs, right. It's like you tell someone about my job now, they say 'What?'

She described the short term history of the program that she is in and continued:

It's a very open field [Occupational Health & Safety]. It's not restricted to...working in a hospital,...You can work in a mill, department store, a hospital, municipality, private industries, just about anywhere where there's employees and work and activities involved you need a safety officer. I like the thing that you can grow, that you can move up the ladder.

There were other things that made this course of studies attractive for Surinder. She wanted something that made her parents happy, and she wanted "a science job; a professional job in nice surroundings. This gives [her] both."

James who was very focused and sure that electronic engineering would meet his needs and interests, seemed also to be practical in his reasons for choosing that career:

I want to enjoy what I do. Like there's no point taking a program that you're not interested in. My two main things I enjoy are computers and electronics. And basically I want to go to university, because, although whether or not it may be so or not, people tend to regard university degrees on a better standard than they do sort of technology degrees like at B.C.I.T. and stuff. They have good programs but people just in general feel university degrees are of higher standard.

And like Wayne, James saw electronics, computers and engineering as the way to ensure a future job.

I'm not going to be out of a job if I graduate with an electrical degree. That's another reason for **doing** it because you don't want to go into a program that's going to be obsolete.

While agonizing about the decision seemed to be part of the experiences of a number of narrators, Joyce was able to speak about this most clearly:

I had a tough time actually deciding that [medicine] was what I wanted to do. In this program in particular you have to go through a lot of loopholes to get to. So I was half sure and I started to do all the entrance requirements, put my application in and everything else, but to come to the actual decision itself I went through a lot of analyzing and finding if it would be worth my time and my effort and I came to the decision it would. Even when I was first considering it, I would say which would be about five years before I

entered, in grade 11, I was always considering the other aspects of it and whether my personality would be suited for it. I wasn't assured, as assured of myself. And at the time all along I kept working toward it, the questions became more 'Do I have the time and effort to do that? Is that what I want my career to be in?' and more decisions about personal happiness than working towards it [entrance to medical school]....I went through up and down times of indecision.

Joyce was also able to verbalize the feelings she had once she had made the decision.

Once you get started, the process is provoked by action and there is a need to make a decision and a need to act. ...When I had stated that [career goal] to someone else, it kind of confirmed it for myself. ...It was such a positive thing when you do start moving.

Having settled on a career path seemed to empower the decision makers to face future decisions with some confidence. Joyce continued by speaking about how she would use the skills she had learned and the self-confidence she had gained that would enable her to make further decisions.

I would certainly make big decisions [entering medical school] like that [using a decision model] again, whether I was going to buy a certain house or not or something like that. I think when something is more subjective like when I'm going to marry or questions such as that, I would use more of a personal basis than that. For large decisions that affect your life and are not so much on a human basis I certainly would use the same method. It's another good thing that I learned and was encouraged to do was to act. And I think I would encourage other people to do that

as well because we can become stuck in our thoughts and stuck in our patterns of indecisions... I think in the preparation in the decision making process I learned that I can do things. I know that I can pursue things and be active. ...I also did learn a great deal about prioritizing and how to make decisions and how to express myself.

The narrators spoke about the experience of deciding as something that made them different from their peers, many of whom had not yet chosen a career; but they did not think of themselves as special for having done so. Susan observed that many young people made a decision after leaving high school to take a couple of years off, found a job and just stayed there.

I think a lot of people go through ups and downs. I don't think many people are completely focused, and a very small part of the population I'd say is extremely focused and wants to do something and continue with that straight along. I think people go through a lot of changes. That's just even from experience from my group of friends. I'm probably the only one that was, (even though I had my ups and downs) I was the only one that was always wanting to do that and focused on setting my goal and then reaching it.

Wayne who had "always known" he was going into computers seemed quite pragmatic when he told his story on how he came to enrol in the C.I.S. (computer information systems) program at Kwantlen College:

It's surprising. I would have thought that there would be a lot of demand for the C.I.S., but there's not really that much competition. ...I

don't think that there's that much information really about C.I.S. program. I don't think that many people know about it. And I don't think that many people know how easy it is to get into these kinds of courses. ...They [young adults] don't know where to get the information. I know that if I hadn't gone through Maureen I might not have seen the C.I.S. program. In fact, there was a good chance I would've missed it.

The experience of making a career commitment in young adulthood included the experience of universalizing, that is, understanding the decision in a context that extended beyond themselves and beyond the single situation. Wayne spoke about his relationship with friends who were already attending the C.I.S. program; Susan believed that the support of her family kept her focused on her goals, a support not enjoyed by many of her peers; Mary compared her decision to enter into business with her decision to enter into the co-op program; while James saw the relationship of making his career decision and moving out from home as an extension towards his independence.

Volition

This category is comprised of five theme clusters. There is the realization that choice is a personal thing, an understanding of what one values as well as

the realization that internal and external pressures are part of decision making. There is realization that the difficulty in making a career choice often stems from the many different choices and the lack of information about them. Other theme clusters dealt with perceived needs for guidance and the advice that they would give to their peers who are also making career choices. And finally, one theme cluster dealt with their description of the career choice that they had made.

Career choice is a personal act. In reading the stories of the decision makers one is made aware of the many personal aspects that contribute to a decision: individual values, understanding oneself, believing in oneself, the degree of awareness that the individual has of the pressures and influences exerted on him/her and the manner in which these pressures are handled as well as the influences as that impact on career choice. Mary spoke about the importance of doing what is best for oneself:

I don't think anybody should be influenced in any direction until that person has looked at all the options....You know, I sometimes wonder, I could have missed that opportunity to totally take business....I think you see people in sciences not doing well and it's not because they can't do

well, it's because they don't want to be there. And I think a lot of people go on when things are wrong and they don't change that. And I think people need some guidance in there to understand why perhaps they're not doing so well, and **not** because they're failures in life but because their heart isn't in that. I think everyone has their areas. I really believe that. ...Everybody has their spot. And I mean **their** spot, and not business or science....I don't think you should listen to the social pressures of what the degrees are about. ...I mean people are always going to have their opinions but I think you should be proud of yours.

Susan reflected on the difficulty of making choices about careers because of the social pressures for material success which seem to have a strong influence on young people. However she is unequivocal about making a career decision for personal fulfilment, and not because of social expectations:

The standard of living everyone wants to achieve now days. The young people, everyone, wants to be this and that because they're going to make that kind of money and that's not what it's all about. I think it's about personal fulfillment. ...You have to make a decision that you're going to be happy with.

Mary echoed this sentiment when she answered my question on what she would want to say to someone else making a career decision.

I think you have to believe what you want first and foremost. I mean there were points when there was other people like dad or somebody [that made me doubt whether I should be doing this] but I had to answer to myself before I'd answer to anyone

else, and I'm driven by what I want not what other people want for me. ...There is a big difference what and where people expect you to be and where you want to be.

There was universal agreement that a career choice had to be made by each person individually. And while the narrators did not use the vocabulary of "values" or "self-esteem", it was very clear that that was what they spoke about. They wanted careers that met their expectations for life style, and contributed to personal fulfillment and happiness. They recognized the difficulty in making choices because "There's so much we don't even know about. So many different kinds of career and jobs. I think it's really difficult" (Susan). But the advice that they would give to their peers was not to permit others to influence them, to leave opportunities for exploration, and to get in touch with themselves so that they know what they really want.

Pressures Exerted by School, Peers, Parents and Others

The three categories that are discussed under this heading are "Outside Influences", "The Role of Family" and "The Experience of High-School".

1. Outside Influences was comprised of three theme clusters: outside influences of a general nature such as finances and location of institute; self-imposed or external pressures resulting from demands of people or experience; the impact of important others (not including parents) on the decision to commit to a career program.

2. The Role of the Family included five theme clusters: family events, family values, siblings, supportive statements made by parents and other family members and non-supportive statements made by parents and other family members.

3. The Experience of High-School included the theme clusters of peer pressure, direct and indirect influences exerted on individuals by their counsellors, teachers, courses or programs, and school career guidance programs.

It was evident from the narrations that young adults perceive pressure from three distinct sources: their parents, their peers and school (teachers, counsellors, courses). Less evident in the stories were the pressures of a social nature--cost of education, expectations for material success, or

conforming to social class values, although these were discussed in terms of family or in terms of peers.

Bill spoke openly about the external pressures he perceived as part of his experience in high school:

I think that external pressures guide a person in high school much more heavily than internal direction. I think that a lot of teachers, parents are very worried about what the child feels inside, where that person, that student wants to go. And by worrying about that, they inadvertently put pressure on to create a direction within that person. So that creates an external push.

Positive and negative influences were part of the pressures experienced in school by virtually all narrators. Some of the pressures were subtle while others were less subtle. They came in the form of supportive or non-supportive teachers or counsellors; others grew out of the courses or programs that individuals had been enrolled in. The impressions that the teachers and counsellors made on their students stood out in the narratives because they were at the extremes of a continuum. For example, Susan spoke warmly about meeting with her counsellor in grade 10:

I remember sitting with my counsellor and she said 'When you get to high school there's this course being offered in grade 12, an interior design course, that you might find interesting. And a

very good school you should go to would be Ryerson, if you decide to go on after high school.

Surinder experienced a negative encounter with her counsellor:

Personally I went and spoke to a counsellor in grade 11 and he said that I sort of couldn't do it [go to university]. I thought 'You're wrong. ...You're mistaken.' And he goes 'It's gonna be a lot of work and a lot of studying.' And I thought 'Well if that's what you think, right. You don't know me. I know me. Whether I can do it or not is up to me.' So I found counsellors to be no help at all....He was sort of the career counsellor [at the school], but he was very discouraging. He always sort of pointed out the negative things first.

Similar extremes were cited in relation to teachers.

Susan spoke angrily about her high school math teacher:

It was a math teacher with me. He said if you don't get this test, you may as well forget it and just be a berry picker. That's just the wrong attitude to take.

While Joyce spoke glowingly of a Biology teacher:

I had one teacher in particular who influenced me a lot. He was my biology teacher, Mr. B. and he was actually a lot of a father figure for me because he had very high standards...and he expected incredible amounts from me and I always, always came through because, because of him really.

Programs and courses were seen in similar extremes as either being a positive experience or a negative one. Early in the interview, Bill referred to the

impact that the private school he attended had on his entering business as a career:

I think that molding [business] was mostly due to the fact of the private school that I was at. Most of the kids there came from very wealthy families. I was on a full scholarship, that's the only reason why I was able to afford to go there. But most of the kids there were from wealthy families that were very business oriented.

Later he became more intense and specific in describing the "molding":

Starting in grade 10 we had a career counsellor that would take us in to do tests on computers about aptitude, or written tests too. It's quite intensive actually. It was almost a course in itself. ...Nobody told you should go into this area, but when a computer flashed on the screen that all your attributes and interests lie in a desk job, then you're going to go 'Wow, I guess that's what I like.' ...It's something you can come home with and say 'I'm gonna be this' and your parents are like (he gasps) 'That's wonderful.' That was the strongest direction creator in high school, that course; in some ways very manipulative. ...And I think that's very bad.

For Wayne and Joyce who both took advanced courses in school, the influence of the courses was more subtle.

Wayne said:

I took as many enriched courses as I could just for the challenge 'cause I didn't find school really that challenging.

Within the arena of the school, the pressures of peers were strong. Mary stated:

I've learned a lot since high school. I was a little peer pressure person too, you know. It was like 'Oh my friends are doing that, you do that.' And you don't resist in high school. You spend five days a week with the same people and that's your world. And you don't oppose to that. ...I think there's a lot of influence and the people in high school...are so confused anyway and they're so used to performing to peer pressure and stuff like that, that it's a difficult time for them to make a decision.

Susan grew passionate as she spoke about going for her goal while a girlfriend gave up completing high school:

I think a lot of people think if you fail once you can't do it over again. I have a girlfriend who hasn't even graduated from high school. It gets me so upset. I say 'Do it! Who cares if you're 23 and you have to take a high school course. You've got to care. It's for yourself.' ...If you're in high school it's always the peer pressure but you have to overcome that at one point in your life, and you better do it soon or you're not getting anywhere. You're stuck.

And Wayne speaking of his friends some of whom were already in C.I.S. program, demonstrated subtle peer pressure:

They're mostly like straight 'A' type of people that I hung around with. That's another reason why I took enriched courses. Most of my friends that were there [in school] were also in enriched courses and I liked them. I don't like people who like, goof off and that kind of thing. I like people who can understand it and who can understand what I'm talking about. You know, who can understand me.

This need to be understood by his peers was echoed by James. James observed how he felt as a first year

engineering student:

You will find that the majority of engineers do hold the same sort of values in terms of political and stuff like that. ...I've talked about this to other people, other engineers, and it's sort of...nice to be able to discuss and everyone sort of agrees with you.

Likemindedness is experienced differently from peer pressure but is nevertheless a subtle director of choice.

While only Joyce included in her narrative the remembrance of a family event that she believed contributed to her career development, all of the volunteers spoke about family values and statements made by parents as part of their experience of making their decision. The narrators did not evaluate the statements made by their parents as supportive or non-supportive, but both those themes became evident in the reading. Parental influence was very real and very apparent in all of the narratives. Yet one cannot say after examining the stories that any one aspect of family influence is greater than another. Family values were not represented more often in the stories than parental statements and supportive parental statements did not seem to have greater or lesser influence than non-supportive parental statements.

Bill spoke clearly on the values espoused and practised in his family:

My family was very, even though they didn't have a lot of money, they were very money oriented. I think working hard and making money were a higher priority than doing something for self-fulfilment. ...I was interested in medicine when I was really in grade eight and grade nine. But because my mother was a nurse, she **pushed** me away from that area, psychologically. She'd come home from work complaining about the doctors, complaining about the hospitals, saying 'This is terrible, this is terrible'. Even though she liked her career, she rarely said anything good about it. I think because of that I was pushed away from that area.

Later, when I asked him how his mother felt about the decision to go into business, Bill returned to the earlier theme of working and making money:

I think my mom was happy that I was going into [business]. It's kind of difficult for my mom. What my mom holds important is working hard. As long as you're working forty hours a day and you're making enough money to keep yourself comfortable and eventually keep your family comfortable, then it really doesn't matter what you're doing...[as long as] I was working hard and not making money on the backs of other people.

Near the end of the interview, Bill made a profound statement that demonstrated the degree of influence he felt from his parents. Discussing what he might do if he had children he stated:

I think the only people I could truly effect [in terms of career choice] would be my own children. And [I would] try early on to keep, to make sure that they have an open mind and never try to **push**

them. I probably even subconsciously push them in the direction that I'd take because if I do become successful, **when** I do become successful, I'll probably [be] just like my father and probably just like my mother and end up **driving** and **pushing** my kids subconsciously in that same direction.

In examining the supportive statements made by Joyce's parents, we are confronted with a picture of a similarly powerful parental influence on this young woman's career path:

Another thing that was very, very important to me was to have something where I would be very independent financially as well as in the work place where I ... could have my own creativity, have my own decision making ability and my own authority really. I think that was something that was drilled into me from my parents actually because my mother never having a career, she always, from the time when I was very young, encouraged me to have something where I could support myself so that I didn't have to depend on another person. ...So that was always instilled in me from very young. ...[My father] didn't encourage me so much there but he encouraged the other aspects of it where you be your own boss, you be in control of yourself.

Joyce continued that her parents did not really encourage her specifically to be a doctor as they saw the negative sides of that profession as well, but:

that was always kind of my profession. That was my choice, and they always respected that. But they didn't [force me to] think...that or encourage me specifically to be that. ...that's what gave the job aspects that they wanted to give me [financial independence and being one's own boss]. That's [in medicine] where I found them.

Later on in the interview I asked her how her parents felt now that she had actually made it into medical school. She seemed to sparkle:

I think they're quite overjoyed and proud. Really proud. My mother just drives me totally crazy because she won't just say I'm a student, even when she's talking to the shopping cart boy at Safeway, 'Oh my daughter is a **medical** student'. And my father has a great deal of pride but he keeps it more to himself. He never brags to us but I'm sure he does it to his friends.

Janice seemed to experience mixed messages. The overall feeling was not supportive. But the parental presence was very real:

My parents, they kinda told me to go that way too, if that's what I liked because I did take all the sciences in school; kinda said that I had a knack for it; kinda encouraging me. They're supportive. They really state their opinion. We have a lot of conflict with that. Arguments. But they're supportive with this.

However, later on when I asked whether she felt that her parents might have had a different goal in mind for her she continued:

well, they kinda always wanted me to take more business courses like computers and typing and stuff like that....it's because my sister took all that. She is a legal secretary and I guess they thought that was a pretty good occupation. Sometimes my mom says 'Oh if it's too hard, you can be a legal secretary or something'....

Even when parental presence was actively fought

against as in the case of Wayne, the parental presence was an obvious part of the experience of making the career decision. When asked how he thought his parents felt about his decision to enter the C.I.S. program, Wayne stated:

They're happy with it. Not much else. Like they didn't take me out to dinner or anything, but they're happy about it.

Then he seemed to almost defend himself on why he did not wish to invite his parents' ideas even for purposes of discussing his career goal:

I just didn't want any help from my parents. I want those decisions up to me. I didn't really want the guidance. If I was going to do it, I was going to do it by myself.

It became quite clear in reading the stories that the narrators were able to express what had been helpful and what had been lacking for them as they made their decisions. The experience was worded in terms of the support they received and the support that they, in retrospect, would have benefitted by. What was not helpful was directiveness that did not allow for experimentation; whether directiveness came in the form of career counselling, parental statements or educational planning. What was needed was the chance

to try out different things and opportunities to speak to people in various career fields.

Bill believed that the intensity of the career guidance he received as part of his high school experience was too directive and even manipulative. Mary who decided in grade 11 that if she didn't like the sciences by then, she should change her options, found both her parents and her counsellor non-supportive of her desire to explore other options:

I decided in my grade 12, I think I had ...four electives (what they were trying to get me to do was Biology 11, Biology 12, Physics 12 and Chemistry 12. That was originally set out for me [by] the counsellors and my parents)...I took Chemistry 12 and Biology 11 and then I took my accounting and my marketing, and I decided I was going to do that for me. ...Anybody who is decent student isn't really given the electives,...so I think it would be nice to see in the high school people not being always considered stupid and not an intelligent academic person if you didn't take all your sciences.

What Joyce found helpful was learning how to prioritize her interests and needs:

I would suggest to someone making big decisions and who are unsure about what they want, is to write down what they want and to list them in order and to see what they do want, and then write down the careers they think would satisfy that and go through them systematically. I did that actually under the guidance of someone who taught me and it really helped.

For Susan working in related fields and talking to

people was most effective:

Talk to, maybe work in the work force or get involved with something that is similar to what they [young people who are thinking about a career choice] want. ...I think it has to be personal. ...I think it really has to do with just talking; a lot of contact with people in the area. [It's] worth going and exploring it yourself.

Surinder echoed the idea of talking to people and working in the work force to get ideas on what one wants to do:

I think the only thing that can help you is if you go out into the work force and you see. Well, suppose you wanted to be a doctor or something, you should go out and see what they do for two or three days or even more if you've got the chance and that's the only way you're going to find out if you really like it.

When I asked Wayne how he might have helped someone come to a decision, he was, at first, very adamant about not making decisions for anyone; that it was very personal and needed to be made on a personal level.

Then he went on:

First I'd ask him his interests and then I'd ask him his educational history and I'd ask him of course his dreams and stuff like that and get him talking. Talk about himself. ...And try to help generate ideas through that. It's always ideas. You give them ideas and there's going to be something that's gonna pop up that they're going to see and that they're going to like.

Over and over the respondents seemed to make statements that indicated that they were not served by people

giving directions, but would have been served by people helping them seek direction. People, not a program, not a computer was what was desired. In replying to the question on whether they had received career planning help in high school, all but Wayne and James had, and without exception the major tool had been a computer program which none of them really related to. Joyce described her career guidance:

I did a little Choice [CHOICES] Career booklet that didn't help me at all. Actually I did those in grade 10 I think. And I got funeral director which was on everybody's and I actually found with the choices it gave me it didn't, I didn't find it helpful at all. In some ways at that point in time a special person rather than an instrument of some kind would really have been more influential I think.

Mary echoed the experience:

I took the CHOICES program and it was millions of choices 'cause I had the grades. I did that in grade 10. Other than that, no I never did get help of any kind.

Surinder too experienced the CHOICES program:

In high school we had some CHOICES program. I didn't like the outcome of it. I thought this thing just doesn't know what I'm about.

And Bill spoke vehemently against the program:

They had a computer program. I think it gives them [students] way too much direction. At that age you're trying to grasp at anything you can get a hold of.

In examining the statements made by these young people, the observation can be made that the type of career guidance that was experienced by them was at best unsatisfactory to their needs and at worst alienating. It seems that Sloan's (1986) criticism of computerized counselling is validated by the narrators in this study who had experienced this method of career counselling.

The Experience of Applying and Being Accepted

This section deals with two categories: "Applying to the Program" and "Feelings and Issues about Being Accepted".

1. Applying to the Program was made up of two theme clusters, one describing the hurdles that individuals had to overcome in order to enter the program; and two, the fears that they experienced in applying and waiting for acceptance to their program.

2. Feelings and Issues about Being Accepted was made up of three theme clusters that included descriptions of the narrators' respective programs, the feelings experienced by their positive outcomes and other issues surrounding being accepted.

Part of the experience of making the decision was tied to making application to the career program and waiting to be accepted. For a number of the narrators this meant overcoming the hurdles set by the different institutions to ensure that certain criteria were met for entrance to a program. Joyce had to meet the rigors of the admission criteria of the medical faculty at U.B.C., Mary faced the fierce competition to enter the Business faculty at S.F.U., Surinder had to overcome the bias against her age for the program of her choice at B.C.I.T.¹, Susan was forced to upgrade her marks and her portfolio to enter Ryerson and Janice had to endure the long waiting lists for students wishing to enter the nursing program at Douglas College. They were able to describe the restrictions

¹Surinder: There's only limited enrolment into the program and they're all mature students, even though the book [course calendar] says you need only grade 12. But everyone's got more than grade 12; they've all got their Bachelor of Science already. ...

And I said "Well, you know, I can't see what the problem is. Why aren't I being accepted into the program?" He [department head] said "Because of your age."

Interviewer: Age?

Surinder: Yeah, I'm the youngest in the class. The age in there is much older.

to their respective programs and seemed accepting of what needed to be done in order to enter. What was found to be frustrating to various individuals was those times or those instances when they experienced opposition to being accepted that was outside of their perceived ability to do anything about. For example, when Susan was faced with needing to upgrade her high school marks in order to enter Ryerson, she went ahead and did it. When she was placed on a waiting list following her interview, she felt anxious and at loose ends:

I just don't really know where I'm going to go if I don't get accepted, where I could take a fine arts program if I should [pause] I had an offer to go to Germany and we know a man who could get me a part time apprenticeship type job with interior design. I have that option but I really would like to stay in school. ...There were 700 applicants, 240 people were chosen from the 700 applicants to be interviewed. And then some 60 are chosen from the 240, so I already considered myself quite fortunate to have a spot on the waiting list. I stand a fairly good chance to get in. The lady who heads the department [said] that I would most likely have [gotten in] if I worked on my portfolio. ...So I'm, quite confident I would [get in] next year but I would just like to get on with it now. I'm just really, really prepared.

James, who had completed his first year engineering was now waiting to get into the specialty area of his choice. He was feeling very vulnerable

because of the rigid criteria set by the engineering faculty:

The whole thing seems to be geared on trying to get rid of people. That's the most unsettling thing. ...It's unsettling because you're not sure what to do. You're not used to being trying to get rid of, you're used to being in a course where people want you in the course because you're used to getting high marks. ...And like right now I'm sitting. I passed O.K. I've been admitted into second year etcetera. ...Now some programs are more popular than others. Some have less space than others because of facilities etcetera. ...It's a question of how popular it [electrical] is this year, how much space they have. [I won't know] 'till the end of this week [whether I've been accepted]. Now I'm not interested in anything other than electrical. That's the whole point I went into U.B.C. engineering was to take electrical.

Frustrations such as those quoted above were experienced by all the respondents with the exception of Wayne who expressed surprise on how easy it was to get into the program of his choice; probably because, as he stated, few people seemed to know about that program. On the whole, the experience of committing to a career program brings with it elements of personal distress that seems to be rooted in that part of the process where the individual is unable to exert any personal influence or power and where the outcome of the process has direct impact on the individual.

The experience of applying and waiting to be accepted to the career program of choice was framed in terms that spoke of facing personal fears. Acceptance was framed in terms of personal validation. Individual fears varied. For some of the young adults the fears were related to issues of self worth; while for others the fears were not knowing what they might do if they were not accepted. Still other individuals were concerned with work, leaving family and generally trying to make ends meet financially. Both Susan and Joyce expressed feelings of personal doubt and inadequacy. Susan stated:

I didn't apply for the school [when she visited Ryerson in grade 12] because one of the ladies in admission told me that I would have to have straight B's in my grade 12 courses. ...I wish now that she would have not said that because I was so scared. I should have just applied and perhaps I would have gotten my interview and would not have been accepted but at least I would have had that extra year to put together a better portfolio. But then I didn't have enough confidence in myself.

Joyce also seemed to fear applying:

I think certainly with this [the application] in particular there was a lot of fear. Fear that I wouldn't be accepted. Fear that I would be a failure, because it's such a competitive program and it is such a huge thing to go for. And always I was fighting with, I think, a sense of inadequacy because it's a very intricate application form. ...You have to find three

people to write about you that are professionals, that are people who know you and care about you. ...It's a big step of believing in yourself. I think I was hiding an inadequacy feeling the whole time.

In spite of Mary taking the precaution of applying a year before she needed to, she feared the competition to enter commerce. On the heels of the first risk, Mary took a second risk and applied to enter the co-op program. The fear of rejection it seems was not ameliorated by an earlier success. Mary described her waiting time as follows:

There was another stress. It's like 'Why did I even put myself through the stress of not getting in?' Like with school I don't have that much problem with stress. ...but then you have to start applying for the jobs. And I'd apply for the jobs and I never got any interviews or anything. ...I went through a lot of stress going 'I'm not going to get a job. What am I going to do this summer now?' sort of thing. Because I'd finally committed to this program and I wasn't getting any results and I was like 'Oh maybe this was the wrong decision.'...I was just doubting my decision greatly.

James framed his fear in words of feeling trapped:

If I do not get into electrical then ...I don't really have any choice. Like I got into a twenty minute argument with [the secretary] in the Dean's office. They won't let you retake first year courses. [and]...if you do not choose a program as in civil, electrical, etcetera, you are no longer in the faculty. Now you cannot take some just general courses [to] stay in the faculty. You can take second year science courses but there's no guarantee you'll get in [to the

engineering program of your choice] in the following year. There's nothing related to electrical that you could really transfer to without losing a year. So basically I'm no better off than the people that fail now.

Janice's fears were related to her financial situation:

Once I start this program I can't work at all because it's too difficult, about 35 hours a week I'm going to be there. You have practice at the hospital too. So I'm going to have to quit work altogether. ...I live with my parents and everything, but I don't want to always have to ask them for money. It's going to be hard because money's pretty tight.

Acceptance to the program of choice was framed in terms of personal satisfaction and affirmation of self.

Janice spoke with pride:

I feel good about my choice. I know it's really fulfilling. I'll help people and take a lot of joy actually helping people that are hurt; and you can actually see the results, and that's what I like about it. ...I was glad I made this decision 'cause I know what I'm going to be doing in a few years.

For Bill the decision to switch faculties in order to pursue his career goal was framed in words of self-respect:

I think that I'm not as scared of failure as I used to be 'cause I did so badly last year. I brushed very close with complete failure. And I think it was good for me because I learned that there is going to be times when I'm gonna fail and I'm never going to be able to do what I want if I'm always shying away from things from fear of failure.

For Mary, being accepted was framed in terms of excitement about being able to get on with her life instead of worrying about her career:

I was elated. I never had such a moment of joy in my life as when I got that letter. I was running around the house yelling out loud, singing. That really reaffirmed how I was feeling, that [medicine] really was what I wanted to do. ...It's almost as if I know now that I'm in, I know for the next forty years I will be a fairly busy person. And it's going to start right now. And I'm young--I'm twenty-one--and I want to start experiencing my life as I want to live it now because I can't any longer [say], and I have for a number of years said 'Well I'll start it then, when I have this', because I put so much energy into the career aspect of things. And now I realize that I'll never do it if I don't do it now. And it's given me an incredible feeling of action and of ability and of like just throwing off my old lethargic self and it's an amazing, wonderful, freeing feeling to be doing what you want.

This sense of happiness, of freedom to do what one wants was repeated over and over again. Susan spoke of being clear and dedicated now that she was in the program and proved to herself that she could be successful at Ryerson. Mary talked of having shown more determination than a lot of other people she knows and being happy in her program. And James spoke glowingly about being able to now prove that he could do it as the courses he would be taking in his second

year were the courses that had originally lead him to his field of studies. The experience of acceptance it seemed was an affirmation of the individual--that they really knew better than anyone else (as Surinder might have said it) what they were able to do; and to be recognized for that is to gain a sense of freedom which was not there before.

Self Talk, Other Decisions, Observations about Others and Thoughts about the Future

The discussion in this section arises from four categories: "Self Talk", "Other Decisions", "Observations about Others" and "Thoughts about the Future".

1. Self Talk is comprised of three theme clusters that include discussions of inner conflicts, feelings of success and periods of doubt.

2. Other Decisions is made up of two theme clusters that seem to run parallel to the major decision of making a career program commitment. One theme deals with the need to get on with what they have chosen to do and to get on with their respective lives; the second theme deals with a growing awareness of

other issues in their life which they may or many not be prepared to deal with at this time.

3. Observations about Others is a single theme cluster that contained observations about the narrators' peers and how the peers seemed to be handling career decision making.

4. Thoughts about the Future is made up of two themes that are almost bi-polar in meaning. One theme deals with an awareness that there is an end in sight; the other with the awareness of the many unknowns about the future that give rise to feelings of ambiguity and fear as well as hopes and dreams.

In the context of self talk and observations about others it was possible to further understand what the meaning of the experience of making a career decision was for these young adults. The secondary decisions and future plans enabled me to better understand the context of the decision.

As the narrators spoke about their friends it became apparent that many of them had not yet made a decision for a career. In some way, these young people's experience seemed unique to me in comparison to what they said their friends were experiencing.

Nevertheless, they themselves did not consider themselves very different from their friends. Surinder spoke at some length about the peers she graduated with:

...there, high school, everyone, all the people, well my graduating class, I spoke to them as well. 'I'm going to U.B.C.', 'I'm going to U. Vic or McGill', 'Do such and such, be such and such'. Never really happened. I was really quite surprised, 'cause they all had such high expectations of themselves, to do such and such or things. But I'm really surprised at the amount of people that I heard from. If I meet someone, a friend, I meet and they're not doing anything. And I was really shocked. I thought 'How can you do that? How are you going to support yourself when you get older? How are you going to live?' I'm really surprised and I don't say that to them, but I say that to my mind. You know, without an education, how're you going to get a good paying job?...They used to say that a quarter go to post secondary education and I thought 'My graduating class there's more than a quarter' but actually it did turn out to be that much.

Joyce made some observations about her peers which seem to summarize some of the statements and observations made by the other narrators:

I find people my own age, I would say the majority are avoiding it [making a decision]. And they really don't have the tools and the know how and the motivation within themselves to do it. And maybe they get moved on from a lot of external motivation, forces which--I mean parents aren't going to make their career decisions for them any more which is really quite good. I know very few people my age group that have made the decision making process, gone through the agony of that. Certainly my sister has and my girl friend in medical school and so I do see others that do, but

I find a lot of them are postponing it and just trying to live a carefree life still without making it. ...Thinking that life will just happen for them; they don't have to act to influence it. And I often get comments from people going 'Wow, how did you do that? You know you're so motivated. Why, what do you do?' And I have no answer for them because I don't think I'm exceptionally motivated. ...For some of them, and I look at my two very best girlfriends, I think they have security in other things. In themselves.

In this statement are reflected the observations of Wayne for whom working at "Safeway" was not a career decision; of Mary who understood the influence of peer pressure; and of Susan who observed the sway of social pressure on her peers. It reflects Bill's observations that external pressures were far more powerful than internal pressures during the formative teen years but that in early adulthood people become disillusioned with what others had picked out for them and drift, hoping to find something that they can do. It seems, that while making a career decision is individual, it also is an experience that can be avoided. Judging by the observations of these young adults, perhaps more young people simply drift into an occupation, a job, a career, than actively making a career decision.

As part of the narration, the individual respondents from time to time drifted into personal

musings which I have put under the category of 'Self Talk'. This category differs from "The Self in the Decision" because it deals with statements that reveal the character of the individual as opposed to statements that revealed the nature of the experience. For Joyce and Bill the musings included some past regrets. Joyce believed that if she were to relive her school years she would not choose the International Baccalaureate program again.

Those two years could have been spent having a lot of joy and fun you have in those teenage years.

This sentence allowed me to understand the depth of freedom she had felt once she had been accepted into the medical program. For Bill the regret came in the form of not experimenting more in high school; permitting himself to focus his courses too early in life:

I look at it now and I'm taking courses that are completely unrelated to business and it doesn't really matter. It just sort of broadens your mind. So in retrospect I wish I did take those courses and maybe I would have taken a different direction.

Janice's self talk was centered on her finally getting accepted to nursing. It seemed to give her a sense of

accomplishment that the courses she had taken in the meantime did not:

I've learned that when I want something I try to go out and get it; when I start something I try to finish it. I'm persistent. I don't like to give up. Like if you don't do things the first time out, do it over. [I feel] pretty strong about myself. I don't like changing my mind a lot with things like that just because I like to think about it before starting out. So I'm decided.

Wayne's reflections enabled me to enter into the world of this young man at a level that my questions were unable to access. Following the question on whether he saw himself pursuing his career in computers for the rest of his life, Wayne added that his dream was to become a writer:

What I want to do is to become a writer, just like part time, and try and do that because I do like writing. That is my dream right there. Being a computer programmer isn't my dream, it's not a dream, it's a probable reality. It's the bread and butter. ...Writing is that of a romanticist while computers is that of a realist. And this is a realism world. Writers are dime a dozen you know, they don't always make it. When you look at some of the occupations that many writers have had, it's--like the last author I was reading, Terry Brooks, he's the accountant. ...I think writers should always have a back up career, computers is what I picked.

Later in the interview he made observations on how he learned and what was important to him in learning. It related somewhat to Joyce's comment that some people

have other things that give them security:

As long as I have the knowledge I know that I'm fine. ...I guess in a way you can call it confidence but I don't really have driving confident force. ...I have a drive to succeed for other reasons, other than confidence. ...I like knowledge. The acquisition of knowledge is enjoyable. ...Other things I suppose are--like I have a really good imagination. I think about life as a whole. I'm not religious but I'm not an atheist either.

Wayne went on to talk about his feelings about life, his fears of death of awareness as opposed to death of body and how he makes decisions. In some respects Wayne's story highlighted the personal characteristics which were less evident in some of the other narratives but which contributed to the decision that these young people came to. For Bill it was to realize in telling his story that he had striven to please his father; for Surinder it was understanding the obligations placed on her by her family to 'be something'; for Mary it was the strong ties to her father and for James the need to be understood.

The experience of career decision making seems to go to the very root of what the individual is, what he or she thinks of self and how the self is perceived in relationship to people and environment. Perhaps that is why it is difficult to make that decision in early

adulthood. It seems that the hurdles that many of these young people had to overcome to get into the program of their choice would put their very self on the line, open to acceptance or to rejection.

As Sloan (1986) noted, most decisions are not made in isolation but concurrent with other decisions in one's life. A number of the narrators in this study spoke of other decisions that they had made or were making concurrently with their career decision. Most of these secondary decisions related to moving away from home. For Joyce this decision was compounded by family issues which she was able to describe in some detail:

I knew if I got accepted [to medical school that] I wanted to move out. I had lived with my parents through the first two years of university and my parents separated and I continued living with my mom in the third year. And in that third year I was a great support to her and I was hesitant about leaving that situation because she relied a great deal upon me for her support. And it's almost fighting with your individual happiness of what you want and your 'obligation and responsibilities' to quote society...And when I did get accepted I had a very short time to find a place because I found out two weeks before starting and the housing market in Vancouver was such a fearsome thing at that time. I was worried about getting a place....In retrospect I don't think I really talked it out with [mother]. I [had] made a closed decision prior that if I was accepted I was definitely moving. And I rather just stated it than discussed it...And secretly

...inside, I really did want to reapply myself and start to experience my own autonomy, my own individuality, my own personality, my own place.

Bill moved out during his first year as well, but his concern was more in the area of finance:

Moving out of the house was a big decision. Deciding if I could balance making enough money to get me through without jeopardizing the courses or the time I put into school. But I did do that and so far it has worked out.

Finance was the reason Mary and Janice did not move out and why James chose to commute and work. Surinder's decisions were in the sphere of balancing her autonomy with the demands made on her by her extended family:

I guess everyone sort of wants their children to be better than others, but I don't see why people have to compete a lot of the time. I don't think competition is necessary. I think everyone's different and not everyone is going to have the same idea and same concepts; the same career choices. ...You can explain to your parents but you can't explain it to everyone. No I don't think [trying to explain her choice is] worth it because they still compete.

Other decisions seemed to be more in the realm of filling in the time between having made application and receiving word of acceptance. Janice spoke of the frustration she felt waiting to be accepted. After completing the required first aid and C.P.R. courses, she chose to take courses at Douglas College:

I was frustrated because the first year I was at Douglas College I couldn't take any biology courses. It was my first year and my student number was very high. Hopefully I can get some this semester before I start, but I just couldn't take anything very much in that direction...I took things that really had nothing to do with [nursing]. I took human geography and...I don't remember what it's called and political science. There's things I learned in there but I couldn't get any biology courses.

Janice also decided to volunteer at the local hospital in order to gain some insights into hospital routine. Susan spent her time waiting by exploring alternatives in the event that she was not accepted. While she was unhappy with her situation initially:

I would just like to get on with it now. I'm really prepared and I've taken these years off now and I've matured

she also was unhappy just continuing to work as a salesperson if she had to wait another year. Joyce too was engaged in exploring alternative decisions should she not have been accepted to medical school. She spent her summer making "decisions about personal happiness" which included having a contingency plan so that she did not feel so much at the mercy of the medical school personnel:

There are always people who are better [academically]. As time went on I actually progressed and I didn't make it [medicine] my only thing. And I think that's much healthier attitude

than to put all your worth or all your occupational worth on one career.... I had my alternatives set and I was willing to accept it. ...My alternative was teaching...that would give me the same things that I wanted in being a doctor but in some less degree and different aspects. But it was my second choice. I think I would still do it if I dropped out [of medical school] now.

The experience of committing to a program of studies leading to a career seems to be made in conjunction with decisions that relate to acquiring personal independence. Whether these decisions were about moving out, asserting oneself in the family, taking responsibility for financial decisions or increasing personal skills and self worth, the narratives suggest that a career decision is part of the developmental process of early adulthood (Dudley & Tiedeman, 1977).

It has already been noted that the young adults interviewed were vague in describing the jobs that they would have at the conclusion of their respective courses of studies. The responses to the question regarding future hopes and dreams permitted me to understand why this was so. It appears that young adults do not perceive their present choice as the end of career development. This conforms to statements by

futurists such as Toffler (1980) who note that people can expect to change careers four or five times in their lifetime. For example, Bill on several occasions during the interview spoke about going back to school:

I need to work two or three years before I go back for my M.B.A. I've considered teaching for a year, considered working for the government, I considered going into a business firm. Those three years are really not that important to me other than for getting some experience under my belt to bring to the school for my M.B.A. and then launch myself from my M.B.A. into something. ... I've considered Law in the long term possibly. As far as the government is concerned I don't want to be involved in the business side of government as far as bureaucracy; if I do go into government it will be politically...but I think that will have to be a jump taken from a business career after I have established myself, made contacts, and gone in that direction first.

James stated that he would be interested in doing some teaching in terms of computers but also work in a firm and possibly at some point enter into a business of his own. Wayne's future hopes are to become a writer.

Janice wanted a career not only to help people, but also to meet her goal to travel and to permit her to do other things if she found that she did not wish to do nursing for the rest of her life. Over and over again, in the narrations, the evidence points to an understanding that this is not a once-in-a-life-time career decision; nor a decision defined by persons

outside of themselves. One gets a very strong sense that these young persons are planning to define their own job roles and are open to redefining those roles in the future. Mary stated this most succinctly:

I just got goals to get my degree and then start getting some experience. And I think once I get out there then that's when I'll be able to make my decision where I want to be. It's hard when you're in school because [work is] very different from your text book learning. I can't say [administration] is for sure what I want to do because I've never done it, and you know I might not enjoy it. I mean if I enjoy something I put my drive into it and I'll succeed at it, and if I don't enjoy it, getting up to go to work in the morning wouldn't be fun and I really want to go in there and do something with [my business degree].

Statements about the future were framed in terms that intimated some ambiguity. Mary's optimism about getting out and doing something with her degree is later tempered with an observation:

I'm not sure what the outcome of business is or what I'm going to do with my future, [what area of management, etc.] but as long as I put in every effort I thought I put into it, then I'm satisfied with it. We have no way of predicting what's going to happen.

Surinder was even more tentative:

I don't know what the future holds. ...It's hard to compete out here you know--everyone older, more experienced, more educated. And when you're ethnic too, and you're female--it's always a male dominated field.

But continues with the optimism that stems from

knowing herself and how far she has come:

I think I need the experience and I'm not the kind of person who can just sit at home watching soap operas. Once you've got your education you might as well use it. So I plan to. Hopefully I would like to find a job [in my field] as soon as possible when I graduate.

And she finishes this part of the interview on a mischievous note: "I want to get my BMW before I'm 25."

Summary

In reading the narratives we can state that the experience of career decision making in young adulthood as evidenced by a commitment to a career program in a post secondary institution is individualistic, autonomous and freeing. While it appears to be part of the developmental task of young adults, it is not always a task that the individual chooses to engage in. On the contrary, judging from the stories it is possible to say that many young adults avoid facing that task and choose instead to drift towards something which will result in employment or a career.

For the young adults interviewed in this study who had actively made a choice, the experience extended beyond simply choosing a career, into other areas of their lives. They stated their experiences in terms

that included such metaphors, adjectives and analogies as "molding", "only path", "stumbling block", "gearing for it", "it felt right", "never have gone off track", "a goal", "on target" to describe their individual paths that lead to their decision. They affirmed their uniqueness in such terms as "rising to a challenge", "I have that drive to succeed", "a firm grasp", "messed around on my own", "a different feeling" , or "really good foot in the door". When they were accepted to the program of their choice it seemed to lead to an inner freedom, a growth in confidence and self-worth that was expressed by such phrases as "a very open field", "then you could breathe and go on with your life", "throwing off my old lethargic self", "not afraid of failure" and so on.

There did not seem to be a definite beginning to the decision; nor was the decision to commit to a career program seen as the end of the decision. For each of the young adults interviewed, the decision was an unfolding of a yet nebulous future direction. They believed that they had made a choice for a field that would give them the best options in terms of self-fulfillment and future opportunities, but they spoke in

broad and sweeping terms that seemed to suggest that they were willing to wait and see what they would do with their opportunities as they presented themselves upon graduation from their respective programs. One did not get a sense of a reluctance to meet the future, but rather of confidence that they could meet the various challenges in life now that they had made this initial decision. The feeling was one of empowerment.

Much of the meaning of the experience became clear by examining how it was framed. There was evidence that parents and school were very important. For most of the respondents, senior high school seemed to awaken them to the need to begin making a decision. They expressed this awakening by describing their experience with teachers, counsellors and career guidance in positive or negative terms. The same can be said of the influence of parents. The presence of parents in the career decision was a very important part of the experience even though the narrators spoke about making their own career decision. The stories contained many references to parents, including family values and positive and negative statements made about careers in

general or specifically about careers that the son or daughter had chosen to pursue.

There were other statements that also defined the experience of deciding on a career. A major part of the frame included statements of self-knowledge. It seemed that these young people were not just aware of their strengths and weaknesses but were able to verbalize them. For Bill, Mary and Joyce, telling their story lead to a deeper understanding of their reasons for being where they were.

Self-knowledge was also demonstrated in the narrators discussions of their personal goals, their interests, needs, aspirations and career fulfillment. The knowledge was clothed in pragmatism, in emotion and analogy. Self-knowledge was evident by the way they were able to discuss their own history and in the way they were able to look at their peers and make comparisons between themselves and their peers. They saw the results of not deciding as drifting into something, being open to social pressures and finding fulfillment in other areas of life. They stated that non-decision was often the result of lack of information, not knowing the options, peer pressure or

lack of focus. They did not claim to be virtuous in these things but saw their career decision on a broader scale that involved other people and luck as well as hard work.

Career decision making in young adulthood is more than just making a decision for a future occupation. It is an act that touches the inner person. It affirms the ability to make choices, it empowers the individual to take risks, it increases the autonomy and feelings of independence, and it encourages decision making in other areas of the individual's life. That is not to say that these skills cannot be attained through other activities, but only to state that these were evident in the narratives of the experience of making a career decision by the young adults interviewed for this study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The narratives of the young adults interviewed provide us with the context for discussing the experience of career decision making. The ensuing dialogues are reflective. Their purpose is not to challenge theories of career decision making, but to encourage further questioning of the experience of making career decisions.

A second purpose of this chapter is to examine the implications that the results of this research have for current practice and research, and to raise questions for future research.

Dialogue

Personal Dialogue

Colaizzi (1978) writes that "what we implicitly view as the final meaning or value of our research will influence how we approach an investigated topic."

(p.55) Reflecting on what I believed the value of the research would be I was able to name two things: I believed that I could learn from the young people and thereby improve the quality of career guidance that I

offered to students; and I believed that the study could be a step towards integrating the many theories of career into a unifying theory. I therefore approached the investigation from a utilitarian perspective. Whatever I would learn would enable me to do my job more effectively.

I began the dialogue with myself prior to examining the stories. In doing that I discovered several things. First, that I described my job as a counsellor differently from CHOICES (1988) program; for example counselling for me was definitely not "routine". Second, I discovered that career and I are symbiotic in nature; it grows and expands or becomes smaller and narrower as I will it or as I feel.

The examination of my own experience alerted me to questions that could be raised in the analysis of the protocols. Do we all possess our own ideas of career? Are we influenced by what others define for us as career? Does what we learn about careers influence how we experience making career choices?

As prepared as I was to learn from the young people, I was surprised to find the level of occupational sophistication that young adults possess.

I had not anticipated that they would be so clear in answering many of the questions I had raised. Even though I expected to hear that the activities I and my colleagues offered in career guidance programs were not satisfactory, it was humbling to realize how very unsatisfactory they really were. And while I had hoped that the message that a career choice was not for life was a message that young people had heard, I was unprepared for their answer. The vision they had of their future career was mobile and flexible and changeable, not only in terms of the workplace which was the experience of people in my generation, but in terms of themselves. They seem to take ownership of their careers; speaking in terms of their jobs being fulfilling and meeting lifestyle expectations. I had also expected to hear more concern about an unknown future, fears of unemployment or fierce competition in the workplace and was confronted with narratives almost devoid of those issues that are still important to my age group. I expected some comments on their being better off than their friends who have not yet made a decision and found that while they were individually empowered as a result of making their decision, they

did not see it as necessarily imperative that individuals make career decisions. On the contrary, they felt that some people do better when they finally drift into something; or they believe that their friends have other things going for them in their life that gives them satisfaction. What they demonstrated to me was that the need to make a decision was personal and that the classroom types of activities I had engaged in were not personally speaking to them and therefore not making a difference in their lives. It seems then that the methods of the 1970's which we still practise are not going to reach the students of the twenty-first century.

Dialogue with the Theories

Decision Theories

The decisions that were made by the narrators in this study were made, with the exception of Joyce, without cognitive understanding of decision theory. Nevertheless these were decisions that could be identified on Morris' (1977) spectrum of decision making or in James' (1890) five types of decisions. They were not arbitrary but "[strove] to fulfil

intentions, desires [and] wishes" (Sloan, 1986, p.12). The doubt or indecision that was expressed did not seem to occur prior to decision making (Festinger, 1957; James, 1890) but seemed to be related to self-concept ("can I do it?") and self-esteem ("what will I do if I don't get accepted?") at the point when they were acting on the decision (applying for the program). In those cases where non-acceptance to a course of studies was not perceived to be a problem, there was little if any evidence of self-doubt or anxiety. James (1890) might say that Bill, James, Wayne, Janice and Susan's were decisions marked by "drifting" towards their eventual goals, just as they saw their peers who had not yet decided drift towards theirs. The main difference I perceived between what the narrators stated about themselves and what they stated about their peers was that the young adults in this study appeared to have had a strong interest that guided them towards their decision while they did not describe their peers as having identified strong interests. James (1890) does not differentiate between people who drift towards a decision that is related to a strong

interest and those who drift without a goal in the hope of finding an attractive solution.

Morris (1977) said there are five terminologies which are frequently associated with decision making: luck and skill, standards (realistic or unrealistic), rational, costs and benefits, and intuition; terminologies that individuals in this study applied or might have applied to themselves. Wayne, Mary and Surinder spoke of luck as a factor in their choice while Susan spoke of her luck in having a supportive parent and adult friends. James and Wayne spoke of realistic standards that were a measurement of career choice for them; at the same time believing that intuition is also a factor in choosing. Rational is the term that might be applied to Susan, Joyce and Janice, each of whom deliberately prepared themselves for their respective career decisions. Most of the narrators spoke of benefits they would derive from their respective careers.

The experience of making a career decision in young adulthood is difficult to fit into a specific decision model such as described by Simon (1983). While Mary, Wayne or Janice might be representative of the

intuitive model, Susan and James fit part of that model as well as the behavioral model, while Joyce straddles the behavioral and S.E.U. models. What we can say is that the experience of making career decisions in young adulthood covers the whole spectrum of decision making behaviour (Morris, 1977) from random decision making at one extreme (for example peers who are looking to "fall into" a career), to inspirational decision making (Mary and Wayne) to systematic behaviour at the other extreme (Susan, Joyce and Janice). And we can acknowledge that all of the decisions had one thing in common, the decision maker, acted "in the context of his internal and external worlds" (Fishburn, 1964, p.19). Each of the narrators revealed aspects of their known internal and external worlds in the stories of how they came to their decision. It was through these revelations that the meaning of the experience took form.

Career Development Theory

Career decisions are made within the context of developmental stages. While there was no indication in the narratives of most of the respondents that career development followed a linear, progressive, or

increasingly sophisticated developmental path, the stories seem to suggest that there is a stimulus (situational, parental, school) that initiates an interest towards vocational decision making, and that that stimulus (with the exception of James, Wayne and Janice) seemed to occur between grade 10 and grade 12 what Super (1953) calls the stage of "exploration". The decision itself which can be described as a "provisional commitment [for] occupational establishment" (Super, 1953) was enacted up to five years after initial stimulus.

The untested "systems model" proposed by Tiedeman and Tiedeman (in Dudley & Tiedeman, 1977) provides the basis for an interesting perspective on Mary's experience. While her decision to enter business might be described as externally driven and explosive (James, 1890), a systems model could explain how a change in school focus can initiate rapid changes in a "career system". Although Mary had never entertained an option other than going to university, she struggled with the concept because she believed that universities only gave degrees for science related fields. She really did not like the sciences. When in grade 12 she chose

two electives outside the science area, accounting and marketing, Mary was able to integrate her need to attend university with her new found interests in business courses.

In the same way new information introduced James to engineering and Surinder to the opportunities offered by B.C.I.T. The stories of career decision making suggest that a "systems model" may be a method for "reconceptualizing" career research, and may offer a basic framework for integrating many of the current theories of career development and career choice (Collin & Young, 1986).

While career guidance activities seemed to stimulate the process of career decision making, the activities were not seen to be helpful by the narrators. An explanation for that might lie in how the individual storytellers described themselves and their careers. Mary, for example, in answering the question of what she would be doing in the future answered that she wanted to do something with her degree but that she was also realistic in knowing that bookwork was very different from actual job work. These young adults know themselves as they are in school. They do not

know themselves as workers. They described the jobs that they would have at the end of their training in terms of lifestyle, personal fulfilment and stepping stones to an ideal job in the field that they have chosen. The traits that they may be discounting in an exercise may be the very traits they would exhibit in a job; while the traits they consider key to their present situation (school), may not be the ones that are considered key by workers who are presently doing those jobs.

Surinder's story included a good example of how school and job training differ (let alone school and job). She described herself as not being a strong academic student at school, but interested in the sciences. The demands of her culture determined that she needed to go on to post secondary training for an occupation that provided "status". At B.C.I.T. she proved what she knew about herself; that she could be successful in her career choice. The characteristics she displayed at B.C.I.T. were ones that she was unable to demonstrate in high school: organizational skills, technical report writing skills, collaborative skills and so on. She knew she had it in her, but she didn't

know what that "it" was or how to demonstrate that "it" to her counsellor; nor can that instinctive knowledge about oneself be translated to answers in trait-factor questionnaires or computerized programs. As a result, the potential for students to discount the results of such activities appear to be great.

The stories reflected self-knowledge more than self-concept. Garbarino (1985) defines self-concept "as the individual's idea of who he or she is, as the answer each person gives to the question, 'Who am I?'" (p.286). Self-knowledge on the other hand may be defined as "competence knowledge" (what I know about myself by observing my actions) plus "legitimacy knowledge" (what I am in terms of my membership and status in a group/culture/family) (Zimbardo, 1979, p.637). Because the stories did not imply a finite decision, one cannot speak of the individuals having achieved self-actualization (Super et al., 1963) in choosing a career path, but rather than they were in a process of actualizing the knowledge that they possessed of themselves within the bounds of their cultural milieu. The young adults in this study sought occupations that were not only compatible with their

self-concept (Mortimer et al., 1986), but were acceptable to their parents and their social group (including peers and other significant adults).

Social Learning Theories and Sociological Influence

There is no denial that social learning and sociological influence are evident in the narratives of career choice of these young adults. What is notable is how aware they were of the influence of family, peers and social pressures that impinged on their choices. Both Bill and Surinder spoke at length about the molding that their respective families, and in Surinder's case also her culture, had on them and their choices. Mary who rebelled against the role that her family had in mind for her--a career in the sciences--never doubted that she would fulfil the parental expectation of her attending a university. Susan was very clear in recognizing that education was valued in her family. Wayne who actively distanced his parents from his decision, accepted the practised, if unstated family value that one chose an occupation that would provide the bread and butter of daily life.

These young adults were also quite clear about the influence of society and of their peers on career choice. They spoke openly about the pressures that many young people face to choose an occupation that did not fulfil them as persons, but provided them with opportunities to acquire those things that society believed to be important. They spoke about pressures to enter the "trendy" careers like business related occupations and the resultant unhappiness of some of their peers who were not successful in those areas. They spoke about peers who avoided making decisions because they hoped that somehow they would fall into something that suited them and they spoke about hurdles that were seemingly set up to screen some people out of programs. The young people's perceptions of the pressures that they faced were for me perhaps the most insightful in terms of understanding their experience of career decision making. It was as if they were able to stand outside of themselves and see what was happening to them and to their peers. They demonstrated in their stories a knowledge about their social milieu and its expectations for them. They knew where they could exert their individuality and accepted

the fundamental expectations of their families. They accepted that peer pressure was a fact of life but did not feel bound to conform.

Reflection

The experience of making career decisions in young adulthood cannot be adequately described by any one of the current theories in career development or career decision making. While there were elements of all the theories present in the narratives, there were also elements that are not evident in the traditional theories. The narratives demonstrated that the experience is larger than any of the individual theories imply; just as the meaning of the experience for young adults is larger than the individual story.

First, there appears to be a stimulus that begins to set into motion thoughts about career. The stimulus may vary from one person to another and does not seem to be age bound albeit the tendency is for it to be recognized at an age when students are about in grade 10 or grade 11 which coincided for most of the narrators with the provision of some form of career guidance. While people may prefer a positive stimulus,

it did not seem to matter whether the introduction to careers was positive or negative in tone; nor did it matter whether personal interactions with parents, teachers or counsellors were positive or negative. What did matter to the individuals was that the stimulus was personal. Action seemed to follow when the stimulus struck an inner chord, or spoke to some inner need or jogged some basic value held by the person.

Second, the decision to commit to a course of studies seemed to enhance personal confidence. It empowered individuals in other areas of their life to make further decisions or even to challenge the wishes of the parents. A key element of the experience of personal choice was the feeling of freedom once the choice had been made and the individual had been affirmed in his/her choice by being accepted to the program. Sloan (1987) citing Ricoeur's (1950) work stated that the difference between wish and decision was "accompanied by a sense of power or capability which could bring about the state of affairs projected by the decider" (p.52). James (1890) also stated that

coming to a decision is accompanied by a sense of freedom.

A third element in the experience of career choice in young adulthood is an underlying belief that this is not a lifetime decision. There is tacit understanding that the decision is broad and flexible and therefore permits the individual to grow in directions which are as yet undefined. The decision to commit to a course of studies does not carry with it a precise understanding of what the job will actually be at the conclusion of their studies. It seems that young people have a desire to express themselves through their careers and see themselves as shaping their careers to suit their individual style rather than shaping themselves to suit the requirements of a job. In a world where old jobs disappear and new jobs are created (Toffler, 1980), the flexibility that such career attitude implies goes far beyond being prepared for three or four career changes in a lifetime. It implies an acceptance of change and the ability to adapt to whatever changes arise.

Finally, while I had hoped to gain some insights into what had made these young people different from

their peers who had not yet made career decisions, the narratives provided no clear answers. Most of the young people stated that they believed themselves to be different from their peers who had not yet made a career decision, but not necessarily because they had made a decision while others had not. They spoke at length about many of their peers who were avoiding making a decision, others who had permitted themselves to drift into a course of studies rather than to choose a particular course, and still others who had succumbed to peer pressure or societal pressure to enter an occupational field that was not fulfilling to them. They suggested that their peers were less focused, that they had other things going for them, that they were succumbing to peer pressure, that they lacked the initiative or that they got a job after graduating from high school and never followed up their plans. While both groups of young adults had equal opportunity to participate in high school guidance programs, generally there was a tendency to ascribe their own position in terms of luck. They were lucky to have taken a course at the right time, to have had a good counsellor or teacher, to have had a friend or supportive family and

so on. These were not self-negating statements, but almost pragmatic acceptance of circumstances which touched them but which they did not see touching their peers in the same way. Having made a decision, even though it felt freeing and empowering and was seen for themselves as more acceptable to the way that they wanted to lead their life, was not seen as having an edge over their peers who had not made a decision and was not interpreted as giving them a unique standing among their peers. Hoyt et al.'s (1977) observation that many people fall into their jobs by chance was not perceived as negative by the young adults who had made decisions; they saw their peers who hoped to fall into a job by chance as being in different circumstance.

The conclusion I reached in reflecting on the narratives is that there is a readiness point when a person will commit to a career decision. Readiness is not age bound. It may happen when the individual feels that he/she has explored all the alternatives and can gain nothing else from exploring further, when the individual has drifted into a job or field of study that seems to meet present needs or wants, when the person comes upon something suddenly that piques

his/her interest, or if the situation changes rapidly so that a decision must be made (James, 1890).

By returning to the initial questions I posed at the outset of the research and reflecting on the content of the narratives, I became aware that the traditional methods of research, the nomothetic methods, could not account for some of the elements that make up the experience of a career decision in young adulthood. First, career decision making does not seem to be a selection from amongst different career possibilities. There was no evidence to suggest that young adults weigh alternative job descriptions and settle on one. Joyce, who weighed all of the pros and cons of becoming a doctor, did so in terms of what she wanted in life and in terms of whether she was willing to put in the time and effort to become a doctor. It was only after she had made her decision and had sent in her application that she decided on an alternative, teaching. Teaching was not set against medicine as an option; teaching was a contingency plan that would be put into effect should the medical faculty not accept her.

Second, making the decision and applying for the program that would lead to the career of choice was seen as one thing. There was implicit understanding that a decision is not made until it has been acted on. As Sloan (1987) observed in his study, decisions mark the end of deliberation and the beginning of action. Together with this understanding was a recognition that to apply was to put self on the line. Joyce made her contingency plan for the event that she was not accepted into medicine because she did not want to tie her self-concept to one career that might accept or reject her. In stating her reason, she echoed the feelings of dissonance (Festinger, 1957), definite feelings of not being in control of one's destiny during the waiting time, experienced by many of the narrators. Being accepted to one's chosen field of study was framed in terms of personal empowerment that permitted the young adults to address other issues in their life with confidence.

Third, the experience of deciding was not framed in terms that indicate that they have a stronger self-concept than their peers who are undecided. On the contrary, several of the respondents stated quite

unequivocally that they had put themselves down in the past, felt fearful, were aware that there were a lot of other people around who were stronger academically than they perceived themselves to be and so on. Yet most of them made decisions for very competitive career programs. This might be explained by research in career development and self esteem (Pietrofesa & Splete, 1975). While individuals may have periods of self-doubt, a healthy self-concept is developed during childhood and comes from successful encounters with the environment. The narratives seem to indicate that with the exception of Surinder, all had experienced success in school and all the narrators, including Surinder, had experienced successful relationships in terms of family and friends.

Fourth, it was the acceptance to the program that brought future into focus. It seemed that a vision of a future was non-existent during the waiting time between application and acceptance to their respective programs. For example, James, who at the time of the first interview was waiting to be accepted into electronic engineering, struggled trying to answer my question about his future; there was no spontaneity in

his answer. He constantly returned to the possibility of not being accepted. Mary, who had a similar experience waiting to receive word about the co-op program said she felt stuck in uncertainty and could not plan what to do next. Susan was so anxious about what she would do if she were not accepted to the program that she could only deal with that issue; once she had been accepted she could describe what things that she would like to do in her future. Bringing together past, present and future appears to be contingent on the ability of the person to perceive a future and this hinges on a decision having been confirmed (in this case, being accepted to the program of choice).

Fifth, the career decisions made by young adults were neither framed in words to indicate that such decisions were viewed as a milestones, nor that they were viewed as transition from adolescence to adulthood. What was evident was that the decision was framed in words that indicated understanding of volition. Career decision making, whether done with support of others (as for Joyce and Susan) or without help of any kind (as for Wayne and Mary) is a personal

act that relates the inner world of the decider to the outer world as the decider perceived it (Fishburn, 1964). The experience of deciding was described as taking ownership of one's personal goals and values and acting upon them in an arena that was perceived as neither hostile nor friendly, but which was not open to their personal control. While the outcome for them had been successful they were equally aware of peers whose outcomes had not been successful. In the end, they may well have said that it is neither a milestone nor a transition; it is "my luck".

Sixth, a career decision is not made with a particular job description in mind. It is made on the basis of lifestyle concepts (Gottfredson, 1981). The decisions that these young adults made were framed in a personal understanding of life-style associated with career and the opportunities provided for them. Thus Joyce was able to state without apology that she did not really know what a doctor did on a daily basis even after having completed the first year of her medical program. What medicine offered her were the financial independence and freedom to be her own boss; two values which were important to her. It seemed that

these young adults understood that career decision was a continuous act that would continue to unfold long after graduating from their respective programs. Individual job descriptions were not part of the overall vision they had for their career.

The structure of the experience of career decision making may therefore be expressed as follows.

Individuals experience a personal stimulus that seems to provoke thought into action. Often this stimulus is experienced at the grade 10-12 levels albeit commitment to a career program may not be initiated until up to five years later. Application to a program is seen as synonymous with commitment to a career path.

A period of anxiety follows application while individuals wait to hear whether they have been accepted to the program of choice. The degree of anxiety appears to be directly in proportion to the degree of competition the individual perceived or the degree of preparedness for the program, that the individual felt.

Once the person had been accepted to his/her program of choice, the experience is one of feelings of freedom and readiness to get on with life. The

intensity of this feeling appears to be tied to how much of the self had been invested in the choice.

A general feeling of empowerment is experienced by all whose career goals have been affirmed by way of acceptance to a program. This empowerment enables the young adults to make other decisions in their life, many relating to increasing their independence.

Career decision making in terms of commitment to a career program is expressed in terms of luck, focus and determination. There is however a general acceptance that making a decision does not necessarily give one an edge and that young adults who do not make decisions may have other things going for them. And there is acceptance that part of the experience of decision making include pressures exerted on young people by parents, peers and schools.

Each experience is individual in terms of the stimulus that provoked the action, the degree of anxiety and freedom felt and the circumstances of the help they received from others.

The experience is marked by strong emotions, self-knowledge and a tacit understanding of the environmental factors that impinged on the decision.

Implications for Further Research

While past research into career development and career decision making has contributed a large body of information to our understanding of the topic, the experience of career decision making reflects more than just an amalgam of these theories. It has been acceded by proponents of decision making theories (Janis & Mann, 1977; Morris, 1977) that decision models are perhaps more effective in analyzing decisions than making them, and that in reality people do not make most of their decisions using a model (Janis & Mann, 1977; Sloan, 1987). Models do not help us to understand the meaning that a decision has for the individual. In the dialogues it became evident that theories of career development and career decision making only give us limited answers to what it means to make a career decision. And while social learning and sociological influence theories provide yet another dimension for understanding career decision making, individually there is no theory which can answer all of the questions regarding career decision making in early adulthood.

There appears then to be a need to develop a unifying theory of career. It has already been suggested that a systems model appears to meet some of the requirements for unifying career theory. Young (1984) proposed the use of the ecological metaphor to provide "the framework in which to integrate [the] diverse perspectives" (p.153) on career. Such an approach would accept the relationship between the individual and the environment as was demonstrated by the narratives, and would also provide a basis for understanding the reciprocal nature of that relationship which I believe accounts for the individual's inability to "predict" exactly what might happen in the future. As Mary might have said, "I can only made a choice; the outcome of that choice depends on what I will like and will give my energies to when I graduate."

The concept of the ecological metaphor combined with a systems approach was explored by Collins and Young (1986). While such an approach implies a radical paradigm shift in thinking about careers, the results of this thesis indicate that there is need for such a shift. If we are to understand why some people make

decisions while others do not; what triggers the need to think in terms of career; what shapes our concepts of career and how we articulate ourselves within our careers then we will need to create a new foundation of information that does not separate the actor from the act or from the setting.

Questions that Arise from this Research

There are a number of questions which arise from or remain unanswered by this study. The first question is whether the experience of career counselling that these young adults described, is similar to that of young people outside the lower mainland. One suspects that different school districts in British Columbia have different policies on career guidance and therefore counsellors will have varying mandates for the delivery of career guidance programs.

A second question arose from the discussion with the theories. Could a systems model unify the varying theories of research in career development? It has been suggested by Collin and Young (1986) that an ecological systems approach could unify the theories. Research needs to be undertaken to determine whether

this approach will lead to a new understanding of career.

A longitudinal study to determine whether people who have a thorough understanding of decision process and elements of decision making, are more effective in making career decisions is a third area of research that would be of value. Janis and Mann (1977) believe that people who are informed about making choices will in the long run make better decisions than those who do not. The introduction of a decision making component in elementary school "Learning for Living" curriculum which will receive continuous review and practise throughout high school may offer opportunity to study whether decisions are better if the person understands the process and has the tools provided by a decision making model.

With a broad spectrum of ethnic groups in British Columbia, it is necessary to begin looking at providing career guidance for people in different ethnic as well as socio-economic groups. There is a need to understand the culture and how occupations are perceived within that culture. The experience of Wayne is a good example of a student from our native Indian

culture who, despite having been in academically challenging classes, did not receive the counselling that might have challenged him to enter a university. How can we make school more meaningful for such children and how can we ensure that children from different cultures have equal opportunities to develop their talents, are two more questions that stem from this study.

Certainly many more questions arose for me from this study and others will probably still arise as the report is read and discussed. Questions of sibling decision making, the questions about self-esteem and career choice, and so on. Even a similar study undertaken with young adults who enter a career without post-secondary education, a study of adults who are re-deciding, or a study of people who have just "fallen" into their career, would contribute more information to our present body of career information literature. There is in my opinion a real need to re-visit this topic whose major research base comes from the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's.

Implications for Practice

There are a number of implications for practitioners in the helping professions and particularly for those of us engaged in career counselling or preparation of career guidance programs for young adults. First, it is important to note that computerized career counselling, which most of these young adults had experienced in schools, was not perceived as helpful. Some of the factors that might have contributed to that have already been discussed. The practitioner can now anticipate some of the problems and decide how to minimize those effects. At the same time we cannot overlook the apparent relationship between those activities which were part of a grade 10 or 11 guidance program, and the triggers that lead individuals to making career decisions at a later date.

Secondly, it is important to emphasize that most of the respondents said that what would have been most helpful to them was a person or persons to talk to. In schools, mentorship programs, work experience and shadowing experiences are relatively easy to implement and monitor and can provide that personal relationship.

Thirdly, most of the respondents believed that exploration and wide exposure to a lot of different options are much more helpful than narrowing down the field too quickly. For school personnel it may mean encouraging students to take risks with their electives and to branch out into a variety of disciplines. Counsellors need to act as advocates for exploration. Advocacy is necessary not only for students but parents, many of whom have limited knowledge of the wide varieties of opportunity available to young people in colleges, universities and technical institutes.

Fourthly, it is essential for counsellors to take note that negative experiences with school or parents did not deter individuals from making career decisions. As such the counsellor can work with whatever the client brings to a session. Young adults do not want a directive approach, they want someone to listen to them and to permit them to seek their own direction. They ask for guidance in 'how' not 'what' to do.

Finally, for all practitioners it is essential to note that career decision making, while resulting in personal empowerment, is not necessarily viewed as essential by young adults. Thus we are freed to get to

know the client and his/her needs and are not forced to conclude career guidance only after the client has made a decision.

In view of the human experience that this phenomenological study revealed, we all need someone to talk to, to listen to us; but we do not need directiveness and we do not need closure in terms of having made a decision. For some, the choice to drift into a career is as much a decision as committing to a program. The counsellor can provide opportunity to listen and to lead the person to understand his or her own experience of career decision making.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, a phenomenological approach was used to answer the question "How do young adults frame their experience of making a career decision?" While there was much information available about decision making theories, career development and career decision making, there was no unifying approach to understand the meaning of career decisions in young adulthood.

Eight persons who had just been accepted or who had just completed their first year of a post secondary program that on completion could lead directly into a job, were interviewed by the researcher. They were asked to tell their stories, with as much detail as possible, of how they came to enrol in their respective programs, what had been helpful (or not helpful) to them in their decision making. The interviews were taped, transcribed and then broken down into meaning units which could be compared across the various interviews. A summary of each interview was made and a second interview undertaken to verify the researchers interpretation of the narrator's story. Time was given to add to the stories information that might have come

up in the interim, and closure accomplished by discussing how they experienced the interviews.

From the meaning units emerged themes and categories which became the foundation for the phenomenological description of the experience of career decision making in young adulthood. A dialogue with personal assumptions and assumptions from the literature was then possible. Finally the contributions that this study has made to the body of literature in career decision making was made under the headings of reflection, research and practise; and questions for further research were raised.

By understanding the meaning that career decision making has for young adults we may be able to provide greater and more meaningful assistance to those people who are seeking our help. Career decision making can no longer be seen as a simple act of choosing one career over another, but an act that combines the inner world of the decider with the outer world as he/she perceives it to be. It is an act that requires the courage to risk self concept, social approval and stand against peer pressure.

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APPENDIX I

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Karin Breuer and I am a student in the MA program at the University of British Columbia - Department of Counselling Psychology. The area of my research interest is the experience of career decision making in young adulthood.

The objective of this research is to record the stories of students in post secondary institutes who are in, or have just completed, the first year of a program of studies, which on completion, will lead to an occupation. Participants will be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire which will be used first to screen for candidates that meet the criteria for the study and second to provide demographic information. Candidates who meet the criteria, will be asked if they will participate in two interviews. The first will be approximately 1 to 2 hours in length. It's purpose is to permit the candidates to tell the story of their experience of making the decision that will lead them into their chosen occupation. The second interview will be approximately 1/2 hour in length. It's purpose is to provide the candidates with a summative review of the interview prepared by the researcher, to discuss the candidates reaction to the summation, to permit the candidates to add anything that might have come to them after the end of the first interview, and to provide a sense of closure for the candidates.

Both the interview and the questionnaire will be held in strictest confidence. An identity number will be assigned to the questionnaire which will be the only identifier on the tape. Only the researcher will know to whom the identity number has been assigned. Names and phone numbers will be destroyed at the end of the study. The participation of the candidates will be voluntary and candidates may chose to drop out of the study at any point. A resume writing workshop, free of charge and offered by myself, will be offered to candidates who participate--whether or not they complete the project.

APPENDIX II

**UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM**Project Title

The experience of career decision making in early adulthood.

Investigators

The project is supervised by the University of British Columbia, Department of Counselling Psychology. Dr. R. Young, Dr. N. Amundsen, Dr. D. Pratt and Karin Breuer are the research investigators.

Purpose of the Study

The researcher is interested in how individuals who are enroled in, or who have just completed the first year of a course of studies, in a post secondary institution leading, on completion, to an occupation, frame their experience of making the career decision.

Procedures

Volunteer participants will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. Based on the questionnaire, suitable candidates will be contacted for a follow-up interview that will be approximately 1 to 2 hours long. During the interview participants will be asked to tell their story on how they experienced making the decision for their career evidenced by their commitment to a course of studies which on completion will lead to an occupation. This interview will be audio-taped. A follow-up interview of approximately 1/2 hour will be conducted to enable the participants to hear a summative evaluation of the experience and to discuss with the interviewer any issues that arise from the summation, issues that might have come up for the candidate after the interview, and to provide a sense of closure to the experience.

All of the information collected will remain completely confidential and under no circumstances will

participants be specifically or indirectly identified in the study. The forms that you will complete will be identified by a code number which will be the only identification used on the interview tape. The tapes will be transcribed and information will be reported in terms of group data. A precis of the transcription will be appended to the study.

Benefits/Risks

By participating in this study you may become more informed about some of the values you hold and the strengths you have which lead to your decision. Some research indicates that people who tell their own stories are affirmed in their course of action and feel more effective about future courses of action.

During the course of the interview you may experience some anxiety or discomfort as you recall the events that lead to this decision.

Participants may avail themselves of a free resume writing workshop which will be offered by the researcher free of charge at a later date.

Other Information

The total time commitment required for this study will approximately range between 1.5 to 3 hours. 5-10 minutes will be required for the questionnaire, 1 to 2 hours for the initial interview, and approximately 1/2 hour for the follow-up interview.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardizing your standing as a student in this or any other post-secondary institution. You will have every opportunity to discuss your concerns about this study or your experience as a participant at any time before, during or after the questionnaire or interviews. You may also feel free to discuss the project or ask questions regarding the procedure at any time before or during the project.

The interviewer is aware that sensitive issues may be opened up during the telling of the story and will aid in the debriefing to ensure that a level of comfort is reached before closing.

APPENDIX III

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

Project Title

The experience of career decision making in early
adulthood

Investigators: The project is supervised by the University of British Columbia, Department of Counselling Psychology. The investigators are Dr. R. Young and Dr. N. Amundsen of the Department of Counselling Psychology, Dr. D. Pratt of the Department of Adult Higher Education, and Karin Breuer.

Purpose: The researcher is interested in how individuals who are enrolled in, or who have just completed the first year of a course of studies in a post secondary institution leading, on completion, to an occupation, frame the experience of career decision making.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to provide the researcher with information to determine whether volunteers meet the research criteria of age and program enrolment and to provide a uniform means of collecting the demographic data.

Benefits: By participating in this study you may become more informed about some of the values you hold and the strengths you have which lead to your decision. Some research indicates that people who tell their own stories are affirmed in their course of action and feel more effective about future courses of action.

Participants may avail themselves of a free resume writing workshop which will be offered by the researcher free of charge at a later date.

Procedures: Candidates will be asked to tell the story of how they experienced the decision to enter the program that they are enrolled in which will lead them into a specific occupation upon completion. The interview will last between 1 to 2 hours and will be audio taped. Subsequently the interviewer will meet with the candidates for approximately 1/2 hour to share

a summary of the interview and an interpretation of the experience. Candidates will be able to discuss both, add anything they may have thought about in the meantime and comment on the interview and the feelings that may have been generated.

Candidates may withdraw from the project at any time without jeopardizing their standing as a student at any post secondary institution. The resume writing workshop is open to anyone who participates, regardless whether they withdraw at any time or not.

The identity of subjects will be kept completely confidential. An identity number will be assigned to the questionnaire which will be the only identifying mark on the audio tape. Data in the report will be written up as group data and will avoid any individual references.

The completion of the questionnaire will assume that consent has been given.

Name: _____

Phone Number (where you can be reached most readily): _____

Time of day you can be reached most readily: _____

Identity Number: _____

1. Gender _____

2. Age _____

3. Post Secondary Institution (name)

4. Name of Program you are enrolled in

5. How long have you been in this program?
(circle one only):
- a. just enroled
 - b. one year or less
 - c. more than one year
6. Have you ever entered a training program before this one? _____
- a. if "yes", would you please name or describe it?

7. Marital status: (circle one)
- a. single
 - b. married
 - c. divorced or separated
8. Ethnic origin (if known): _____
9. (circle one)
- a. immigrant
 - b. first generation Canadian
 - c. two or more generations Canadian
10. Educational status (circle highest level)
- a. grade 10 or less
 - b. grade 11 to 12
 - c. high school graduate
 - d. 1-2 years college or university
 - e. more than 2 years college or university
11. Family Demographics
- a. occupation of father: _____
 - b. occupation of mother: _____
 - c. occupation of brother(s): _____
 - d. occupation of sister(s): _____
 - e. occupation of spouse (if married or separated or divorced): _____

12. Size of community you were raised in (circle one)
- a. farm or community under 500
 - b. village (500 - 2500)
 - c. town (2,500 - 10,000)
 - d. small city (10,000 - 100,000)
 - e. large city (over 100,000)
13. Distance of permanent residence from institution you are attending. (circle one)
- a. part of the same community
 - b. within commuting distance (less than 60 km)
 - c. more than 60 km but commute daily
 - d. living away from home to attend institution
14. Economic evaluation (circle as many as applicable)
- a. come from above average income family
 - b. average income family
 - c. below average income family
 - d. tuition and living expenses are not a problem
 - e. tuition and living expenses are tight but manageable
 - f. tuition and living expenses are a problem
 - g. the cost of programs had an influence on my decision
15. If I was to make the choice of occupation again it (circle one)
- a. would be the same choice
 - b. would be a different choice

I would like to participate in a resume writing workshop.

(circle one)

- a. yes
- b. no

APPENDIX IV

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender: Male-3 Female-5
2. Age: 1-18yrs 2-19yrs 3-20yrs 2-21yrs
3. Post Secondary Institution (name):
U.B.C. - 3 S.F.U. - 1 B.C.I.T. - 1
Douglas College - 1 Kwantlen College - 1
Ryerson - 1
4. Name of Program you are enroled in:
Medical School - 1 Business Administration - 1
Occupational Health and Safety - 1
Interior Design - 1 General Nursing - 1
Applied Science (Engineering) - 1
Computer Information Systems - 1 Arts - 1
5. How long have you been in this program? (circle one only):
 - a. just enroled: 2
 - b. one year or less: 6
 - c. more than one year: 0
6. Have you ever entered a training program before this one?
No - 7
Yes- 1
 - a. if "yes", would you please name or describe it?
First year Commerce (just completed)
7. Marital status: (circle one)
 - a. single: 8
 - b. married: 0
 - c. divorced or separated: 0

8. Ethnic origin (if known):

Irish/Scottish:	1
Irish/Canadian:	1
East Indian:	1
German:	1
German/Native Indian:	1
British/Irish:	1
Serbian/Scottish:	1
Spanish:	1

9. (circle one)

a. immigrant:	2
b. first generation Canadian:	4
c. two or more generations Canadian:	2

10. Educational status (circle highest level)

a. grade 10 or less:	0
b. grade 11 to 12:	0
c. high school graduate:	1
d. 1-2 years college or university:	3
e. more than 2 years college or university:	4

11. Family Demographics

a. occupation of father:

Engineer:	2
Millwright:	1
Autobody Repair:	1
Economist:	1
Courier:	1
Computer Systems Analyst:	1

b. occupation of mother:

Homemaker:	3
In charge of Flight personnel:	1
Secretary:	1
Collections Officer:	1
Salesperson:	1
Nurse:	1

c. occupation of brother(s):

High School student:	1
Sales person:	1

d. occupation of sister(s):

University student: 3

Legal Secretary: 1

e. occupation of spouse (if married or separated or divorced): N/A

12. Size of community you were raised in (circle one)

a. farm or community under 500: 1

b. village (500 - 2500): 0

c. town (2,500 - 10,000): 0

d. small city (10,000 - 100,000): 5

e. large city (over 100,000): 2

13. Distance of permanent residence from institution you are attending. (circle one)

a. part of the same community: 2

b. within commuting distance (less than 60 km): 4

c. more than 60 km but commute daily: 1

d. living away from home to attend institution: 1

14. Economic evaluation (circle as many as applicable)

a. come from above average income family: 2

b. average income family: 6

c. below average income family: 0

d. tuition and living expenses are not a problem: 1

e. tuition and living expenses are tight but manageable: 4

f. tuition and living expenses are a problem: 0

g. the cost of programs had an influence on my decision: 1

15. If I was to make the choice of occupation again it (circle one)

a. would be the same choice: 8

b. would be a different choice: 0

APPENDIX V

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. My name is Karin Breuer and I spoke to you earlier about the nature of this study and its purpose. I would like to briefly go over that information again and answer any questions you might have thought about since completing the questionnaire. The study is conducted as part of the requirements for the masters program in the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. Drs. R. Young and N. Amundsen of the Counselling Psychology Department and Dr. D. Pratt of the Adult Education Department are my supervisors.

We are trying to find out what it is like for young people to commit to a career program for the first time; what they go through to come to a career decision; how they feel about the decision; what they think is good, or perhaps not so good about their decision; and in what general atmosphere--positive, optimistic, pessimistic or so on--the decision was made. In addition, we would like to know whether the decision was made a long time ago or just recently and how it was arrived at. Because we fill a lot of roles at the same time, as for example (checking the questionnaire) you are presently a student, a son/daughter, a husband/wife, a career decision is often made in an arena of many other decisions. We would also like to know how your decision for entering (refer to description of program) fits into some of the other decisions in your life.

The information from these interviews will help us understand how young people experience their first career decision which in turn may lead us to become more effective as counsellors in assisting young people in choosing a career.

The interview will last approximately 2 hours. With your permission, I would like to use an audiotape to record your story so that I can listen to you without having to interrupt you to repeat something that I need to record. The tape recording will be transcribed so that all identifying information, such as your name, will be deleted. All information that you give me will be treated confidentially and be used

only for research purposes. You may withdraw from this interview at any time. The permission form (given to candidate) states the same conditions that I have explained. Please read it and feel free to ask any questions about it before signing. (pause to complete permission form)

Before we begin, are there any questions or concerns that I have not answered? (pause) I will now turn on the cassette recorder and test it so that I am sure that everything will work as planned. (perception check level of discomfort when doing that). Many people find speaking to a recorder a little awkward at first but after a while you may find that you have completely forgotten that it's there.

(The interview was focused insofar as certain questions were covered, but the style of the interview was nondirective to facilitate the free flow of information. Minimal encouragers such as 'mhm, yes, I see' and so on were employed to provide encouragement to the narrator, while summary statements, paraphrasing and linking of ideas were used to keep the topic focused. Body language skills such as good eye contact, nodding of head, open posture were used to maintain rapport. Notes on the narrator's body language and other impressions such as level of discomfort, speed of narration and so on were made as soon after the interview as was feasible in order to provide as complete a picture as possible of the interview. The use of notes aided in interpreting the "tone" of the narration.)

While the precise questions were not always asked if the narrator provided the information with the use of the prompts, the following schedule was generally covered during the course of the interview.)

1. To begin, perhaps you could tell me how you came to enter (name of the program)?

2. What kinds of events in your life contributed to making this choice?

3. Are there any people who in the course of your life helped you come to this decision? How would you describe these people and your relationship to them?

4. What kinds of things do you remember running through your head at the time when you were about to apply for this course of studies? How would you describe your feelings?

5. When you were deciding on this course of studies, were there other important decisions that you had to make at the same time which might have affected your career decision? For example, did you need to change location of residence, give up a job, or so on?

6. How do your parents/siblings/friends feel about this decision?

7. Do you see this as a career that you would like to pursue for the rest of your life?

8. If you were to retrace the steps that lead you to this decision, would you make changes and perhaps decide differently?

9. What are some of your future hopes and dreams and how do you see this career plan helping to fulfil those?

10. A career decision is considered one of our major life decisions. What are some things that you might wish to say to someone who is also making a career decision for the first time? Would you make another major life decision such as getting married or having children in the same way? Why or why not?

11. What kinds of things have you learned about yourself while making this decision?

12. Do you think that young people by and large undergo a similar experience as you have had making a career decision? How similar or different?

13. Did you ever experience any career guidance, before you made the decision? (if 'yes': Could you tell me what it was like for you?)

14. If you were to help someone make career plans or help them decide on a career, what would be some things that you might want to include in your discussion?

15. Do you think it is difficult for young people today to make career decisions? How does this compare with your own experience?

16. Before we close, is there anything that came to mind during the discussion which you might have wanted to say but which you thought not relevant at the time or for which a question was not posed?

Thank you very much for your participation. I will get back to you within two weeks with a summary statement. I would like to share the summary with you to ascertain accuracy and permit you to add to your story or to question my understanding of what your experience of a first time career decision was. May I reach you at the same telephone number as before? And is the time for calling still good for you?

(A follow up session of approximately 30 minutes was conducted within two weeks of the interview. This interview was also audio taped. A summary of the transcript was given as well as read to the candidate and three main questions were asked.)

1. Do you feel that this summary captures your experience of making a first time career decision as you told it to me two weeks ago?

2. Are there any other thoughts or feelings that came up for you since our interview that you may wish to add to your story?

3. Was the method of the interview conducive to your telling your story in the way that you had wished to tell it? Did you find the questions appropriate and open or did you at any time feel restricted or perhaps even lead to answer in a certain way?

APPENDIX VI

CATEGORIES AND INDEX HEADINGS

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Index Heading</u>
1. The Relationship of Self to the Decision.	1. Decision making is very much believing in yourself. 2. Decisions have a history: there is a time when you begin to think about what you are going to do. 3. Decisions are relational: they concern the need or the desire to get help or not wanting help. 4. Part of the decision was knowing oneself; looking at past history, the kinds of things one has come to value and the resources one has that helped in the decision making. 5. It is important to focus on what one wants in life or in a job. 6. Getting the decision process started: feelings of dissonance and indecision. 7. Part of deciding is to verbalize to someone what one wants to do. 8. There is a payoff for oneself when one has made a decision that seems to give guidance for how one might make future decisions.

2. Volition.

1. Choice is a personal act that has to do with values, knowing yourself, understanding the way you get information, and believing in yourself and your goals.
2. There are internal and external pressures resulting from people or experiences which are part of decision making.
3. Making a choice is often difficult because there are many different careers to choose from, and often little knowledge about them or the places where one might receive training or education.
4. Describing the career choice.
5. Expressing the need for personal guidance: guidance, for those who want it, seems to be very limited.
6. Some advice to others: it is important not to limit oneself but to explore many avenues and most of all to talk to many people.

3. The Experience of High-School

1. Influence of peers: peer pressure is subtle rather than direct in terms of career decision making.
2. Direct influences: in school, one is influenced directly by positively or negatively experienced interactions with teachers and counsellors.
3. Career guidance in high school is not perceived to be personal.
4. Indirect influences: courses and programs can also influence one positively or negatively.

4. Outside Influences

1. There are many influences of a general nature such as finances and location of institute of learning that impact on the decision for a specific program.
2. Influence of people other than parents or school.
 - a. How one is treated and regarded by others.
 - b. Some positive experiences with other people.
3. Siblings: influences and competition.

5. The Role of
Family

1. Family events may play a role in decision making.
2. Expressed and implicit family values: there are family values which exert pressure on the individual thinking of making a career decision.
3. Pressures from parents come in the form of
 - a. Supportive statements made by parents and
 - b. Non-supportive or negative statements made by parents.

6. Applying to
the Program of
Choice

1. There are challenges and hurdles to be overcome as one is applying to a program of one's choice.

7. Feelings and
Issues about
being Accepted

1. Describing the program: many programs have specific limits or entrance parameters that one needs to meet or address.
2. During the period of waiting, between application and acceptance, there are issues of personal fears and self-doubt that need to be faced.
3. The acceptance to a program engenders positive feelings about oneself and one's future.
4. There are other issues related to becoming accepted into a program which deal with personal insights and insights into the program one has chosen.

8. Observations about Others

1. Talking about peers and how they are managing their career plans: most of their friends have not made a decision and seem to be avoiding making one.

9. Self Talk

1. Statements made about self: it seems that everyone has periods of self doubt but unless one goes ahead and tries things, nothing will ever happen.
2. There are some inner conflicts that are directly or indirectly related to the decision.
3. Regrets: although the decision would have probably remained the same, there are things that some students might have wanted to do differently.

10. Other Decisions

1. Important ideas that lead to self-recognition or action: there is a need to get on with life now that the career decision has been made.
2. There is a willingness to make other decisions.
3. Making a career decision raises the awareness of other issues in life that individuals may or may not want to address at this time.
4. Acceptance to a program may be accompanied by a need to make decisions for greater independence.

11. Thoughts about
the Future

1. There are some unknowns about the future which give rise to feelings of fear (or)
2. Ambiguity about the future.
3. Some future hopes and dreams: there is an end in sight where one will have the career that is being prepared for, but the completion of the program of studies is not an end unto itself.

APPENDIX VII

THEMES FROM THE QUESTIONS

Technique Triangulation

A second examination of the protocols was made to increase the strength of the validity of the analysis. The answers given for each question were written on 3"x5" cards and then sorted for major ideas. In this manner, I was able to identify the kinds of information that the questions elicited during the narration. Eleven major ideas (corresponding to the categories originating from phenomenological reduction) were identified. A high correlation between the two methods was observed.

Question 1. To begin, perhaps you could tell me how you came to enter (name the program)?

Answers included: Description of self; parental relationships; decision making; describing the feelings; school influence.

Question 2. What kinds of events in your life contributed to making this choice?

Answers included: Parental relationships; other people & influences; school influence; description of self.

Question 3. Are there any people who in the course of your life helped you come to this decision? How would you describe these people and your relationship to them?

Answers included: Parental relationships; other people & influences; school influence; friends and peers.

Question 4. What kinds of things do you remember running through your head at the time when you were about to apply for this course of studies? How would you describe your feelings?

Answers included: Describing self; describing the feelings; describing the career; general decision making.

Question 5. When you were deciding on this course of studies, were there other important decisions that you had to make at the same time which might have affected your career decision? For example, did you need to change location of residence, give up a job, or so on?

Answers included: General decision making; parental relationships; other issues.

Question 6. How do your parents/siblings/friends feel about this decision?

Answers included: Parental relationships; other people & influences; friends and peers.

Question 7. Do you see this as a career that you would like to pursue for the rest of your life?

Answers included: Future; describing the career; describing self; other issues.

Question 8. If you were to retrace the steps that lead you to this decision, would you make changes and perhaps decide differently?

Answers included: General decision making; other issues; describing the career.

Question 9. What are some of your future hopes and dreams and how do you see this career plan helping to fulfil those?

Answers included: Describing the career; describing self; future.

Question 10. A career decision is considered one of our major life decisions. What are some things that you might wish to say to someone who is also making a career decision for the first time? Would you make another major life decision such as getting married or having children in the same way? Why or why not?

Answers included: General decision making; friends and peers; other issues; describing self.

Question 11. What kinds of things have you learned about yourself while making this decision?

Answers included: Describing self; parental relationships; general decision making.

Question 12. Do you think that young people by and large undergo a similar experience as you have had making a career decision? How similar or different?

Answers included: Friends and peers; other people & influences; general decision making; describing self.

Question 13. Did you ever experience any career guidance before you made the decision? (if 'yes': Could you tell me what it was like for you?)

Answers included: School influence; career guidance; describing self.

Question 14. If you were to help someone make career plans or help them decide on a career, what would be some things that you might want to include in your discussion?

Answers included: Friends and peers; general decision making; future; parental relationships; describing the career.

Question 15. Do you think it is difficult for young people today to make career decisions? How does this compare with your own experience?

Answers included: Future; describing self; general decision making; describing the career; describing the feelings.

Question 16. Before we close, is there anything that came to mind during the discussion which you might have wanted to say but which you thought not relevant at the time or for which a question was not posed?

Answers included: Other issues; describing self; future; describing the career.

APPENDIX VIII

DESCRIPTION OF THE QUESTION-ANSWER ANALYSIS

1. General decision making. In trying to understand the experience of decision making, I wanted to separate the statements that were generic to decision making from those specific to the career choice. I found that the stories did not allow for such a separation. However, the stories provided information that permitted some understanding of the time commitment individuals required to come to the decision. While in some instances, the decision was made over a period of many years, in others individuals seemed to "grow into" their decision and still others came to a decision very quickly. There was not a sense that career decisions are made over "x" period of years. Career decision making appears to be quite individualistic and related to a personal stimulus that initiated the career path.

2. Parental relationships and involvement. Part of the experience of deciding on a career included the feelings surrounding parental involvement. Although all of the respondents spoke of their parents, there appeared to be only one person, James, who spoke in what might be called neutral terms about his parents. The other respondents tended towards the use of more emotional language when discussing their relationship with their parents in terms of their career decision.

A theme of parental presence rather than involvement emerged in the stories. Parental presence was expressed by the narrators in terms of being welcome as well as unwelcome.

3. Other people and influences. There were two thoughts expressed in the narratives that dealt with other people and influences. One thought described people and how the narrators perceived their influence which could be summarized in one of three ways: first a lack of influential people in the lives of young adults trying to make career decisions; secondly, the people who are available more often try to influence young adults in their decision instead of permitting them to explore; and thirdly, the narrators were clear about what kinds of interaction with people had been helpful and what had not been helpful.

The second thought involved identifying whether the influence was direct, as for example Susan stating that "people always told me 'you have a fine eye, you have good ideas'", or Wayne being directed by his friend to investigate the program he later enrolled in; or indirect (by way of expectations or environment), as for example Susan describing her childhood surrounded by "a lot of design things, culture, art, and always having literature around and books and magazines..."; or Bill talking about his school "teachers and parents, ...worrying, [about the students' future and thereby] inadvertently put[ting] pressure to create a direction within that person".

4. Friends and peers. While friends and peers appeared to influence choice, it seemed to be subtle rather than direct. The narrators discussed friends and career decisions in terms of comparisons. They spoke about this topic by relating stories of friends or peers who avoided making or are postponing career decisions; in terms of lack of information and lack of skills in finding information that some of their peers demonstrated; in terms of a lack of commitment by some young people to making a decision and a concomitant hope of "falling" into something; by recognizing that some of their peers who are in a career program are there not by personal choice but because of parental pressures; and speaking of others who fell prey to peer pressure and decided on a career that their friends were entering.

In making these observations and comparing their situation to those of their friends and peers, the narrators generally expressed their coming to a decision in positive, self-affirming terms. And while they have fears, concerns and doubts about their friends who have not made decisions or who are seen to have made wrong decisions because they were pressured into them, they were uncritical and seemed to believe that as long as people keep their options open, that they will eventually be lead to the career of their choice.

5. Describing the self in relation to the decision. Coming to a career decision was an experience that was described in emotional words. Anxiety, hope, fear, joy are just some of the terms that were used. For some of

the narrators what they had embarked on was new and exciting while for others it was a fulfillment of a decision that seemed to have originated in early childhood. The unifying element in this theme was one of people feeling good about themselves.

Fear was a feeling experienced primarily during the commitment stage especially during the period between application and acceptance when the self is open to acceptance or rejection by the institution. Once the decision had been made and the person was accepted, the words expressed feelings of freedom and relief. Regardless of whether individuals felt that they made decisions recently or whether they had grown into the decision, the stories were filled with comments that indicated a high degree of self awareness that seemed to go beyond just the career decision.

6. Describing the feelings. Most of the narrators experienced a great sense of relief when they knew that they had been accepted to the program of their choice. It seemed that the more competitive the entrance requirements to a program, the greater the sense of relief. For the person, who during the main interview was still waiting to hear whether he had been accepted, the stress level was so high that it seemed to dominate a good part of the interview.

Once in the program of their choice, relief gave way to feelings of relaxation and feelings of empowerment. However, some of the narrators who had experienced a year in the program of their choice also expressed mixed feelings--not in terms of their goal, but about the program itself. For Susan, for example, not all the courses she had taken were as meaningful as she might have anticipated, for Bill the focus of the program was too restrictive and for James it was suffering academic stress for the first time in his life.

7. Describing the career. Not everyone spoke about the actual career in terms of knowing what he/she would be doing at the conclusion of their education. On the contrary, it seemed that the experience of making a commitment to a career program did not necessarily imply an understanding of that career. In general career was described more in terms of life style and

personal fulfillment, rather than in terms of job description.

8. Career guidance. Career guidance encompassed two topics, guidance which they received, and guidance which they would wish to impart to others or would have found more beneficial to themselves. The guidance that was helpful was described as personal interactions with people who made an impact on them. The guidance that was not helpful was described as interactions that seemed manipulative or impersonal. The latter were primarily with computerized career programs, albeit some of the respondents also experienced impersonal or manipulative human interactions.

9. School influence. In terms of school influence on the career decision, the students expressed the extremes of good or bad, whether in their relationship with individuals (teachers or counsellors), or with specific programs in the schools.

10. Future. Most of the respondents spoke about the future in somewhat nebulous terms which may perhaps not be too surprising as they all looked to completing two to five years of studies. However, it is worthy to note that among their future goals was the recognition that they would continue professional development or future courses or even higher degrees.

11. Other issues. While the overwhelming focus of the individuals was on their commitment to their career programs, two concurrent topics appeared to be part of their decision making, that of residence, and that of finances. While neither of these items seemed to prevent the individuals from actualizing their career decision, they were an element in each narrative.

Adjunct to finance and residence was the underlying need to assert their independence, while at the same time looking for approval, especially of parents.

APPENDIX IX

CHRONOLOGY, REFLEXIVITY AND REFLECTION

Each of the stories was examined in terms of chronology to get a sense of time; and reflexivity, to gain some understanding of how the experience of deciding for a career program was part of a continuous experience of self. In addition, I have included a summary statement of the reflections I made on the narratives. The information is presented here in the order that the interviews were conducted.

Joyce

I. Chronology

1. Elementary school: toying with becoming a doctor, nurse or teacher.
2. Move to B.C. when in grade 9: became more independent; no longer with people who prejudged her.
3. Grade 11: entered the International Baccalaureate Program
 - a. academically enriched program
 - b. surrounded by very bright but not always well-rounded peers
 - c. influential Biology teacher
 - d. missing out on a lot of fun
 - e. began thinking about her career more seriously
4. University: won a scholarship that made her decision for the institution she would attend.
5. 3rd Year S. F. U.
 - a. seeking to decide future
 - b. fear of failure immobilized further action
 - c. went for career counselling
 - d. did career search at university career centre
 - e. learned prioritizing and acting on plans
 - f. made application but spent summer still soul searching

- g. told mother of plans just before receiving letter of acceptance from U.B.C.
- 6. Was accepted to medical school.
 - a. incredible relief
 - b. subsequent decision to move away from family home was made quickly and independently
 - c. greater feelings of confidence in asserting herself with her peers
 - d. great sense of relief; freedom from pressures to perform
 - e. struggle between growing need for independence and sense of responsibility towards parent (mother)
 - f. more relaxed and able to take free time
 - g. thinking of future
 - i. service overseas
 - ii. marriage and family
 - iii. private practice

II. Shifts in time space coordinates

- 1. Move from small community to urban centre
- 2. International Baccalaureate program
- 3. University
- 4. University specialty area

III. Reflexivity

The career choice was made in a personal arena where the stated family values of independence and career wrestled with unstated values of non-assertion and dependence so that Joyce felt almost immobilized to act. It seemed that overcoming the paralysis, and having the action (application to medical school) validated in the form of an acceptance letter was a pivotal point in how Joyce experienced herself. Prior to the resolution to act, all decisions appear to have been made for her (parents; scholarship to S.F.U.); once she had acted, she felt free to move out, become more assertive and let go of the intensity with which she pursued the academics. It seemed, that in Joyce's case, the experience of making the career decision freed her to continue making decisions about her life.

IV. Reflection

Two things stood out for me in this story. First the relationship Joyce had with her parents --good children obey the parents and try to please their parents by being obedient. Second Joyce's struggle with self-confidence which I saw as in some way linked to the parental issue. Despite of academic success Joyce experienced a period of immobilization when it came to acting on her career plans. She believed that part of her lack of self-confidence stemmed from the family home. The parents, while advocating independence, expected unquestioned obedience from the children.

Mary

I. Chronology

1. Elementary and junior high school: undecided; taking sciences but unhappy with the courses.
2. Grade 11: decides she does not like sciences and goes against parental and counsellor's advice; she does not choose to take a full science program in her final year.
3. Grade 12: takes accounting and marketing and discovers a new world opening up to her.
 - a. is turned on to business by a teacher
 - b. decides that this is where she really would like to be
4. Attends S. F. U. but does not take any science courses.
 - a. father refuses to discuss her choice; makes it clear that he is not in favour
 - b. mother and sister support her in her decision
 - c. friends are supportive of her decision
 - d. increased awareness of the opportunities available to her at university
5. She applies to enter the business faculty.
 - a. father against it; feels need to stand up for herself

- b. mother and sister still supportive
 - c. feeling afraid because of the competition
6. She is accepted to the faculty.
- a. great sense of relief and accomplishment
 - b. sense of energy
7. Other decisions: whether or not to enter co-op.
- a. fraught with self-doubt
 - b. finds she needs support of family and friends to make this decision
 - c. great anxiety during the period of waiting especially when nothing is happening
 - d. grateful for the opportunity it provided once it was job time
 - e. growth towards personal independence; throwing off her routines; becoming more flexible
 - f. finds acceptance for her choice from dad

II. Shifts in time-space coordinates

- 1. high school
- 2. university
- 3. university-specialty area
- 4. specialty area and co-op
- 5. co-op work experience

III. Reflexivity

Mary's decision to take courses other than sciences in grade 12 freed her from her previous misconceptions about opportunities at university (she said that she did not know about such things as a business degree, communications degree, criminology and so on as she had been influenced by her father and the school to think that only science related areas were at university.)

Her career decision was made almost in rebellion. As a result she did not seem to understand the steps she had taken in arriving at her decision making the subsequent decision for co-op education also difficult, for her. When Mary recognized the processes in the second interview, she was able to tie them together and feel more empowered to act in the future.

IV. Reflection

Mary's experience of making her career decision was marked by the father daughter conflict which she returned to in her story, time and time again. It was evident that her father was a strong influence in her life and that she wanted to please him. This was evidenced by the relief she experienced once he had accepted her decision. However, she also needed to be independent of her father's dictates and directions and was prepared to face his rejection, not just of her choice, but of herself, in order to follow her interests.

Surinder

I. Chronology

1. High School.
 - a. need to begin some career search about grade 11
 - b. career search is focused on physiotherapist
 - c. career guidance seen as waste of time
 - d. school counsellor seen as very non-supportive; negative
2. College
 - a. entered into first year science transfer program
 - b. pressure from parents to make a decision
 - c. applied to B.C.I.T., Occupational Health and Safety
 - i. wanted a science related occupation
 - ii. wanted a "different", uncommon occupation
 - iii. wanted something that would allow her to advance
3. Waiting period
 - a. did not receive a reply from B.C.I.T. over the summer
 - b. phoned the institute and was told she was on a waiting list
 - c. did not give up: got an interview with the dean of the program and was accepted

4. B. C. I. T.
 - a. feels fortunate to be in this very competitive area
 - b. feels affirmed that it was the right decision for her
 - c. personal growth
 - i. recognizes that most people in the program have more experience and background and feels free to learn from them
 - ii. recognizes she has strengths and is willing to share them
 - d. has been encouraged by her experience to help her brother in a career exploration

II. Shifts in time and space

1. High school
2. College
3. B. C. I. T.

III. Reflexivity

For Surinder having a goal is essential if one wants to become something in this world. She sees herself as becoming successful in her career by visualizing both her career and her success and working towards that vision. At the same time she appears to be a "here and now" person who just wants a job in her field but who, it seems, would take anything in the way of employment, once she has completed her training.

IV. Reflections

For me the underlying theme in this decision was the influence of the extended family and her culture on Surinder. She accepted the strong family values about having a good education and an occupation acceptable to her station in life, but at the same time struggled against the competitiveness she saw in her ethnic community. Surinder also felt that the community judged heavily those who cannot make up their minds or who change their minds about their careers. On the other hand she does not shy away from competition, as demonstrated by her willingness to participate in a very competitive occupation. Surinder seemed to separate herself from a perceived negative competition

in her extended family by using the third person pronoun "you" when she talked about herself and the pressures she felt from her extended family about her career goals. She used the first person "I" when she spoke about herself in terms of what she is doing at B.C.I.T.

Susan

I. Chronology

1. Growing up in a single parent family with a mom who is very much a patron of the arts.
 - a. surrounded by 'nice' things
 - b. artsy friends of mom
 - c. travelling to Europe
 - d. being exposed to art galleries, symphonies, ballets, etc.
2. High School
 - a. academics stressed by mom but are difficult for Susan
 - b. in grade 10: counsellor suggests a grade 12 course and to aim for Ryerson after graduation if she still wants a degree in interior design
 - c. Susan does not take senior art courses
3. Post high school graduation
 - a. Susan is afraid to apply to Ryerson right away and enrolls in some art courses at a local college and works as a sales clerk in a clothing store
 - b. she visits Ryerson and is told she will need to upgrade some of her high school courses
 - c. she enrolls in night school to upgrade
 - d. she applies to Ryerson
4. Waiting time
 - a. Susan is short listed after an interview at Ryerson but is not accepted immediately because her portfolio was lacking
 - b. she enters a period of inaction brought about by the news of only short listing and by personal family tragedy
 - c. she receives word to enrol

5. Ryerson
 - a. she realizes that it is not all easy work and has some down times
 - b. she is encouraged by her professors
 - c. she believes if her instructors have faith in her then she can also have faith that she can do it
6. Future
 - a. plans to travel, perhaps an overseas job
 - b. eventually a business of her own

II. Shifts in time and space

1. home with mom; supportive environment
2. School: a place where it is difficult for her to compete
3. College: enrichment; courses she enjoys
4. Visit to Ryerson: affirmation of her plans; some setbacks
5. College and Night School: determined to make it
6. Ryerson interview: success coupled with disappointment
7. Job: waiting to be accepted
8. Ryerson: affirmation with mixed feelings

III. Reflexivity

Susan's career decision is deeply embedded in her childhood and adolescent experiences in a family that surrounded itself with the art world. Mother provided incredible experiences for her children, both here and abroad. The influence of these experiences are seen as positive by Susan and she accepts both the molding and the person she has become through the molding without equanimity.

IV. Reflection

Susan's decision in some ways seemed unreal-- something that was set into motion by her imagination and her experiences, fuelled by her "finer feelings" and a supportive environment. Although she was goal oriented, she seemed to be dependent on external affirmation and support systems. There was a hint of emerging independence when she spoke about the energy she put into her courses near the end of the year and

how she brought her marks up dramatically through her own endeavours; but it seemed only a hint. Susan followed up that statement by saying, if her professors have faith in her then she should have faith in herself as well. In the end I wondered whether she will have the strength to carry out three more years.

Wayne

I. Chronology

1. Growing up.
 - a. isolated; almost a recluse
 - b. becomes immediately enamoured with computer after seeing it the first time at an uncle's
2. High School
 - a. friends are older than he is
 - b. chooses enriched courses and enjoys the challenge but does little to get marks
 - c. is not impressed by people who fool around in class
 - d. applies for a college computer program after graduation
3. Is accepted
 - a. is not very impressed because it is only a college
 - b. sees it as a bread and butter job that he is good at
4. Future
 - a. dreams of becoming a writer

II. Shifts in time and space

1. Early childhood: is introduced to the computer
2. High School: enjoys his courses but does not like the competition for the scholarships or bursaries
3. College: utilitarian training

III. Reflexivity

Wayne's decision stems from a pragmatic outlook on life rather than being reflective of Wayne's nature or

his desires. His career decision, as he sees it, is practical and viable with the added benefit that he "knows" computers and likes working with them. Wayne states that computers work like he does. The experience of making the decision is considered by Wayne as intuitive and realistic. He considers himself a realist living in a "realism" world.

IV. Reflection

The dream of becoming a writer seemed so illusive to him, that Wayne could not fathom preparing himself for it. He knew that he needs a job that will support him and eventually support a family. The dream may be a way for him to express a deep soulfulness that seemed to have contributed to his feelings of isolation and, it appears, an unfulfilled wish to be understood.

James

I. Chronology

1. Elementary School.
 - a. builds a simple laser in grade 7
 - b. already reads science and electronic magazines
2. High School.
 - a. very academic
 - b. father helps him with computers as needed
 - c. he turns his bedroom into a working lab
 - d. he gets a job in a related area
 - e. he applies to university: has no doubt he will be accepted
3. University
 - a. he enjoys his first year engineering
 - b. he works to not get too deeply into debt
 - c. his marks are too low to be accepted into 2nd year electronics
 - d. he feels trapped but fights back

II. Shifts in time and space

1. Elementary student: memories of grade 7
2. High school: developing entrepreneurial talents

- a. engineering - potential to fulfil his dreams
- b. job - the reality of financial constraints

III. Reflexivity

James' decision grew out of his seemingly only interest in life, electronics. Yet the experience of not being accepted into the specialty area of his dream did not leave him immobilized. James immediately looked at other alternatives to achieve his goal and proceeded to set these into motion when he received word that he had not been accepted. He experienced high levels of frustration while he waited for acceptance but seemed to be able to turn that negative energy into productive energy almost overnight.

IV. Reflection

While he did not consider himself a loner, James seemed to have very little contact with anyone that significantly influenced him or even encouraged him. His experience of deciding certainly seemed one of isolation mixed with purposeful activity towards reaching his dream goal. He was very focused. The focus was not just for the occupation alone, but it seemed, also to fulfil a need to share ideas and be accepted. This was evident in his passionate description of how engineers bond and how difficult the experience of watching people being "weeded out" of the faculty was for him.

Bill

I. Chronology

1. Private school entered on a scholarship.
 - a. finds he does not like challenging himself
 - b. takes the easy road in high school
 - c. decides that business is for him while still in grade 10
 - d. experiences pressure to maintain his career goal through the heavy emphasis on careers in guidance
2. University
 - a. does pre-commerce and applies for commerce

- b. feels restricted
- c. moves away from home to join a fraternity
- d. decides to switch to the Arts faculty

II. Shifts in time and space

- 1. School
- 2. University
 - a. home
 - b. fraternity house

III. Reflexivity

Bill's experience of deciding might be described as one of not being in control. It seemed to him that the decision had been made for him through the values espoused by his family and through his experience in the private school with its heavy emphasis on having a career goal firmly in place prior to graduation. While he expressed some regrets over this experience because he was not encouraged to explore a wider range of possibilities, part of him seemed to accept it. Bill stated that career decisions are not made so much from within as they are made by outside influences.

The change in faculty appeared to be the first choice he made without reference to family or friends, but it was done in reaction to feeling restricted in Commerce, rather than in a reflective manner of deliberate decision making.

IV. Reflection

Central to this young man's experience was the struggle for independence and self worth. Only as he told his story did Bill come to recognize that he was trying to prove himself to his father and that somehow his career goals were trying to fulfil that which his father never fulfilled himself. While he philosophically stated that his close brush with failure has made him more able to take risks which he had always avoided because of fear of failure, I was left wondering about the impact that this need to succeed has had on self worth. The ability to take risks was almost obliterated by his subsequent remark about now feeling a lot less intelligent than he had previously considered himself to be.

Janice

I. Chronology

1. Age 6: goes to hospital to have tonsils removed.
 - a. really enjoys hospital stay
 - b. is particularly impressed by one nurse
 - c. makes her first decision for nursing
2. High School.
 - a. takes science courses to prepare for university entrance; nursing degree
 - b. listens to nurse from U. B. C. and is again impressed
 - c. makes application to a variety of nursing programs
3. Waiting for acceptance.
 - a. works
 - b. takes courses at college but cannot get related courses
 - c. begins volunteering in hospital
4. Accepted to college program.

II. Shifts in time and space

1. Hospital: age 6
2. High School
3. Work and waiting period
4. Acceptance

III. Reflexivity

Janice believes that decisions are made by first impressions. While that implied for her a weighing of alternatives, she stated that the final decision reflects a positive first impression. Janice feels that most people make decisions in that fashion and that her experience of making the career decision is similar to the decisions she makes about purchasing a sweater or other item of clothing--it all comes back to the first impression.

IV. Reflection

While there were no strong statements regarding family relationships, it seemed to me that Janice's experience of career decision was underscored by a theme of parental control and direction versus her need to be independent and her own person. Janice described her parents as supportive and willing to permit her to follow her dream but at the same time Janice stated that they feel that the program might be too difficult for her and that she would perhaps be better off becoming a secretary like her sister. Several statements in Janice's story seem to indicate that this has provoked strong conflicts between herself and her parents and has strengthened her resolve to meet her goal.

APPENDIX X

**SUMMARY OF THE PROTOCOLS AS READ TO THE NARRATORS
AND DISCUSSED IN THE SECOND INTERVIEW**

The summaries of the protocols that were read to their authors in the second interview are typed in regular type. The additional information gleaned in the second interview, has been added in italics.

Joyce

(A postscript which needs to be a preface.) *In an off-the-tape conversation subsequent to the second interview, Joyce told me that while she had been considering medicine as a career since elementary school, and while she had always enjoyed the sciences, her struggle to come to a decision resulted from not knowing whether she was doing this for herself or for her parents. The parents valued the sciences higher than other types of education and wanted their daughter to enter an occupation that was science based. Joyce felt that she had to be sure that medicine was what she wanted; that she was not pursuing that as a goal in order to please her parents. Joyce had no objections to my paraphrasing this part of the conversation and including it in my summary.*

Joyce stated that she came from a regular "Joe Blow" family; basically blue collar. Only her father had aspired to go beyond that and had achieved a degree in engineering. It seemed that the roots of some of Joyce's conflict in making her choice lay there.' On the one hand she seemed insecure and uncomfortable in her role as a "med student", on the other she had demonstrated throughout her life that marks were important and success in school was highly valued. She even "gave up two precious teenage years" (which she now wishes she would have spent in developing her social skills), in order to be a member of the baccalaureate program, which in her school attracted the academic elite whom Joyce described as "not necessarily well rounded" students.

Her efforts in school appear to have paid off financially. She entered S.F.U. on a scholarship; and

the summer before entering med school she stated that she had a lot of free time, presumably because she was continuing to have, at least in part, her education funded through scholarships. *This observation was confirmed in the second interview.*

Joyce's struggle with self-confidence was evident throughout the narrative from comments such as "I wasn't assured...of myself, I often put myself down" and so on, despite of the fact that she "never doubted" her academic abilities. I suspect that this probably arose out of the family dynamics which did not permit her to test her ability to make decisions and deal with the consequences. It seemed that her father made all the family decisions.

Joyce spoke long and eloquently about the decision making process she underwent to come to her decision. She stated that she received some professional guidance in decision making which provided her with the skills to make a decision and gave her the impetus to apply to the faculty of medicine. While she risked a great deal in applying--much of what little self-confidence she had was put on the line, (which she recognized as she did a lot of procrastinating prior to putting in the application)--she was not going to risk all of her self-esteem. So as the summer progressed, she planned for a back-up profession, teaching, in the event that she was not accepted into medicine.

Joyce continued to debate going to medical school virtually the whole summer after she had submitted her application. Several days before the letter of acceptance arrived, she finally spoke out loud, to her mother, the words that committed her to try for medicine. As if to affirm her growing confidence, acceptance came and her life, it seemed, turned around. The words she used to describe that feeling gave me a sense of how much of herself had really been tied up in this risk: "elated, ...never had such a moment of joy in my life, ...yelling out loud, singing" and so on. *At this point in the second interview, Joyce again beamed and nodded her head, as if she was reliving that moment of joy.*

From that moment on Joyce seemed to have come into her own. She described the subsequent decision of moving out on her own in matter of fact terms. She stated that she became more relaxed during her first year in medicine and was able to do some of the

enjoyable social things that she had put off for so long. She also noted that she became assertive in her relationships so that she did not feel so taken advantage of by her friends. She admits that having made the decision, and having that decision affirmed gave her the courage to keep making changes.

Joyce still has some misgivings about her relationship with her mother. As mom and dad separated the year before she entered medical school, she felt obligated to return home during the summer to support her mother emotionally. She describes this as being more than just a social obligation, as her mother had become dependent on her daughter being available. Joyce had really felt free living away from home while in her first year at medical school and was still feeling vulnerable in terms of the old parent-child patterns that had been established over the years. However, Joyce also recognized that it would be a limited time at home and that she would return to her apartment for the subsequent year at university.

In all it seemed that Joyce's experience of making a career decision was one of turmoil as she struggled with family values, self-concept issues and personal uncertainty. At the same time, having made the decision was experienced as incredibly freeing, giving her the incentive and courage to continue making decisions and to grow in her independence. It also seemed to be a lonely experience. Joyce did not receive a lot of encouragement as a person. While both parents had provided her with the work values and educational values that permitted her to do well in school, it appeared that they had not provided the kind of personal development support that would allow her to make decisions and possibly deal with the failures. It seemed that the length and the intensity of the struggle to come to a decision was based on an unstated value that she needed to be successful at whatever she finally chose to do. *At this point in the second interview, Joyce stated that growing up in her family was filled with mixed messages. On the one hand she was encouraged to become financially independent, on the other hand the parents had very high expectations for their children and demanded their obedience.*

School also did not seem to be much help. While Joyce described her biology teacher as a "father figure" for whom she would do anything, she did not

describe him in terms of warmth or caring but rather as someone who pushed her to the limit. She admired him because he gave her the academic confidence by pushing her, but there appeared to be no other type of caring in terms of her as a person outside of the academics. *Joyce reflected on this statement for a moment when we got to this point, and then said that she had not really ever thought about it in those terms. But yes, it was like her father. She also admired him but had difficulty feeling warm towards him as well.*

Nor did school provide her with the kind of career guidance she would have wanted. Joyce spoke briefly and humorously about the CHOICES program which, she said, did not really give her any choices. What she needed then, was a person, not a computer. Nevertheless, even at university when she had found a counsellor, most of her career search was done in isolation. She believes that many young people do not have the tools and therefore perhaps not the motivation to do the kind of career search that she undertook--every Friday afternoon looking up jobs and reading about them in the career guidance office of S.F.U.--and are therefore unable to make a decision. Instead, Joyce observes, they hope that somehow they will stumble on something that will interest them.

Joyce thinks of herself as unique among her peers. She says that many of her peers have not made a decision, and certainly not a conscious decision the way that she had. I noted a sense of ambivalence about that. On the one hand she admires some of her peers who seem to be able to take life as it comes and not worry about a career, on the other she is very happy that she has made her decision because she believes once that a career decision has been made it empowers the individual to make other decisions and to become independent.

Joyce was articulate, well spoken and generally harmonious in her verbal and non-verbal expressions. She was unafraid to speak about her insecurities and the struggle with self-confidence that appears to be still a main issue for her. For example she is looking forward to her own practise in family medicine after her three years medical school and two years internship "if I feel confident enough" and then adds hastily but "I should be by then".

Joyce finds that she still puts herself down when she is with her friends, in order to make them feel more comfortable with her ("they put themselves down too"), and she is unsure about the attention that she is being paid by friends and relatives as a "med-school" student. She would prefer being treated ordinarily.

Finally Joyce has some concerns about her future as a doctor. She hopes that she will eventually marry someone who can respect her as a professional person and will not consider her career a frill.

Respect, equality, independence, service are some of the outstanding values I became aware of as I read the transcript and listened to the tape. Here is an intelligent young woman who is experiencing both joy and uncertainty, pride and self-doubt, independence and dependence simultaneously. The decision has made it easier for her to see herself as capable, but it has also underlined the very deep seated fears that perhaps outside of her intellect, she may not be a capable person. Nevertheless, the decision has also given her the hope that just as she was able to overcome the fear of rejection by the medical school administrators, she will also be able to use her newly developed skills to make future decisions (except in the area of personal relationships where she feels the tools she has would be of no use). Even in saying that, she is also acknowledging that the confidence one gains in making these kinds of decisions, give one the courage to make others.

Joyce listened carefully as I read, no longer looking at the transcript in front of her, but settling back into the cushions of the chesterfield as if to understand fully the story she had told. Except for a few comments in between as noted, she listened silently and then stated quietly that she was surprised at how fully I had been able to restructure the experience. She felt she really could not add anything. I shut off the tape, and then she began telling me about her experience of growing up in her family. She said she couldn't tell it on tape but that if I wanted to use the additional information that I would be welcome to do so. I chose to place a small excerpt of what she told me at the beginning of this summary since it seemed to provide a background for Joyce's story on her experience of making a career decision.

Mary

Mary is a well-focused, bright and happy person whose career decision was exceptionally difficult as it went against the wishes of her father who appears to be a very powerful person in her life. Nevertheless, in freeing herself from the expectations of father, Mary seemed to demonstrate her own power which has, it seems, contributed greatly to a sense of self-respect and personal value.

Although Mary grew up in a two parent family and has one sibling, it appeared from the story that father was the key figure in her life. The role of the sister was seen by Mary as important because she had spent much of her school life competing against her sister who was more capable in the sciences. Once Mary had decided to enter the arena of business, this competition faded as she recognized her own self-worth in the area of her choice.

Mary's career choice seemed to have been made by accident. Defying the wishes of her parents and her school counsellor as well as school academic tradition, she chose to take in her grade 12 year, two non-academic courses in the area of business. She had all the requirements for entering university already and these courses were chosen because she wanted something different. In her first semester in grade 12 she took accounting and while she found that accounting itself was not particularly interesting to her, her teacher offered so much in the way of information about business that she was immediately enamoured with the idea of entering this field. By the time she took marketing in the second semester, she was convinced of this career choice.

Mary speaks with some anger about school and the parameters of what is "academic" and what is not that school puts on courses. She felt that she was doing this (career choice) all alone. There was no support from the school for her to investigate the business courses since she was encouraged to take more sciences as electives instead of courses which "would not count" at the university. Mary believes that schools do students a great disservice by not encouraging them to take some courses just for interest in grades 11 and 12 when most students are beginning to think in terms of post secondary goals. She felt very unprepared and

believed that students went to university only to study sciences as sciences were really the only academic courses worth anything. She also believes that there are many students who are struggling with courses that they are not particularly interested in when they could be succeeding at other courses that they could be interested in, simply because they do not get the kind of guidance that helps them understand all the possible options at university and at other post secondary institutions.

It took a lot of courage for Mary to say to her parents "Well I want these courses" since her parents too were of the opinion that if the universities wouldn't look at the courses she wished to take, then they weren't worth taking. It was even harder for her to confront her father a year later with the news that she was not going to ever take another science course at university but was preparing herself for entering business administration. At this time she did receive some encouragement both from her mother and her sister, but her father did not discuss her decision for more than a year and a half. Not until she was accepted into the business administration faculty did he finally accept her choice. It seemed that she was more elated over that than being accepted. The weight of going against her father's desires lay heavily on her shoulders.

In describing her choice, Mary's vocabulary was rich in adjectives and descriptive phrases: "definitely what I wanted; I enjoyed; no question about [it]; it was definitely right; I love it; so competitive; really feel like I'm learning; really enjoy" and so on. When I asked her how she felt at the time that she applied, she said she applied early because a lot of people want to get into the faculty and she could have another chance at applying again if she didn't make it. But even then she was worried and the sense of relief that she would be able to get in and do what she wanted was really great when the news of acceptance came. "I was very excited, very excited. ...it was nice, I think it was just a nice feeling."

Although Mary stated that many of her friends did not make it, she feels that sometimes it is because they are not perhaps doing what they really want and therefore not putting in the effort required to get the marks. S.F.U. appears to be heavily geared to business

and the competition to get into the faculty is fierce. Others, she believes are giving up on their dream too easily. If you want something as badly as she wanted it, it is difficult to imagine giving up on it. So she entered her pre-business courses with her goal in mind. "I knew what I had to take, the grades I had to make...And when I had that sort of a goal to meet, I had a lot of energy there."

There was no doubt, no hesitancy in making this career decision. It was a freeing thing. A more difficult decision was that of entering co-op. It would extend her time for graduation and she was unsure whether the benefits would be such that she wanted to extend that time. It seems that Mary is quite utilitarian in her approach to her studies. They need to give her what she wants or there is no point. Perhaps after all the years of taking science courses which she didn't want she feels that she no longer wants to become fettered in anything that will not give her the excitement and the learning that she is looking for. Unlike with the career choice, Mary did consult with her parents and with "everyone" before committing herself, only tenuously, to the co-op program. However, with the job she has this summer as a result of being in the program, she no longer has any doubts. The job is not just utilizing the skills she has already learned, but is giving her challenges in business as well, such as, in her opinion, she could not have gained if she had gotten just a regular summer job.

Her interests are broad. She enjoys finance and investment banking as well as marketing but she is open to learning virtually anything in business. Her immediate goal is to work in a corporation but her long term goals include an M.B.A.

While she is goal oriented Mary recognizes that she also tends towards being a "routine person". Once having set goals she finds it more difficult to make changes which is one of the reasons she had such a difficult time deciding on the co-op program. Success appears also to be very important. She can be very philosophical about friends not getting their goals, but it is difficult for her to imagine not making hers. Once having committed herself to co-op, she experienced a lot of stress with the decision because she was not getting the responses to her job applications that she

felt she should have gotten. It may also be once again hinged to the aspect of control. Having just experienced making a decision that was outside the control of her father, it may have been very stressful for her to experience someone else's control regarding where she goes and what she does for a job. "Because I'd finally committed to this program and I wasn't getting any results and I was like 'Oh maybe this was the wrong decision'." She stated that she felt "really rejected because [she] hadn't any interviews or anything."

In terms of giving advice to others making career decisions, Mary believes that it is essential to know who you are and what you want first. "I had to answer to myself before I'd answer to anyone else and I'm driven by what I want not what other people want for me." She feels that one cannot be motivated by someone else's goals; one has to have a dream of one's own. One needs to have an honest look at oneself to be able to shake off the expectations others have of us; but it's worth it because it will affect the rest of one's life. She also feels that if one believes to be on track and then finds out one isn't, it's O.K. to change one's mind, but if one has a goal, then one should be prepared to really work at it and not just change one's mind because one isn't accepted to a program the first time. Furthermore, she feels that many people are pressured into taking a course of studies because that seems to be the thing to do, rather than doing it because one wants to. It is important to explore and find out what is available but if you don't really know what you like, it is very difficult to get motivated. To do that she suggests looking into different faculties, talking to different people. She believes that one should resist anyone's influence until one has seen all the options. Finding a person who will be helpful to present different options is O.K. as long as they don't push their ideas.

She said that she would engage in making future decisions in the same manner as she made the decision to go into business. However I believe that she has not really stood back to understand the process she went through in making that decision. She made it more on gut feeling than through a well developed plan, and although it turned out to be the best decision for her, the fact that she could not really stand back and

examine how the decision was made, made the decision to go for co-op a difficult and unsure venture. I got the feeling that she learned a little more about how she functions when she made the decision for co-op, than when she made the first decision regarding her career choice. The first decision, seemed highly emotional, while the second problem needed to be wrestled with. She needed to come to terms with herself as being routine and not liking changes in plans; she needed to recognize that she did not like to deal with unknowns and that she struggled with lack of control in the situation. Her coping mechanisms, when she has a problem, is to throw herself into her work and block out the problem. "It's terrible actually, but I, I can evade all other problems by throwing myself into school and I excel in that school and that gives me a lot of comfort..."

At the same time, standing up to her father was a major accomplishment. Her decision to go into business "taught [her] to do what [she] wants to do." And, she adds, "I learned a lot about making my own decisions..." apart from her father. She can now believe in herself. She knows that she can succeed at whatever she sets her mind to. As long as she wants it, she knows she can get it. It is a very freeing, very self-affirming feeling to be able to know that one is capable and can stand independently even against very powerful persons in one's life in order to make a dream come true. As she spoke, I was conscious of how she was internalizing the truths about herself which in turn would strengthen her future resolves even more. She used words and phrases that built up her strength throughout the interview: "I put every effort into [it]; I maximised; I'm satisfied; I learned a lot about how I handle myself; I've learned to think for myself" and so on.

In terms of others, Mary feels that she is not the same as the average young person. She said about 90 % of her friends have not yet made a real decision, others have not met their goals because they have not had the dedication to it. She also believes that many students still are in the mode of comparing themselves to each other while she has stopped doing that and is interested in only doing her best. She can be satisfied with herself if she feels she has done the best even if the final grade is not up at the top. A "C" in a subject that she really worked for, gives her

a great deal more satisfaction than an "A" in a subject that perhaps she did not put as much effort into. She speaks of internal disappointments and internal feelings of success which are, I believe, genuine feelings for Mary, rather than just platitudes.

As far as guidance for herself she did not receive any that was useful. On the contrary, it seemed that there were blockages. It was a decision made in isolation; she felt alone. "Sometimes I wish someone would have sat me down and said 'Well here's what you could take in university'. Nobody ever did that." She muses that it could have happened that she missed taking business. "I might have just followed....I think a lot of people don't step forward and say 'Oh wait a minute' and a lot of people go on when things are wrong...I think people need some guidance in there."

Mary thinks it is difficult to make career decisions because of the many options but she also believes that there are a lot of opportunities to get information. The most difficult part of career decision making is the pressure put on by other people who wish to influence you on which careers are better. She feels that schools bear a lot of that burden, especially because they tend to want to channel academic students into certain directions most of which are science related. However other influences include the pressure of money. Many students may wish one career but choose another because the money seems better. Peer pressure for career choice is another problem. Many people are influenced by what their friends are doing and look no farther.

Mainly she would like individuals to make their own decisions because it is such a freeing thing. "It didn't just help me as a career decision, it helped me as a person." And there is no doubt when I listen to the tape or read the transcript that it is true. "I want everybody to get that because it...gives you confidence as a person. That you know you can do something, that you're worth something."

There were no changes to the summary following the follow up interview. Mary felt that the interview had been very positive for her and had permitted her to reflect on her decisions already after she had left here the first time. She appreciated a copy of the summary and felt that it was good to see someone else's

perspective on the whole experience. She felt it certainly represented well what she had said and enabled her to see the whole experience together which is "something people don't do" and something she had never taken the time to do for herself.

Surinder

Career choice for Surinder appears not to have been an option. Like many other students she began to consider career possibilities in about grade 11. Initially her school provided some guidance through the CHOICES program which she completed in grade 11 but she felt that it was no help to her. The job options that came up for her were not, in her opinion suitable to her interests or to her family's expectations for her. A subsequent visit to the career counsellor in the school proved to be even more disappointing as he tended to be "negative" towards her ideas for higher education, telling her that she would probably not be able to do it.

However, Surinder was not discouraged. On the contrary, it seemed to give her additional motivation as she began to think in terms of "I know myself" and what she was capable of doing when she was motivated.

Motivation was not just internal. Her family background is East Indian. She comes from a line of well-educated, "higher status" people. Even her mother has a grade 10 education, which Surinder said, for her generation, was about two times the educational level of the average woman in India. Her father is well educated and holds a responsible job. She has uncles in India who are doctors; other relatives with other science degrees and even her grandfather was already a very well educated person. *During the follow up interview she stated that this was the grandfather on her mother's side who also was in the British armed service. Her grandfather on her father's side had lead "a pretty easy life," that is, his family had wealth and he did not have to work hard for a living.* Education is valued very highly in Surinder's family, not only for it's own sake but as a symbol of the family's status and to ensure that a future spouse would come from at least as well-educated a background.

Beyond the expectations of a good education, which meant not only high school but also a suitable career

based on post-secondary education, Surinder's parents had no specific career expectations for her. She was free to choose, as long as once she had chosen and committed herself to something, that she did not change her mind. A change of mind in her social community is considered a failure and could be interpreted as a lack of intelligence or of commitment to task. Even her tentative exploration of physiotherapy, although supported by her parents, was held suspect by another member of the extended family. Surinder could not afford to choose a career, that, once she had started the program, she did not like, or perhaps worse yet, a program where she would not be accepted. This young woman was risking not only her own self-concept in making a choice it seemed, but the reputation of her family as well. As Surinder put it:

"This was sort of biggest and the hardest decision I've ever made. ... because... in our family, if you don't have a career decision made...they think that you can't handle it...they think that you're a failure. ... I didn't want to fail basically. ...[so] I was really hoping that I would like it."

In addition to having high values for education, she described her family as also valuing material goods, jobs, income and housing. She herself admits to enjoying the finer things in life and being motivated by the thought of a B.M.W. at the age of 25. Money is important to her and one of the guide posts for her career decision was that she was not prepared to study four years only to find that there were no occupations open at the end of that time, or perhaps "making only \$5.00 an hour" after a lengthy training period. There needs to be "incentive", and incentive was in part for Surinder, the monetary rewards of a job.

While her parents valued education and a career it seemed that they did not wish her to enter something that might take six or seven or more years to complete. The four year program of physiotherapy would not have been a problem but doctor or lawyer seemed to have been out of the question. Surinder appears to have accepted that without much question as she also wanted to "get on" with it and finish school in a reasonable amount of time.

Surinder stated that she wanted a non-traditional type of job. Possibly this was because the competition

in her larger social circle appeared to be fierce and a job that is not run-of-the mill would provide her family with the required degree of status and herself with a reasonable buffer from being compared. Surinder resented the comparisons and the competition within her social milieu and since no one really knew what a person in Occupational Health and Safety did, it was quite a safe choice.

On the other hand, Surinder is capable of a lot of competition and does not shy away from it when it is not family oriented. She had to fight to become accepted into the program because of her youth and, she noted, also in part because of her gender. She is very aware that this is a non-traditional female occupation as in the five years it has been offered at B.C.I.T., this is the first year that four females have been enrolled in a class of 16 (presumably larger at the beginning as she mentioned that students had already dropped out before the end of the first year.) *In the second interview she said that they had started out with twenty-two students in the program.* In addition the program head had mentioned that there were mainly males in the program and cautioned her during the interview that she might feel out of place because of her age and gender.

Her persistence and focus paid off and she was accepted into the program which turned out to be an excellent choice for her. She described it as very interesting, challenging and providing her with excellent opportunities for a job as well as for job advancement. She also appreciated the variety of settings that people in this occupation work in.

A story that she told of how she, at the beginning of the course, proved herself to her group as a capable and self-motivating person who was also cooperative and non-critical of her group members, exemplified Surinder's drive to succeed. While she was surprised that they publicly recognized her with a bouquet of roses, she appeared to also take it in her stride. She spoke well of her classmates whom she admired for their levels of education, the sacrifices they had to make ("most of them gave up well-paying jobs to come into the program") and the amount of work that they put into the program in order to be successful. She also appreciated that they consider her as a peer even though they are much older and more educated than she

is, and had come with much more life and work experience to the course than she had.

When Surinder described herself in relationship to her extended family and their expectations, it was interesting to note that she used primarily the third person ("you", "they"), while in describing the program and her relationship to it, she frequently used the first person ("I", "we"). It seemed that she was separating herself from the negative experience of stress and competition in the family milieu, while taking ownership of the activities and the competition in the educational setting. *Surinder was quite interested in this when we came to it in the second interview. I had anticipated that she might be and had brought along the verbatim transcripts which she began to pour over. Then she said "Yeah. Right. Yeah."*

Surinder did not state that she felt that she was different from her peers, but she said that she was surprised how few of her former classmates had actually gone ahead and done what they said they would do. She felt that many of them had expressed plans to attend post-secondary institutions, primarily universities, but only the very top in her class had gone on. It was evident that this puzzled her as she said over and over again that she "could not believe it" and that she didn't know how they would ever manage without a decent career to support themselves.

Career advice to others is the same as the advice she gave herself. Surinder believes that the best thing anyone can do is to research the jobs one might be interested in and actually go out and watch people at their jobs. She believes that computers have no way of knowing what people actually do and what individuals feel that they are capable of. Knowing one's interests and what is important to oneself is also important to making career decisions. And she feels strongly that it is important to start looking at want ads in the newspapers to see if the career one has chosen is in demand.

In the area of motivation and achievement, Surinder had some extra advice. She thinks that it is important to surround oneself with the accoutrements of the occupation one plans to enter. She feels that if you have pictures, books and so on around, it will help to keep one focused; and if, in addition, one begins to dress the part, then it will be easier to put oneself

into the role of the occupation and encourage one to succeed. She believes that being immersed physically in the environment is helpful to success and in the future for upward movement in the occupation one chooses. *In the follow-up interview Surinder explained how she had done these things for herself and how she was presently helping her brother, who had just entered junior high, and has expressed an interest in aerospace engineering, do the same.*

At the same time her own future plans are somewhat fuzzy. She would like to enter her job right after graduation but she also stated that she may not be working for two or three years after graduation. There was no explanation given for this discrepancy between what she had stated about herself earlier and what she was appearing to express about herself in the future, and at the time I did not query it. She did state immediately thereafter that she was always working, even while she was yet in high school, and that she was not the type to sit around home watching the soaps. It seemed almost as if she was not sure whether she would be able to find suitable employment as she said "It's hard to compete out there (pause) everyone older and (pause) more experienced, more education (pause) and when you're ethnic too (pause) and you're female (pause) it's always a male dominated field." I found that that did not make sense in terms of the drive and the persistence she showed in order to be accepted to the program.

When we came to this part in the follow-up she looked surprised and said "Did I say that?...I don't remember saying thaaaat!" We looked at the transcript to find the sentence. "Wow, I guess, I guess so. No, I'd be out there looking for a job, right." (Interviewer) "You weren't going to wait?" (Surinder) No I would try to compete with everyone else...and if I didn't find one, I'd just keep trying until I could find one that was suitable for me." She found it a "paradox" that she would have said that and kept shaking her head at what it might have meant at the time.

Surinder believes that it is difficult for young people to decide on a career. There are "so many more choices" now days that it can become "confusing". She believes that unless you are really "motivated" to do something and are willing to learn "from everything"

and "everyone" you are not going to be able to make it in the world today. All in all she is comfortable with her choice. Surinder wanted a career in the sciences, and a professional job where she could dress nice and work in nice surroundings. "This gives [her] both."

When we had finished and I asked her if anything had stood out for her she said "Yeah. The whole thing." Paused and then added "I think the motivation part. You really have to be motivated, and be persistent...[and have] confidence in yourself, that you can make it. If you don't, then it's very hard." When I asked if she had any other thoughts or feelings that came up for her she looked over the summary sheet until she came to a spot, pointed to it and laughed "I can't believe you wrote it in; I was just joking." I said "Well, it seemed reasonable, you said you needed incentive." She laughed again. "Yeah, yea. I have one by the way; my parents gave me one (B.M.W.). Now I want a vet."

Wayne

Wayne is a young man who has just been accepted into a two year computer information systems course at Kwantlen College. He spoke thoughtfully and at length about some things and dismissed other questions abruptly with a yes or no. It was as if some of the topics were either not worth discussing or perhaps too full of yet unexplored issues that he did not wish to examine at this time. In the follow up interview Wayne said: "In my interview when I didn't go into depth it was because there was nothing to go into depth for."

Wayne chose to study at a college level because of financial constraints. At one point he said that he was cynical and pessimistic, but I found, at least in the area of choice of institution, that, rather than being cynical, he was feeling discouraged. The scholarships offered at the school level seemed insufficient for him to realistically go for a university entrance program and although he took what enriched courses he could, his lack of interest in the sciences, and his interest in the business courses appear to have defined his options as continuing on to a college. I sensed that although he might have wanted to go the route of a university, it seemed monetarily so far out of reach that he did not seek the guidance

of what was financially available. From his comments it became evident that he was only aware of the small school based scholarships and bursaries and about educational loans. He had heard of overwhelming debt loads incurred by students at universities and was not prepared to tie himself to that. When discussing this summary with him, I would like to ask Wayne what he would choose to do if money were no object. When I asked Wayne about this his eyes became mischivious and he said with humour: "Well if money was no object I wouldn't need to go to college." However, becoming serious again it was evident that he really had not seriously considered university as he was not sure of how long it took to get a Bachelor's degree: "I wouldn't want to spend like 8 years at university just to get like a Bachelor's or whatever." and added wistfully "I'm not that good of a student." However, if it were only three or four years and money was no object "I'd probably be going to university, yeah."

Whether it was financial or whether it was because of a genuine pragmatic outlook on life, Wayne chose computers rather than to study his "dream" occupation, becoming a writer. He considered his choice of computers a realistic one and writing, part of his romantic nature. *Even if money were no object and he could attend university, he would still choose to study computers rather than writing.* There does not appear to be any conflict in this choice as Wayne's role models for writers are those who have an occupation and for whom writing is a second occupation. It also seemed that he recognized that fame is elusive and that writers are "dime a dozen". Therefore he felt that he's more apt to make a living with a practical occupation.

In terms of decision making, I found Wayne to be somewhat unique. He stated that he makes his decisions internally, as if by sixth's sense. He was unable to really verbalize how he knows what he must do; he said he just knows. And while he does not always do what he knows inside he should, he says he is almost "dead on" in terms of the right decision every time. Wayne believes that this sense is inside of everyone. Instinctively we know what we should be doing; but we are taught to write everything down as if somehow the answer would pop up on a page when it is all the while in our heads. That is why, he explained, he knew he

was going to be working with computers from the day that he saw his first computer at his uncle's place. He didn't know exactly what he would be doing, but he knew it would be with computers.

Wayne felt so secure with his decisions, that he said he would continue to rely on his sixth's sense for all his major decisions. Since the method has worked well for him in the past, he did not anticipate changing his style of decision making.

There appeared to be no people in Wayne's life who have made a significant impact on his career decision, or even on his school life. He seemed to have discouraged his parents from becoming involved in his educational decisions; and while he believes that they are happy with his choice of careers, he has been perhaps more successful in warding them off than he had wanted to, as he wistfully stated that "they didn't take me out to dinner or anything...but they are happy with the choice." I felt that Wayne was ready to be recognized for making the right decisions and that the recognition was not being expressed in a manner that he might have desired. His uncle provided a use of computer when Wayne visited, but did not seem to have provided any guidance beyond that.

Nor did Wayne mention any significant teachers or counsellors that inspired him, even though he seemed to enjoy school for the knowledge that was available there from his teachers. Only his friend Maureen was in any way connected to his career decision. But I had the feeling that this connection also was only in the sense of friendship; the sharing of what one is doing on a day to day basis, rather than in terms of an older friend mentoring the younger friend.

Wayne said that he is shy; that he was "almost recluse" in his younger years. Nevertheless I sensed a deep affinity to people. He desired to be understood by and to understand people. And while he stated that he does not have much patience with people who are at a "lower level of understanding" than himself, I believed that that was a reference to the people in some of his classes who he described disdainfully as "just goof[ing]" around and not having a serious attitude to learning, rather than people who may be of lesser intelligence than himself. He described one of his friends who had difficulty in academics but who was serious in his school work. Wayne said that this guy

really knew what he wanted to do and what life is all about.

The part that struck me, and which made me believe that Wayne has a deep understanding of humanity, was his description of how he would help someone find a career goal. At first when I posed the question on how he would help someone make a career choice, Wayne was adamant about not giving advice even when it was asked for. He said that while people at the time may want advice, and may even take it, they would also hold the person accountable if things didn't turn out well. He did not wish to be held accountable for anyone else's success or failure; only for his own. Instead, he would have the person talk about themselves; would through discussion try to learn what the person was about and then try put himself in the role of the person. Wayne believes that if you can identify with someone at their level, then you can say "If I were you, I would do this, because...". He does not believe in pen and paper kinds of decision making but rather in discussing what is important so that what people already know about themselves becomes clear to them.

Wayne believes that he is different from his peers, not because he has chosen a career path--most of his friends have done that--but because of his understanding of himself. He feels that many young people fool themselves into believing that they are learning simply because they write copious notes. He listens and wrestles with understanding. He knows that the understanding "is the most important part". He is also at this point in his life wrestling with a personal belief system. It seems that he is not neglectful of any aspect of self. He is challenging himself intellectually; is maintaining a fitness program; is developing social skills by increasing his circle of friends; is increasing his independence by assuming responsibility working in a Safeway store and as a newspaper carrier; *(He corrected me on this during the follow up. He is not a newspaper carrier but a complaint driver. "Newspaper carrier makes me sound like I'm 12 years old" he grinned.)* maintains volitional health by taking ownership of his decisions and recognizing the importance for every individual to make and own their own decisions; and developing his spiritual nature in his quest to come to terms with life and the relationship of individual life to

something which is greater than the individual. Perhaps he is different from his peers. Certainly he stands out from the other interviews to date insofar as he feels less pressure, it seems, from outside to do, or to achieve, and appears to be more autonomous in making and accepting the outcomes of his decisions. And, judging only from the progression of the interview, he stands out in his acceptance of responsibility for all parts of his life to which he appears to attribute equal importance. Career does not seem to be the most important issue; all aspects of personal development seem to share equal importance at this time.

During the follow up he said that there was one aspect of life which for him did seem to be somewhat more important than the others, that of his love of reading.

When I had asked him if there was anything else that he might have wanted to add he was at first quite adamant that there wasn't. Then as I was about to close he said quite softly "Maybe my ah library in my room." Wayne has a great love of books and has already a fairly extensive library of soft cover and some hard cover books. More important, he does not just collect them, but is an avid reader. All the books on his shelves have been read by him. He was quite proud that he had just spent \$60.00 in a second hand book store picking up more books for himself. He thought that I might be interested in that since he believes that not many people in his age have a library of their own. (He is probably right.)

In terms of career choice, Wayne believes that it is not difficult to make choices. All of his friends have made career choices and are either in training or already working. He believes the choices are very simple: electronics, sciences or computers. In some ways I found this to be very simplistic in view of his own deep insights and in view of his awareness of the competitiveness at the universities. On the other hand it seems to be aligned with his approach to life--reality. He sees the future as becoming more and more automated and therefore sees the need for people to enter into occupations which will be in harmony with future needs and which will provide for a comfortable lifestyle. He does not see the service occupations such as working in Safeway or in a department store as

careers. They do not, in his opinion provide enough money for a person to live, and therefore, judging by the fact that he is employed at Safeway, he believes they are suitable as only interim jobs. *In the follow up he nodded at this and then said "Or if they want to get into the business...yes, like management."* He also believes that the traditional jobs such as office secretarial or working with machines are going to become increasingly scarce. Although he did not specifically state it, from his discussion of desirable jobs, I am presuming Wayne, foresees much of the manual jobs being replaced by computer and robot. *At this point in the follow up interview, Wayne nodded gravely but did not comment.*

In general I found Wayne to be a sensitive, intelligent young man whose realistic appraisals of himself, his strengths as well as his weaknesses were refreshing while at the same time, the lack of youthful enthusiasm and spontaneity which seemed to have been suppressed by his need to live in the "realistic" world left me feeling sad. I wanted to blow on the smouldering coals of the romantic and have them burst into flame. *When we came to this paragraph, Wayne looked at me with grinning eyes and then grinned openly. I found myself grinning back, waited for a comment, but none came.*

James

James is a young man who had just completed his first year in engineering and was waiting to receive word on whether he had been accepted to his chosen field of electrical engineering for the second year. At the time of the interview the uncertainty of that lay heavily upon him and appeared to dominate much of the interview. He spoke rapidly and expansively on the engineering program and his very deep desire to be in the electrical engineering program.

It seems that electrical engineering and computers go hand in hand with James and ideally he would like to combine the two. However, since there appears to be little difference in the courses he needs to take for computer engineering and electrical engineering, and since computer engineering appears to be a more competitive field, James went with his first love, that of electrical. He said that there are two things he

enjoys doing, computers and electrical and he wants to work in a field where he can "enjoy what [he] do[es]."

University appears to be the only way for James to go. He stated that "people tend to regard university degrees on a better standard than they do technology degrees" even though places like B.C.I.T. have good programs. And while he did not directly state this, he seemed to imply, a university degree would give a person a better opportunity for employment. *He affirmed this with a nod in the follow-up interview.*

James's interest in electronics and computers seemed to start at an early age. He can remember building his first electronics project, a simple laser, for a science project in grade 7. He had seen the project in a magazine and it took him months before he got the information from a library. This lead me to believe that he had already developed a reasonably strong interest in electronics by this time as he would not have waited for the information for such a long time if it had been a randomly chosen project. *James thought about this for a moment in the follow-up interview, the said "Never thought about that. I guess it probably was."*

His dual interests in electronics and computers continued to grow throughout high school; albeit, not in terms of school subjects, but rather in terms of private "messing around" at home. James said he has a voltmeter and everything in his room so that he can do his electronics projects there. At high school there were no electronic courses for James to take so that he concentrated on what he calls the "core" subjects, chemistry, physics and mathematics. He was very pleased in having chosen the sciences for his grade 11 and 12 as they were precisely what he needed to get into engineering.

His hobby began to expand into work. James demonstrated his understanding of computers by producing an effective letterhead, used for promotional advertising, by a drug store where his mother was employed. This project resulted in his being hired at the local Radio Shack store where he worked part time throughout high school and first year university. James appreciated the opportunity to work there because he believed he was not only able to learn a great deal but also offer a great deal of his own expertise. Arising from his job, James took on what might be

called tutorials; helping individuals learn how to use their computer. He said that he enjoyed doing that and felt that he had become sophisticated enough in helping people that he would like at some point in his life try teaching people computer skills.

James counts himself as lucky to have been working in an area that will allow him to associate with what he enjoys and what he plans on doing as a career. He recognized that not everyone is that lucky as he pondered about the possibilities of his having gotten a job dishwashing somewhere. "I got a lot of experience in that [explaining computers to people] from working at the Radio Shack store." He also used his own interest and the opportunities provided him in the store to work on his electronics by fixing stereos and the alarm systems and so on. He seemed to be quite proud that he was able to not just sell equipment but understand the equipment that he was selling.

James did not seem to have had any teachers or mentors per se in the development of his interest in electronics. "I've taught myself" he states on several occasions. "I've just worked, picked a project, worked on it and taught myself all the necessary stuff for that project." He feels that that is a good way to learn as it forces you to learn everything you need to complete the project. He cited his most recent learning, that of "C" language, a computer program language he needed to use to complete a program that prints pricing labels at the Radio Shack where he had been working. During the course of the project he learned the language that he will be learning next year in electronic engineering. Now, he said, having already worked with the language, he will be ahead of others in the class.

James's father is a system's analyst working with computers. He helped his son by answering questions as James asked them, but he never "pushed" the young man into that direction. Basically James believes that he did the initiating and his father was helpful in the response. He believes his father was very thorough in explaining everything that James asked about: "If you ask him a simple question he'll go on for like 30 minutes explaining it." but, he laughs it was good because it went beyond the "regular boundaries" that most professionals would go to.

James believes that it was a natural progression for him to enter into electrical engineering. "I had already decided over the years what I was going into. I didn't know it was termed engineering. I just sort of knew that I was going to go into it." He also thinks that most people enter their career fields in the same way. "In grade 12 you could tell" who was going to a university and who was going to college. He admits you can't be certain of everyone, but the majority of people are predictable--even to the kind of program they would enrol in based on the kinds of courses that they had been taking and "partially by their nature". He described how he observed students in a History class he had taken, and the debates that raged in the class. The nature of the individuals he described as outspoken capitalists, or theoretical persons, or more philosophical people. Once you know their natures, James states that you can tell whether they will be going into something practical as he has, or something theoretical such as pure sciences or philosophical such as the arts or psychology.

As far as he was concerned he enjoyed electronics and that is why he went into it; but now that he is there he realizes that many of the people he is with have the same kinds of values in politics and appreciating the concrete, utilitarian aspects of learning, that he has. While James did not directly express this thought, I have the feeling that he welcomed the opportunity to understand and be understood by others which contributed to his feelings of closeness to the students in his faculty. For example he described the closeness of the engineers in warm and accepting terms "it's nice to be able to sort of discuss and everyone sort of agree"; "they spend so much time together"; "you tend to get to know the people"; "they're proud [to be engineers] 'cause they have worked hard to get [there]"; "you feel a bit of at loss so to speak when you know that people've been kicked out", and so on. At one point he attempted to describe why people go into psychology or science, but he faltered and reverted to describing what happened in engineering, the field that he seemed to be most comfortable with and understanding of. *At this point in the follow-up interview James nodded a lot, smiled and made affirming noises "mhm; yeah; mhm" and so on.*

James appeared to be well aware of the requirements of entering engineering and felt no apprehension about being accepted. He had the grades and the appropriate subjects and that was the only important criteria. On the other hand he felt highly anxious about being accepted to electrical. The frustration of finding himself in competition with very bright young people in a faculty that he described as being more interested in getting rid of people than making life easy, was evident in many of the descriptive phrases that he used and in switching from the first person "I" whenever he described the things he likes to do or when he seemed to feel in control to the third person "you" and "they" whenever he described the things that are giving him difficulty. "You're competing [with] the cream of the crop from the high schools"; "the whole thing seems to be geared on trying to get rid of people, that's the most unsettling thing"; "they give you more work than in the time allotted"; "if I took the course now I could probably finish most of the assignments"; "you didn't care what understanding is, you just cared getting it done"; "you have all the other classes"; "you cannot remember totally"; "you're not used to being trying to get rid of"; "you're used to getting high marks"; "you sort of pretty well have to joke about it"; "I passed"; "I've been admitted into second year" and so on.

James's only comment at this part of the follow-up interview was to continue in the same vein as he had at that time just heard that he had not been accepted to the electrical and had begun to explore some of the alternatives.

The anxiety pulled at him from two sides. On the one side was the spectre of despair if he does not get accepted--there appeared to be no alternatives for him. His chosen area is engineering specific. He cannot continue in another faculty and get the same thing; nor does he wish to continue in engineering if he must take a focus that he will find boring or completely without interest. On the other side there was the person who needed to act and phoned up the Dean's office to argue his case with persons on the other end of the phone. He felt helpless when told that he could not by-pass the requirements for getting into a specialization, and felt hopeful when he was told that it looked as if he had a good chance of being accepted. This see-saw

effect of hope and fear seemed to dominate the interview; not so much in terms of content but in terms of the delivery of the content. James often spoke very rapidly, both when he described his own love of electronics and computers and how he developed these skills mainly on his own, and when he described the engineering faculty and the courses which were set up to get rid of bright students on the basis of seemingly arbitrary rules: "can't fail more than two courses; must maintain a 55% average; can't repeat first year courses; must leave the faculty if you can't enter into the specialty area you have chosen and if you don't wish to choose a different specialty". He moved about the room, sat, squatted, knelt, stood, sat again so that one had the feeling that here was a person who was experiencing severe duress. With one week left to wait for the answer, it seemed both a relief to speak about the joy of being an engineer and the suffering of being in a faculty that seemed so ruthless in its approach to students; as well as pain to open up to view the seemingly unsolvable problem of having been accepted to second year engineering but not necessarily to the one area of interest that was the only reason engineering was chosen in the first place.

While James did not receive any career guidance from either school or parents, he did feel that the most important advice anyone could receive was to go with what one is interested in. "What you choose is going to be what you're gonna be doing for the rest of your life." You should not choose what someone else thinks would be good because you will only be happy in what you want. James believes that people who have not made up their minds and still go to university are doing a good thing. University is the key to the future as far as James is concerned, and as people take different courses, they will find an area that they will like. However, he recognized that at some point one needs to make a decision or become a career student. He suggested if things don't sort themselves out at university, a person would be best off taking a year out to work and get a focus. But he is optimistic. Most people have a pretty good idea of what they like and will identify where they want to go.

For him it is electrical engineering. It fulfils his values of doing something practical in a science field, doing something with purpose, "there's got to be

a use for it", doing something he really enjoys and preparing himself for a job that will provide him with a lifetime occupation. "I want to be in a job that is in demand and that I will enjoy. That's why I'm so adamant about getting into electrical."

In the follow up interview, James spent a great deal of time talking about the feelings of not having been accepted; of seemingly having fewer options now than if he had failed the year. The frustration was very evident. While he did not move about like in the first interview, it was evident by the rapidity of the speech and the frequent sentence fragments, many of which do not seem to hang together except in emotional tone, that James was very agitated. Nevertheless there was no evidence of a person who felt defeated. He continued to press on with his plans and was leaving no stone unturned to reach his goal.

James did not feel that he had anything to add beyond that and said that the summary represented very accurately his experience of making the career decision. The one question regarding his future goal was answered without real depth as if it were still too far ahead to really visualize in more concrete terms. He plans to eventually have a business of his own after having gained experience in some large electronics' company.

I felt that here was a young man who, had he not been as firm in his career goal as he is, would probably have given up in the face of all the frustration that he was experiencing. It seems in some way, that a career goal, a decision made by an individual regardless at what point in their life, is a very empowering experience.

Bill

Bill was a soft spoken young man for whom the telling of his story of career decision making appeared to be an inner journey. I had the feeling that I had been invited to observe an intimate viewing of a kaleidoscope of experiences that evoked memories of childhood and school, rich with attendant emotions. Bill was beside me as my guide as well as an observer, standing and watching the same things and explaining to me what we were seeing. There was a sense of detached involvement that permits the observer to see what has

happened and in seeing, become aware of new things which were not apparent in the original experience. Even the expression of Bill's emotions seemed detached, as if it was not him experiencing the feelings, but him empathizing with someone who was close to him and who had experienced the feelings.

Bill started by saying that he knew by grade 10 that he was going to go into some sort of business. It seemed logical. He was very good in mathematics at the time and looked to a math oriented field such as accounting or economic analysis. In grades 11 and 12 there appeared to be a shift in skills. Mathematics, which had always been his top subject, suddenly began to give him difficulties. He was no longer getting the marks, albeit he felt that nothing he had done contributed to that change. His attentiveness and the amount he studied had not declined, yet the marks were unmistakably dropping. At the same time English and History seemed to become easier and marks in those subjects were improving. Again he had no explanation for that since his interest in those subjects had not really increased. Frustrated and confused he turned to one of his teachers who thought that Bill might be changing dominant brain hemispheres and rather than fight that, should go with it. The explanation seemed to satisfy him and he said "fine". Without verbally connecting the changes in thinking to the changes in plans, Bill stated that by the end of grade 12 his focus for business had changed to one of dealing with people rather than with numbers.

Bill seemed to have no apprehension about getting into university, or qualms about the faculty he was planning to enter. He had attended a private high school on a full scholarship, and although he spoke of his marks dropping in grades 11 and 12, I had to consider those drops relative to earlier grades since he continued to attend school on scholarships up to graduation. Therefore in reading between the lines, I suspected that the grades for university entrance were well above minimum requirements for Bill to have had no apprehension. *In going over this section, Bill felt that it was not quite representative of the way he felt. He said he did feel apprehension. He always had a "high level of anxiety about whether he was good enough" even though he should have know that from his marks. Furthermore he was always worried that his*

marks would not quite measure up even though they had been high enough for him to enter U.B.C. and in second year, Commerce.

Bill chose to attend a local university because it was financially the most feasible; he is paying for his own education. He had briefly toyed with the idea of attending an eastern university, but considered both the cost and his desire to stay with his friends. It seemed that friends were even more important a factor than finances in this decision.

Bill needed a 70% average in his first year of university to get into the Commerce faculty (which he apparently got as he was accepted) and had just completed his first year. Bill stated that he had chosen the faculty because, at the time, it "was the way I wanted to go". In his mind commerce was the "end all and be all" of business education and the only means of getting a good job with good pay. At the time it also seemed the easiest route to his goal and choosing what was easiest had always been a pattern that he had adhered to. Now in retrospect he decided that it would have been easier had he chosen Arts in the first place. It seems significant that in both choices of faculty he was able to describe the benefits of the education that he perceived he could get, but that he reduced those to viewing them as what was easier. Bill interjected in when we came to this section because he believed that I had not quite captured his experience. Even though he was "happy, simply for the fact that [he] had made the decision to go into commerce and that [he] was going to put my full efforts into it" there was still the uneasy feeling of whether he had made the right choice out of the two possible options. When, at the end of the first year of commerce he decided that Arts would have been better, the decision to switch faculties made him feel happier and easier. Easier had been interpreted by me as the route of least resistance whereas he had intended "easier" to mean an inner feeling of comfort.

The experience of first year commerce was described in generally negative terms: "very technical, very specific"; "it wasn't flexible enough"; "it didn't allow me to take certain courses"; "it was very narrow minded"; "I found it very confining" and so on. Bill "coasted" through the year having made the decision about half way through that this was not for him and

that he would switch to the Arts faculty and complete his business as part of that program. Bill wants to major in economics and political science, two of the courses he had been able to take as electives in commerce and which he enjoyed the most, but which were not available to him as a concentration in the Commerce faculty.

While he also admitted to having made two other important choices in his second year (first year commerce), that of moving out of the house and that of pledging a fraternity, which launched him "quite abruptly and intensely" into the social scene at U.B.C., Bill did not feel that these choices compromised his courses or the time he put in for studying. Bill felt very comfortable having made those choices: "That was the best thing I did; I have no regrets" and is planning to maintain his living arrangements as a member of one of the fraternity houses on campus next year. He felt that he gained a lot having learned that he "could balance making enough money to get me through without jeopardizing the courses or the time I put into school." He proved that he could do that and that it could work out.

Bill also credits the past year for his personal growth. Having "brushed very close with complete failure" he now believes that it was good for him. He said he recognizes now that there will be times in the future when he will fail, but that he's "never going to be able to do what [he] want[s] if [he's] always shying away from things from fear of failing." Furthermore he also believes that his decision to go into Arts will have attendant benefits since he must now rely on himself getting a job after graduation rather than on the initials after his name. There was a sound of pride in his voice when he said that, as if for the first time he understood that it was he, and not the faculty he graduated from, that would make the difference in what he will do in his career.

Bill spoke extensively about his family. He seemed to have two pictures in his mind about his parents which do not appear to be well integrated at this time. One picture is of supportive parents who are open to his ideas and encourage him in his education; parents whose values he identifies with and who in some way he attempts to emulate. The second picture is of parents who have put great demands on

their only child; who have contributed to molding him to follow a business career and who tend to be, if not directly, then indirectly critical of things that are outside of the frame of reference that they embrace. There appear to be some conflicting values from the parents who seem to be competing for the attention of the son. On the one hand is mother who has a very strong work ethic, believes in "honest, hard work", saving one's money, providing comfortably for oneself and for one's family, and on the other is father who believes more in risk taking and the development of social and intellectual skills. Both parents are "very money oriented. Working hard and making money were a higher priority than doing something for self fulfillment."

The ying yang effect of the parental pictures is described by Bill in how he sees himself. He spoke of how his values subconsciously guided him along the path to commerce. "What do I value? Ah time, I value money first, number two I value success, not so much in my eyes but in people around me, my mother, my father, my friends. And three prestige, respect and happiness." Although he did not consider his father a mentor, Bill did, in reflecting on his father's role in his life, conclude that in some ways he was trying to prove himself to his father. His father had such high expectations of him and in some way, Bill was going to do what his father had not been able to, utilize his degree. Even as he was saying the words, Bill recognized that he had not ever put that together for himself. It had been there driving him but he had not recognized what it was until he had said it.

In his heart Bill seemed to wrestle with all the things that he as missed out on, being so early set on a career path: "I think gained so much momentum and so much direction from my parents and stuff even in elementary school, that no matter how many people told me to [try a variety of things] it would have had to have been an incredible inspiration in a new direction to make me do something different." At this point he spoke darkly of his mother who, by her negative expressions regarding the professional careers, "inadvertently pushed [him] away" from even exploring the sciences in high school. And he mused that perhaps, had he been more open to experiences then, he would now be studying to become a doctor and loving it.

School too, it seemed, was a heavy influence in terms of career direction for Bill. He felt that there was unstated pressure by "the rich parents", on the teachers of the private school he attended, to turn out students who had career goals clearly defined so that they would become successful in some area. He described the career guidance program which began in grade 10 as very intense and very seductive. The interest tests and the aptitude tests, written and computerized, the question booklet and the computerized job search, he said, was almost as intense as a course. Bill felt it had a great deal of power to direct the students. "Nobody told you, you should go into this area, but when a computer flashed on the screen that all your attributes lie in a desk job, then you're gonna go "Wow!" I guess that's what I like." And when the students took the printed material home and showed it to their parents, and they would gasp "That's wonderful", it made a strong impression. He likened it to computing a problem on a calculator and getting the right answer. And when the answer was confirmed in an interview with the counsellor, "Well, it seems to all add up; then it must be right."

Young people Bill feels are externally directed in those years and if someone inspires you, you will get a hold of it and go with it. And if later you find that maybe it was all wrong, you become disillusioned with the people who told you you would do "so well" in that area, and insecure with your own abilities. "I'm not as smart as I thought I was," Bill states wistfully so that I felt that the "you" he had been talking about very much included him.

There were other people in Bill's life who made an impact on his decision. A young friend of his father who had an M.B.A. from one of the universities in the U.S. spoke with him many times about careers and "sort of psyched [him] up for that area of career decision". A high school friend with whom he had always been close also "headed [him] in that direction". Others, such as the Dean of Commerce encouraged him in his decision to go to Arts and take an M.B.A. later if he wanted it, and still others who spoke to him of their career paths. Many, Bill said, were feeling "stuck" in their jobs because they had never had the courage to make alternative decisions while others spoke to him of being unsure of where they were going until they

finally drifted into something that really excited them.

Bill believes that it is very difficult for young people to make career choices nowadays because of the many options available, the direct and indirect pushing of parents, school and friends to make a decision, and finally the inevitable recognition that you need to make the decision for yourself and that depending on what you chose you could either feel stuck or feel happy in your job. Other people he says, may judge him as having given up on his original goal, that he "was too weak" but he believes that no decision is really "right or wrong". As such he feels that it is important to not worry so much about young people making decisions, as to give them as many opportunities as possible, to try out things and then to permit them to drift naturally into the area that they like and which will make them happy.

It seemed to me that Bill, who hopes to enter the diplomatic corps or to enter politics at some future date when he has well settled in his business career, is permitting himself now the luxury of "drifting" into business by way of an Arts program. He looks forward to trying many of the courses that he did not try while in high school, thus "rounding" out his education which he feels should have happened there. And while there are still some tinges of doubt about this choice in terms of how his friends or perhaps even his family perceives the move, for himself, it seems that this was the first decision that he really made about his career and in making it, he feels "more confident" about himself and his future.

All in all Bill thought that this was a succinct representation of what he remembered of the interview and that it was representative of what he had said. The only thing that worried him was that he felt that I had written him up as "a little bit more sure of myself than I actually was in some points" especially those concerning his marks, entrance to university and entrance to the commerce program. He did not raise any other issues that could have been differently interpreted or anything new.

Susan

Susan had a clear goal and one of the most persistent plans for reaching it. Even before Susan's visit to Ryerson with her mother following her graduation from high school, a visit which seemed to confirm for her that she was on the right track in having chosen Ryerson as the school for her degree in Interior Design, she had already begun to plan for her career. In high school, with the guidance of her mother, she chose to take academic courses for grades 11 and 12 in order to prepare herself for university entrance. Although she did not state it specifically, I suspect that she also took the Housing and Interior Design 12 which was offered as an elective at that time and which had been recommended to her by her counsellor in grade 10. *Our follow up interview confirmed this as being so.*

Her tenacity in pursuing her goal is best illustrated by the story she told of her struggle with Algebra 11. In spite of a weakness in mathematics, and in spite of a callous teacher who told the students that they may as well be "berry pickers" if they didn't understand this, Susan realized the need to have the algebra in order to go into her chosen field. She took the course three times in order to pass it and subsequently went on to take Algebra 12 albeit the interview is not clear on whether she was still in school at the time or whether that was done as part of the upgrading she did subsequently. *In the follow up interview she stated, "I was at Langara when I took that".*

The visit to Ryerson appeared to happen sometime in the year after she had started a program in Langara. Susan applied to Langara because she felt she did not have "enough confidence" to right away apply to Ryerson. At Langara she took design and art history courses. However I am not quite clear how long the stay at Langara was, since during that time the visit to Ryerson took place. That visit resulted in Susan upgrading many of her grade 12 courses in order to get the 'B' average which someone in the Registrar's office in Ryerson said she would need to get in. *The follow up interview clarified this for me. Susan had applied to Langara because she felt that she was "not ready" to go to Ryerson right out of high school. She*

was attending Langara part time, taking evening courses in art and art history and then subsequent to her visit to Ryerson, courses to upgrade her marks. She was also working part time for the three years between high school graduation and starting at Ryerson.

It appears that Susan applied to Ryerson as well as to Regina in the winter of 1988/89. Actually it was the University of Manitoba at Regina. Regina did not accept Susan on the basis of her academic standing and the lack of balance at Langara between the academic and art type courses. "Actually" Susan said in the follow-up interview, "[Manitoba] looked strictly at Langara's [marks]. I didn't have enough academic courses [at Langara]. I sense they didn't really look at my grade 12 as much as Ryerson did". At Ryerson she was short listed and called for an interview which encouraged Susan immensely as being on track. However, during the course of the interview it was revealed that she had a weak portfolio and that while it contained a variety of samples of work, it appeared to be insufficiently strong especially in the area of free hand drawing and watercolours. Susan was left feeling frustrated and depressed.

It had been a difficult time for her. She had by now been out of high school for three years and was finally feeling ready to go on with this part of her life. The news of the lack in her portfolio sat heavy on her shoulders because she felt that had she not spent so much time upgrading her high school academics, which it turned out, was not really that essential, and had spent more time on her portfolio, she would have been able to register. However, on the good news side, which at that time did nothing to cheer Susan, was the comment of the interviewer that she would probably be accepted for the following year which would give her a year to work on the portfolio.

Susan felt stretched to capacity and unable to make an alternative decision. The summer had brought this difficult news of nonacceptance and at the same time had brought untimely deaths in the family which necessitated several trips to Germany. Although in her life, she considered the stumbling blocks to her reaching her goals only as "set backs", it seemed at that time that the setbacks had left her immobile to make a further decisions about her life. Susan listed different possibilities that she might have pursued but

followed none. She said she was not even able to work on her portfolio. At this point in the second interview, Susan clarified what seemed to be my misconception. It was not that she was not accepted at Ryerson after the interview, but that she was not able to register right away. They placed her on a wait list, "in very good standing ... I was in a very good position. I was in the first 20%". The sense of frustration came from the not knowing whether to make alternative plans or to wait to be called by Ryerson; and the sense of inertia arose from the family problems she was experiencing.

At the end of summer, Susan received the news that she could register. She laughed that she was away within a week. Susan described the feeling of being accepted as "amazing...really good". It was almost as if she were saying it was too good to be true to be finally on the road that would lead her to her long-planned future career.

Susan spoke of the year at Ryerson with mixed feelings. While it confirmed for her that she had made the right career choice, it also was an eye opener in terms of the work load that she faced. Susan described herself as an inconsistent worker with some lazy days and ups and downs, but also one who was able to come through in the crunch. She realized that the second year would be even harder and perhaps the established patterns of work would not be adequate to see her through. However, by recognizing that at this point she already is planning to work harder and really "do [her] best."

It was my observation that Susan seemed very dependent on outside feedback in order to achieve, while at the same time perhaps not aware of the degree of dependence on that feedback. Several things that Susan said lead me to notice some patterns that seemed to emerge from the narrative. I noted that Susan did not participate at high school or later in college in career exploration activities, but seemed to be lead into choosing her career by the encouragement of her mother, friends of her mother's and peers who noted that she had a seemingly natural flair for what is good in design. On the basis of the recommendations by her mother she took a full academic course load in her senior years at high school in order to prepare herself for university entrance, but without the attendant

senior courses in art which might have been helpful in providing her with the beginnings of a strong portfolio of drawings and colour work.

During the visit to Ryerson Susan spoke to one person who mentioned the upgrading. There appeared to be no discussion about what Ryerson expected in the way of a portfolio. Finally, during her year at Ryerson, Susan met with different levels of success in her courses. When she was doing well and getting positive feedback, she felt up and encouraged to work. When she was not doing well or struggling with negative feedback in terms of lower marks, she would withdraw from tackling that work. When she said that she proved to herself that she was capable of much independent work, by bringing up her marks in the last six weeks, I felt that it did not seem to stem so much from a deep inner sense of accomplishment, as much as from her "profs [who] were always saying what a great job we were doing". To bring up her mark in one course from barely passing to a 'B' was an "incredible feeling" accompanied by the external approval in terms of self talk "I can do that and they have faith in me..."

As I reviewed the tape and the transcripts, I gained an impression of a very capable person. Susan was perhaps the most poised, most articulate of the students that I had interviewed. It was evident that she must have presented herself well during the interview at Ryerson with professionals who selected her from among 700 applicants to be one of 60 students to be accepted. I came to think that once Susan 'owned' the words of friends "[that she] really has a fine eye, ... [has] good ideas" and design sense, and internalized them with the "finer feelings" she recognized in herself, that she would be able to exploit the talents she possess and become that successful person that she longs to be. The feelings of insecurity ("...[my] sister is very bright") that she struggled with and which prevented her from right away applying to Ryerson are not yet, it seems, gone; even after the first year at Ryerson. Self-doubt always seems to haunt her and the good advice that she gave her friend who has not yet completed high school that "It's for yourself" seems to be inaccessible to her in her situation.

Susan seemed to listen intently as we went over this part. It was as if she was trying to see whether

what I had said fit. I paused for a few moments to give time for her response, but she just nodded gravely and asked me to go on.

Susan's mother has been a powerful influence in her life. Although Susan does not accept her mother as being a "mentor" in the sense of someone who can assist another person along the road he/she has chosen, it seemed that she had a greater direct impact in shaping the goals of this young woman than many parents have. Her own love of the arts was translated into practical experiences for her daughters who were taken to musical performances, theatre, art galleries, ballets and so on, for as long as, it seems, Susan can remember. And because Susan's mother worked for an airline, that exposure extended to Europe as well as Canadian and American cities. These cultural experiences have had a deep effect on the sensitive and artistic nature of Susan.

It also seemed that, while mother did not make the career decisions for her daughters, Susan shared a lot of her plans and goals with her mother. In addition, Susan said that her mother assisted her artistic development as much as she was able to, by surrounding her with things which are beautiful, encouraging her through cultural experiences, by making available literature in the way of books and magazines, and by making herself available to her daughter when she checked out Ryerson.

While Susan and her sister are very different, Susan seems to long for a more meaningful relationship with her sister. Susan says that she seems to be unable to effectively communicate her dreams to her sister, and in turn does not seem to be able to penetrate the sterile wall that she feels her sister has erected in order to close off her sensitivity. Susan admires her sister's intellect and although she feels that her own nature is to be preferred over that of her sister, she occasionally feels "inferior" to this younger sibling for whom school appeared to be no problem.

Susan sees herself as being different from her friends. She is goal oriented, persistent and individualistic. While during the tough times she said she would muse, like perhaps so many students do at various times in their studies, that she might have married a rich man or just did something easy like

working in a retail store, she also recognized, after her year at university that, she needs to be her own person. She stated that she needs the new found challenge and even if she anticipates a tougher year next year, she looks forward to the atmosphere of the school which she knows will challenge her once again to do her best.

As far as advice to others who are seeking careers goes, Susan suggests that they do it personally. She does not advocate group sessions in career exploration--it "needs to be personal". She thinks that talking to people, seeing what is out there, working in the areas one wants to explore or at least looking at them by shadowing people or reading about them, are an essential part of making a decision. Susan believes that it's not easy. There are so many fields and in each field so many related areas. How do you know which one will give you the competitive edge; which one you have "that little bit of extra talent for" that will make the difference.

She also recognized that other things prevent people from making decisions as well: lack of confidence, discouragement by others, standards of living that everyone wants to achieve which makes competition for money such an important value. She believes that personal fulfillment should be a major goal, but that takes time.

Her future, although she says she does not want to plan too far in advance, seems to include further studies, whether in her field or in a related field, travel, gaining experience abroad and then working for an established Canadian firm either here or in Toronto, or establishing a business of her own. She wants to marry--not too soon, and have a large family.

Susan's sensitivity to her "finer feelings" appear to be both tools for her future and possibly the key that locks in her insecurity. The beauty of what she has seen and heard is deeply etched into her soul. "How can one young woman effectively bring that together to show others beauty and calmness in their environment" she may well be asking herself, "if I cannot even make my own sister understand?" Is she comparing herself to the masters that she has been exposed to, only to fall short in her own eyes, while the people around her, her supporting mother, friends, instructors, are able to appreciate her skills without

needing to compare her to anyone? Her love of the aesthetic appears to be not just vocational but avocational. It is not an easy future for someone to put their whole sense of self on the line in a career, and yet her tenacity to get to where she has gotten indicates a side to her that is strong, determined and capable of dealing with adversity. Perhaps, at some point when the strong and the sensitive natures merge comfortably, when she sees her strengths and her skills not through the eyes of others, but through her own eyes, she can become that top professional in her field that she longs to be.

Susan made few corrections during the reading of the summary I had prepared for the follow-up interview. I chose to go over each of the paragraphs with her after the initial reading to see whether I had correctly interpreted her experience of coming to her career decision. She was reflective but said that she would change nothing except the part about her being accepted to Ryerson (I had stated that she had not been accepted). When I asked her whether there was anything else that had come up for her during the interim, she stated that as of this year Manitoba was accepting people with portfolios. She believes that that is the only way to assess entrance to artistic fields of studies. "People might have the right average academic level, but you really need to see their artistic side as well."

She closed by saying that the interview style I had used permitted her to express all of her thoughts. When we had started, she said that she thought she might not be able to talk about her ideas, but that the questions permitted her to express what she wanted to express. She said that it had been a good experience and when she left with her summary, she walked out of the office with a look of self-assurance.

Janice

Janice was a quiet spoken, thoughtful young woman whose decision to be a nurse was rooted in a childhood experience of a hospital stay. At age of six, she entered the hospital to have her tonsils removed. Her stay in the hospital was made enjoyable by the nurses. She remembered one nurse in particular who would read to the youngsters on the ward. "I had a really good

time in the hospital and I didn't want to go home." Janice feels that she had wanted to be a nurse since that time, "I think that's where I first made my decision I wanted to be a nurse", and had carefully prepared herself during the school years, particularly in high school to reach that goal.

During high school Janice also remembers going to the career centre to listen to a student nurse from U.B.C. speak to interested students about nursing. "I found that really good too." Aside from these two incidents, there did not seem to be any special people or directions in her life that would have contributed to the decision or perhaps caused some dissonance in her plans.

In high school Janice took science courses in order to prepare her for entrance to nursing. She says that in retrospect she thinks that she would not take Chemistry 12 again as she did not enjoy the course, nor, it turns out, did she need it. At the time however it seemed that it would provide her with the best possible options. While Janice did not say that she had considered going to university to do a degree program in nursing, she did state that had she not chosen the courses that she did, and had she chosen the business courses that her parents had wanted her to, she would not have had the option of going to university. I would like to check this out with her to determine if she had considered the option of a nursing degree and why she might have chosen to not pursue that route. Yes, I was on track. Janice had planned and still plans to take a degree in nursing. At this time she feels that she prefers going the college route. The university requires her to have completed nursing at college or to take two years of undergraduate sciences which was not to her liking. She has not yet made a decision whether she will go to the university right after completing nursing or not. She thought that in the first interview she had left it out of the discussion because it seemed "still so far away".

School also provided Janice with some career guidance in grade 10. Janice was not specific on the extent of the guidance but it appears that she participated in some written exercises which were designed to give the students some occupational options. While she said that there was nothing that came up for her that she would have liked to pursue,

she seemed to feel that the program was useful in providing some guidance to students. However, she added that she was the only one of her friends who had to date made a career commitment. I am surmising here that her friends attended the same school and participated in similar career guidance which may not be so. *This was confirmed by Janice in the second interview but not pursued. However, she offered no further insights on the topic of career education.*

Janice spoke little of her parents and the relationship she experienced during the decision making time. Although she stated that she believed that they were generally supportive and that they were able to argue about things openly, "they really state their opinion", she felt that she didn't really know whether they ever had any other goals for her. While they "kinda told me to go that way if that's what I liked" and while they also recognized that she "had a knack for it" she thought that they would have liked to see her "take more business courses like computers and typing" as her sister had done. And even as they were encouraging her in her pursuits for nursing, they kept reminding her that if it is too hard she could always become a legal secretary like her older sister. I sensed that this was an issue that Janice did not wish to pursue as she seemed to be uncomfortable discussing her relationship with her parents and generally acknowledged my probes without elaboration.

When we came to this part in the second interview I waited for a response. She said that I had been right about interpreting her remarks, but again did not elaborate on the topic.

Janice also did not speak much about her sister except to state that she was a legal secretary who felt fine about Janice's choice of becoming a nurse without really wanting to do it herself. I was left to wonder whether the two sisters were too far apart in age to have very much interaction or whether Janice had grown up in the shadow of the older sister and was trying to achieve an identity of her own. *Here Janice grinned and nodded in assent. Her sister is five years older than she is and yes, she thinks she does not want to be like her sister and definitely wants to establish her own identity.*

Janice is exceptionally proud of having made a decision. "I was glad I made this decision 'cause I

know what I'm doing in a few years." However, she does not feel that that somehow gives her special status even though most of her friends are still looking for something to do. She says "I think I was just lucky" and then goes on to reveal something of her personal nature which perhaps explains her decision more precisely than luck, "I don't think I'd go along undecided like that." She thinks that it would be difficult for her to be undecided.

It seems that Janice is as persistent as she considers herself to be. When she first applied to B.C.I.T., she was too late with her application. However she had applied at a variety of places although I am not quite clear what she meant when she said that "I wanted something else to fall back on, so I applied at a few places." During the interview I thought that she might have meant that she had applied for nursing in a few places in order to assure being accepted somewhere, but in re-reading the transcript I am not sure whether I can surmise that. I need to clarify this with her in the follow up. *Again this was confirmed by Janice. She had applied to virtually every place that gave a general nursing program and was actually accepted to Prince George before she found out about Douglas College. However once the acceptance from Prince George was there, she reconsidered going there as it was so far away from home. The acceptance from Douglas came shortly thereafter, so she decided to stay with Douglas College.*

Janice said that she applied to Douglas College last October and was notified this summer that she was accepted for March of 1991. In the meantime she has been preparing herself as a student by taking a first aid course and a C.P.R. course and courses at Douglas College, which, even if they had nothing to do with nursing, she stated that she learned from them. She also began volunteering at the hospital this past summer which she really enjoys.

Janice seemed to be very focused. She did not express disappointment at not having been accepted to B.C.I.T. and while she said that she was frustrated in not having been able to take biology at Douglas College last year but rather some very unrelated courses, she was hopeful that this fall she could take biology and English which are two courses that would count towards the nursing program. We did not explore her feelings

about being accepted at Douglas College in the nursing program which is something that I wish to do in the follow up. At this point Janice showed a genuine sense of relief on her face which was reflected in her words. "I was glad I made it." The 'gladness' it turned out was definitely connected to relief, as she had written an entrance exam to be accepted and had been waiting on the results. Once she was accepted she knew that she had passed the exams, as well as having met all the other requirements for entrance. Later, after the tape had been turned off and we sat to chat with her mom who asked if she could join us at that point, she stated that she had still not been able to register for Biology this semester, but that she would automatically be in the course next semester as the students accepted to nursing were given priority in the course once they started the program. While she was not completely happy about that as she had wanted that out of the way before she started nursing, she was accepting of the fact and looked to an easy semester which would still permit her to continue working at her jobs.

Janice believes that it is difficult for young people to make decisions now days because of the many choices available to them. I got the feeling that she sometimes longs for a past that she has only read or heard about; where schools channelled students into vocational areas and where women had the option of just being at home and raising children. However, she does not feel critical about the choices available either, "it isn't bad, it's just hard to decide." Ultimately, she believes that if people are left to make their own decisions and do not allow themselves to be pushed into things by other people, most of them will go with something that they found interesting at some point in their life. Just as she had found her place out of a pleasant experience in childhood, so others have had pleasant experiences that will guide them to their careers. She gives the example of a girl friend who is now thinking of going into teaching: "I think this is similar as me; memories from when she was little. She really had a good time in school."

In addition to considering herself persistent, Janice also considers herself careful and thoughtful. She believes that first impressions are important to making a decision but that one needs to sit back and really evaluate what one would like to do or have. She

gave an example of how she carefully shops for clothes so that nothing ever just sits in her closet. She says she has never regretted a purchase which she has made. While not being able to really articulate for herself the decision making process she engages in, I felt that she was genuinely in control of her process and comfortable that she would be able to make appropriate decisions for herself.

Janice describes her future occupation in positive and warm terms, recognizing both the opportunity provided here in the province and elsewhere in the world by the shortage of nurses. Janice is also cognizant of the opportunities provided within the occupation in terms of being able to do a variety of jobs without leaving the nursing field. She feels that it will be a "really fulfilling" job for her and that she will receive a "lot of joy" from helping people who are hurt. She also sees as positive that it is a job where she can "actually see the results" of her work, and one where she will be able to actualize a future dream of travelling because nursing can be practised all over the world.

The interview left me feeling that there was much depth in this person which I was unable to fathom. Janice was cautious, polite and friendly throughout. Perhaps she felt unsure that she would be permitted to remain in control of the interview, or perhaps she is a very private person but she was able to portray a young woman who had a goal and would not permit anything to dissuade her from it.

It seemed that when I had finished reading the summary to her, Janice was more open to discuss some of the questions that had been left in my mind. This interview turned out to be much more relaxing for both of us it seemed. She made no comment to my last paragraph but smiled her assent that I had been on the right track. We spoke a little off tape on the topic of my thesis. She was interested in the way I was doing it and hoped that she had been able to help me. Once her mother joined us, the conversation was focused on her concerns for her daughter. Janice's mother was very outspoken about the college system which she felt discriminated against people like her daughter, who in her opinion was not assertive enough to get the things that she should be getting (her courses such as biology). Janice's gentle humour was nevertheless

pointed in asserting herself over her mother "Well mom, maybe next time I'll send you to register me" she laughed. I left with an invitation to come back for a coffee at some time and a feeling that here was one person who knew where she was going.