THE CAREER DECISION MAKING EXPERIENCE
OF FIVE WORKING CLASS MEN

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ABSTRACT

Five working class men described the experience of decision making related to their participation in paid employment. Each man was interviewed in depth. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed, from this data an account of the subject's experiences were generated. Each account was validated by the subject as accurate and complete. The five accounts were then compared to theories of decision making to determine how theory would explain the men's experience. The three theories were; The Conflict Model by Janis and Mann, The Rational Model by Horan and The Deciding in Context Model by Sloan.

The divergence between theory and experience, rather than the agreement was more informative. The comparison of the two rational models highlighted the importance of treating the decision moment as consequential: of focusing one's attention with deliberation and awareness. When the decision situation is not clearly defined and where meaning and significance must be drawn from the context of a life history these models are limited. Sloan's deciding in context model provided a more complex and complete understanding of the five decisions.

Further study is needed to understand the decision making behavior of working class men as they participate in paid employment. The findings suggest that the context in which the decision is made is a significant factor. For the counsellor and working class client understanding the importance of the context of class may be one of the most critical factors in career decision making.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General Topic

This thesis examines how five mill workers made a decision
related to their participation in paid employment. The aim of
this study is to describe the experience of decision making, to
understand those aspects of the experience which are significance
to the decider, in other words to describe the subjective. Or as
Hamper (1986) declared in his autobiographical description of
blue collar life, "Workers should perform workers songs. Let
assembly workers sing about assembly lines. Let waitresses sing
about waiting on tables" (p. 197). These subjective accounts were
then compared to three models of decision making to better
understand the interface between theory, that which is predicted,
and experience, that which occurs.

Identification of the Problem

Dickoff and James (1968) defined theory as "a conceptual
system or framework invented to some purpose" (p. 196). Theories
of decision making fall into the broader category of theories for
guidance and counselling which have as their purpose the
betterment of the human condition and the enhancement of
individual potential (Herr and Cramer, 1988). The majority of
decision making theories attempt to fulfill this purpose by
delineating the steps involved in ideal decision making. The
process is usually conceived of as a rational and sequential
ordering of a number of options which culminates in the selection
of the most desired option. Thus a decision is made (Harren,

1979). The rational approach to decision theory has enjoyed widespread acceptance not only in counselling practice; it has also exerted extensive influence on how career decision making is conceived of by educators, policy makers and the general public.

According to Herr (1982), the mere acceptance and incorporation of theory into counselling practice is no measure of its worth and validity. Herr maintains that the very sociopolitical processes which support the development of theory can also act to discourage, even prohibit, the emergence of arguments to the contrary. Therefore all theory must be recognized as carrying a bias and that this bias may inadvertently favor one group over another. As Collin and Young (1986) concluded, "There is a moral as well as an intellectual and a practical imperative that the theory which informs policy and practice is coherent, adequate, relevant, and applicable" (p. 837).

March (1973) proposes that ideally all theories have both a truth value (the extent to which a model correctly predicts observable behavior), and a justice value. A model is deemed just "to the extent to which belief in it and action based on it produces better people and better worlds" (p. 414). Yet there is substantive evidence in research to suggest that theories of decision making, and counselling practice based on these theories, are as yet not just. Researchers, Phillips, Strohmer, Berthaume, and O'Leary (1983), and Osipow (1975) have charged that theories of decision making reflect the behavior of the white middle-class male more accurately than the behavior of

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other groups such as women, the disabled, the economically disadvantaged, and ethnic minorities. Willis (1977), Roberts (1977), and Law (1981) contended that the experience of the working class in determining their participation in paid employment bares no resemblance to that outlined in the majority of career decision making models. Ochberg (1984), in his study of male career development, recognized such a difference but chose only to elaborate on middle-class experience to exclusion of the working man's voice. Such exclusions have the effect of reinforcing existing theories, suppressing contradictory evidence, and prohibiting the emergence of alternative explanations.

Research Question

This study addresses the question of how do theoretical models of decision making explain the decision making experience of five working class men related to their choice of occupation. The objectives are to describe that experience, to understand that experience and then compare each decision with three established theories of decision making to examine the relationship between theory and experience. The three theories are: the conflict model by Janis and Mann, the rational decision making model by Horan and the deciding in context model by Sloan.

Rationale

The rationale for this study is to contribute to theoretical knowledge and provide tentative implications for counselling practice with working-class males. In his study of class analysis, Wallace (1988) determined that 36% of the Canadian

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population identified themselves as working-class, yet using structural and relational criteria he found the percentage increased to 60. No matter which figure is accepted, the working class as a group represents a significant portion of the population whose career counselling needs may or may not be adequately met. This study will give voice to the working-class experience.

Gottfredson and Brown (1981, b) point out that most research in the area of careers has focused on the fate of individuals. They claim that research which deals with the career behavior of populations is worthwhile. Such knowledge would be useful for understanding what problems or situations are normative for different groups, what client problems counselors can expect to confront, and what common patterns of career development might exist. The results of this study is not generalizable to all working-class males. However, the study is an explorative first step in furthering research of the working-class career experience.

In their review of career development studies of special groups Phillips et all (1983) were concerned with the problem of how counselors translated traditional theory and counselling practice into interventions for non-traditional groups. They found few, if any, special groups were adequately served by such an approach. These researchers determined there was an urgent need first to describe the career decision making behavior of special groups and, secondly to develop explanations from these

descriptions to guide practice. This study will describe the career decision making behavior of one such group: the working-class male.

According to Wright, Hutton (1977), counselors may unconsciously employ one decision making process for high-status clients and another for low-status clients. A middle-class client was perceived as more likable and more likely to benefit from counselling. They found that agreement between the middle-class client's and the counselor's conception of reality facilitated communication while incongruity hindered the development of a counselling relationship. By describing the working-class experience it may be possible to generate a perspective which will inform counselors and in small part address the bias in career theory which favors the middle class.

Approach

Ethnography is a cultural description; it tells how people describe and structure their world (Marshall, Rossman, 1989). Following this perspective my intent is to understand and describe the experience of deciding: how five working-class men made a significant decision relevant to their choice of occupation.

Rosenwald (1988) noted that by conceiving of experience as a legitimate focus of research and not mere raw material in need of behavioral processing, it was possible to show how the elements of experience were mutually related and structured. Such reports provided the data for the development of descriptive categories of everyday life which revealed how each participant constructed

his vision of reality. It was then possible to explore a phenomenon through individual consciousness. This thesis seeks to emulate this tradition by providing five true and accurate accounts of the experience of deciding. These accounts are available for comparison with theories of decision making enhancing our understanding of both experience and theory.

Each informant was employed at mill work as an hourly-wage worker and was willing to share his experience. The format for each interview followed what Mishler (1986) termed a "natural discourse", a process which recognizes the reciprocal commitment between researcher and respondent to discover the subjective meaning underlying experience. The verbatim transcript from the interviews was used to generate five separate accounts of decision making. Each account was validated by the informant and a significant other as true and accurate description of his experience. Each account was then compared with the three theories.

The decision to limit the selection of participants to mill workers was a deliberate attempt to confine the parameters of the inquiry. To have selected men from other industries may have introduced extraneous issues and contextual complexity which could have detracted from, or obscured the discovery of, the phenomenon of deciding. It was important to ensure the phenomenon being studied (decision making) was the phenomenon being described (Yin, 1984).

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to all working-class men. These participants are typical of the working

class but not a truly representative sample of that sub-population. This study is not concerned with verification and proof, rather it is concerned with analytical generalization, the use of a chain of logic to describe the relationship of theory to experience (Yin, 1984).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Career Decision Making</u>

The earliest conception of career decision making focused exclusively on occupational decision making, of how individuals decided to participate in paid employment. Since then this field of inquiry has expanded to envisage career decision making as a part of a process of growth and change across the whole spectrum of human activity on the continuum from birth to death. While various conceptions of "career" exist, it is Super's definition which has gained the greatest acceptance (Herr and Cramer, 1988). Super (1980) defined career as, "The course of events which constitutes a life; the sequence of occupations and life roles which combine to express one's commitment to work in his or her total pattern of self-development; the series of remunerated and nonremunerated positions occupied by a person from adolescence through to retirement" (p. 282). The focus of this study is on one aspect of what Super has defined as career: remunerated positions, or in other words, the occupations we choose to enable us to make a living, to generate an income.

The decision to limit the scope of this inquiry to this one aspect of career decision making is not an endorsement of the earlier definitions of career, but is a recognition that career is now understood as a "complex, multidimensional reality" which is difficult to research in its entirety (Collin and Young, 1986). While the decision making behavior of working-class men as they participate in paid employment represents only one facet of

that multidimensional reality, it is a context which can speak both to the process of decision making and to the mediating effect of class consciousness.

A career decision is, according to Super, an attempt by the individual to shape a life path, a fixing of intention toward the creation of meaning and purpose within the context of a life history. "Careers exist only as people pursue them; they are person centered" (p. 282). Not only are they statements of intention but, according to Herr and Cramer (1988), they are public statements of a wished for self, illustrative of the mediation process between the inner self (that which I wish to be) and that which the context is perceived to foster or prohibit me from becoming. Therefore, a decision related to occupation depicts both the process of decision making and the individual's unique experience of deciding.

Work or occupation is according to Levinson (1978) a primary factor in determining a person's income, their prestige and their place in society. In his study of adult male development, he concluded, "A man's occupation places him within a particular socioeconomic level and work world. It exerts a powerful influence upon the options available to him, the choices he makes among them and his possibilities for advancement and satisfaction. His work world also influences the choices he makes in other spheres of life" (p. 45). Decisions related to work have a very real impact on the course of a life history.

During the transition between leaving formal education and emergence into the world of work, a process is enacted. Some

theories suggest ideally this process involves intense planning and self-reflection (Tiedeman, 1961); others believe chance occurrence plays a major role in the type of work we choose (Bandura, 1982); while others contend that the options available to most people are very limited (Gottlieb, 1967, Roberts, 1977). You take work where you can find it. No matter which perspective is taken the making and sustaining a commitment to work requires decision making. It may be as fundamental as the decision to work or not to work, or as complex as can the commitment to six year of training produce a meaningful and satisfying career? Yet Cochran (1983) warns that in making a career decision, "a significant part of what one does is to assume a psychological position within the social pecking order. One's career aspirations are a promissory adoption of a social position that is apt to be fraught with personal implications" (p. 1). A decision has very real consequences for the individual who makes it.

Traditionally there have been two opposing theoretical perspectives of career decision making: one, the economic and sociological theories which stress the importance of environmental contingencies on limiting or shaping a decision which inevitably suggest that the second, the psychological theories which appear to assume freedom of choice, are unrealistic. Gottfredson and Becker (1981 a) argue that few if any theorists or researchers studying career decision making would now hold to either extreme position, no choice versus totally free choice. Currently emerging in the literature are

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theories which attempt to accommodate both aspects: the personal and the external contextual elements impinging on a decision. An example of this change is Law's (1981) mid-range focus for theories. He is interested in both the "big-picture" structural elements in society that are beyond an individual's control, and the "small-picture" the unique personal aspects of decision making. For Law "the community" is the modifying agent between these opposing poles. Despite such changes, Collin and Young (1986) believe there is still a preponderance of research and theory which ignores the importance of context and fails to address the experience of special groups including the working class. As a result, they suggest that the possibility and nature of career for such groups is either ignored or inappropriately interrupted through a predominantly male middle-class perspective.

Levinson's study of adult male development clearly illustrates this problem. He talks of actualizing the "Dream" and when describing the worker he concluded that very few workers defined an occupational dream. For some,

> The vision of the good life involves a mixture of
> work, family and community involvements. For others,
> the dream remains inchoate. Still others, perhaps
> the largest number, begin the early adult transition
> with fantasies about exciting kinds of work and
> accomplishment, but the incipient dream cannot be
> articulated or explored, it is gradually covered
> over by the more immediate problems of survival (p. 97).

The question arises whether workers's career paths are inadequate or did Levinson use constructs which reflect more favorably on the middle class. Some of the constructs he used were: active striving, competence and rational consideration of alternatives, a rising trajectory of career, and work as an expression of self to determine if a occupational dream was present. Gottfredson (1979) would dispute the validity of using such constructs to understand workers's careers. Such constructs, he believes have little or no relevance to the reality of most working people's lives, and are inappropriate descriptors of a distinctly different life experience. Inappropriate descriptors may lead to inappropriate conclusions.

<u>The Working Class</u>

There is ample evidence, according to Marshell (1983), that differences exist between the working class and the middle class in experience of work and career development. Marshell examined the two basic themes which dominate American work life: equating occupational success with high self-esteem, and the belief that work is meaningful. Marshell found these themes are only consistent with middle-class values and only describe the experience of a minority of the working population. Marshell believes that high unemployment and employment in less prestigious occupations is a more accurate description of the overall pattern of working life in America.

Using the 1981 Census Bureau categories for classifying occupations, one sees the over-whelming majority of Americans are employed in the traditional

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blue-collar and lower echelon of white-collar occupations

(73%). While only 27% of American workers are among the

ranks of managers/proprietors /officials and professional,

the two groups at the top of the occupational structure

(p.109).

For Marshell the perpetuation of "the middle-class career

myth" is destructive because it is illusionary and misrepresents

the realm of possibility facing the majority of the work force.

Dunk (1988), in his study of the working-class culture in

Northern Ontario believes the contention that most white-collar

work is more interesting and rewarding is fictitious. Like blue-

collar work most white-collar work, he determined involves few

skills, carries little prestige and is relatively poorly paid.

When a disproportionately large sector of the work force is

located in occupations which are said to lack meaning and

interest, one must ask to how this has come about? Is the seeking

of an occupation unimportant to these individuals, or are there

very real limits to choice? Is the study of careers better

informed about the reality of those who hold work to be a central

aspect of self? Or is there a need to explore working-class

career experience firstly from within, to understand the meaning

and purpose as defined through the values of the working class,

not through middle-class concepts?

These questions are not easily answered because no decision is

made in a vacuum. A multiplicity of forces that come into play to

determine the behavior of both the individual and the group.

Therefore the answers to the above questions are determined as

much by the perspective from which they are viewed as they are from evidence which supports the conclusions made. This is particularly true when our understanding of decision making behavior is based on the behavior of large groups more typical of the sociological perspective versus the individual approach more typical of human psychology.

Roberts (1981), a British sociologist, has written extensively on working-class experience of the transition from school to work. His views represent the more extreme position that the majority of career decision making theories are false and inconsistent with the known facts. As a prescription for career behavior he suggests these theories are inappropriate and likely to prove positively harmful because they perpetuate the illusion of choice when in reality the opportunities are very limited. Roberts considers that one's socioeconomic position predetermines the career path of the greater majority of the working class.

Like Roberts, Willis (1977) believes the culture of the working class is a powerful and distinctly different force moving working-class kids towards what he terms is their own "self-damnation." The critical issue for Willis is in how working-class youth adopt an oppositional posture at an early age to all forms of authority. The result is that they are alienated from the very mechanisms through which they might advance beyond the factory floor and a life of manual labour. Willis found the non-conformist youth viewed academic work, credentials and career counselling as irrelevant irritants in the meaningless process of

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being educated. For such youth, Willis believes the transition from school through to work must be seen not as a process of choosing a career or even a particular job, but of committing to a future of generalized labor. He concluded, "it is confusing and mystifying to pose the entry of disaffected working-class boys into work as a matter of particular choice: this is in essence a very middle-class construct" (p. 99). The working-class culture he believes, not only limits the choices available but determines the time frame in which decision making is possible. Willis argues, class position structures both how the experience is defined and how the outcome is achieved.

Descriptions of North American working-class culture range from descriptions of poverty, alienation and a state of hopelessness to positive upbeat adoration of the honest working man. In attempting to describe the working class Rubin (1976) stressed the need to recognize that working-class life experiences are not random nor accidental, they are derived from real differences in the types of problems this group faces and the possible solutions available to deal with the problem. The mistake many researchers make is, according to Rubin, the failure to identify and articulate that which is working-class experience. Too often, Rubin believes, research resorts to describing this group as if they are the failing end of a continuum: failing to advance, failing to be educated, failing to decide and plan. In other words failing to live according to a universal standard set by the dominant group, the middle-class.

Those studies (Fried, 1973, Levitan 1971) which have attempted to describe the working-class experience from within the culture, have consistently found that the central life goal is the creation of a comfortable and secure place for oneself and one's family. The desire to be secure dominates above all else. It is according to Levitan a "centrifugal reference point" around which their lives are ordered. An effort to ward off the possibility of unemployment, layoff or poverty however real or remote. The quest to maintain security dominates all aspects of life regardless of whether the individual has gained a degree of affluence (Rubin 1976, Hale, 1984 and Fried, 1973).

Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie (1978), in their study of life themes also found their blue-collar workers were more concerned with the problems of concrete survival than their middle-class counterparts, even though both groups had suffered equally in childhood. These authors were interested not only in the difference in experience, but also in why when the initial problem was similar, the professional apparently transformed or transcended the problem while the worker continued to live with the problem. The professional seemingly "discovered" a life theme while the worker seemingly "accepted" his life theme.

They found the difference existed in the attributions each group made regarding the cause of their early childhood problems. Working-class individuals did not attribute causes to their problems and according to the authors were therefore unable to conceptualize possible solutions. The 15 professional men were able to identify specific causes for the problems they

experienced in childhood, to recognize the impact of this experience on their adult behavior, and seek ways to resolve the problem.

This suggests that there are two distinctly different ways of thinking about problem solving which are culturally bound. Therefore it is not only the themes themselves which are culturally specific but also the cognitive processes which are employed to give rise to these themes. The culture is intimately connected to the process of defining and thinking about problems, decisions and solutions. It is not only a question of what career to choose, but perhaps more importantly how the worker goes about choosing a career. According to Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie, when workers focus on maintaining security at all costs, they preclude the possibility of other novel options and solutions emerging. A decision made in this context is constrained not only by that which is perceived but also by the process which allows these perceptions to emerge.

Yet Rubin (1976) cautions the reader to consider the very real threat the worker faces in deviating from the secure, of going beyond the safety net of organized labor and kin for his access to other economic spheres is restricted by a lack of formal qualifications, contacts and knowledge. Young working-class men do not experience a protracted adolescence as is more typical of the middle class; they quickly assume adult roles and responsibilities. As a group they will marry and begin a family at an earlier age than their middle-class counterparts who will be involved in further eduction or beginning a career. Authors

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such as Dunk (1984) Levitan (1971) & Rubin suggest the early assumption of adult responsibility limits the options and resources available to the individual to change careers.

Alternative career options are limited once a worker has settled for the good money, benefits and seniority that come with long-term tenure on the job. By the early to mid thirties most working-class men have reached the peak of their career (Rubin, 1976). Skilled craftsmen who set up shop to become their own boss fail in disproportionate high numbers because they lack the knowledge, resources and business acumen needed to be successful (Levitan, 1973).

The career path of many workers is already set long before they graduate from school. In his study of American blue-collar workers, Hale (1984) found in general that school was a humiliating experience during which most men were classified as non-academic. The majority of his informants were sensitive about their lack of formal education, a topic they were least candid about. Formal education lacked relevance and purpose to their lives. The curriculum generally lacked options that catered to the technical and practical forms of learning or if it did these options were considered the inferior "a dumping ground for dummies" (p. 50). A similar criticism was made by Scullion (1988), Head of the Royal Commission which reported on the state of education in the Province of British Columbia. He states "the larger challenge for the provincial system rests in attempting to establish a system of plurality of excellence; a variety of

career paths in formal schooling leading to different types of high level competence other than academic ability" (p. 104).

Willis (1977) also found qualifications were rejected for a simpler way because what is needed in the working world is practical know how, of:

> having your head screwed on" and being able to make your move. The unofficial criteria the lads used for selecting a job were: "has to be work where he can be open about his desires, his sexual feelings, his liking for booze and his aim to `skive off' as much as possible.".....It would be a work situation where there was a boss, an us and them situation.....Work has to be a place, basically, where people are alright and with whom a general cultural identity can be shared (p. 96).

The working environment is therefore as important if not more important than the nature of the work.

Dunk (1984) noted that none of his working-class informants regretted the lack of meaningful work and that they considered the price of striving for career success too high a price to pay. The popular myth of the career workaholic who sacrifices family time and free time was held in disdain. A man who could provide for himself and his family "a decent income", by working forty hours a week was the ideal. "The boys do not expect their jobs to be enjoyable. A good job is a job that pays reasonable well, that is secure, and that is not too physically demanding" (p. 96). His informants prized the practical above the theoretical with the

"common sense" approach to all problems and decisions. The negative consequence of holding this perspective is that many other forms of knowledge are rejected. Such a rejection Dunk believes perpetuates opposition to the very mechanisms which might generate alternative career options.

If no purpose can be found in formal education it is according to Pryor (1985), folly to assume the working-class student will perceive purpose and merit in career counselling initiatives offered by the very same educational institutions from which they feel alienated. This rejection of career counselling is, according to Willis (1977), a continuation of the culture of opposition to all authority. Yet this is an incomplete explanation of why career counselling has failed to have an impact on the career behavior of working-class students. Willis found few working- class students had access to career counselling service and for those who did it was largely ineffective because of a clash of cultural perspectives.

Arbuckle, Corwin and Clark (1969) discovered that school counselors, who usually belong to the middle-class, had problems working with lower-class students. In affluent neighborhoods the counselors relied on objective data while in poorer neighborhoods they focused on subjective data which was more likely to be prone to distortion. The counselors had greatest difficulty in understanding the needs and aspirations of their clients when there was a difference in world view between client and counselor. These difficulties were further compounded by the

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imposition of counselling theory and practise which seemed to favour the middle-class students.

This clash of culture is, according to Ibrahim (1985), often ignored, misunderstood or inappropriately interpreted as failure by client or counselor to apply themselves to the task. While the detrimental effects may be minimal, the cost in terms of failed expectations, and of frustration and disappointment cannot be minimized. While neither career counselling theory nor practice can be value free, they have a moral obligation to strive to meet the needs of all, not just a select group of the population. Therefore, can career decision making theory predict the career decision making behavior of working-class men?

Models of Decision Making

Career decision making theory represents a central construct and focus for both counselling practice and research. Career decisions are seen as intersections which shape a career path. According to Herr and Cramer (1988), personal decisions are the conjunction between self and the environment. They are public testimonies people make about how they view themselves, how they view their opportunities and the relationships between these opposing forces (p. 106).

Theoretical models of decision making serve to conceptualize or explain how individuals choose, presupposing there are "good" decisions and desired outcomes which will, on examination, be evident. Decisions are evaluated by describing the process involved in choosing, by the outcome, or by identifying skills required for effective decision making (Jepsen & Dilley, 1974).

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Each model is supported by specific theoretical propositions that range from a highly rational and logical perspective through to more intuitive and subjective approaches which are more typical of human beings (Herr and Cramer, 1988).

Current models of decision making reflect their diverse origins from the fields of statistics, economics and psychology. These models have been applied to business, social organization and counselling, in particular to career counselling. The majority of models propose that a rational, sequential and systematic deliberation before and during the act of deciding will produce a desired outcome. According to models which emphasize rationality, a good decision achieves maximum gain with minimal loss: is determined from an objective position, and corrects the faults wrought by impulses, misperception and subjectivity common to human behavior (Jepsen & Dilley 1974).

In contrast, other theorists argue that personal decisions are "non sequential, non systematic and non scientific (Gelatt, 1989)." Harren (1979) concluded that a personal "decision making model is a description of a psychological process in which one organizes information, deliberates among alternatives and determines a course of action" (p. 119). Horan (1979) proposes that to understand how individuals decide we must focus on how individuals actually behave when making decisions and not on an abstract ideal. Personal decisions can therefore be best understood within the context of a life history (Ochberg, 1984., Sloan, 1977.) or the decision situation (Harren, 1979).

Yet many of the decision making models applied to personal decisions still emphasize those key aspects of the original mathematical models while attempting to accommodate the human dimension of choice. The resultant models continue to give disproportionate weight to that which is calculated and that which is observable and "...relegate the subjective process to a second even epiphenomenal state" (Sloan, 1988 p. 42).

The test of the relevance of a model is best achieved by examining how it furthers our understanding of experience. For the purpose of this thesis the following three major theories of decision making will be discussed: (1) the Conflict model (Janis and Mann, 1977), (2) the Rational model (Horan, 1979), and (3) the Deciding in context model (Sloan, 1987).

The Conflict Model.

Janis and Mann (1977) propose that an effective decision making process is a conflict ridden process. Their model "applies only to decisions that have real consequences for the decision maker and thereby generate some discernable manifestations of psychological stress" (p. 69). Deciding is a "vital affect laden" process. Decisions are not just a matter of cognition but involve emotion in what the authors term are "hot cognitions". Implied in this model is that the stress of the decision making induces an unpleasant emotional state which may lead to self-defeating behaviors such as procrastination, impulsivity, and suboptimal choice. An effective decision maker utilizes the urgency induced by the stress in combination with information processing strategies to make a quality decision. An ineffectual

decision maker therefore fears, avoids or denies the emotional intensity induced by the stress of decision making.

The functional relationship between psychological stress and decisional conflict is outlined in five assumptions. These assumptions link goal striving to anticipated loss, to the desire to retain the status quo or the degree of commitment to a present course of action. A degree of risk must be present for the situation to induce stress. If the decider is subjected to a high degree of risk when no solution is apparent, maladaptive coping patterns will emerge. The ideal decision situation has a moderate amount of stress which mobilizes "vigilant information processing".

Janis and Mann's seven criteria for "vigilant information processing" by the decision maker are as follows:

1. Thoroughly canvasses a wide range of alternative courses of action;

2. Surveys the full range of objectives to be fulfilled and the values implicated by the choice;

3. Carefully weighs whatever he knows about the cost and risks of negative consequences, as well as the positive consequences, that could flow from each alternative;

4. Intensively searches for new information relevant to further evaluation of the alternatives;

5. Correctly assimilates and takes account of any new information or expert judgment to which he is exposed, even when the information or judgment does not support the course of action he initially prefers;

6. Reexamines the positive and negative consequences of all known alternatives, including those originally regarded as unacceptable, before making a final choice;

7. Makes detailed provision for implementing or executing the chosen course of action, with special attention to contingency plans that might be required if various known risks were to materialize." (p. 11)

To complete the process and achieve the desired pattern of vigilant information processing, the decider must respond affirmatively to four questions in sequence. First, are the risks serious if one does not change? A negative response leads to a pattern of unconflicted adherence; the need for change is ignored. Secondly, are the risks serious if one does change? A negative response produces unconflicted change; the risks involved are minimized. Third, is it realistic to find a better solution? A negative response leads to defensive avoidance "a lack of vigilant search, selective forgetting, distortion of the meaning of warning messages and construction of wishful rationalization that minimizes negative consequences" (p. 50). Finally, is there sufficient time to search for information and deliberate? A negative response leads to hypervigilance under extreme stress the decider fails to search for further information, to generate alternatives, and prematurely decides on a course of action which may lead to postdecisional regret.

If the decider is vigilant and thorough, the outcome will be a contingent plan of action drawn from the decision made.

The Rational Model.

The model developed by Horan (1979) proposes a framework for the counselor and the client to improve the quality of the decision making. The model is therefore intentionally more limited in scope and application than is the Janis and Mann model. Hogan argues that effective decision making is a skill that can be learnt if the subjective, emotionality of the experience can be "managed". An effective decision maker is one who maximizes the subjective gain with the highest probability that action plans generated from the decision will lead to personal satisfaction. The theoretical foundations of the model (the classical decision theory and cognitive behaviorisms) give emphasis to the importance of logic, of systematic deliberation and the quantification of subjective values. The individual allots a numerical value to each desired outcome then subtracts the potential costs of each option. By factoring in the probability of achieving the desired goal an overall value will emerge. If a positive indices results then the decision is worth pursuing. This process Horan believes makes concrete the decision making process and diminishes the emotional panic of deciding.

The four stages of the model are: (1) conceptualization, (2) enlargement of response repertoire, (3) identification of discriminative stimuli, and (4) response selection.

Initially, the decider must determine the scope and extent of the problem or decision to be made. Stage two requires the generation of responses both known and novel; the client and

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counselor jointly brainstorm or hypothesize ideas to create the maximum number of alternative courses of action. At stage three, each alternative is evaluated to determine the positive and negative consequences of pursuing this option. This stage is characterized by an emphasis on information gathering strategies. Finally, with the information from stage three, each alternative is ranked according to the greatest personal gain coupled with the highest probability of it being implemented. An action plan is generated.

According to Horan, the skills of effective decision making aid the client to perceive the experience with a sense of detachment, to define the dimensions of the problem in concrete and quantifiable terms separate from the multiplicity of factors that may impinge on the decision. Therefore an effective decision maker understands and pursues the process of deciding with determination and clarity of purpose. Once the skills are learnt the implication is that these skills are applicable to all decision situations regardless of context or personal significance of the decision.

The rational model of decision making provides a workable synthesis of problem solving and decision making strategies in a stage model. Though readily comprehendible, it reduces decision making to a mechanical skeleton devoid of the richness and complexity of personal choice and divorced from the context of an individual life. As a result, Horan's model ignores the role of the meaning and the qualities of a decision which make it unique to the individual. There is an implied assumption that all

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decision making situations can be reduced to a number of alternative courses of action which will be readily apparent on examination. This model overlooks the importance of indecision, and self defeating behaviors, of time and environmental constraints that the decider may not be aware of.

Horan's reliance on qualification of personal values is an attempt to bridge the rational and logical process of classical decision theory with the personal dimension of choice. How readily quantifiable are personal values? How does the individual weight alternatives when they are perceived to be of equal importance but offer completely divergent action plans? Such questions are largely ignored or considered secondary.

Horan intentionally avoids complexity in his presentation and development of the model. He implies that to attend to the whole range of possibility is interesting but "leaves the counselor without a clear road map to provide direct assistance to the client (p. 98)." The theoretical strength of the model according to Horan rests in the conceptual similarity between behaviorism and classical decision theory. A marriage of these approaches he believes offers the greatest promise for a technology of decision making counselling. What Horan's model cannot explain are the motivations of individual to move with a decision when the probability of success is low or those who move with an action plan despite mixed agendas.

The Deciding In Context Model.

Sloan (1987) examined decision making by studying the subjective, the lived experience within the complexity and

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uniqueness of a life story. He is highly critical of the traditional theories of decision making, "not so much because our theories will be inaccurate but because institutional interventions based on such misunderstanding have a serious impact on the quality of individual lives and social life in general" (Sloan, 1987 p 69). The misunderstandings Sloan speaks of are conceiving decision making as a rational process that can be reduced to a number of mechanical steps, devoid of complexity, of failing to understand the importance of the personal struggle and confusion that gives meaning to behavior, and by treating the whole as a process that can be evaluated separate from its originator.

Sloan's approach is not a model of effective decision making but a method for examining a decision in context through the application and development of interpretive categories. Sloan divides the context up into two aspects: a context of character which consists of positive and negative self images developed through interaction with others and the life structural context, external to the individual. Life structural categories include social, historical and cultural influences. These categories provide the framework upon which to understand the decision. The key is to examine the interrelationships between the individual and any one specific context or contexts, to discover the meaning and unique qualities of a specific decision.

His system of analysis is patterned on the concept of a life structure as conceived by Levinson (1978). According to Levinson, a life structure is an essential design that describes "the

current psychosocial totality" of an individual. A life structure is constructed by three key aspects of the self: (1) self-world transactions, i.e., the immediate interaction between oneself and others; (2) constraints and opportunities, e.g., skills, goals, fantasies and intrapersonal conflicts which affect individuals in realizing their potential: and (3) mediations between individual activities and the socio-cultural contexts. A life structure is influenced not only by external factors, but also by self-images and unconscious intentions conceived within the individuals own self image. It provides a focal point or pattern for the individual to deliberate between the subjective and objective forces shaping an emerging decision. In turn each major decision shapes the future by setting up prohibitions or endorsement to the already existing life structure.

Each major decision is unique and has meaning. Decisions derive their meaning from the context which determines them. They reflect the wishes, desires and intentions of the individual, and are an expression of how the decision maker mediates between the inner world of self in relation to others. They require deliberation "a fixing of attention" by the decider toward a possible course of action or purpose which may or may not be in conscious awareness.

Sloan argues most decisions are denials of the true self in relation to others. He refers to this phenomena as the "psychological constraints on the rationality of deciding", in other words the tendency of the individual to be self deceptive and resort to rationalization which results in faulted decisions.

Conflict occurs when the repressed wishes and impulses of the decision maker contradict the socially sanctioned self image projected to the external world. The individual resorts to conceiving a rational argument to mediate between these opposing forces: the result is a compromised vision of self. According to his thesis, no one is "free to choose"; they are subjected to powerful external pressures (the historical context) which challenges the notion of authentic behavior, of deciding for oneself. Sloan believes, through reflection and increasing self awareness the decision maker can more closely approximate a desired vision of self.

In contrast to the rational decision making models Sloan conceives of effective decision making as requiring freedom to choose: freedom to entertain a full range of possibility; and freedom from automatic compliance to the culturally sanctioned options. In the ideal, a decision would be an uncompromising reflection of the individual expressing the relationship sought between self and others. The intent of the decision maker would be the dominant force in the process. In reality, Sloan's research suggests we invariably accept the status quo and rarely challenge our behavior. We compromise the self in exchange for money, power and influence, potent symbols which distract us from the original purpose of the decision. Only through self reflection, increased self awareness and the conscious deliberate focusing of attention can individuals maintain their true purpose in deciding.

A Comparison of Models

These three theories are each concerned with the process of decision making and with enhancing the understanding of that process. The differences that arise result in part from the different purpose each author had in developing their model as well as from the different theoretical foundations on which the models are based.

The rational model and the conflict model share the underlying theoretical assumption that human beings rely on rationality and logic when making decisions. With careful and systematic deliberation, the correct decision and an appropriate course of action will emerge. Both models break down the process into discrete stages. Each stage describes behaviors for effective decision making and addresses influences which will impede this process. Both models are characterized by an emphasis on conscious deliberation, a controlled emotionality and the persuasion of logic to pursue an ideal option. Horan developed his model as a guide for decision making within the counselling relationship. He choose to deliberately limit the scope and complexity of the model in order to facilitate its application.

There is no allowance in either of the rational models for explaining the role of intuition, the unique qualities of the decision maker, nor the context in which the decision is being made. Horan considered these factors to be an "unmanageable morass" which would only further confuse the decision maker. In contrast to Horan, the Janis and Mann model is more complex and allows for the personal dimensions of choice to be considered.

The emphasis is on how emotionality and stress are an integral and necessary part of decision making. High levels of stress and emotional responding are considered to be obstructive to making a decision, therefore it is the management of these two factors which leads to effective decision making strategies.

Neither the conflict model nor the rational model consider the context in which the decision is made to be significant to that process. In contrast, Sloan is interested in the context and meaning behind a decision. He acknowledges the role of rationality in the decision making process but determines that the tendency to seek a rational argument to support an action will more likely lead to a compromise of one's self. He is concerned with the interdependence that exists between the individual and the context that leads to a faulted decisions. His is not a stepwise model of effective decision making behaviors but an attempt to provide a mechanism for examining each decision as a unique phenomenon that can only be understood via the process of self reflection. The examination of their experience from an objective stance allows the decision maker to become more aware of how they have compromised their own purpose. Sloan is interested in complexity, in understanding the distortions and difficulties in making a decision more than finding the ideal process. Sloan is determined to develop a new theory of decision making which more adequately addresses human frailty in decision making.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is from the broad tradition of ethnographic, or field research. The role of the researcher is to be the disinterested observer, yet at the same time to be a self-reflexive instrument whose awareness and intuitions may become a source of data available for analysis (Glasser, Strauss 1976). The researcher acknowledges, documents and examines self awareness, motivations and perspectives. Such subjective data is then available for scrutiny by others, who can alert the researcher to possible sources of bias.

<u>Personal perspective.</u>

My interest in the topic stemmed from a critical encounter with a male client during a counselling interview. This client revealed he had risked his life to salvage a large piece of machinery. In response to my disbelief, he stated he had no life if he had no livelihood. In that moment I realized how different my conception of reality was from his, how different the values which governed my personal and professional life were from his. I became concerned with the appropriateness of the theories and interventions I employed as a counselor theories that were congruent with my conception of the world but not with his. The source of my discomfort distilled down to a profound sense of not knowing "a working man's experience". I needed to understand in order to evaluate the worth of counselling theory for such clients. This state of not knowing is the basic premise I have worked from throughout the entire process. I have looked for

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alternative arguments, I have consulted with my participants and I have questioned and countered my hunches and intuitions to allow myself to be informed by the data.

<u>Orientation to the Research</u>

The overall orientation of this research project is patterned on the tradition of descriptive psychology. Giorgi (1985) determined that descriptive psychology is concerned with describing events in everyday life and through such descriptions coming to understand how people define events, how they construct reality and how they act in relation to their beliefs. Giorgi claims "A qualitative analysis of descriptions can yield psychological insights of a value at least equal to what quantitative approaches yield, although different in character and style" (p. 2).

Within this broad field of inquiry is phenomenology, defined by Sloan (1987) as "a philosophical movement and technique which claims as its task the descriptive study of consciousness" (p. 50). For the purposes of this research, this means attempting to understand behavior as the participant understands it, learning about their world, learning about their decisions and how they define the meaning behind their experience. To achieve this, the researcher takes on the perspective of the informant, observing and analyzing the experience of deciding through the consciousness of the subject.

Research conducted in this manner, according to Marshell & Rossman (1989), operates in a context of discovery, as opposed to a context of verification characteristic of the natural science.

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According to Phillips et al. (1983), an over reliance on the hypothesis-testing approach to research in decision making has had the effect of stressing confirmation of existing constructs, of limiting the generation of new hypothesis, while continuing to yield a one-sided picture of a multifaceted phenomenon. They call for the design of future research for special populations to be descriptive and explanatory, to be moved away from an objective stance to the subjective position of inquiry. According to Collins & Young (1986), the subjective, drawn from the phenomenological tradition of research, is now a legitimate focus for the study of career and career decision making.

The Design

The design for this research is a multiple case study design modeled on the case study research method outlined by Yin (1984). He defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p 23). This study generated five separate yet similar case studies of decision making. Each account of decision making gives insight to the unique qualities of the individual, the phenomenon of deciding, and the common context of working-class experience.

Rather than rely on a single case, a multiple case design was chosen because such a design generates multiple descriptions of the phenomenon and multiple examples available for scrutiny and analysis. The strength of a multiple case design is its reliance of replication logic. If agreement, commonalties and trends can

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be identified across cases, the researcher can be more confident that the phenomenon sought is the one that has been documented. If there is a convergence of the data in the aggregate of the five cases, there is compelling support for the propositions that emerge during the comparison of theory to experience.

<u>Selection</u>

The first participant was selected opportunistically following an initial contact made to the president of the local union. He volunteered to be the first informant. A snowball sampling technique lead to the discovery of the other four participant. The fifth participant was more deliberately selected in that he represented a younger age group. In total, eight individuals were approached: one declined to be interviewed and two were excluded because they did not meet the criteria for selection.

The following criteria were used: that each participant be an adult male who was or had been employed in the milling industry; that he had not been on salary and that neither of his parents had a salaried position during their working life. A participant was deemed to belong to the working class if his parents worked for hourly wages and he did also. Porter (1965), in his discussion of class differences in Canada, determined that the structural differences between salaried and non-salaried workers is an acceptable criterion for distinguishing class position. The non-salaried worker is more likely to be subjected to layoff and receives a wage which reflects commitment to work measured in units of time. He has had limited access to decision making power or control of his work environment.

The decision to not include working-class women in the sample resulted from a need to find cases which shared common characteristics. This is not to discount the experience of women but to acknowledge the additional complexity the issue of gender would bring to the data. The inclusion of such data would have the potential of obscuring the phenomenon of deciding within yet another phenomenon: the stereotypic behaviors of men and women (Yin, 1989).

Procedures

The research took place in Smithers, a Northwestern town in B.C., the home of the author. Initially I contacted each participant by phone, explained my purpose and set up an appointment some three or four days later. The delay between our phone conversation and the first interview provided the men with time to think about their experience: a "warming up period".

The first interview generally took one and a half hours during which each participant described his experience. All interviews were recorded on audiotape and later transcribed verbatim. I reviewed the tapes to identify key elements of the decision which I organized into a "map". Again I listened to the tapes and reviewed my notes to identify possible relationships, omissions and inaccuracies. This map was presented to each participant part way through the second interview.

The purpose of the second interview was to add new awareness, to deal with omissions or points needing further clarification. At the beginning of these interviews I invited each participant to speak before I shared my schematic representation of their

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experience. It was important to avoid imposing my construction of their experience to direct their participation. These maps facilitated the conversation, it provide the men with a means to organize their thoughts and brought forth new awareness. Following these two interviews, I then prepared a draft narrative from the verbatim transcripts which was given to the participant to evaluate using the following guidelines: is this a true and accurate account of your experience. Are there omissions or errors? Is there any undue emphasis on any one aspect of the description. Each man had a period of a week or more to review the account. All participants voluntarily invited significant others to review the account to assist in the validation process. Correction and validation of the description took place in a third and final interview.

<u>Interviews</u>

Each interview began with social pleasantries. Inevitably I would be asked to explain why I had an interest in this topic. There was a reciprocal curiosity: my desire to understand the working man's experience and his interest in the motivations of a university educated woman. Such an interchange helped build a rapport between us and resulted in each participant becoming a co-researcher rather than a subject to be interviewed. The consent form was reviewed and signed.

The preamble to the interview began as follows: "Can you tell me about how you made a significant decision related to your choice of employment, significant to you that is?" An open ended style of interviewing modeled on Mishler's (1986) research

interviewing strategies was used. Mishler contends that a focused
discourse is more likely to reveal contextual understandings,
assumptions and knowledge of everyday life than would the
question and answer format. He believes a question and answer
format imposes constraints on the explorative process is limited
to utilize serendipitous findings, and is heavily dependent on
the quality and pertinence of the questions asked. A number of
key questions were developed as a guide to ensure
comprehensiveness (See appendix A). By the completion of the
interview the following areas had been covered: the decision
detailing how, when, where, and what; family, education, personal
ambitions, regrets, and satisfactions regarding the outcome of
the process. The interviewing was considered complete when there
was coherence to the description which was agreed upon by myself
and the individual participant.

<u>Analysis</u>

For the purposes of analyzing case study data, Yin (1989)
states that, "the ultimate goal is to treat the evidence fairly,
to produce compelling analytical conclusions and rule out
alternative interpretations" (p. 106). This process continued
through-out the study. It began with the formulation of the
question of how well theories of decision making could explain
the career decision making experience. This broad proposition was
narrowed down to examine decision making within the context of a
working-class man's life and further refined by looking at how he
decided to participate in paid employment. These constructs
became the parameters for the investigation.

Three theories of decision making were chosen, the conflict model by Janis and Mann (1977), the rational decision making model by Horan (1979), and the deciding in context model by Sloan (1987). Each theory offered a particular orientation to decision making yet still represented the dominant ideas underlying decision making theory. These theories were examined and the key constructs identified. For the purposes of this research a theory would be considered relevant and applicable if all key constructs predicted by the theory were found in the description. Relevance and applicability would then be determined on a continuum from relevant and applicable to not at all, based on the judgement of the author and supported by a line of logic developed from the data. Yin (1985) refers to this method as pattern-matching. The assumption underlying this premise is that the convergence of data within a single case and across a number of cases provides evidence to support the conclusions made.

The generation of each description followed these step: A review of the tape-recorded interviews identifying key issues was followed by a review of the verbatim transcript again identifying key issues; a map was made which organized these issues in terms of perceived importance and with some chronological ordering; then the text was organized into a description. The original text from the transcript was maintained except for minor alterations or corrections needed to enhance the flow or comprehension of the description. Each case was compared and contrasted with each other as well as with the three theories.

<u>Criteria</u> <u>for</u> <u>soundness</u>

Qualitative research, like quantitative research must address the issues of validity and reliability. Yin refers to four tests that which must be given to the data to determine the soundness of the study. They are: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability.

The first test, construct validity, requires that the parameters of the investigation are specified and that the phenomenon described in the proposition (the making of a decision) is the actual phenomenon that is described. This was achieved by predetermining the criteria for including or excluding participants, by selecting mainstream theories of decision making which had discernable constructs, and by clearly documenting the procedural steps taken in generating the data.

The second test, is internal validity. Yin states that for a descriptive or explanatory case study internal validity rests on how well developed and supported by data is the line of argument from which the inferences are made. The validated account, the key theoretical propositions used are included in the documentation and available for scrutiny by the reader.

The third test, is that of external validity. How generalizable are the findings. Yin determined that for case study research the generalization sought is analytical as opposed to the statistical generalization more typical of a positivist approach. He defines analytical generalization as, "striving to generalize to a particular set of results to some broader theory" (p 44). Each description was tested against the established

theory providing different explanations of the phenomenon of deciding, consolidating points of agreement between experience and theory, and highlighting differences.

The final test is the reliability of the study; that is the measure of the agreement any other researcher would come to in arriving at the same findings that have been documented here. Towards that end I have kept copies of all verbatim transcripts and field notes so they are available for scrutiny. In my field notes I attempted to acknowledge my biases, challenge emerging assumptions as they arose, and seek rival explanations. In the report I documented my motivation, the procedures and the perspective from which I examined the data. Above all I trusted my profound sense of not knowing and my seeking to be informed by the phenomenon.

CHAPTER IV

The ACCOUNTS OF DECISION MAKING

Account 1, Ross.

Ross is a sawfiller, a 38-year-old married man who has two young sons. The note he wrote for the validation interview stated: "It was a strange feeling reading this (the account). Twenty years of life on 10 pages of paper." He could not elaborate further on this statement but was content to mull it over. For Ross there were two points of decision making: one was the decision to work in the mill to start with, and the other was to begin a trade. His account is as follows:

It was 1973, just about everyone I knew was either leaving or had specific goals, like going to go to university which I didn't. Actually the only goals I had were to not go any further in school; I had totally lost interest in that. But losing interest in school was all kind of related. I had no goals set on doing anything in that system, and between what was going on in my life: the school, the indecision about cadets, the girl friend. I couldn't decide. I stuck it out at school but I didn't feel like I was getting anything out of it either. It was frustrating at the time, not really knowing, really undecided about what I wanted. It was a tough time for a year or so there.

Back then, I came very close to joining the military. I'd been in cadets for quite a few years locally and had gone on a few different things through them down to California, Mexico and a few different cruises. I think it was I didn't want to leave my girlfriend, and in some ways afterward, when the relationship

ended with her, I sort of kicked myself for not joining. It was also the work involved in going; I was more interested in what was going on at parties on the weekends than school. At that time I started thinking, "What the heck am I going to do? I have no interest in school whatsoever." And yet I knew that if I was going to do something like the military or college I would have to get good marks in school. Finally I think, just losing the interest won out over the rest of it. I don't think it was "I'm not going to apply for the military, but I don't really know what else I'm going to do." It was,"I got to get out of school," basically.

I never thought to talk to anyone, not the people at school, not my dad. I never talked to my dad much actually, not in that five-year period. Things were rather stressed between us. I know he wanted me to finish high school and stuff. He wanted me to be responsible, reliable that was more important than becoming, say, a doctor or lawyer. I think my Dad was quite happy with what I became. I have a good steady job and my bills are paid. You're not scrambling around all the time. That was important to him. All through the school thing he wanted me to crack down, do better in school, but I was not too interested. I'm the kind of person that probably unless I more or less had my mind made up for sure, I would never have approached the military recruiting people, or anything like that.

From high school I went to work in the mills and I am not sure why. The mills were an easy place to get a job. You think, "I'll work here for a while until I decide what I want to do."

That is nineteen years ago and I'm still there. I've stuck it
out but I didn't mind it. There have been good times and bad
times but shortly after (starting work at the mill) I bought a
house, so I had payments and this and that. I just don't know.
Just never minded the work that much and I always shut the work
off. Went and did my job for eight hours, went home and forgot
about it.

You know, I still remember my first day at the mill. I had
been phoned on Saturday and told to report to this certain fellow
on Monday morning. I didn't know anything about a mill, never
been in one before. I wandered around trying to find this guy and
someone said, "Oh he's up by the Scrag saw." I finally found him.
He was an old guy and he just looked at me, like I had long hair
or something. I said "I'm supposed to report to you." He said,
"You got a pair of gloves?" And I said, "Yep." "Well go to the
green chain." I wandered around and found the green chain.
Another guy showed me what to do, but there was no training. You
sort of muddled your way through the first couple of weeks.
Actually I was "gung ho" on the first day. It wasn't bad. It was
hard work. It was the third or fourth day I was about ready to
say to heck with it. That is when blisters and stuff started
appearing. But I stuck with it and within a couple of weeks I
didn't mind the job.

I was lucky it was the summer. The weather was good and I was
working outside. It was the type of job, busy in spurts, say for
half an hour, and then you'd have half an hour or so to soak up
the sun. When you first got out of school and you got your first

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steady pay cheque, that was the most important thing. All of a sudden there is money to do whatever you wanted to do. Never thought more than a month down the road.

Mind you, things are different today. It used to be if you had no education and weren't all that good at anything you could always get a job in a mill. It was never really frowned upon because it was a good stable job and the pay was always decent. But it wasn't the place where you saw a lot of people with PhDs There was this social thing of if you were out meeting people you didn't want to say, "Well I just work in the mill." But at the same time inside of me I didn't really mind the work I was doing. So, it was sort of like, I don't really mind working there but you almost don't want to advertise it. It became kind of a standing joke amongst a lot of us that were in that position. People would ask; "What are you going to do?" We would say, "We're just here for a while, till we decide what we're going to do." We'd all kind of laugh at it knowing, I think, that we'll probably keep working here till we retire.

In time things changed; the mill was modernized and more business like. It seemed like people started settling down. There weren't the jobs, you couldn't quit on a Friday and get another job on Monday. By that time I had worked my way through to running a cut-off saw, which was considered to be one of the better jobs as far as being on the floor of the mill. It was an outside job, but you had your own little shack and nobody bothered you. You just ran the logs in, cut them to lengths, and then they went into the mill from there. It wasn't anybody

pushing you that much as long as you kept the mill going, sort of
thing. You'd see the foreman coming once a night or day. Actually
I enjoyed it, you could suit the mood you were in. I've always
liked swing shift -- two weeks nights and two weeks days. Anyway
you'd bring a radio or tape deck, plug it in listen to some music
and just forget about it. Do your job. But then I got to thinking
about that a bit. I never really disliked the job I was doing,
but what's it going to be like another thirty years from now? Am
I going to be doing the same thing? I started to consciously
think about it; I still had no interest in quitting the mill and
going somewhere for other training or schooling or anything. It
would have been very difficult. You know, newly married and all
this kind of stuff. A lot of expenses, it would make it difficult
to quit.

Then I went back to the cut-off saw, which again was
interesting for a while. But after I'd been there (at the mill)
for probably eight years, I was getting pretty frustrated. I was
married with one kid at least, so there were pressures you
couldn't quit as easily as you would if you were single. It was
the first time I started to actually think like, "Do I want to do
this for another forty years?" You know, trying to imagine
yourself as sixty years old standing pushing these stupid
buttons. I probably would have seriously started looking at other
things, not so much other careers but just,"Do I want to be doing
this?" It was shortly after that, the opportunity to get into the
filling room happened. So I moved in there and I've never

regretted it. That's what I'll be doing until I retire. It won't bother me.

When the opportunity came up in the filing room, I made a bid for it and I got it. It (the decision to learn a trade) was more of a conscious decision. Like I didn't know anything about the trade; I knew a few people that worked in it and I asked them a couple of things about what you do up there (in the machine shop). It was a more conscious effort to get something better paid and just a little bit more interesting over a long term thing than just sitting there running the cut-off saw.

My first days in the Filling Room were really exciting. I was kind of up (excited). That was a really great moment, I remember that. It was a first step; you go from being just the guy that works in the sawmill up into the trades. You know, you're now a tradesman, and moneywise it was a big jump in wages. Your status in the mill itself. It was a jump because to a certain extent it was the kind of job that everybody would have liked to have got, and not everybody could do. You have to be fairly slow not to do most of the jobs in the mill. But once you got up into the trades, be it millwright or electricians or sawfiling, they (management) were a lot more careful. There were a lot more people rejected.

After I started work at the mill I thought about other options but never really made any effort to look into it. I don't know why; it was probably financial. Like I was married, had the family, all that kind of stuff. Financially in a sense in that probably held me into the mill more than anything. But also the

fact that I never really disliked my job at any time. I'd probably really have to dislike my job to push me into going somewhere else.

There was only one other job I considered at any time that I remember since working at the mill. Right early, the first year or two, a neighbor of my parents who was a bank manager was over for coffee one day and we were chatting. He said I should look into working at the bank totally different ends of the spectrum. You work in a sawmill, you work in a bank. They're sort of different types of people. But I considered it. I actually went down to the school and found out what I was missing. It turned out, it was a Biology 12 course and it wasn't offered by correspondence. I'd have had to quit the mill and go back to school for a semester and that's as far as it got. It was the same old thing. By the time I walked out of that school after talking to the principal, it was, "Ah, it's not worth it."

While I've never really disliked working at the mill, I guess it's more that I have never really ever felt great about working there. To me, the job part of it has never been an ultimate goal. My idea of an ultimate goal is, just through the job, to be in a position financially and secure enough to do the other things that I wanna do. It was the other things that come first and it was sliding yourself into a position in the job where you could afford to do the other things, not always afford money-wise, but like shift work (allows for free-time on and off the job.)

I think luck and chance has a lot to do with how your life turns out. There are always a million and one things that can

change a situation, say, take the two head guys on each shift are worlds apart, they're totally different people. When I first started the trade, I had no option to which shift I was going on. It just happened that I was with this guy's shift and we get along just super. We have stayed together now for twelve years on the same shift that's probably one reason why it's a lot more enjoyable. We spend a lot of hours at the job and when things are going good you sit back in the coffee room for two hours at a time and B.S. I mean we get along really good. Whereas on the other shift I know the guy fairly well too but we don't get along in the same way, at all. The whole thing of work might have gone in a different direction, in a sense as it just wouldn't have been as enjoyable with this other guy.

Today things are different and it is important for kids to think about work and that sort of stuff. We're almost at that point that if we're going to have any input at all it's now. We have chatted with them already about jobs and stuff, but only to the point to try to get them to look at what they'd like to do. I've seen people locked into jobs that they hate but because financially or socially they feel like they can't get out of them, and I would hate that and wouldn't want to see my kids into that. Probably the big number one is do something that you'd like to do. Money is something that is also important. I wish it wasn't as much, but in this society with the type of life-styles we like to lead, it is. And commitment if you're going to do something then try and do it good. I've worked with people there that have the same ticket as I do, but they do a lousy job and

they don't do any more than they absolutely have to do. I don't think it's a good way of living; it's not just your job, it's your whole way of life. Like if you're building a house, it doesn't have to be a palace, but build it well. Try and do a good job and if you feel good about yourself and good with yourself when you're finished, then I think that's important. Whether at the end of a day's work or something you built at home, you should feel happy with what you do.

Account 2, Rob

Rob was about to start a business of his own at the time of the interviews. He is married with three children. His account is as follows:

I started in the mill in the 1980s when I was trying to find work after being laid off. I just took the job because it was the first thing that came up, but after a couple of years I began to see that working in a sawmill can also be a trap. It's hard to get out of the mill because of the wages and benefits. When I decided to quit the mill, I was making $21.00 an hour with benefits worth $6.00 an hour. My next job paid $14.00 an hour and no benefits. The high wages at the mills make it hard for a person to quit and find a job that they will find enjoyable. You become accustomed to the high wages, set your lifestyle accordingly, and then it is very hard to quit.

As a teenager I had no goals other than I was expected to finish high school. There was never any discussion with my family that I would go on to college or other things. I was pretty mixed up, hanging out with the wrong crowd, partying. It wasn't till I

received the Lord that I began to straighten out; I began to see things differently but by then I had left school. Still I managed to finish high school as was expected of me and that was that. I liked school. I like learning, but sitting in class all day wasn't fun. I guess I'm more practical in a sense; learning new concepts and new things with my hands is the way I enjoy learning. Even when I was working in the sawmill I tried to keep up by taking various courses through the college.

When I first started work I was seventeen at the time and I had my own skidder on a rental purchase agreement, but it was a big mistake. My dad had presented the opportunity to me to become an owner operator and I took it. He was an hourly man and he still is today, but I think he has always hoped that one day he could be his own boss. He bought his machine with the idea that he could get out of working for wages, but he never has. Actually I always said I would never work in a sawmill, either. But when the 1980 recession hit, my boss cut way back on the logging and as a consequence I was laid off.

Even when I took the job at the mill, I knew it would be a drag. I knew I wouldn't enjoy it because I'm not the kind of guy that can do assembly line work where you stand in one place all day. A lot of sawmill work is like that. It was very much a dead end. There weren't the opportunities to work your way up in the company unless maybe you were willing to spend twenty-five or thirty years in there. I've always wanted to get ahead and I knew I had the ability and energy to go further than just working in a planer mill. But in time my goal of working my way up to

management seemed very unrealistic and I began to realize that. I felt trapped in a job I didn't like.

What I remember about that first time I went to work at the mill was that the owner of the sawmill (a member of his church), who was known to me, offered me a job and I took it. It was a decision to work in the mill I guess but I don't remember how it was made. I had a young family (two kids) and we had just bought a house. I needed a steady income and the job was presented. It wasn't something I was looking for. I know I could have stuck it out and looked for a job in the bush somewhere else. So I guess it filled a void in a sense. I basically took the job out of a need for money. The less hungry you are the more picky you get. I felt I had a responsibility to my family first, before I had a responsibility to myself to enjoy my job, because that is what I'd been taught. When I think about my kids and my wife, they're far more precious to me then going to work and feeling great about it. I can easily put up with eight hours of boring work, more than I can seeing my family having a hard time subsisting, making ends meet, and paying bills and depressed all the time.

I was always very frustrated with work in the mills because there never seemed to be an opportunity to move into a position where I could find meaningful work. Meaningful for me, that is. I was looking for something that I would look forward to doing and something with responsibility. For instance, I would enjoy being in quality control where you're responsible for the quality of the product, where you're constantly getting upgraded in your knowledge of wood, timber and lumber. I have always liked to keep

learning but I never had an opportunity, say, to go full time to school or get training. My parents never encouraged me to study or think about college. I don't think they could have really helped me anyway. I've always felt frustrated because I feel sure there is some type of job that would really suit me; I just can't find it. No matter what I've done I've always tried to do my best, like taking evening courses like welding or whatever. In fact I looked for ways to get training through the companies or the forestry service, but all the time there was nothing, no avenues available to me. I felt trapped in a job and there was no way out.

By the time I took my last job I think I was looking for a way out of the trap, not just from mill work but being tied to the big income and benefits. I guess I was afraid subconsciously, if an opportunity to go out on my own presented itself I wouldn't be able to afford to take it. So we seriously looked at our budget and spending habits. Then we decided to sell our house on Viewmont Road and I buy a big lot in Telkwa which we subdivided. That summer I brought one house on the property while still working full time at the mill. We built another the following summer after the first sold. I was working sixteen hours a day for at least five months for a while there. Then we decided to sell the second house and purchased this place which gave us the money to invest in an opportunity if it ever came up.

By the time I quit, I had worked in three mills for a period of ten and a half years: seven years at the first, then six months at another and three years at the last. My decision to

quit came in steps. It was a gradual process of weighing things up and talking and praying. When I took the last job I wasn't looking at it as a temporary step, but I knew I wasn't going to work in a sawmill all my life. Even as I say that I have to admit I could have been there for another ten years. If an opportunity in the mill had come up I might still be there.

In my last job I was grading lumber; the lumber would go past up to ninety pieces a minute. You have to grade every second piece, so you're standing on your feet, flipping pieces with one hand and marking them with a crayon with the other hand. The smaller pieces were going by so fast that you really didn't get a chance to look up. You had to kind of guess at them, which was very frustrating when I wanted to do a good job. I really liked working with lumber, and learning about it was interesting. But once you mastered the grading it became meaningless kind of work. I don't know how some fellows do it for thirty years. Maybe they look forward to what they have got going after work all the time and concentrate on that. Me, I'd rather be able to apply myself at work. I found when working at the mill, even though I didn't use much energy, I had no energy when I got home. Working at a job I enjoy I can do vigorously, I feel a lot better when I get home and I have energy for the things that I have to get done while I'm there.

Eventually I think the frustrations just got to me. Especially the frustration of being part of a union because I'm not a union sort of person. You see I strongly believe it's part of my Christian beliefs, that I'm employed by someone to do a job and

that I should work to the best of my ability and be thankful I have the job. If not, you should look for another job or look at your motives for working.

My frustration with the union was if I tried harder that put pressure on other people to work harder. And there were instances where I did that: I put more effort into my work, and as a result I was given jobs that were maybe sought after by other people who had more seniority than me. That created conflicts in a sense subtle conflicts. Yet I got along with everyone really well, but somehow there's always the resentment. Everyone expects it to work on a seniority basis instead of merit. That's the union way, which makes it hard for someone to get ahead. In fact, some people still resent me. I suppose I would too if I had been working in a place ten years and somebody came along after a year and was given a job that I had been trying to get for ten years.

Eventually the frustrations built up and I decided to quit. It was not a sudden thing; I thought about it a lot. I weighed things up, talked to people and prayed. When I finally brought it up with my wife she said, "Well, if you don't like it then you should quit and find something you enjoy doing." I guess that relieved me of a little of the responsibility that I felt towards the family. I was surprised she thought that way, because her dad is one of the guys who could sit at the sawmill all day and not do anything different the rest of his life. I guess maybe I had put her in the same category. I spoke to a number of close

friends; some expressed concern about the financial future and that sort of thing, but I quit and have never regretted it.

Whenever I make an important decision, like quitting the mill I talk to people a lot. It's often bad for me in the spring because I get spring fever and I have lots of ideas. So I have to sit down and write the pros and cons. If there is any validity to my ideas, then I talk to friends about them. It gives me different perspectives on the situation, different ideas. Maybe my friends know something I don't. I'm looking for moral support for if I go through with the decision. If I've talked and shared with these people and they've encouraged me to go through with it, in a sense they are obligating themselves for moral support. I've already experienced that sort of support. Like when we subdivided the property and built the houses, we had a lot of positive support from friends and the Church community I also mean direct support where they even helped us finish the houses. We couldn't have done it without them.

When I make a decision I need some real positive feedback, encouraging word. I'm too chicken to go it alone. Things have to be pretty clear with me. If I was single and on my own it would be different but I have my family to think of. Once I have made a decision there is this deep down assurance. It's a comfort I receive that, even if what I am undertaking should fail I don't need to worry about it any more. Like now with this business we're buying, I'm at the point where I'm not obsessed with thinking about it that I can't sleep at night. I am at peace with my decision.

Finally I'll have the opportunity where I'm going to see direct results of what I do. I may not like what I see sometimes but I will have nobody to blame for the situations around me. I guess it is a chance to prove something to myself, I don't know. I have always wanted to do something with my hands, to provide a good service that someone was willing to pay for. It is important that I feel good about the service I provide and the people receiving that service feel good about it too. I don't want to be rich, I want to feel good about my work and what I am doing for others.

Account 3, Larry

Larry is a 38 year old loader operator, married with two teenage daughters. He wondered whether he had ever made a decision related to his participation in paid employment. By the third interview he was more confident: he had not. Now, 20 years after starting work at the mill, he is struggling with his first significant work related decision. His account is as follows:

It (working) has just happened. You start doing something and it gets easy to do. You get paid for it and you sort of get hooked into it. It's not a decision, I would say, for most hourly paid people. They start into it as a temporary thing and end up full time end up for the rest of their life, just about. Like right now, I'm trying to decide, this is probably the first decision of my working career. There's a job opening up in the next two years for a management position at the mill. And with the scaling courses and a couple of other courses, I'll be eligible for it -- maybe not get it -- but I'll be eligible. You

know, should I move up into management? I am happy where I am but?

I did well in school, especially with the academic subjects like sciences and mathematics. I've always liked to read, and at school I studied anytime on the bus or at lunch, I guess, you could say I was a bookworm." Larry developed an interest in Marine Biology while working with a cousin on a fisheries project one Easter. He received further encouragement for this possible career option from his high school biology teacher. During school and following graduation he fostered this idea but never translated his interest into a career plan or action. He can never remember deciding not to pursue his interest in marine biology. In retrospect he sees working at the mill as a less threatening choice. "Whereas it would have been a struggle to go away from my friends and my family to somewhere else where I might not be accepted." Larry lost interest in becoming a police officer for the same reasons: not wanting to leave his family and community even for a limited period of time.

Immediately upon graduating from high school he went to work at the mill, as he had the two previous summers before. "You've just got to go to work. There is no question about that, but I can't remember really deciding anything. Back then I just played it by ear; I went with the flow, kind of thing." His first job was to manually sort and pile lumber on the green chain. While working there he meet a number of disenchanted professionals who had left their respective careers to work at manual labor. One was a marine biologist. Larry's interest in a professional career

began to wane further. With his father's help he secured a
permanent position at the mill. Thus Larry's working life began
in a similar fashion to his own father's.

Larry is perplexed as to why and how his working career
evolved without more deliberation and purpose, beyond the need to
secure a steady and secure income. "It's sort of weird that way
because I never had to make a decision like that. To make a
choice between going to school it was at the time expected, you
were expected to go on. Especially because I had high marks. But
it didn't bother me not to go on. My parents knew I had the
potential but they didn't pressure, there was no pressure to go
on."

At the time Larry's greatest need was to be independent and
self-supporting. Economic security was then of greater importance
than finding personal fulfillment in his work. " You're finished
with school. You go to work for the summer and summer becomes the
fall then the spring. Most of the guys that come through the
mill, they just get started for the summer or they clean up and
the wages are good. It sort of hooks you the wage. Like if I was
pumping gas, it might have been different. I wouldn't have been
hooked as easily. If you had a choice between four dollars an
hour and sixteen or eighteen dollars an hour as your start rate,
that's a little bit more attractive to stay working, say, at the
mill there. If I'd never got on the mill then it might have been
different. I might have gone to college or something."

In contrast to the lack of deliberateness and purpose in his
efforts to decide on a career, Larry was both determined and

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courageous in his efforts to overcome his shyness. "Although to me books and stuff were an enjoyment, there were often parts to life I was missing out on and I knew it . You know, like going to your own graduation dance." The transition from nerd to extrovert was difficult, and at times Larry's behavior was forced which resulted in him inadvertently alienating himself from others. Despite the struggle and setbacks he faced, Larry takes pride in the degree of social confidence and competence that he has achieved. "At heart I'm still an introvert but I'm an extrovert. I make myself be an extrovert." In retrospect, Larry considered his lack of social confidence was an impediment to possible career options. "It would have been a struggle to go away from my friends and family to somewhere else where I might not be accepted."

Pursuing an alternative career path would have also meant leaving his girlfriend who later became his wife. " I wasn't married then but it was a decision, you know. Four years in university or stay with her. Anyway, it didn't seem like such a bad idea, just working at the mill and staying with her, as opposed to going away and maybe not having a future. I'm not a risk taker then or now. I don't like to take risks. I don't want to give up one security for an unknown. That is the type of risks I don't like,-- like skiing down a ski hill and not knowing what's around the next corner.

At age 21, about to become a father, Larry was given a diagnosis of terminal cancer and given a life expectancy of five years. This crisis propelled Larry into taking a risk. In

partnership with his father, he brought a farm. Larry regrets that decision. He took a risk to pursue a dream which turned sour despite his hard work and perseverance. "The lifestyle wasn't enough to compensate for the real hardships that I put the wife and the kids through back then; it wasn't like I dreamed about. I wouldn't do that again because I was constantly working, either on the farm or at the mill, and as a consequence I had no time for my family or my wife. I needed to work at the mill so we had some income and security. My long term goal had been to develop the farm into an economically viable unit and then quit the mill but it didn't work out that way. I stuck it out ten years before I decided to quit the farm. My wife was pushing me to quit and finally she left me. A few lonely nights and I realized she was right. You can't go on working that hard and not getting any benefit at all."

Today Larry enjoys his work and accepts the limits to which he or anyone else might find deep personal fulfillment in mill work. "You don't get that at the mill (intellectual stimulation). The kinds of decisions you make are very limited, but you know, I like manual labour, I like being physically active." At the same time he jokes about the possibility of remaining there for the rest of his working life. When asked if he would know when to quit, he replied, "About 2018 (my retirement date) or the day the mill shuts, down which ever comes first." Larry has few regrets and looks back on all his life experience as useful, whatever the outcome may have been.

Throughout the years Larry has had the opportunity to learn a trade as a millwright, a saw filer, or an electrician, "I seriously considered taking them as a trade better pay, using your mind slightly. It's not a heck of a lot more but you do have to think about stuff." The only drawback was in the first five years he would be on permanent graveyard shift away from home at night. This situation was unacceptable to his wife, he therefore has never pursued this option.

It is activities outside his work that provide the intellectual stimulation and personal fulfillment that his work lacks. Larry is an avid reader, he is involved with his local union, and during the summer he runs a small house construction business. He is frustrated with how his life is fragmented into activities which can only fulfill portions of his needs. In listening to him there is a sense of longing for the opportunity to be fully committed to a project. He wonders if a professional career may have offered him such an opportunity.

From Larry's perspective professionals may have more interesting work, but at a cost. He believes they must devote themselves entirely to their careers, that the long working hours with additional responsibilities and problems rob them of their peace of mind. "I sure don't have the headaches and ulcers probably they do." He is caught between what he knows a working man's life, and what he must speculate upon the experience of the professional. If he decides to apply for the management position and is successful, he will forsake the security of his current position and hope to begin determining a more satisfying career

path for himself. But he is not convinced nor confident that he will be better off, so he is relieved to have a six-month probationary period in which he can try out the job without penalty or loss of seniority in the union. In contrast with his experience on leaving high school, today Larry is very aware of his struggle. Today's decision has a context and purpose which is both evident and compelling to him.

Account 4, John

At age 60 John took early retirement. He has been retired now for two years and enjoys his free time for fishing, maintaining his house and taking life a little easier. Every day he walks five miles to help him retain the flexibility in the ankle he injured while working at the mill. John worked for twenty-four years in the mill before he decided to take early retirement. He looks back on his working life and concludes. "Maybe there were other opportunities, I don't know. I liked what I did. I was tired and got hurt but I'm satisfied." His account is as follows:

John came to Canada from Holland shortly after the war, those years in Holland were not easy. "We didn't have much as kids and when the Germans came it was worse. There were a lot of times when there was no coal for the school. It was too cold to go, but then suddenly they (the Germans) came and took the place over. We had to stay home. By then I was thirteen and living with a farmer, helping him milk his cows. You see, my dad had gone underground. He was supposed to be working for the Germans but he didn't. I can never forget the day he left. It was the summer and

we were in school when the teacher called us into the hallway and my Dad said goodbye to us. He was crying and I really didn't know what was going on. I never saw him for a long time after that. A farmer picked me up; my brother went with someone else. We just never knew if he was killed, I had no clues. My schooling stopped there.

Even if there had not been the war, I don't know if I could have gone on to a higher school to, say, learn to be a carpenter or mechanic. We didn't have the money for it, but at least at that time you could get a job without numbers of pieces of paper. No one said to me to think about what I would do. My dad, he never said much about that sort of thing. He never said get this job or that. I was sort of on my own. Now, a lot of people, even university students, they can't find jobs. Where do they go? It's pretty hard for the kids right now. The time when I came here there were jobs all over. Now you need an education. Back in those days you could quit one tomorrow, and the next day you had another job. You didn't need an education like you do today. Those days, they are finished.

My brother had immigrated to Canada before me and he wrote and said it was a good place to come to, so I followed him out. I was unhappy at home. We had a housekeeper who didn't like any of us and made our lives miserable; it was better to leave. To this day I don't know why she was so mean or why my dad put up with it. I can't say I made a decision to come to Canada, because I didn't know what I was getting into. It was a risk and it was tough, not knowing English and all. I had saved some money so I

paid my way out here. The government didn't help me. I had a job two days after I arrived in Telkwa.

My first job was at a mill but I got laid off. So then I worked for C.N. for the next eleven years. I only quit the railways because they wouldn't give me time off to take my father, who was visiting me back to L.A., to see my other brother. My dad was not well, and the doctor said he should not travel alone. So before I quit I asked the guy at the mill if, when I came back, could I start there? He said "Sure, don't worry about it." I wouldn't have quit unless I had the other job to go to. So I started at the mill as soon as I came back from Los Angeles. I was at the mill twenty-four and a half years a long time. I can't tell you why a person stays that long, maybe you stay because it's a habit, you have debts, or just because it is a good steady income. For me that was really important, to have financial security.

My first job at the mill was loading box cars. Then they needed an edgerman and I learned how to do that. I used to pick up logs and cut them into slabs by pushing them towards the saw. It was dangerous work: the block would get jammed in the saw and sometimes spring back and hit you. Pieces would fly back and cut you. I got hurt once, pretty bad. It was '69, November 19, there was a piece stuck in the saw so I stopped the saw but left the rollers going. Before I knew it, my feet were caught in the rollers and was crushed, I couldn't get it out because I'd left the rollers running. My foot was cut up pretty bad, the bone that sticks out (the ankle) is gone. The doctors fused my ankle and

even today there is a big screw in it. I was off work for a year and came back to a different job. I never thought of not coming back. Where could I have gone? At the time you were lucky you had a job and I wanted to work.

There were good and bad parts to working in the mill. I liked the men, the joking around, like the day one of the guys wired the power up to a work bench and another guy sits on it. "Boom", did he jump up! The company is good to us. But the shift work was hard on the family, and in the winter if you were on afternoons you came home cold, chilled to the bone. It would be 1:30 in the morning and I had to warm up before I went to bed. You either accept the situation, (the shift work and the cold) or you were out. What can you do? I was not going to go on welfare, I just wouldn't have done that.

When you get to sixty the company gives you a retirement seminar and the wives are allowed to come as well. It was in Prince George and the company paid for everything: the hotel, the food and everything. The seminar prepares you for retiring, they cover everything: income, filling in time, not staying in the same town. They did a lot of good lectures. They a had good speaker; he explained a lot of things, good things things my wife and I had not thought about. It was good to have Dorothy there too. The company have an early retirement plan which means they pay you to leave early and every year it is less and less. So even though I'm not working, the company is paying me. My wife gets a pension and I get one from Workers Compensation. Also I

get a Canadian Pension, and when I am sixty-five then I get my old age. So financially we can manage. I feel secure.

We (his wife, Dorothy) talked about retiring a lot, and after the seminar it just seemed to be the right thing to do. The seminar really helped me to decide to retire. Besides thinking about the money, I was having trouble standing in place for a long periods of time. In my last job as a stacker operator I was required to stand at a board and press a button to activate the stacker to lift a pile of lumber off the chain and place it ready to be taken away. There was no moving about, I had to stand in that one spot all the time, and my ankle hurt really bad. After eight hours of standing I had enough. It was always the standing that got to me. I was also getting bored with the job I was; on I had done it for three years by then.

Mill work is hard on you. In the old days it was a lot of bull work and slower. Now it is different, easier but faster. There is a constant pressure things have to be twenty times faster than they used to be. No one job is easy; every job had its drawbacks, say like forklift driver. You bounce around a lot and when you are young you don't mind that, but after a while your back is going to pieces and you don't know this till you're, say, in your forties or fifties; then the damage is done. Well the benefits and the wages are good, otherwise I don't think people would stay and work under those conditions. Still, it is a good living, and today the jobs just aren't there. That's tough on the young kids.

The day I retired I was home early. It was July 29 and on the last day I just walked around and talked to people, but after a couple of hours that was enough. It was kind of strange. The company still pay you and the guys don't say nothing about your not working. I was prepared for it because that is what the seminar was about; but it still felt strange. Now I enjoy not having to get up in the morning, but you know I never sleep in late even though I can. Most of the time I work around the house, in the garden. Like yesterday I painted the picnic table.

We plan on doing other things, we will travel, last year we went to Europe for two months. I visited family over there. Last winter I bought a snowmobile and I go out with another guy who has retired from the mill. I enjoy that. I couldn't have taken the standing much longer.

I am satisfied with my life perhaps because when I was a kid we had so little and the future did not always look great. Today I have a nice home, a secure income, good friends and my wife. It is the little things that are important to me, like each year when I go out to the bush at Christmas time and cut my own tree. When I was a kid in Holland I dreamed about having a tree, but only the rich people had Christmas trees. Then when I came to Canada I couldn't believe it, everyone could have a tree, and every year I get just as excited cutting my own tree.

Account 5, Tyler

Tyler drives a chip truck. He is 25 years old, single and an accomplished athlete. He is the youngest informant. He understands that his decision to work at the mill was not part of

any career plan but more a matter of "chance happenings". His account is as follows:

Currently I'm a chip truck driver. I haul shavings from the planer to the burner. I dump them and then burn them. This entails running a loader which moves the chips up into the burner but unfortunately the burning creates a lot of smoke. I like this job because there is some freedom involved; you can look around and the scenery is changing all the time, you're not stuck in the same place. Inside the mill there are a lot of walls around you and you're standing in one spot. I like being free to move about. And I don't mind graveyard shift because I like going to bed in the middle of the morning and getting up in the afternoon. Then I have the whole day to myself. I never planned on being at the mill but I have always wanted to work at a good paying job.

Actually it was my Dad who helped me get my first job. I had quit school and was hanging around the house, moping around, nothing to do, and he put me to work. He packed my suitcase and threw it on a plane. He took me to work with him in camp some seventy miles south of Bella Coola. He put in a good word for me with the boss and said, "He's a skinny, strapping kid, we got to put some meat on him," and he did just that. I needed him to take charge. Actually I wanted him to because I wasn't doing anything. Nothing had been working out; my life was a bit of a disaster then.

My first job wasn't that easy. It wasn't the work, it was the guy I was working with; he made it really tough on me. If you can work with a guy like that first thing, you know you're going to

make it. If you can take it and not crack, you can just about make it anywhere after surviving working with him. I managed and, besides, I liked being out in the bush, the big trees, the fresh air. I might still be there if I had not gotten injured. That's what put me in the mill.

At the time I got injured I was working on a drilling and blasting crew up in Bella Colla building a logging road. This one particular job had finished and we went out of camp for a two-week break. While I was home I had entered a mountain bike race, crashed and separated my shoulder. I was off work for the next seven weeks, and when I phoned back to the employer he wasn't too interested. But then when I told him I was ready to go back to work he said, "No, we've hired someone else." That was that. I sat around town for the next five weeks waiting, and a friend who worked at the mill as a secretary put in a good word for me with her bosses. She told them I was a good worker. Then she told me to fill out an application form, and I was hired on the next day.

It was not as if I planned to be at the mill, it was more that there was nothing else coming in. My friend said, "You've got to do something.", but all the time I was expecting to go back to the bush. She pointed out it was a better opportunity at the mill because you're only going to be working eight hours a day and you can be home every day. In camp it was twenty-four whole days in with a week out. So I thought maybe I'd give it a try. But you see when she phoned she caught me off guard. It was in the morning so I didn't get much time to think about it. She

did all she could on her end, which was a lot, and I wouldn't let her down. But my stomach was in knots when I went there. It was like walking in with a blindfold on. I didn't know how it was going to go or what was going to happen.

I knew I was deciding to go through with applying for the job, but I can't say I really thought much beyond that. I was more concerned with, will I get the job, can I do the work? That sort of thing. I tried to be as calm and straight forward as possible with him (the planer mill supervisor), I thought it might help, might ease things out. When I walked in, my friend introduced me. I shook his hand, he looked at me and he looked down at my application and he asks, "You're twenty years old? He didn't seem to believe me, but then he said "Okay. Can you start tomorrow?" I said, "Yes I could start today if he wanted me to." So I signed the application, said thanks to my friend and then I walked out. When I walked out, to the left of the building I saw the planner mill and I seen the boards falling down. Then my heart started to go. It really set in then that I was nervous. I kept thinking was I going to be able to do it. I mulled it over that evening but the next morning when the alarm went, I said "Well, this is it, let's do it." And I put in my eight hours.

I needed the work really badly. And I didn't expect it to go this long (four years). You know in the first week somebody told me, "Well, it doesn't get any excitinger than this." I said, "It doesn't?" acting surprised. We joke around. It's a kind of everyday thing to joke back and forth like that all the time. There is nothing really surprising about the mill. It is pretty

straight-forward when you walk in. It's like put in your time and then you punch your clock and it's out. Actually it's pretty boring, mill work, and so many people say the same thing. "This is it. This is all it's going to be." Everyone accepts the situation.

When you asked me am I a "lifer" I don't know. The guys joke about that, but things could change the next day or even the next minute. For new people it's like: "Boy do you mean I've gotta work here for the rest of my life?" But that feeling goes. You know you can quit anytime. Not everyone can stick it out, you know. I don't think you know (if you can stay with it) till you do it.

When I was twelve or thirteen and I had mill work explained to me, and I thought I couldn't do that, it sounded too complicated for me. I forgot about those feelings. Some people come in here and they have been working say in logging for maybe fifteen years. They come right off the street and they can do it. They say, "Well if I can do this, anybody could do it." I didn't have that feeling. I didn't know if I could do it.

It is now seven years since Tyler left school and he remembers his last years of school with a sense of frustration and disappointment. "Up until grade nine, school was a lot of fun. I enjoyed going to class, joking around, you know, the way teenagers do, but the work part was really tough. I tried hard but even with the teacher's help it got too advanced for me. I would just more or less give up on it. I learnt to be responsible and I had to be patient, but I never got much out of school. I

was faced with being in grade eleven for a third time and I just couldn't take it. I only completed one month of my last year and dropped out.

Luckily for me I enjoyed sports and acting classes, you know drama classes. They were an escape for me. It was like I could forget all about school, all about the paper work and just go out there and participate. It (school) was really stressful. I didn't know it at the time but I do now. It felt like a heavy responsibility. I just couldn't take that any more. I've always wanted the simple life, just everyday things with no complications. I think that is what my parents prepared us for. It wasn't, say, college, college, college or say you have to save up for college or study really hard. They prepared us for everyday living. Even when I was really young I just wanted to follow in my dad's footsteps. He's a heavy equipment operator.

When I was a little guy, say eight or nine years old, my dad would take me with him to work on the weekends or during the holidays. He would show me the ropes, how to grease and oil the machine ready for the day's work. I would watch him operate the equipment and sometimes he would let me drive with his help. I could drive a "crummy" before I could even look out over the top of the steering wheel. I don't know if I would let a kid do that but my dad trusted me. It was pretty safe.

I've worked at the mill for four years now and I don't plan on doing anything else at the moment. If you ask me will I be here thirty years from now I have to say I don't know. That's a tough one. I could get ahead in the mill but I'd have to wait till I

have earned enough seniority to apply for an apprenticeship. When
the weather is really bad, say if it goes to -40 C, or gets
really hot, then I start thinking about changing things around.
Maybe I could go on and do something else, maybe thirty years of
this kind of work would be a complete waste of time. But then if
I have accomplished things, say, through having a family and set
myself up well, then it is not so bad. Sometimes things get to me
like the razzing. Once a guy drove me to the brink where I wanted
to drive him one. That would mean automatic dismissal. So I said,
"If this keeps up I'm just going to blow up and I'm just going to
put in my notice." But I was moved on so it resolved itself.
These days, I think you had better hold on to what you have
unless things change.

I remember when I was in grade three and they asked us kids,
"What do you want to be when you grow up?" I never answered that
question with, say, a fireman or policeman. Those jobs never
interested me. I think I always wanted to be like my dad. He's a
really cool guy. I mean you can talk about anything, joke, cuss
around, he don't care. He's got a serious side, a financial side
and his family side. I guess you could say I am just like my dad:
he moves dirt and I move wood.

There are three other jobs in the mill other than the chip
truck that I am interested in. One's the forklift, the other is
the wood in-feed with the log loader (loading logs onto the deck)
and the other is the Leturneau. That's the big auto-stacker that
takes the logs off the trucks and stacks them. Even though the
chip truck is a bore at times, it'll do for now. I can't make a

change unless a job comes up for bid, and then it depends on who has seniority. Like with the chip truck I had to decide if I'd take it and if I did I might then miss out on an opportunity to go beyond it and get a better job. But if I don't take this opportunity I will miss out on higher wages and have to go on another shift. I wanted to stay on graveyard. It wasn't just me; other guys with more seniority were looking at it but I got it.

When it is an important decision I take my time. I'm pretty slow. Like right now I am trying to buy a piece of property, but the owners aren't sure they want to sell. I have lost a couple of sleepless nights over that one. I've put so much time into looking for the one I found and I really like it. I keep thinking, "Am I going to have to look more?" I have thought about it lots, talked with my parents. They are really keen for me to get the property. They will help me do the work, they are really excited. I know already what it is going to look like because when I was in school we got to write up house plans and I designed houses as school projects. Even when you weren't supposed to be designing I was. I kept all those ideas in my head. Now I'll get a chance to use them, I hope.

CHAPTER V

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis will be dealt with under the following headings: Discussion of the Five Decisions, in which the five accounts are described; Commonalties and Differences, in which the cases arecompared; and Comparison with Theory, in which the five decisions are compared with the three theories.

General discussion

The five accounts describe the experience of five men working-class men and their decisions regarding their participation in paid employment. There were five decision situations: one to start working at the mill, one to quit mill work, two to seek more interesting work within the system, and one to retire, five different men with five different situations all of which were unique yet remarkably similar.

Ross's decision.

Ross, the confused adolescent, lacked a plan for living. He was frustrated with school, unable to decide on his future, and yet unable to seek support from others to help him decide. He drifted into mill work because he felt unable to formulate a career goal. His actions allowed him to temporarily set aside his doubts, confusion and frustration regarding his future; but the motivation for change was then lost. This was a critical moment for him yet he had no awareness of it. He would never again be as free to decide, unencumbered by the responsibility of providing a secure and steady income. In retrospect he knows he committed himself to a lifestyle that has limited his options.

Ross acted on the principle that he must work, support himself and be responsible. He did not pursue a career rather he found a way to earn a living and achieve a measure of financial security. He felt pressured to find a job. For Ross there was no opportunity or obvious reason for him to stop, to be aware and focus his attention on the short or long term consequences of his actions. Since he thought of mill work as temporary he had no reason to evaluate or question the direction his life was taking. Had he been more deliberate he may still have chosen to work at the mill mindful of the consequences of his actions, and more in charge of his fate.

A pattern was set in which chance encounters and constant accommodations to boredom and frustration rather than a clear sense of purpose, propelled Ross forward to his decision to become a millwright. He did not seek out the trade so much as the situation presented itself. He did a cursory information search by talking to others and then committed himself to a work situation he dimly understood one that would occupy him for the next thirty years, the benefits and costs he still has not examined.

While Ross is satisfied with the outcome of his working life, he considers himself "lucky" to be where he is today. This awareness leaves him amazed and concerned. He is concerned because he wants his children to make good career decisions, yet he feels unable to help them. He is amazed because he realizes he could have run out of luck and options to be trapped by his own indecisiveness.

<u>Rob's decision.</u>

Rob, unlike Ross, struggled to make a decision. He explored options, he vacillated through periods of indecision and doubt, and he consulted with others until he arrived at the moment of deciding. Rob's decision to quit began long before he was aware of it; it began on his first day of work at the mill but took him twelve years to act on after multiple false starts.

For Rob, mill work proved to be boring, and without challenge or personal satisfaction a situation he had anticipated. Despite these misgivings he chose to work at the mill. He knew there were other career options available to him but they were dimly conceived options; such as, acquiring further training or starting his own business.

His overwhelming sense of responsibility to provide for his young family overshadowed his initial fears and misgivings. As a single man there would have been less risk and no reason for him to endure mill work. In the role of provider, he found a determination and commitment which gave him a sense of purpose and meaning beyond the nature of the work itself. His work effort was a means to an end and had no value in itself, therefore he could banish his fears and misgivings. Had he examined his motivations closely he would have realized he was committing himself to doing something he would hate. This neglect cost him the satisfaction of feeling he was in charge of his work life and the full awareness of the why he was so dissatisfied.

Over time, following numerous efforts to enrich his work situation, he came to the realization he was very unhappy and

that personal cost was too great. He was secure in the world of mill work, but he was trapped and dissatisfied. To leave, he risked this security, but to stay he risked losing himself. He felt alone and different from his work mates in his desire to find meaningful work. He was not only caught between two conflicting needs, but also between two distinctly different motivations for working: work as a meaningful expression of self, characteristic of the middle class, versus work as a means to secure an income, characteristic of the working class (Dunk 1988).

Rob was not only faced with making a decision related to work, he was faced with accepting he could no longer deny his own needs and aspirations. But he still lacked the confidence to make the decision alone and so he sought out the unconditional support of his wife and church community. While still at the mill he examined his options and he took business courses, sought financial advice and planned. Slowly a notion of his ideal work situation crystalized in his mind, he would own his own business and provide a service to the community.

When the opportunity presented itself he found himself vacillating between confidence and doubt, euphoria and despair; he felt energized and distracted; he prayed. He wrote list of the positive and negative consequences of all the options. The decision consumed his attention for a week; then, forced by a deadline, he decided to risk buying a business and he quit the secure but stifling world of mill work.

Until Rob was interviewed he had no sense of how protracted his struggle had been. He was surprised and delighted by the realization that finally he had trusted his own instincts. In spite of an overwhelming sense of responsibility to his family, his decision to quit work at the mill was a significant validation of his own needs and self purpose, a moment of focused intentionality in which he was striving to create a career as opposed to just being an employee.

Larry's decision.

After 20 years of mill work, Larry is grappling with his first work-related decision: whether to apply for a management position or stay a mill worker. This decision presents Larry with the same confusion, doubts and questions he faced when graduating from high school. It is essentially the same decision situation to be a professional or not. The difference is that now he is aware and concerned about the future direction of his working life. He realize that if he avoids making a decision he will forfeit the very thing he most desires peace of mind.

When Larry left school his attention was focused on establishing financial security and independence in the adult world. Like Ross, he conceived of his commitment to the mill as temporary, he could suspend making a decision. He did not have to address the long-term consequences of abandoning his interest in a professional career in marine biology or criminology. Nor did he have to recognize he may have inadvertently committed himself to a life-time of mill work.

At this point in his life the congruence that resonated between his public self and his life circumstances was a compelling force in shaping his behavior and obscuring the need to be decisive. He was the son of a working man following in his father's footsteps, trading physical labor and resourcefulness for a "good steady income." Larry referred to being "hooked", seduced into a lifestyle as if he was powerless to change the course of events. Yet, in other aspects of his life he was decisive, determined and courageous.

There were no warning signs or indicators to challenge Larry, no motivators to alert him to his lack of deliberateness. Family, friends and the prestige of having money reinforced an already existing life structure (working-class) and inhibited the possibility of him pursing his private ambition an interest in marine biology. The cultural stereotype of the worker dominated over the dimly conceived and perhaps alien image of the university educated professional.

The need to satisfy his intellectual curiosity has remained private and relegated to a minor position or satisfied in non work related activity. Caught between these two aspects of himself the thinking man and the worker he has struggled to find an arena in which he can express both, but has been unsuccessful. It is eighteen years of accumulated frustration, of not being able to commit himself wholeheartedly to a project, that is propelling him towards making his first significant career decision.

Larry, like Rob, has begun planning for a change but unlike Rob his commitment to this change is conditional. He is wavering and unsure. He debates with himself, arguing and questioning each possible option. At times he speaks with authority and confidence about possible outcomes of his decision; at others he wonders why he cannot just be a loader operator. His decision is not only a decision to change the type of work he would do but a decision to shift his identity from worker to professional. This question of identity is the very same dilemma he ignored in his youth. This time he has some awareness of the costs he has incurred as a result of not facing up to himself and addressing his need for greater personal challenge in his work.

He consults with his wife and considers the needs of his family, yet he seems more mindful of their cautions than their support for his changing. Larry fears making a mistake, his failed experiment at farming haunts him and has robed him of the confidence he needs to commit himself wholeheartedly to changing. He has talked to management, to the man whose position he is applying for; this time he wants to be sure. But he is not willing to risk his current security, so he has devised two sets of action plans: one to complete the decision and one to abort the process and return to the status quo if the need arises.

He wonders if it is too late to make a career change. There is talk that the position he is seeking may be upgraded, requiring the incumbent to have some form of training. Larry is stepping back and attempting to take charge of his working life.

John's decision

John's decision to retire reflects a rich interplay between the tragedies and triumphs of his life: his overriding need to maintain security and his declining health. He was only dimly aware of these factors prior to his taking the pre-retirment seminar offered by his employer. Yet it is these very factors which played a major role in shaping his decision.

The seminar did provide John with an opportunity to reflect and evaluate the options before him: to continue working at full salary until 65 or to retire at 60 with a reduced pension. Before the seminar he had informally weighed up the pros and cons of both options but his participation in the seminar heightened his awareness and broaden his perspective. He had never thought of himself as not working and until the seminar had not fully explored what would be the gains and losses in deciding to retire. The seminar provided him with a frame of reference on which he could organize his thoughts and ideas.

While the seminar facilitated the decision-making process, his motivations came from the awareness that now he could trust himself. He had finally reached a point in his life when he felt secure. John was not convinced so much by a rational accounting of his financial resources, but he was persuaded by the inner conviction that he could be secure. As a result of his attending the company seminar, he was able to find the confidence to make a plan for early retirement. Had he not used this opportunity he believes he would still be working, tolerating pain and boredom until could put up with it no longer.

John worked at the mill to secure a steady income. The boredom, the lack of challenge and the rough conditions were the price to be paid for security. When John decided to leave he was not leaving meaningful work but abandoning a work habit, a lifestyle and identity which had no direct relationship to the nature of the work he performed. When there is no income to compensate for the hardships of working in a mill there is no reason to pursue this activity.

Despite all of this, the decision to retire was not made easily. It required soul searching and a reappraisal of his own purpose. John lost the sense of camaraderie and focus that work had provided in his daily life. The tantalizing illusions of being able to sleep in, of doing what you want when you want to did not give him the satisfaction he had anticipated.

John does not regret the decision, but the consequences of not working are still a surprise to him. He looks for structure to his daily life and struggles to be comfortable with defining himself as a retired person. His wife's endorsement of his decision was vital; without her support he might not have found the conviction to retire. John's life goals are now to enjoy spending time with his wife, to maintain his health and to play a little.

Tyler's decision.

Tyler, like Ross, was a confused and disheartened teenager with out a career goal when he left school. He had lost confidence in his ability to cope and felt powerless to decide on his future. Had his father not intervened he may have drifted

aimlessly into unemployment, and lost hope of ever "getting his life together". His decision to work at the mill reflects a coming together of favorable circumstances rather than a process of planning and deliberation.

Tyler recognized being out of work was a problem. For him the solution lay in his finding work, not in improving his decision-making ability. This is a simplistic but accurate assessment of his situation if his frame of reference is understood. Tyler, like the other men could not tolerate being idle nor would he let himself go on welfare; his family expected him to be productive. He had a grade ten education and feared being placed in a situation where the demands of the job exceeded his ability. Had he gone to a career counselor it is possible that he might have looked at longer term options such as further training or alternative work options, but the dilemma he faced of not having a secure income would have not changed. He had to find work. Tyler was immersed in the experience, consumed by it, unable to step outside his immediate awarenesses and grasp different thoughts or ideas, unable to generate solutions beyond the obvious and known.

It was the intervention of a good friend that initiated the process of deciding. She presented the mill as an option, persuading Tyler by listing benefits which were largely unrelated to the type of work he would perform. He had no knowledge of what would be required of him nor did he stop to consider if there might be negative consequences to working in the mill. His knowledge of the mill was drawn from local banter which stressed

the high wages and good benefits. The consequences of boring
unchallenging and dangerous work are rarely discussed; these are
factors the men make light of or accept grudgingly as the price
to be paid. Tyler, like all the other men, ignored these factors
when deciding to sign on not only committing himself to a style
of working but to a process of accommodations and acceptance that
made it possible to sustain a purpose for working.

Tyler sees his commitment as temporary and while he maintains
this orientation he can suspend looking for a greater purpose and
direction in his life. The consequences of his drifting have not
been examined nor has he established a criteria by which he could
judge was the right time or reasons to quit working at the mill.
There is always the possibility of moving on if things get bad. A
rationalization which allows him to avoid looking at the reality
of his life. Tyler, like all the other men, would not declare he
is committed to mill work for the next thirty years yet they
inadvertently drift into this situation, seemingly trapped by
their lack of decisiveness. Tyler derives some satisfaction from
the knowledge that he is a good steady worker and well liked by
the company, but, derives no satisfaction from the work itself.
His decision to work at the mill has meaning only because it
affords him an income and time to pursue his rigorous fitness
routine.

Commonalties

A number of features are common to all five decisions. The
men worked in order to provide a steady and secure income. They
acquired jobs as opposed to the popular notion of pursuing a

career. They valued maintaining security above the need to find meaningful and interesting work. None of the men fully evaluated the risks or benefits of working at the mill: though they all at some time thought of quitting. They all enjoyed physical labor and relish the opportunity to apply themselves in finding practical, as opposed to theoretical solutions to problems. They accepted that membership in the union would in large part control the choices available to them. The high wages and benefits offered by this type of work provided the incentive to sign on, and proved to be a potent force in maintaining their commitment to this workplace. They all understood that the work was generally boring, and personally meaningless, and, that the possibility of physical injury was real.

Decisions they made related to their work life were not immediately conceived of as critical moments, requiring attention or deliberation. They accepted the role of worker as modeled by their fathers without determining if it would meet their needs and aspirations. As young men they did not explore career options beyond the idea of seeking work. They all held vague notions of possible alternatives but none which could be said to have had any impact on their decision-making behavior. It was not until the adverse consequences of working at the mill was experienced did the men have the motivation or knowledge to examine what they had done. The role of worker proved for each man a limiting prescription, an orientation which constrained their confidence and retarded their motivation for change. These men were free to decide only through the perspective of the worker.

There was no distinct moment of deciding, no crisis that propelled these men to decide, but, typically, a gradual progression forward. None of the men spoke of following hunches or intuitions. Except for Rob, and in part, John, they did not demonstrate a focusing of attention, a directing of energy and awareness to the task of deciding. These decisions initially seem nondescript, in fact almost nonexistent, yet upon reflection, these men's behavior can be understood as a statement of intention or the creation of meaning and purpose in their lives. This intentionality is fractured and dispersed, lacking a wholeness and coherence which would make it readily identified and understood. Yet these decisions are acts of intention of, a making real the self (Osherson 1980), of implementing a process to create the person I am to become within the role of worker.

The significance and meaning of each decision was revealed only as the layers of personal awareness were discovered. While the men had an assurance that the path they had taken was the right one, they had no awareness of how this was so. By describing their decision making process they were able discover the factors and people who had played a significant part in shaping their decisions. They came to know the context in which they had made their decisions, awareness and knowledge they did not have during the period of decision making.

It is evident that context plays a significant role in structuring the outcome of these five decisions, in particular, the context of class. Support for this argument is drawn from the theme of resignation and accommodation which resonates throughout

all five accounts of decision making. Working-class youth taking

working-class jobs to live out working-class lives. Yet this is

too simplistic a conclusion to reach. The rebuttal to this

explanation was provided by the informants' own rejection of the

notion. None believed their lives were predetermined, although

they were aware of how their work-related decisions seemed less

decisive than other decisions they had made. The men could

identify and gave examples of what they called "real" decisions,

those which more closely approximated the rational decision

making models: Tyler in deciding to buy land, Larry in his

decision to be an extrovert, Ross in his decision to buy a house,

John in his decision to leave his father's home and Rob in his

decision to build houses. They do not have explanations for why

deciding on a career should be any less significant but they all

felt confident that by following their fathers's footsteps along

the same career path, they knew they "couldn't go wrong."

Although the working-class culture did not predetermine their

life path, it provided a confidence and knowledge of the world of

work which took them into the mill, and for all except Rob, has

helped keep them there.

Conceiving of this one aspect of context, the working class

culture as a critical influence on decision making is useful, yet

limited. It is useful because from this perspective of class it

is possible to trace a number of themes and ideas which

influenced the decision-making processes of all five men. It is

limited, because none of these men were totally passive, pawns

carried along reacting to the environment and unable to create

their own unique purpose. The individual motivations and aspirations of each man helped them transcended and translated the working-class culture in very different ways. The challenge in understanding their decision making behavior lay in understanding the interchange between the working-class culture and each man's personal motivation. The boundary between the influence of class culture and the personal was in all cases obscure, difficult to define and identify. Each man could readily speak to his personal motivation but he was not cognizant of the influence his socioeconomic status may have had on his decision making.

An examination of the men's experience with formal education illustrates this point. With the exception of Larry, all the men experienced difficulty, sometimes major difficulty, in coping with formal education. Although they were expected to apply themselves in school, they were not expected to excel. They were not encouraged to think of planning a career, nor to seek further training. On leaving school their parents hoped they could find a job and prove to be a steady worker. These findings are congruent with what is said to define working-class attitudes and experiences of formal education (Dunk 1988). These men did not state that it is the working class that which shaped their experience but they did say how significant were the attitudes and expectations of their parents, in influencing their attitudes towards education and their choice of work. In fact, for Larry, Ross, and Tyler, their fathers played an active role in helping them secure a job. Cultural attitudes shaped how they conceived

of the need, the value and importance of formal education and future career plans. Cultural attitudes shaped their attitudes and approach to making a career decision.

But each man's experience was also unique. For instance, John's education was dramatically interrupted by the Second World War. Despite the war he believed his family could never have afforded to finance him through further training. For John to work was to survive a belief grounded in the reality of early childhood experiences. Both Ross and Rob felt alienated by a curriculum that they perceived as too academic. They were frustrated in their efforts to find challenging opportunities to learn which focused more on the technical and applied subjects. Ross, attributed the cause of his difficulties to the inadequacies of the system, while Rob tended to internalize his difficulty and considered the deficiency to be personal. Rob believed his only option was to change himself. Tyler was motivated to do well but his inability to cope with "the paper work" overwhelmed him. Like Rob he assumed he was responsible for his "failure". As a result of this experience Tyler had learnt to be cautious, to see himself as not being good enough even for a job he could master without difficulty. These five men shared similar cultural expectations of formal education but had different personal experiences.

Comparison with Theory

The Conflict Model

Janis and Mann (1977) consider an effective decision maker is one who utilizes the urgency induced by the stress of deciding in

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combination with cognitive strategies to make the ideal decision. A balance must be found between optimal stress which energizes the decision maker and overwhelming amounts of stress which force the decider to abort the process or adopt ineffectual decision making strategies. The model "applies only to decisions that have a real consequence for the decision maker and thereby generate some discernable manifestations of psychological stress" (p. 69). This qualifier requires there be risk or potential for loss which threatens goal attainment. What is implied but not stated is that the decider conceives of the need to make a decision, accepts that the threat is consequential, and is able to evaluate the risks involved in making or not making a decision.

Although each man assumed responsibility for his life circumstance, none except Rob conceived of his decision-making behavior related to participation in paid employment as a critical moment of deciding, or as Janis and Mann termed, "consequential". At times they all experienced some degree of stress and self recrimination, yet this awareness did not immediately propel them to more decisive action. Once they had satisfied their principal goal of securing a good steady income and had found a tolerable balance between boredom and personal interest, each crisis passed. Ross described this as "taking the pressure off." The motivation for change was lost. It is not that they abdicated responsibility for their fate, but that their frame of reference their cultural values and knowledge of the world of work, provided support for this coping strategy. To

endure was more familiar to them than to capitalize on the impetus of the moment and make a decision. As time passes the promise of change becomes a seductive illusion which in reality is very difficult to achieve; but the possibility of change remains the panacea for their doubts and misgivings.

For Rob the stress which propelled him to act took time to accumulate. The conflict he faced was between his dissatisfaction with mill work and his fear of change. If he quit could he provide for his family? He tried for twelve years to make the accommodations but he could not. He tried to change his work situation without risk by creating minimal change and in doing so put off facing the decision situation. Finally he felt forced to act. At times the stress induced by this awareness overwhelmed him; at times it energized and motivated him to decide.

In Rob's account, and in those of the others there is no vigilant search for information, no generation of all possible alternatives, no weighing of the pros and cons of potential options, and no selection by rational calculation of the most desired option. Ross and Tyler considered the need to change but failed to be vigilant in their decision making efforts and opted for unconflicted change. While all the decisions had some of the characteristics of the conflict model comparison with this model illustrates that the strategies these men employed were ineffectual and their decisions suboptimal.

Both Rob and John did focus their attention on the task of deciding, and partially completed the first three steps of effective decision making as outlined by Janis and Mann. They did

canvass a range of alternative courses of action, but their efforts were neither thorough nor complete. They partially surveyed the range of objectives to be fulfilled and the values implicated by their choice. This information and awareness was not foremost in their consciousness but was vague and fleeting. Rob was motivated by the desire and personal need and he struggled to evaluate the consequences of each option. In contrast, John allowed the structure of the seminar to lead him through the evaluation process. The impetus to begin deciding and systematically evaluate his options was in part provided by an external circumstance. Had he not attended the seminar it is unlikely that he would have had enough information to feel confident about retiring. Their failure to effectively complete the three steps outlined by Janis and Mann prolonged the period of decision making and continued the roller coaster of self doubt and recrimination which resulted.

Larry's decision making behavior mirrors what Janis and Mann have defined as "defensive avoidance", a false start to the decision making process. That is, the decision maker's appraisal of the expected gains or losses are mediated by hopes or fears that are not in conscious awareness but rather operate at a preconscious and unconscious level. Larry fears taking risks and has a limited understanding of why he has lost confidence in his ability to make work related decisions. It was only as a result of recalling his experience that discovered the factors which had affected his ability to make a decision. Factors such as the

passage of time, the influence of family and previous life experience on shaping how he perceives his situation.

What this model illustrates is the need to focus attention, to orient oneself to the task of deciding, and to take charge of the experience. Had each of the men pursued the seven steps to effective decision making they may well still have made the decisions they made. But they would have gained clarity, self understanding and greater individual purpose. Clearly these men did not incorporate effective decision making strategies as outlined by Janis and Mann in making decisions related to their work. How this came about and why can in part be attributed to class consciousness which provided them with a collective purpose and allowed the men to abandon their individual desires and needs in the workplace.

The men discovered glimpses of this collective purpose as they talked about their lives: Tyler in his realization that he wanted to be "just like his dad"; Rob in taking on mill work despite his personal misgivings; Larry in his rejection of a "professional career" for the secure; and Ross in proving to be a good steady worker, like his dad. Each man's purpose was created from real concerns: income, family obligations combined with the collective knowing of "the right thing for them to do." It is the impact of class consciousness which directs this sense of "the right thing to do" but at the same time eclipses the individual's will to become his own person. John's discussion of mill work illustrates this point well:

> The company was good to us, but the shift work was

hard on the family, and in the winter if you were on
afternoons you came home cold, chilled to the bone.
It would be 1:30 in the morning and I had to warm up
before I went to bed. You either accept the situation
the shift work, the cold, or you're out. What can you
do? I was not going to go on welfare, I just wouldn't have
done that.

On a rational level one can argue that there were
possibilities for John other than going on welfare, but none that
John could conceive as possible. He feared being without work
even in times of high employment. From some place of intuitive
knowing John had come to accept his circumstances. He understood
the cost in both physical and emotional terms that mill work has
exacted from his life, yet he would not change his life
circumstances. John has few regrets and is satisfied. He has
survived yet, how much of his potential has never been realized
in the workplace?

Janis and Mann would argue that each man needed to treat the
decision as consequential, then they would have understood the
challenge they faced. They did not, they lacked the awareness and
orientation from which to examine all the possibilities before
them. Nor did they have the direction and purpose with which to
commit themselves to the task; they therefore compromised
themselves in the act of deciding. They forfeited the possibility
of being fully in charge of their work life and of find
personally rewarding work.

<u>The Rational Model</u>

The model proposed by Horan (1979) was developed as a guide to counselors in assisting their clients to make better decisions. The model combines classical decision theory with cognitive behaviorism emphasizing logic, systematic and rational deliberation and the qualification of subjective values. The decision maker must identify the situation as a problem requiring a decision, generate possible options both familiar and novel, evaluate these options by a criterion and finally rank order the options and select the option providing the maximum gain. As in the conflict model, decision making is conceived of as a rational process, the difference is Horan focuses on the need to incorporate personal values. He measures personal values by arranging each value in order of importance and then assigns a number to give a quantifiable index the subjective motivations of the individual.

Stage one of this model is conceptualization, the decider defines the situation as one of choice and understands the scope and extent of the problem. As has already been discussed, the five men may have understood they had a decision to make but they did not know or were able to appreciate the importance of the situation. At a rational level of awareness, deciding to commit to thirty or forty years of physically demanding, boring work, would suggest poor judgement or poor decision making. All the men laughed when asked could they give a rational argument to support choosing mill work as a career. They all laughed at the idea that anyone would entertain such a question and rationally decide to

do this. Yet all these men did choose to work at a mill and for significant portions of their work life. In fact, Larry, Ross and Tyler all alluded to how the men joke about their situation as if they all know they may never get out of it. Only Rob felt "trapped" and thereby compelled to get out of the system.

To enhance the five men's decision making processes, Horan would encourage them to firstly treat the moment as significant, and thereby commit themselves to focusing time and energy to a critically evaluation of the situation. By doing this they might have pursued a more planned and satisfying career; failure to do so diminished their sense of control over their own destiny. It is this act the deliberate focusing oneself on the task of deciding in a systematic and organized way, which aided Rob and John to make their decisions even though they where neither complete nor thorough in the process.

Horan's second step is designed to correct the tendency of making a decision when the decider lacks ideas, has not explored all alternatives and prematurely forecloses the exploration process. While Rob and John did consider a number of responses, their options were drawn from a narrow range of possibilities as defined by the context of their working lives. None of the men entertained novel or dramatically different outcomes nor did they have the benefit of an objective other (counselor) during their deliberation.

Yet herein lies the contradiction: between what can be defined at a rational level of awareness as cursory or perhaps ineffectual decision making behavior, yet as a part of a total

life story their actions have other meanings and significance. It is only by examining these other meanings can there be an appreciation for why and how the men where motivated to behave as they did and to understand why rational problem solving held little or no sway on the process each man pursued. John's commitment to mill work allowed him to establish himself and retire early, secure and proud of his achievements. The young Larry was not ready to deviate from his working class roots and launch into a professional career, but over time he has gained the confidence to "give it a try." Committing to mill work gave him the time he needed. Ross "got himself into position" within the mill. He has a trade, good workmates and a lifestyle he likes. Shift work provides him with enough quiet time at home to pursue his hobbies while still allowing him time with his family. Tyler needs the daylight hours to train on his bicycle therefore working graveyard shift is ideal for now.

The positive outcome to each of the five situations reflects how each man has adapted to his situation rather than taken charge of his fate. For Tyler and all the other men, a secure income equates to security, and security to survival in much the same way as the blue collar workers in the Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979) study of life themes determined. These authors found that despite having a secure economic base, the blue collar workers continued to define their experience from this locus. If this idea is followed through, it is possible to conclude that Tyler, like all other blue collar workers, perceives he has little or no choice until the basic need for security is met.

Once that need is met then the possibility of other options can
be entertained. Unfortunately this commitment to work for a
hourly wage which provides security may also limit future
possibilities. Willis (1977) referred to this as "the factory
door slamming shut behind them" and thereby restricting future
career options.

The Deciding in Context model

Of the three theories, Sloan's (1987) deciding in context
model provides the most germane process to explain the behavior
of these five men. His is a method to examine decisions as they
are lived. He is interested in the complex array of influences
which come together to give each decision meaning and purpose,
hence his interest in context. Thus a decision reflects personal
desires and needs. At the same time it is composed of elements of
past experiences mediated by the life historical and cultural
influences external to each individual.

Sloan acknowledges the role of rational deliberation in
decision making. But he argues the over-emphasis and over-
reliance on this one aspect of decision making to explain
behavior has lead most traditional models to a very incomplete
and inaccurate understanding of a multifaceted phenomenon. For
Sloan a decision can only be understood through the reflective
understanding of the decider. That is, as the individual
deliberates on his motivations, awareness and life circumstances,
only then can the unique purpose and meaning supporting a
decision be expressed.

In the ideal, the decision maker is "free to choose" unconstrained by others or life circumstances. The perceived constraints which limit decision making are most often identified as being external to the decider. Conflict occurs between that which the individual desires and that which the social cultural context will sanction. Based on his research, Sloan believes individuals are more likely to resort to rationalization and self deception than they are to feel free to choose.

The context according to Sloan can be divided into two broad categories: the context of character which deals with the positive and negative self images, and the life structural context which is further divided into three other contexts: life historical, social and cultural.

The life historical context.

Each man's life story was affected by world wide events that in turn had an impact on the decisions they made in John's case in a dramatic way in the case of the others the influence was more subtle. John grew up in Holland during The Second World War. His home life and schooling were abruptly altered when his only living parent, his father, left without explanation to join the underground. This was a time of fear and worry for the thirteen-year-old John, never knowing whether his father was alive or dead. When the war ended his family reconnected, but by then John had lost his sense of security and belonging. A steady income meant much more to John than just being able to afford a lifestyle. It was as vital as breathing oxygen. His decision to seek early retirement allowed him to relax, to trust he will

survive in what John now perceives is a less hostile and more predictable world.

Larry, Ross and Rob were adolescents during the sixtys, a time of social unrest which affected on their lives. What of the disenchanted professionals who Larry meet in his first year of work at the mill? Their opting out did not stop him from choosing a professional career, but their rejection of the very thing Larry sought challenged his failing interest and courage. As teenagers, Ross and Rob alluded to a time when dropping out, partying and living for the moment were valued. There were unlimited opportunities for unskilled laborers and the real possibility of making "good money". The future was always a long way off not so today, they observed.

Today both John, Ross and Rob wonder aloud where young men like themselves will end up. The labor market is tight and shrinking; they know this because they have seen the effects on the work force at the mill. It is well known by the men that in the future mill workers will need a grade twelve education because of the increased use of computers and the modernization of equipment. They know that the choices available to them when they first started work have evaporated. This awareness induces a fear of change and intensifies the need to hold to the secure and known or as Tyler put it, "These days, I think you had better hold on to what you have unless things change."

The local economy of the town and outlying communities is heavily invested in the lumber industry. Problems related to that industry have had, and still have, an immediate impact on the

lives of these men. If the wood supply to the mill is reduced
there will be lay lay-offs, mill closures and no increase in
wages. The "Greenies", conservationists who are calling for a
reduction in the timber supply, are seen to threaten the security
that these men value. Management can justify holding the line on
wages, hiring and or improvements to the workplace because of a
"poor outlook". This debate is real and of immediate concern to
all the men, including Rob, whose new business is directly
related to the lumber industry.

During the time of the interviews, the men were on a three-day
work week because of poor lumber prices. Despite these threats,
none of the four men employed is talking of moving away from the
resource sector. It is as if each is prepared to wait and see
resigned but vulnerable.

The social context.

The social context includes, immediate family, friends and
community. For all the men, the expectations of their families
shaped how they conceived and valued work. Family values and
expectations shaped the decisions they made. Their fathers
played a significant and for some an active role in helping them
launch their working lives. Tyler's father took him in hand and
loaded him on the plane. Larry's parents "knew he had the
potential but they didn't pressure" him to go on to university.
In fact, his dad helped him get his first full- time job at the
mill. The message they heard from their families was: "get a job,
support yourself and settle down."

Except for Tyler, all these men married in their early
twenties, bought houses and had begun to raise a family. Even
Tyler talks of buying land and being set up. He speculates that
if working at the mill allows him to build a house and support a
family, then it will be worth it. That promise is enough to
sustain him and buffer him from moments when he questions the
wisdom of possibly committing himself to a lifetime of mill work.

Maintaining the ability to support a family was a key factor
in why Larry, Ross and Rob continued to look for career change
within the system. Any change which threatened their ability to
fulfill this function was avoided until the accumulated
frustrations of their situation forced them to act. Rob decided
to quit but had made adequate provision for the family. If Larry
took the management position he would have a six-month trial
period during which he could try out the professional life
without jeopardizing his current secure senior position. And Ross
kept bidding for more interesting work in the mill until he
decided to pursue his trade.

Two other elements of the social context have had and still
have an impact on the lives of these men: the union and the
larger community. The union gives these men a voice, a collective
sense of power and is seen to protect their interests. But this
collective force also limits the freedom of each man in some way.
Rob felt unable to excel and advance on merit alone; Tyler has to
wait until he acquires enough seniority to bid on the position he
is interested in; John accepted the predetermined retirement
package which management and the union had worked out. For Rob

the restrictions of union membership were too great he felt stifled so he left. The decisions these men made and will continue to make are in part accommodations to that collective will as much as they are expressions of individual intention.

The mill is the largest employer in the area. The boom and bust cyclical nature of the resource sector has a real impact on fortunes and misfortunes of this community. When lumber prices fall, there are layoffs, cutbacks, restrictions on hiring and fear. The promise of a secure future is then up for question. This still affects Rob and John. If the forest industry fails so will Rob's directly related business venture. John would be affected because when the local economy fails, people leave the community, services are downgraded and the sense of community well-being, gives away to uncertainty and doubt. Each man must live with these changes, powerless to alter the fate of the community but at the same time he must struggle to pursue his own life path. Although each man is concerned none is defeated, each instinctively know he will pull through.

The cultural context.

Already some mention has been made of the impact of the working-class culture on the decision making behavior of these men: the valuing of security, the family and community; the significance of the father as a role model; the decision to take a job versus pursuing a career. The men recognize that they "work" for a living, trading labor for an hourly wage. If the work has some measure of interest then it is a bonus, but this is not an essential ingredient.

It is significant to note that none of these men perceived of the need "to make real" decisions related to participation in paid employment. The question to be asked is: in this situation, is decision making unimportant to these men: or can they know the impact of the cultural context of their lives and decision when they are enmeshed in it? These men care about the course and direction their working lives have taken: they see they have choices and they know the importance of making a decision. But they are at a loss to explain why the decisions related to work look different from those made in other areas of their lives. They cannot define, and are only dimly aware of, the structures that shaped their decisions related to paid employment. The impact of class culture is a mystery to them.

Although each man's motivations were different, they all shared a common underlying orientation to their decisions. To work requires the expenditure of physical energy and the ability to put up with boredom and physical discomfort. The reward for working is a predictable income which allows them to feel secure, and to be able to find enjoyment in activities outside of the workplace. They know that if they can "tough" it out at the mill those criteria will be met. This knowledge of the working world was not taught to them in a formal sense, it was learnt vicariously, from their families and the community. It is knowledge they live with, it shapes the course of their lives an it is a way of thinking. This knowledge is not easily described but it significant in determining the process of their decision making.

While this orientation to decision making dominated, the men were able to keep making minor choices while maintaining their original purpose. For instance, the men kept looking out for the better positions, more interesting work, better pay. This process of approximations worked until each man reached a limit. For Larry, there were no other positions to go to; Ross could not tolerate the boredom; John was tired of enduring pain and boredom; Tyler could not tolerate being out of work so he took a job. When compelled to act they did so but still within a working-class world view.

Rob was different, he initiated a major change in orientation to work; he stopped making the accommodations and began to create a new decision frame, different from the working man's culture. A decision frame according to Cochran (1987) is composed of a number of hierarchically ordered vocational constructs, ideas and beliefs that the individual has formulated about the world of work. In the ideal, these constructs act as a map or design to assist the individual in organizing multiple sources of information in such a way that the purpose and meaning behind the decision is congruent with the person's world view. Framing a decision is "concerned with identifying and integrating aims into a more harmonious whole...... To consolidate a decision frame is to consolidate in vocational terms a person's general plan of living" (p. 264).

It is in the contrast between Rob's behavior and that of the others which illuminates some of the constructs, ideas and beliefs that shape a working-class view of the world of work. Rob

felt a moral obligation to do a good job no matter what the circumstances; he could not tolerate the limitations union membership placed on him. Above all he desired meaningful work and he wanted recognition of his own worth and contribution to the work-place. For Rob his work was intimately connected to his sense of self-worth. Although the other men experienced similar frustrations and dissatisfactions with work the overall impact was less they did not feel compelled to change.

The change to Rob's work orientation began not when he decided to quit mill work, but at age eighteen when he joined his church. Over time, the church has provided Rob with a different set of values and beliefs about his world. His faith in God and the support of the church community helped him to have the courage to initiate change. When he could no longer tolerate the working man's culture, he had an alternative set of values and beliefs on which to structure his life. Rob was able to consolidate a decision frame because he had an alternative value structure to support a new conception of the world of work.

Rob was able to step back into what might loosely be described as the observer position and to reflect on his experience. Sloan refers to this as moving within the dialectic of subject and object. For the other four men, the degree of harmony between their working-class construction of the world of work and their needs inhibited such movement. The discontent and frustration which compelled Rob toward a decision is not evident in their accounts. They have no regrets and remain oblivious to

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the powerful influence that the class context has played in the outcome of their lives.

The context of character

According to Sloan, the context of character is a set of positively and negatively toned self and other images which form the basis of conscious identifications. "I am bright, I am like my parents." It is the negative self images, Sloan argues, that which present the greatest impediment to effective decision making. He concludes "psychoanalytic theory informs us with compelling evidence, that unacceptable wishes are excommunicated from consciousness by repression" (p. 14). The decider "wards off" the unacceptable self and focuses only on the appealing aspects of a project which results in compromise and self deception. This propensity to self deception can only be countered through self-reflection and awareness when deciding.

The context of character is both useful, yet problematic. Useful, because it illustrates how decisions are an expression of a unique individual whose behavior is governed not only by external forces but by intrapersonal struggles. In each man's account it is possible to capture glimpses of such intrapersonal struggles. Larry is shy and retiring, but wants to be outgoing and social; Tyler fears he will fail at a task he cannot believe in his own success; Rob wants to be different but he can not trust his own instincts to lead him there; Ross knows he has settled for less to keep the peace; and John yearns for his lost childhood as an adult he still looks for ways to heal that grief.

The challenge in using the context of character as a
mechanism for understanding decision making behavior requires
certain skills from the individual to attend to preconscious and
unconscious motives the intuitions and beyond awareness factors
that shape the outcome of a decision. If the decision maker is
not practised in the art of self reflection, and none of these
five men were learning the skills of self reflection becomes a
prerequisite to understanding one's own decision-making behavior.
The presumption is that individual well practised in the art of
self reflection knows himself well and this knowledge enables him
to define the meaning and significance of a decision. But Sloan
does not deal with the converse question of how the inability,
rather than an unwillingness to be self reflective, blocks the
discovery of meaning.

This challenge presented itself during the interviewing when
the men would recount their experience and stop, unable to
explain further. They knew there was an explanation but they
could not think of one. Then when prompted with questions which
sought to establish relationships they often came to a new
awareness. For example: Larry is talking about how he would have
taken the secure route no matter what.

L.   I talked about intellectuals tunneling into their field,

      me I tunneled into security. Would you say that?

Larry is aware but unable to go further with that thought. What
Larry had said prior to this moment would provide rational
support for his tentative conclusion but it is the tentativeness
of the conclusion that suggests there is more to be understood.

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I.   Security is a theme that seems to predominate (interrupted)

L.   Yeah. I can't say why.

I.   It seems being secure gives you something; security seems
     to be more than just financial security.

Larry then started talking about his reluctance to take risks,
his need to be able to predict the outcome of a decision. Larry
began to reflect, he argued with himself as if thinking out
aloud. As the interviewer, it was difficult to strike the balance
between facilitating his discovery and not leading the discovery
of feeling confident it was Larry who defined the meaning and
significance of his actions.

In his research Sloan is guided by the thesis of self
deception drawn from the psychoanalytic ideas of repression.
Therefore he is able focus his examination of the context of
character from this perspective and to extend the interpretations
to inferred unconscious motivations. These extension are credible
only if argued from the basis of that theory. Therefore the use
of the context of character as a mechanism for understanding
decision making also requires the acceptance of the
psychoanalytic theory as the basis of explaining human behavior.

Despite this limitation, the examination of context of
character provided rich images and insights into the men's
behavior. How much more there is to know about each of these men:
the importance of Christian values in Rob's life, John's joy in
collecting a Christmass tree, why Ross believes it is important
to do a good job, what helped Larry deal with life threatening
cancer and why success as a cyclist is so important to Tyler. The

answers may seem obvious but they are not; they exist only as these men define them, subtle, complex and perhaps even contradictory. These explanations exist only in the context of character.

Summary

Sloan's method for analyzing a decision in context provides a depth of understanding and complexity, which transformed these ordinary accommodations of men participating in the world of work to personal statements of intention. This model was pertinent because it treats the context a critical component of decision making. It stresses the importance of the meaning and significance underlying a decision: of how contexts shapes the process, and, when preconscious or unconscious motivations drive the decision making process. These five men made decisions in which the context and in particular the context of class played a significant role in determining the process and outcome.

The limitation of this model is Sloan's determination that decision making is essentially a process of self-deception. What Sloan has attributed to self deception I would argue could also be said to represent a lack of opportunity to reflect and more importantly a not knowing how to be self reflexive, of rarely having experienced the worth and relevance of such a process. Working class men have few opportunities in their working life to be self reflexive.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis compared the experience of making a decision to decision making as predicted by theory. Five working class men were asked to recount their experience of making a decision related to their participation in paid employment. These accounts were then compared to three theories of decision making.

Summary of results

Each theory offers a different dimension to understanding, what constitutes effective decision making in the ideal; each account of decision making documents what actually occurred, when five individuals made a career decision. While there is some measure of agreement between theory and experience it is the divergence which in this instance was more informative.

These five decisions were not distinct moments set apart, readily identified as points of decision making. Each decision happened without intense debate or questioning. The men did not use logic and calculation to decide. They were moved towards their goals by a knowledge and awareness that they could not easily describe or understand. The sense of purpose which directed their behavior came from an inherent knowledge of the "right thing to do" not from a deliberate focusing of consciousness on the task of deciding. Nor did they consider their own behavior to be decisive in a traditional sense yet they recognized their actions had purpose, significance and meaning. These decisions reflect the interplay between the aspirations of the individual and the potent forces of class consciousness. This

process which can only be understood if the decision making experience is conceived as a complex phenomenon and not a linear, stepwise process.

The comparison of theory to experience illustrated the importance of applying oneself to the task of deciding with awareness and purpose. Failure to do so resulted in a diminished sense of control, and mastery for the individual. While conversely the deliberate focusing of attention; the assigning of significance, and the examination of all possible consequences lead to an enhanced the sense of self-worth and self purpose.

What the models describe are strategies and methods of decision making which direct the decision maker to be more intentional, systematic and thorough in making a decision. Processes which all five men had an understanding of, yet they failed to use this knowledge in making their decisions. Career decision related to their participation in paid employment were not conceived of as consequential and requiring wholehearted effort. What was lacking was, the focusing of consciousness; a structure to guide the deliberation, and the means to introduce planning and novel options. As a result the significance and importance of the moment of decision making was ignored, unknown or denied, circumstances rather than self purpose provided direction to their career paths.

The explanation as to why these men were not more decisive is found in the examination of both the personal motivations of the individual, and the context in which the decision is made. While personal motivation can explain some of the lack of

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decisiveness and the variance across the five accounts; it is the
context of class which offers the most compelling explanation for
why they did not treat this decision making moment as
consequential. The men shared an orientation to making a career
decision which was embodied with the values and attitudes of the
working class. This orientation influenced the ideas, the
structures and concepts that supported all five decisions. It
both supported and inhibited the men in determining their fate.

It is therefore the deciding in context model which is the
most useful of the three models for explaining the behavior of
the five men. It is the most pertinent because it provides a
method to examine the decision context, to understand the role
and importance of context in shaping a decision. It is only
through understanding the context of these men's lives, are we
able to draw out the purpose and meaning underlying their
decisions and to discover explanations for the lack of
deliberateness in making a career decision.

Limitations of the study.

The findings from this study cannot and were not intended to
be generalized to the larger population of working-class men.
The small number of informants, five, and the fact that each
informant was selected as a typical example of the working-class
and not a true representative of that sub-population, precludes
any possibility of generalization in the statistical tradition.
What was sought was analytic generalizations (Yin, 1989) the
experience of decision making to be generalized to a broader
theory of decision making.

The decisions that were examined were very specific in type and context, that is decisions related to paid employment in the context of working at a mill. It is not possible to extrapolate these findings to other types of decisions, such as non-work related decisions or different contexts, such as other resource based industries. All inferences and conclusions drawn beyond this context must be held tentatively. While the findings support the proposition that in general there is a discrepancy between theory and the experience of decision making this finding may only hold true within the parameters outlined. Further study of both work related and non-work related decisions is needed.

It is important to note the similarity between the method used to collect the data (the interviewing) and the process of self-reflection (a necessary ingredient of decision making according to Sloan). It could be argued that the similarity biased the findings in favour of the deciding in context model over the other models. If the margin of difference between theory and experience had not been as dramatic or corroborated by all five cases, this would be an issue. The evidence is overwhelming in support of the conclusions made, therefore this potential source of bias may be set aside.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) claim the greatest challenge in doing qualitative research is to take everyday explanations and translate those into compelling academic arguments without distorting the original. For instance, the more skilled the interviewer, the more focused the awareness and the greater the chance of capturing and accurately describing the phenomenon.

Within the personal limitations of the author this has been achieved. I was most aware of how middle-class values and ideas, which shape my construction of reality, limited my ability to quickly and perceptively capitalize on the subtlies of the discourse. These descriptions, although adequate for the purposes of this thesis, must be judged as incomplete and awaiting further refinement before they can be said to describe decision making as experienced by working-class men.

Implications for theory

Collin and Young (1986) require decision making theory to be adequate, relevant, coherent and applicable. Theory must therefore help us understand experience as well guide the application of this knowledge in the client-counselor relationship. Clearly all three models offer a unique scope on the process of decision making but each is only a discrete glimpse of a complex phenomena. In combination they offer a more complete and expanded explanation of how the men decided yet there are omissions and areas for requiring further refinement.

If one combines the results of the comparison of experience with theory the conclusions are: that what is needed is a definition of effective decision making which incorporates the objective or stated goal of the decider, with the subjective experience of the making a decision; that the decision is recognized as a part of an on going life history; that the meaning and significance of a decision is drawn from an examination of the that life history. Theory needs to define successful decision making in terms of the decider's frame of

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reference and recognizes the role of intuition and preconscious awareness to enhance decision making. Clearly rational thought and calculation play role in decision making but they are a part of and not always the dominant aspect of that process.

The difficulty is that personal meaning, motivations and awareness are not immediately available for examination or explanation, they await discovery. Therefore prior to deciding or as an integral part of the process initiatives which foster self awareness need to be learnt and practised in much the same way as the rational skills of decision making are taught. Sloan (1987), refers to this as the gaining of wisdom, of ensuring that the impetus which is driving the decision is from within. The scope of self examination ideally will reflect upon decision situations, decision which are life shaping will require a more wholehearted effort those of lesser importance a more cursory examination of the self. All decision situation require an examination of the self.

The strength and yet the limitation of the rational models is they offer clear and explicit explanations which can be universal understood and communicated. Yet Cochran (1983 a) points out that decision making is more typically characterized by doubt, indecision, struggle and uncertainty, decisions are often protracted over time or arrive in an instance, they reflect an ongoing process that moves the individual by minor or major increments closer to their vision of the good life. Rather than devaluing or attempting to offer corrective processes it is imperative that theory recognize the function, importance and

meaning underlying both those behaviors deemed effective and those labeled ineffective. Perhaps there is more to be learned from moments of indecision and doubt than there is in the surety of a logical choice.

What was not well illustrated by the three theories was those aspects of the process which set up the decision situation as non-consquential, what makes these five decisions more of an accidental occurrence than a conscious focusing of attention. Sloan's model addresses this issue through his ideas of self deception and repression but these concepts are difficult to reduce down to clear and explicit ideas which might be readily understood by a lay person.

Understanding the context supporting the decision proved to be critical and neither of the two rational models addressed this aspect of the process. Horan deliberately avoids what he terms is a morass of information, yet in doing so he predetermined a narrow and limited range of decision situations in which his model can be applied. His model can only apply when the client defines the presenting problem as one of choice, where the decider is able to define the parameters of this problem and who accepts that resolution to the problem lies in improving decision making skills. The conflict model is likewise limited and can only apply to decisions of "consequence" which induce some degree of emotional stress, the decider is presumed to be aware of the need to decide, no accommodation is made to explain the function of context. These theories are limited to decision situations which require rational solutions.

The strength of Sloan's Deciding in Context model is it conceives of decision making as a multidimensional phenomenon not a linear process. This approach offers a much needed alternative perspective to the dominant ideology and requires the reader to accept that context plays a significant role in decision making. However it is Sloan's method for examining the importance of context which is the greater contribution to furthering our understanding of an individuals behavior. His method of analysis allows for a number of levels of explanation dependent on the number of contexts involved. It is this "flexibility" which enhances the applicability and comprehensiveness of this model.

One of the propositions which shaped this research was the idea that decision theory was biased to favour the middle class because of an over reliance on research conducted on white male college students; a failure to describe the career decision making behavior of other groups and a conception of career decision making which more closely models the professional man than the worker. While this thesis cannot be said to prove that this bias exists or what the potential source of the bias might be, the findings of this research suggest that there is a discordant interface between working class experience and career decision theory.

While it is acceptable to dismiss theory as inadequate it is unethical to dismiss the lived experience as deficient because it does not fit the way theory has conceived of decision making. Therefore either theory is modified to accommodate alternative

explanations of career decision making or a different more comprehensive model needs to be developed.

None of the three models could be deemed to be comprehensive or just, "where belief in them and actions based on them produce better people and better worlds" (March, 1973). While Sloan's model is a move closer to this ideal it requires further refinement to explain more fully how contexts interact, how to explain the importance of this interaction and whether it is possible super impose his model onto another theory of human development other than the Psychoanalytic theory.

Implications for Practise

Cochran (1987) determined that "Helping a person make a career decision is a deceptively simple affair" (p. 261). It is deceptive if the counselor automatically assumes the goal of counselling is to assist the client to make a decision. In practice, that ideal may have little or no relevance to the goals, motivations and needs which brings the client to counselling. For according to Cochran, the client may need to gain clarity of purpose, to decide not to make a decision, to gain self understanding before moving on to make a decision. It may well be the greatest folly of career counselling to assume there is, or can be, a discrete decision to be made.

While classical or rational approaches to decision making are important they determine a focus for career counselling which is narrow. According to Gelatt (1989), these models do not reflect the uncertainty of our lives and times. He states "What is now appropriate is a decision and counselling framework that helps

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clients deal with change and ambiguity, accept uncertainty and inconsistency and utilize the nonrational and intuitive side of thinking and choosing" (p. 252). It is evident from this research that prior to using the rational models some efforts must be made to examine the decision context and therefore discover the meaning underlying the decision.

To further develop this notion that decision making counselling is not a simple process, it is important to look at the role of context, both the context of the client's life and the context of the counselor-client relationship. For the purposes of this thesis, it is in understanding how the working-class culture shapes these contexts. While the culture of class must be understood as only one aspect of a multidimensional process for a number of working-class clients entering counselling it may be the critical ingredient that the counselor must grasp in order to develop an effective relationship.

Here, there is a real potential for counselors, (whose experience has been the world of academia and who are pursuing a professional career and holding to middle-class values) to be unable to bridge the gap between themselves and their working-class clients. Cultural misunderstandings lead to difficulties in communication, affect the quality of service provided, and may lead to premature termination of counselling. Cayleff (1986) claims "The sex, race, social class and sexual orientation of the client must be considered, understood and honored to prevent doing harm, to serve the client's welfare and to ultimately

provide effective service" (p. 346). Failure to do so according
to Cayleff impinges on the client's rights and is unethical.

Arbuckle (1969) refers to such counselors as the alienated
counsellor, one who holds not only to middle class values for
themselves but also the clients they serve. This alienation can
stem from a clash of world views (Sue 1978): a failure by
counselor to recognize their own bias, the adoption of
counselling theory and practice which is congruent with the
counselor's world view and not the client's (Carney & Kahn 1984).
While recognizing that bias exists, it does not automatically
follow that the counselor can suspend their value system and
provide competent service to the client.

What is required is a more proactive position, a valuing of
the difference, an examination of theory and related treatment
strategies to ensure they are culturally specific and to adopt
what Ibrahim (1985) terms is "a culturally puralistic
philosophy." To achieve this, counselors must be aware of their
world view, have developed the skills to understand and accept
the world view of the client's (Kelly, 1955) and recognize when
their needs and the needs of the clients are at odds.
Understanding the working-class world view requires more than
empathy, it requires a knowledge of the culture, the ability to
understand the language of the shop floor and a willingness to be
informed by the clients how they define their specific and unique
world view.

The working-class men in this study did not talk of making a
career decision, they spoke of "setting oneself up, of doing

better for oneself" of "just knowing the right thing to do."
Simple statements with powerful meanings if the counselor fully
understands the context in which they are made. While the
counselor does not need to emulate this linguistic style it is
imperative they have the confidence and skill to move with such
ordinary explanations of career and to facilitate the client
further in the discovery process. These ordinary explanations of
career are according to Young (1988) the bridge between the
objective theoretical model of career and the subjective
understanding of the client. The difficulty is that such ordinary
explanations are just that ordinary, easily overlooked and prone
to misinterpretion. A counselor conversant with some of the
structures which define a working class conception of career will
hear such statements and immediately understand them as
statements of intention.

The counselor must understand the importance of security,
family, practical wisdom, and how a sense of solidarity is sought
and accepted in the workplace. These are the core values which
shape the working-class perception of career and choice.
Decisions requiring a shift in these values, such as a desire to
find intrinsically meaningful work and greater possibility of
individual expression must be understood not only as a decision
related to work but also as a shift in cultural identity which
may come with both positive and negative consequences.

Willis (1977), in his study of British working class, found
that the conformists (the individuals who sought a career as
opposed to a job) suffered "cultural clash". They had aspired to

better themselves, yet they lacked cultural supports for this change. They were isolated and could not identify either with the working class concept of work or the more middle-class concept of career. This transition was often difficult and problematic in the short and medium term.

If the counselor and client attend to the possibility of this cultural clash any number of strategies may be devised to support the client during the transition. Failure to do so may well result in the client aborting the change process and being discouraged from pursuing future initiatives.

The working-class client is not always the high-school drop out, the frustrated worker, or the hard working stiff who endures, but an individual whose life is in part an expression of that culture. The counselor who has the flexibility and skill to utilize this knowledge can facilitate change. Such a counselor will be aware of the limitations of theory and practise, recognize the very real constraints the external world places on choice, and still be mindful of the indomitable human spirt which seeks growth and change.

Implications for Future Research.

This thesis examined the decision making behavior of working class men as they participate in work compared to what theories of decision making predicted is effective decision making. As an explorative first step, the results suggest that there is a discrepancy between theory and experience. To consolidate this finding, further research needs to be conducted.

Research is needed to clarify the distinction between work and non-work related decisions and to ascertain if there is a difference and how that difference is manifest. Is it in the context of making a work related decision that the impact of class is more potent? A number of other questions have emerged. For example, how does the decision making behavior of these men compare with other working-class men who choose a professional career? Are there differences and what are they? Would the two rational models of decision making be more relevant and applicable?

Research which includes a larger pool of participants drawn from a variety of occupations and locations is needed and would produce more robust results. A combination of survey and in-depth interviewing could be used to consolidate a more accurate general description of working-class decision making behavior. A general description would assist both client and counselor understand the context of class and its potential impact.

The question of access to service was not a topic dealt with in this thesis but it is a related subject which needs to be examined. For if theory is not relevant to experience and if practice is based on this theory, then how does this affect the working class consumer of career counselling

Summary

Five working-class men described their experience of decision making related to their participation in paid employment. These descriptions were generated from in-depth interviews which were audiotaped and transcribed. The five accounts of decision making

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were validated by the participant and a significant other as accurate and complete. Each account was then compared with theories of decision making to determine how theory would explain experience. The three theories were; the conflict model by Janis and Mann, the rational model Horan and the deciding in context by Sloan.

The divergence between theory and experience rather than the agreement was more informative in this instance. The comparison of the two rational models highlighted the need for the decider to be focused, deliberate and aware: of the importance of treating the decision moment as consequential rather than ignoring or avoiding the decision. When the decision situation is not clearly define: where the meaning and significance is drawn from the context of a life story or are shaped by intuition, preconscious or unconscious motivations the rational models were limited. It was the deciding in context model which provided the fullest understanding of the men's behavior. Sloan's model presents a mechanism for examining the context in which a decision emerges. It provided a more complex and complete understanding of the forces which determine the life path of the five men and in particular the context of class.

Further study is needed to understand the decision making behavior of working class males but the findings suggests that the context in which a decision is made is a significant factor. For the counselor and working class client understanding the importance of the context of class may be the most significant factor in facilitating effective decision making.

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INTERVIEW FORMAT

Each interview began with the following question; Can you tell me how you made a significant decision related to your work, significant to you that is?

The Decision

1. How were you aware there was a decision to be made?

2. What did you understand was the decision to be made?

3. When was the decision made?

4. What alternative options did you have?

5. How did you explore possible options, was each examined in detail?

6. How long was the period of deciding.

7. Describe your motivation for making this decision?

8. At any time did you feel pressured to make a decision? If so how or by whom?

9. What were you aware of before, during and after the period of deciding?

10. How do you feel about the outcome of your decision.? Is there anything you would have done differently?

11. How does this decision compare with other decisions you have made in your life?

12. Did you seek out information, discuss your situation with anyone?

13. Could you define for me what you think is effective or ineffective decision making?

14. Could you comment on this statement; that not choosing

is a form of choosing?

Other related topics to be covered.

1. What role has formal education played in the outcome of

this decision?

2. What influence has your family and friends had on your

career decision?

3. Do you have unfulfilled dreams and ambitions?