

PARENTS AS CAREER COACHES

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1996

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard:

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2002

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Date April 23, 2002

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the efficacy of providing workshops for parents of first year university students in the area of career coaching their young adult children. Parents have a great deal of influence on their children when they are entering university.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions, feelings and experiences of parents of students attending first year university in providing assistance in career exploration and planning.

The workshops conducted were for the purpose of giving parents information and resources, an understanding of labour market information, career exploration and planning, and the decision making process.

The study consisted of a series of two workshops attended by 55 parents of first year university students. After the second sessions, 24 parents participated in focus group interviews. The focus group interviews were audio taped and transcribed and statements were analyzed for themes. Parents demonstrated shifts in thinking, especially a greater sense of hope, as well, they gained knowledge and skills, to be more effective career coaches for their students. The major themes were Parent Anxiety (lack of information); Communication; Parenting Styles; and Changing Roles.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to Norm Amundson who responded with enthusiasm to my ideas for this research and provided encouragement, support, patience, and continued faith in me. I would like to thank Angela Post for her consistent positive reinforcement and mentorship over the past two years. I would also like to thank Rod McCormick who provided guidance before I applied to the masters program, and has come full circle in providing support and guidance on this committee.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Brian Walker, who contributed greatly by acting as moderator in the focus groups, and co-researcher in data-analysis. Brian was also a true friend and coach with his encouragement and support, and reminding me to keep the faith. I would also like to thank Debby Koffman who assisted with analysis, editing, and very timely encouragement. Also, I want to express my appreciation to Richard Young who encouraged and assisted me through his qualitative research methods course.

Special thanks goes to all of the parents who participated in this study and enthusiastically shared so freely, their concerns and frustrations of the past and hopes for the future. I want to acknowledge the deep commitment these parents showed in their desire to gain knowledge and competency in coaching their children, as well as their sincere desire for the career and life success of their children.

There have been a great many people who have influenced my own career/life path, and I would like to acknowledge my appreciation to some of them. My parents, who always somehow made me feel that anything was possible if I was willing to work hard enough. Robert Voice has been a long time teacher, mentor and spiritual guide who believed in me before I believed in myself. I want to thank my husband, Alan, for providing loving support throughout my educational career and consistently encouraging me to do what I love.

Finally, I would like to thank my children, Andrew, Benjamin, Sarah, Elizabeth, Christopher, Richard and John, who have provided support over the years, frustration as well as inspiration. I want them to know that they continue to coach and inspire me with their own passion and wisdom.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The goal of the "Parents as Career Coaches" program is to provide parents with the knowledge and information needed to help their child be motivated to start career exploration and planning. It is designed to help parents develop skills to enhance their relationship with their new university student, and be a supportive resource. The program aims to provide basic communication skills, career development information, and parental guidance as their adolescents are in transition.

#### **Rationale for this research**

A pilot study on this program had already been done in July, 1999, with a one-time workshop presented to a group of over 200 parents of students in transition from highschool to university. The need for an interactive and supportive group was evident in this initial workshop and there was great interest from the parents as to how best they can encourage and coach their children beginning their university education. Further workshops and discussion groups were requested by the parents at that time.

In May, 2001, a two session workshop was offered to parents of UBC students. Twenty-five parents participated in this workshop, and the parents clarified their needs for information and specific skills. Parents in this pilot study shared that they wanted to be more informed when assisting their children facing career decisions; as well, parents desired reassurance of outcomes for their investment in their children's education. The parents also recommended that the workshops would be more helpful if offered earlier in the academic year. The evaluation of these workshops was very positive in areas of interactive activities, but mostly in the benefits of sharing with other parents. The parents reported that they gained valuable information, resources and skills, but more importantly, they stated that they felt a sense of reassurance in their role as a parent in assisting their children in career exploration and decision making.

As a career educator, I meet with many students as they are graduating after four years of university education who still have not explored options nor spent time in discovering their own interests, values and potentials. While it is never too late to enter this process, students would benefit if they explored possibilities during the earlier years of their education. In addition, interviews and advising sessions with students in UBC Career Services indicate a strong need for career coaching programs for their parents. Parents provide a critical influence, both positive and negative, in helping students in the dynamic process of career development (Amundson & Penner, 1998, Palmer & Cochran, 1988, Shephard & Marshall, 1999). Career counsellors must recognize the parental

struggle to cope with the changing world of their children (Borgen, & Amundson, 1995); and guidance and support must be provided, and indeed, has been demanded by both students and their parents.

Self-awareness, work values and decision making are all key points to consider in helping adolescents and young adults in career development. Parents can influence their children in developing self-confidence and intrinsic motivation for choosing positive direction, and meaning in life (Blustein, & Noumair, 1996). Ill-informed parents could certainly have a detrimental affect on a young adult's career choices and hinder exploration (Amundson & Penner, 1998; Neault, 2000; Albert & Luzzo, 1999). This study is important because it will provide parents with accurate information of the world of work, as well as guide them with specific techniques on how to be effective coaches in the career development of their children.

### **Researcher's Position**

It has been through personal and professional experience over the years that I began to see the need for parents to have a greater understanding and the tools needed to engage their adolescent children in dialogue in terms of their future careers. In my own personal experience, as a single parent with five children just moved to a new city, I struggled with keeping my adolescent children in school. One by one they began to fade out of highschool. I looked to

the school and community for assistance and found none. Being a student and working full time myself, I found it incredulous that there was so little help for children who felt lost and confused, with no sense of connection with their future. I knew that my children had had dreams when they were younger, so I started there, and slowly began to connect them with their own interests, abilities and strengths. I started to see that they felt no sense of their future, partly in reaction to living through divorcing parents and moving away from their family and friends, and losing a connection to their past. I went about trying to get resources and assistance. The school counsellors were interested in helping, however, they did not have the career background, and were too focused on the childrens' failures in school. They could not relate to how I was trying to connect my children to their future in terms of hope and gaining a sense of their own strengths and purpose. I made many mistakes, but I eventually started to listen to their needs.

As a research assistant completing my BA Honours thesis, I interviewed over 100 young offenders in a maximum security institution in the Lower Mainland. I recognized the same disconnection and lack of support with their past and future in these adolescents, but to a much greater degree. Many of these young people had lived a difficult life with little family support, some in as many as 30 foster homes. They did very little in terms of career exploration or self awareness exploration. They lacked consistency in guidance and encouragement, and for the most part did not have people who believed in them. I saw passion and potential in these young

men and women and I sensed a great need for encouragement as a way to connect hope with their future.

As a Career Educator at UBC Career Services, I saw student after student with a similar sense of hopelessness and lack of connection to future goals even though they “made it” into university. These students came from stable homes, for the most part, and yet many lacked a sense of who they were as a person, what their passion was, and how to connect with their future. At Career Services I began to see similarities in many of the students that came to me for career advising; many expressing extreme pressure from their parents to become something different from their own dreams. One student came to me in great distress saying his parents wanted him to be a doctor or engineer, although he wanted to be a jazz musician. He did not enjoy his studies, and was indeed failing most of his first year science courses. It was a great challenge for him to find a compromise.

I started to see a pattern in the two extremes of adolescent experience, and thought perhaps that parenting influence had something to do with the lack of career exploration. In a broad and general way, I saw parents could either neglect or pressure, but either way they are influencing their children in terms of career decisions and exploration.

## **Purpose of this study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the efficacy of workshops for parents in guiding them to become career coaches for their first year university students son or daughter. The purpose of this study was also to explore the attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions of parents career coaching their first year university students. It is supposed that parents receiving direct guidance in career coaching will influence their children to have a greater sense of agency and more confidence in career planning. Building upon previous research (Amundson & Penner, 1998; Palmer & Cochran, 1988; Young, Friesen, & Dillabough, 1991) this study will use focus groups in order to explore the range of challenges and strengths of parents as they gain knowledge and specific skills to encourage their children in career exploration and decision making.

## **Goals of the “Parent as Career Coaches” Workshops**

The initial goal of this program is to give parents the information, resources, and knowledge needed to help motivate their child as they begin post secondary education. It is hoped that parents learn to build upon their strengths and develop skills to enhance their relationship with their adolescent in their career development process. The program will aim to provide basic communication skills, career exploration activities, career development information and current labour market information.

The content of the workshops were created from previous workshops for parents, and some of the ideas were drawn from The Lasting Gifts series developed by Bezanson and Hopkins (2001). The original series of four workshops were produced by the Canadian Career Development Foundation in order to provide anxious parents with help in assisting their teens in highschool in New Brunswick. The original ideas of Meandering, Manoeuvring and Meaning came from these workshops; however, the majority of the “Parents as Career Coaches” was developed specifically for the proposed needs of parents of university students according to my own experiences with the students.

## **Definitions**

Career Coach - Coaching is a supportive relationship with a primary focus on students achieving their goals, solving problems and making the most of themselves and their opportunities (Hudson, 2000).

## **Research Questions**

Basically, I am interested in what is the nature of the reality of the parents as they participate in their child’s career exploration and career planning while attending university. The problem questions are what are the major issues and concerns of parents as they are providing career advising to their children who are

entering university? What are the possible underlying themes for parents experiencing career coaching of their first year university student son or daughter? What are the needs of parents in terms of guidance and education to help them to be more effective career coaches?

As a Career Educator working with the students and parents, I am developing my own anecdotal experience, formulating some theories of the kind of career coaching parents are currently doing and possible issues that arise as they attempt to coach their children through university. Basically, I am interested in the major challenges facing parents as they participate in their child's career exploration and career planning while attending university. However, only by asking the parents themselves will I gain insight and understanding of their complex issues and concerns.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescence can be a time of dynamic discovery of the self and the world, and yet many young people today have a growing sense of hopelessness and helplessness. A generation of children is witnessing their parents struggling with their own identities, divorcing, losing their jobs, and searching for new meaning for themselves. The period of late adolescence should not be viewed as merely a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, but a rich developmental process of growth in and of itself (Marcia, 1990). This can be a time of exploration of possibilities and potentialities and a time of discovery and self-understanding.

The purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions of parents career coaching their first year university students. It is supposed that parents receiving direct guidance in career coaching will influence their children to have a greater sense of agency and more confidence in career planning. Building upon previous research (Amundson & Penner, 1998; Palmer & Cochran, 1988; Young, Friesen, & Dillabough, 1991) this study will use focus groups in order to explore the range of challenges and strengths of parents as they learn specific activities to encourage their children in career exploration and decision making.

## **Parental Influence**

Research has shown that parents can assist their adolescents in career development in ways of providing appropriate environments, parental encouragement, family socialization and interaction patterns (Young, Friesen & Pearson, 1988; Otto & Call, 1985; Schulenburg, Vondracek & Crouter, 1984).

Parents greatly influence their children's career choices through values, beliefs and attitudes, and role modeling (Sinacore, Healy & Hassan, 1999; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985, Palmer & Cochran, 1988). It is necessary to recognize parental influence and to provide information on career development of the rapidly changing work world. Research has found that the very process of career development programs that include parents helping their adolescents, improved career salience, a stronger sense of agency, and better decision making (Kush & Cochran, 1993; Amundson, 1995a; Guerra & Braungart-Rieker, 1999). Career development workshops for parents could provide a valuable resource for families, teaching them to be actively involved with specific skills. Adolescents and parents are often in conflict, and a career coaching program could enhance their relationship by focusing on solutions for the future rather than problems of the past (Gelatt, 1992). Both students and parents have an interest in the future of their career, and discussions around career development can be a project that the family can work on together. Parents are a powerful influence in the career

development of their children and youth can utilize that involvement more effectively if parents are accurately prepared and informed (Friesen, 1986; Palmer & Cochran, 1993).

It is imperative to recognize parental influence and to provide information on career development in the rapidly changing work world for the parents of university students. Career development workshops for parents could provide a valuable resource for families. Otto and Call (1985) conducted a longitudinal research study involving parents in a career development program. This program helped parents in skills training, career exploration information, career preparation options, and career exploration resources. Study results indicated strongly that this program was an effective strategy in positively influencing young people's career exploration and choice. Furthermore, it showed that most parents are willing to be more involved in helping their child's career decisions. Winston (1991) found that parents want to assist their children in career decisions, but often lack the knowledge and skills to be effective. She also found that little research has been done in developing specific techniques in working with parents on issues related to and career exploration and planning.

Middleton and Loughhead (1993) found that more than any other source, parents were the ones most likely to interact with adolescents regarding their career development. Kush and Cochran (1993) found that the very process of career development programs that include parents helping their adolescents improved career salience, ego identity, and decision making. Parents can provide

a framework, a context of values and encourage a greater sense of awareness in guiding their child in career exploration (Chen, 1999; Amundson & Penner, 1998). In spite of the many influences upon a young person, adolescents still seek counsel from their parents and other adults for guidance in important matters such as career planning. Parental influence can be positively encouraging or negatively pressuring career choice and therefore may limit adolescent exploration of career choice (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Middleton & Loughhead, 1993). There is now strong evidence that parent involvement enhances school achievement and can provide a context and greater sense of meaning making for the adolescent (Sawatzky & Pare, 1996, Young, Paseluikho & Valach, 1997).

Career counsellors have long been aware of the influence of parents on the career development and decisions of their children, as has been documented in the literature. Although the potential impact of parental influence is recognized, attempts to enlist parents in positive ways often appear haphazard, rather than purposeful. Further, the literature shows parental aspirations to be gender specific, also varying according to cultural and socioeconomic factors (Sinacore, Healy and Hassan, 1999). Involving the parents in the career exploration and decision making of their children as they are entering post-secondary education by teaching them knowledge and skills that can help them be effective (Winston, 1991).

## **Career Indecision**

Young people today are entering a world of work that is changing rapidly. The post industrial age has now moved into the postmodern era and the only constant seems to be change itself (Savickas, 1993; Gelatt, 1989; Hayes, 1994).

Research has found that several variables contribute to career indecision: lack of self-confidence in decision making skills; lack of a clear sense of identity; and perceived external barriers (Symes, & Stewart, 1999; Lewko, 1994). Lewko (1994) determined that the influences upon career indecision are complex and multifaceted and much uncertainty may be related to the rapidly changing labour market. Blewitt and Broderick (1999) found multiple factors that influence adolescent identity formation to be the influence of parents in areas of parenting styles, ethnic background and culture; all having impact upon career decision. Further research of the interactive relationship of the adolescent and their parents is needed, in order to establish to what extent parents influence the adolescent, and as well, what effect the adolescent has on the parents. The parental struggle to cope with the changing world of their children must be recognized and guidance and support must be provided. The career counsellor can develop an inclusive team effort of the youth, their parents, and the community as a whole to help adolescents find their place in the world.

## **Career Coaching**

The idea of coaching in the area of career seems to be a hot new trend, and yet is an old concept. Parents, grandparents, teachers, counsellors, and mentors have been “coaching” in some capacity whether with informed knowledge or not. The rise in popularity and the need for coaching arises out of the rapidly changing work world, and the ambiguity of the future. Also, job satisfaction and meaningful life work has taken on a greater importance to younger generations (Morris, 2000).

Hudson (1999) describes career coaching as a supportive relationship with a primary focus on student’s goals, solving problems and making the most of themselves and their opportunities. He found that coaching requires a special relationship that involves nurturing, emphasizing strengths and achievements, provides perspective, and encourages a life long learning. The tasks of a career coach, according to Hudson are clarifying core beliefs and values, revealing developmental challenges, developing a learning agenda, and facilitating change. Coaching skills require communication, interpersonal and change mastery skills.

Bench (2001) defined career coaching as “an interactive process of exploring work related issues leading to effective action in which the coach acts as both a catalyst and facilitator of individual transformation.” Career coaches connect people with their passion, purpose, and values. They build capability in

their clients, thereby increasing the client's awareness, purpose, competence and well-being regarding their desired work.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **“Parents as Career Coaches” workshops**

Participants were invited to attend two career coaching workshops, and one focus group. The first session was an interactive workshop designed to provide current labour market information and resources for parents to gain further knowledge and skills in assisting their son or daughter in identifying career options; and developing and implementing action steps in career planning. The second session was an interactive workshop where parents learn strategies to actively engage their first year university student in career exploration. Each workshop was approximately two hours in length. Participants were invited to attend an optional third session, which was a focus group format.

Workshops were offered one week apart, in the UBC Buchannan Penthouse meeting room, on Saturday mornings, Monday or Thursday evenings. There was no cost to the parents for the workshops and pre-registration was required. Coffee, tea, and juice and cookies were provided to help create a welcoming atmosphere. Parents were guided to the location by a student who met

them at the parking lot and handed out maps with directions; every effort was made to assist the parents.

Focus group methodology was used for this qualitative research. The purpose of this study was exploratory in two areas: first, to explore the experiences of parents in guiding their adolescents through the transition from highschool to university in terms of career development; and secondly, to investigate the efficacy of the “Parents as Career Coaches” workshops. Researchers in qualitative research strive to gain understanding of meanings, concepts, definitions and metaphors in order to capture the true essence and experience of the participants (Berg, 1989). The design of this study used focus groups because of the exploratory nature of group interviews, where the intent is to gather intersubjective meaning of experience. The advantages of group interviews or focus groups are that they can produce a rich range of data and that the discussion can often be stimulating and informative for the participants (Fontana & Frey, 1997). The workshops themselves were very interactive and encouraged parents to contribute and share ideas. Having the parents attend the workshops before the focus group discussion provided a greater depth and range of the issues of parenting and career coaching.

## **Focus groups**

The purpose of focus groups in this study was to explore the concerns of parents in career discussion with their children and to explore the needs of parents in the development of a career coaching workshop. Kreuger (1988) suggests that the purpose of a focus group is to obtain information of a qualitative nature to obtain perceptions in a non-threatening environment. Focus groups rely on interaction within the group based on carefully selected questions that facilitate discussion (Morgan, 1998). The benefit of focus groups is that several attitudes, feelings, experiences, perspectives and reactions can be obtained in one group interview. Compared to interviewing and observation, a focus group enables a greater amount of information in a shorter period of time (Gibbs, 1997). Consistency between focus groups was ensured by using a discussion outline or set of questions, and two facilitators, one to act as moderator, and one to maintain recording equipment, make observations and take notes. Care was taken to emphasize to parents that they are co-researchers of the issues that arise, in being involved in career development interventions of their children.

Gray-Vickery (1993) found that the advantages of focus groups are that they provide group synergy which is much like brainstorming, and allows participants the opportunity to comment on and add to the statements of others in the group, often leading to greater depth and range of experience. The disadvantages of focus groups are that the group itself could cause an inhibiting

effect on some members, or induce a polarization of attitudes (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 1997).

## **Procedures**

The initial intervention was two interactive workshops designed to instruct parents in ways of enhancing and strengthening dialogue with their children in exploration of interests, values and possible occupations (See Appendix D). Parents gained understanding of the career exploration, planning and decision making, and learned techniques such as guided imagery and the Pattern Identification Exercise (PIE) (Amundson, 1995b) which can stimulate discussion with their child, and enhance career clarity.

The objectives of the workshops were:

- to increase understanding of world of work and labour market information
- to increase understanding of changing role of parents
- to increase understanding of qualities of an effective coach
- to increase awareness of student needs
- to learn about resources available to students at UBC
- to learn practical strategies to initiate dialogue in area of career exploration
- to provide handouts that inform of UBC resources in co-op, student exchange and international opportunities, academic success, etc.

Follow up focus groups were held to explore the range of reactions to the homework activities presented in the workshops. It was necessary to convey to the parents that while they would be provided with a great deal of career development information; they also would be taking part in a research study conducted by a Master's student. Parents were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. The workshop facilitator was adequately qualified to give career development and current labour market trend information as well as discussing parenting issues. Interaction and discussion were encouraged within the two workshops. That being said, participation in focus groups may cause concern for some parents, and every effort was taken to provide a safe, comfortable environment where the comments of parents would be greatly valued. In other words, parents were informed that their participation and recommendations mattered greatly. Focus group questions were open ended, and asked in a semi-structured way. The moderator began the session by briefly covering group norms, such as the value of each parent's perspective and concerns, as well as the importance of confidentiality. As the moderator asked the questions, participants were invited to express their views and share their feelings and experiences. The moderator was skilled in encouraging participation from each participant and great care was taken to ensure that one group member did not unduly influence the group input as a whole.

## **Data Collection**

The focus groups were recorded using audio equipment, and as well, one of the co-facilitators made detailed notes. Data was compiled from the transcripts and field notes. Only data from the third session was used for this research study. Four focus groups were conducted with four to eight participants in each group, with a total of 24 participants. At the start of each focus group, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B). They were also asked to answer two pre-group questions in the form of a workshop evaluation form. The purpose of the questions was to assist parents in focusing on the topic and their individual reactions to the workshops before they hear the thoughts and ideas of other participants. The group moderator facilitated the focus groups asking a series of questions (see Appendix C). I facilitated the two workshops, and recorded the statements of participants on flip chart paper and my notebook. The group discussion during the following focus groups was also recorded on audiotape. At the close of the groups, the facilitator provided a brief summary of the discussion and participants were invited to provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the summary. The participants were then asked to write out their reactions to the question of "what insights did you gain from this discussion?" based on their thoughts after the group discussion.

After the group, the facilitator and researcher met to debrief and consider the most important themes, ideas, and findings of each group. The data analysis of

this research was based primarily on the statements recorded on the flip chart paper, the transcriptions and the notes recorded by the primary researcher. The audio tape recording provided back-up information in the case that there is confusion regarding specific statements or their context. The statements were analyzed according to the method described by Kreuger & Casey (2000) which includes a search for themes across focus groups. The primary data was obtained from transcript statements from the flip chart paper and the audio tapes. Secondary data consisted of the pre-group questions, the post-group debriefing between the researcher and the assistant researcher (who acted as moderator), and the individual written summaries of participants thoughts at the close of each group. To assess reliability, a graduate student knowledgeable in career development sorted the statements according to themes, and compared them with the researcher's notes.

## **Participants**

In September 2001, over 1000 parents of first year students entering UBC, attended a Parent Orientation, and there was a very high level of interest in career development for their son or daughter. Parents, as co-researchers, was a group of self-selected parents of students currently attending first year at the University of British Columbia. This group of parents was contacted through the university, in the form of a letter (see Appendix A), offering career coaching workshops, while

also participating in a research study. Availability to attend two larger workshops as well as one smaller focus group was a requirement. Parents signed an informed consent form in reference to audio taping focus groups (see Appendix B).

It is expected that those who volunteered for this study were likely to be better educated, more motivated and with higher social status than the general population. However, this study was interested in the challenges and strengths of career coaching for parents of first year university students, and the parent population was expected to be more educated. In keeping with the focus group design, only a few semi-structured open-ended questions were presented. The results were based upon their discussion and comments, and provided meaningful insights into a relatively new area of career development in terms of the university population.

## **Characteristics of Participants**

A total of 24 parents participated in the focus groups. All were parents of first year university students, who graduated from highschool within the same year. Sixteen of the parents lived at home with their students, and eight parents' children lived in residence on campus.

### **Faculty of students**

Arts – 4

Science – 16

Applied Science – 1

Engineering – 3

### **Parent Level of Education**

Highschool – 2

Ph.D. – 1

Business Diploma – 2

LLB – 2

Bachelor Degree – 12

DDS – 1

Masters – 3

MD – 1

Females – 19

Males – 5

## Parent Demographics

P #	Gender	Level of Education	Faculty of Student	Gender of Student	# of children	Cultural Background
1	F	Bachelor	Science	M	2	Iran
2	F	Bachelor	Nursing	F	3	Canadian
3	F	Master	Science	M	2	Iran
4	F	LLB	Arts	F	1	German
5	M	Bachelor	Science	M	2	Chinese
6	M	Bachelor	Science	M	2	Honk Kong
7	F	College Dip	Science	M	2	Hong Kong
8	F	Bachelor	Science	M	2	Latin America
9	F	Bachelor	Arts	F	3	Ukrainian
10	F	Bachelor	Science	M	2	English/Dutch
11	F	HighSchool	Arts	F	2	Polish
12	F	DDS	Science	F	1	Korean
13	F	Bachelor	Science	M	3	Swedish
14	M	MD	Science	M	3	Welsh/Scottish
15	F	LLB	Science	F	3	Polish
16	M	Bachelor	Engineering	M	2	Taiwanese
17	F	College Dip	Engineering	M	2	Taiwanese
18	F	Bachelor	Science	M	1	Chinese
19	F	Bachelor	Science	M	3	English
20	M	Ph.D.	Science	M	3	Scottish
21	F	Bachelor	Science	M	2	Hong Kong
22	F	College Dip	Science	M	2	European
23	F	Bachelor	Science	F	2	Japanese
24	F	Bachelor	Science	M	2	Japanese

## **Analysis**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the efficacy of a workshop for parents and to investigate the experience of parents as they support their children in career exploration, self-awareness and decision making. The efficacy of the activities and strategies provided in the workshops, as perceived by the participants, were collected through both written and verbal responses. Two general written questions (see Appendix D) and eight focus group questions (see Appendix C) as well as one written question to summarize what insight the parents gained through attending the workshops and focus group discussion.

In focus group discussion, a great deal depends on the ability of the moderator, and in this study, a graduate student experienced with group facilitation led the discussion and helped to keep the discussion dynamic and fluid. He was able to clarify specific comments, request elaboration, and ensure that each participant contributed their ideas. There were eight main questions, with the moderator using secondary questions to draw out more meaning and clarity. Transcripts from audio tapes, researcher's notes and written responses were used as the basis for analysis. Participants' statements were categorized within each question, finding the main issues and concepts within the discussion, and then across the questions to determine the major themes of the experiences of parents in their attempts to assist their children in career exploration. As well,

statements regarding the efficacy of the workshops themselves were gleaned from throughout the focus group discussions.

Krueger & Casey (2000) suggest that content analysis begin with a comparison of key words from each of the focus groups. Also, trends and patterns within each focus group were noted and cross referenced with other sessions. Recommendations were listed according to consistency and frequency of issues discussed. To ensure that the analysis of the qualitative data was systematic, the two focus group facilitators reviewed their field notes from each of the focus group sessions to confirm the interpretations of the transcripts. One additional researcher independently analyzed the qualitative data and prepared independent interpretations. Comparing statements within and across the focus group sessions allowed for assessment of reliability. One of the key steps in data analysis undertaken was in searching for patterns and key phrases into coding categories. The theoretical approach to determining these categories came from the concerns of the parents themselves and my own observations and concerns. Recommendations were listed according to consistency and frequency of issues discussed. To ensure that the analysis of the qualitative data was systematic, the two focus group facilitators reviewed their field notes from each of the focus group sessions to confirm the interpretations of the transcripts. One additional researcher independently analyzed the qualitative data and prepared independent interpretations. Comparing statements within and across the focus group sessions allowed for assessment of reliability.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

There were 525 statements elicited and recorded from parents across the four focus groups, which were held following the two workshops during the focus group discussions. Having parents attend the workshops before the focus groups helped to keep the discussion upon career development issues. When the parents were asked at the beginning of the first workshop what their major concerns were, they were general and more directed to logistics such as choosing courses and finding out information on student exchange and co op programs. Information about these resources at UBC were provided in the second workshop in the form of handouts and websites.

When asked why they came to the workshops at the start of the focus groups, after the two workshop sessions, the parents were much more focused on the bigger picture of career development. They were much more aware of the process and importance of career exploration and decision making. In this sense already the workshops were shown to be an intervention in that the expected change in attitude and awareness of the parents would be affecting the focus group discussion. The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which parents can become more aware of the career exploration and development of their students. The procedures of this study provided an interesting demonstration

of the shift in thinking of many of the parents. The questions following provide the specific responses to each question systematically, however, many of the actual answers to the questions (particularly the one asking how did these workshops help you) were answered sporadically throughout the discussion of all of the focus groups.

#### **QUESTION ONE: Why did you come to these workshops?**

Question number one was a general question to help parents to come to a common place as they share why they came to this workshop. Most parents stated that they had concerns about the way that their son or daughter had been changing their mind about their goals, now that they are in university. Every parent said they were interested in gaining more information about the resources that UBC has to offer. Parents also shared their concerns about their students who are already feeling frustrated, fearful and isolated after attending UBC for only two months. They discussed the demands upon the students in terms of academic achievement and demands upon their time. Seventeen parents commented upon their recognition of their own personal adjustments having a child in university. One parent stated "Being a parent of an university student is a new experience for me, my position, my role has changed with my son, I can see that now." Another parent was concerned that the message at the Parent Orientation was to make sure the students get involved, and yet she said that her son finds very little time left for joining clubs. Several parents agreed, one mother saying " my daughter can't

get involved, because her commute is an hour and a half each way.” Several parents echoed these concerns. Pressure to choose a major was also an issue for several parents.

Because this first question was for the purpose of the parents to voice their concerns in terms of career, the moderator differentiated the initial concerns with the main reason that the parents wanted to attend the workshops. Several parents suggested that they saw the workshops as “an opportunity to access more information so that I can provide proper guidance to my daughter to do what she really likes to do.” A father stated that he wanted help with “gaining the ability to help my son, who is bored and doesn’t want to be a doctor anymore”. In one of the groups, the parents got into a discussion about what they need in terms of giving advice to their sons and daughters. One parent in this group summarized for the whole group:

I just don’t know what career options are, it seems that we as parents are out of touch with the world of work. How to get them to accept us as coaches and less as parents as they are becoming more independent. We need help in how to get them to listen, but we also need to have the knowledge to help them access resources and to expand their world. I would like to coach my son to take up a challenge and step out of the comfort zone by trying new activities and volunteering. I definitely needed help in learning how to encourage my son

more. I think these workshops have really given me more than what I had expected when I first signed up for them.

**QUESTION TWO: What did you find most useful about the workshops?**

Many parents were pleased to receive information about the resources available to their students at UBC, and found it “very encouraging” to learn that there are people at UBC who are available. “that you at UBC understand my situation, and what me and my son are going through”. Over 15 of the parents discussed the practical strategies and new ideas that they thought would be helpful in creating dialogue with their children. Communication was an issue for almost all of the parents, and they found that they “like the strategies, these are practical things that we can do to help without telling them what to do”. “I learned that we can make them think more, there are strategies to help, and very useful information.” “This is such a good thing, such a wonderful service. UBC is so big and there is so much to know. My daughter can’t find out everything on her own, this is so good to include parents, as we can then be a resource for our children too.” The parents expressed their appreciation for the handouts and information about opportunities for their students. They felt that their children still needed their assistance in accessing resources. Several parents stated that they felt that their children were not aware of resources available to them.

One mother explained how learning about resources and coaching strategies can help her daughter:

I am much more confident that I can help my child to avoid stepping into the same muddy puddles as I stepped in. My own experience here at UBC was isolation, and I had no focus. It is reassuring to see that my child will benefit from the new resources in regards to skill building and self development – these were not available when I came here as a student. It is good to find out that some of the things I am doing – listening and understanding – is the right thing to do.

Sharing of experiences and problems was a common theme for many parents, hearing that others are going through the same struggles and dealing with the same issues was normalizing for many parents.

The best thing for me is to realize that we're all in the same boat, same problems, it is nice to know this. Also learning coaching skills, and learning the importance of listening were mentioned several times. Understanding what the students are experiencing was also a benefit of these workshops. My greatest fear was how do I say this to my son. I didn't want to upset my son. I am learning that it is not so difficult to start these conversations.

One father shared his attempts that he has already started in engaging his son in career exploration after the first workshop, and how his son felt limited in his ability for career exploration because of the demands of a full courseload:

I talked with my son and he spoke about the constraints of UBC. He talked about exploring as an undergraduate and he said you're so constrained in 2<sup>nd</sup> year because you have a set number of courses. So I tried the "possible selves" activity in a sort of informal way, and he became more animated and more interested. He said he could explore with extracurricular activities, but he has to find a summer job. We talked about how he could pursue your suggestion about connecting with UBC Career Services. Also, we talked about the overhead you had about geography, and all the possible careers you could have with that. So he will investigate the world a bit more.

A mother shared her experience talking with her daughter and how she found out things she was not aware of, and what her daughter was going through:

I tried the Pattern Identification Exercise with my daughter, and she came to realize things about herself that I knew, but I don't think she did. She gained some valuable insight. This led us to talking about her current interests, and

she told me she was failing physics. This was a shock to me; she hadn't said anything before. I also think that she is quite depressed, which I hadn't noticed before, I thought she was just stressed about midterms. I suggested that she go see someone in the Counselling Services. I don't think that conversation would have happened if I hadn't attended these workshops.

Another mother:

I feel like I am in the middle of a storm, and my role is changing so fast I realize that I have to change from a hands on parent to meet my daughter in the middle somehow. This workshop has helped be to see that I can be a coach, and I think my daughter will accept me more as a coach, and I can reach her more in that middle ground. I got some excellent ideas from this workshop and some insight about myself that will help me to communicate better with my daughter.

### **QUESTION THREE: What has been your experience in the past?**

Question number three asked what have been the experience so far of parents, and several parents expressed frustration, confusion and a general lack of knowledge of how to help. "My daughter asks questions and I know that the consequence of what I say is important, and I am not aware of the kinds of

choices she can make. I am not sure if I am aware of her strengths and weaknesses. How can I assess? I was wondering were I could go to find this out, were there tests she could take? Up until now, I didn't feel confident that I knew enough to help. This workshop is helping me to find the resources." Over half of the parents mentioned that they try to give advice, but their sons and daughters resist, "My daughter is living in residence, so I feel more removed from it for the first time. She is feeling a lot of stress and I am not, and this is a new role for me, not to be a part of it all. I am usually a hands on parent and this is difficult for me, I keep feeling that maybe I should be more supportive" "I don't think I was very effective in the past, he didn't ask for my advice because he knew I didn't have any answers. I worry about the future and don't have much experience to share with my son, I only know how I did it, and after these workshops, I can see that I can get the knowledge and resources to help my son. The ideas strategies will be very helpful in keeping the dialogue open. I know things now, I didn't know then."

One mother explained that her experience in helping her son was haphazard, and indirect. She did not know how to help:

I feel I was a role model for my son, to strive for an education and then get out there and work, but also to be a part of the community. He says he wants to be a doctor, no matter what. I didn't know how to help him. I know that UBC expects the students to ask for help, but I know my son, he is

like me, he will not ask for help. But now I know after this that there is help out there and I can try to influence him to look for it.

In one group one mother shared how she has been able to keep communication open with her two sons, driving them to school each morning, and developing the habit of sharing every time they come into the car with her.

Basically, what I've found is that they use me as a sounding board, sometimes if they feel unsure about where they are going, they just want to voice their concerns. And sometimes I share with them my experience; sometimes, they may or may not, and more often than not they disagree with me. But in the end, they find an answer and they say, well maybe this is what I may do. It is not necessarily something I've said to them, it is just the fact that they have been able to talk to me about it, and that they have worked it through. And they've gone through a talking process and found a way out for themselves.

More parents found that their experiences have not been as positive as their children move from adolescence into adulthood. Communication was the main concern as one parent pointed out:

Well on the topic of career and counselling about career, I found that somewhat difficult, my son doesn't talk to me about it a lot, because I think part of that is that he vacillates a little on what he wants to do, but when he does sort out what he wants to do, there have been one or two constant kind of strains, and they sound very unrealistic to me. And so I've tried to not say that, and to just kind of listen and say uh huh, And the other thing that I think I struggle with a bit is that I'd got lots of ideas about what I think would be great of what he could do, and so therefore,, trying not to push those on to him, or put those forward, so I just stay very, very neutral. And just sort of react to what he says, rather than putting my own things forward. And that's a constant struggle, and it keeps me quiet most of the time.

Several parents in this group and others shared this same experience, that because as they realize how much influence they do have, and as they felt considerable lack of information, they quite often say nothing. "my experience is that he doesn't use me as a sounding board at all. I just try to throw in a few, just a few little, you know, comments in edgewise whenever I can. And I try to listen whenever he is willing to talk, but those times are few and far between. It is very frustrating as a parent."

Seven parents commented on their own expectations and how they try not to push, and over 15 parents did say that they have found that they may push and over direct too much. Several parents shared their experience in coming to Canada and how their children's experience is very different from their own. "As a career coach, right now, my son is coaching me. He tells me what it is like in this country. I had certain expectations and he is telling me that things don't work like that here. I have hope that now I can be more informed to help him reach his goal."

Several parents discussed the different relationships that they have with their different children, feeling that they have been effective with one and not so much with the other.

We have two sons, one is very open and he tells me everything, about what he thinks, his school life, what he talks about with his friends. And actually we talk a lot about his career, he told me he wants to work at NASA... And we have another son, and he just shuts himself down to us. He doesn't want to talk to us about his career or what he wants to do, after highschool, whether he wants to go to UBC... but when he needs money, he talks to us. So they are like that, they were brought up the same; same family, same education, but they are very different. As the father, I was always busy outside kind of. I have had very little influence on

them. A bit like my parents, who had very little influence on my own development.

#### **QUESTION FOUR: How effective have you been in the past?**

In two of the focus groups, the parents discussed what effectiveness, in terms of assisting in career development, would look like. The parents in these two groups wanted to define what effectiveness means in terms of their child's career exploration, or in terms of getting them "this far" – meaning into university. Seventeen of the 24 parents felt that they have not been effective as in the area of career coaching up to this point. Several parents felt that they were too controlling and directive. One mother explained how she was just trying to "make" her daughter follow her own goals...

I have been influencing my daughter too much, but she was the one who always said she wanted to be a doctor, and I was forcing her to do it, but now that she is saying she wants to do something else, I see it as getting away from her goal, and from what she wants. I feel lost and helpless now, because she doesn't want to be a doctor. I am afraid she will get too far behind from her dream and end up with nothing. I felt like I had to keep her on track. But now (after

the workshops) I see that she is trying to tell me that she needs to look in other areas. But I find that so difficult. I can't let go of her wanting to be a doctor.

Seven of the parents felt that they were effective in some ways, through encouragement, helping to get volunteer and work experience, helping to find resources. One parent said that she has done a great deal of research for her daughter in helping to choose courses, "It was a lot of research that I know she wouldn't do for herself. But I have to be careful not to pressure her in specific areas. I think that is being effective, I hope, I try to give information, but I guess you have to give the bigger picture sometimes, it is not just about specific courses." Another parent felt that being less involved was effective. "I think I have been effective without realizing. We have always allowed her to follow her interests and supported her in trying things out. We haven't tried to influence too much"

#### **QUESTION FIVE: How have your son or daughter responded?**

About 10 parents stated that their children were open to their influences. Participants used words such as receptive and listen and open, and one parent even said she found her children to be very 'obedient'. Some parents say that their student's are receptive, although sometimes resistant at first. "my daughter listens

to me, but she doesn't always do what I say. The challenge for me is to live with her choices."

Another nine parents stated that their children were resistant to their offers of help in the area of career. These parents said that their students responded very reluctantly, with lots of resistance.. "My son has the attitude that he doesn't need help, perhaps it is still too early, but it is nice to know there are resources there so I will have the answers when he is ready." One mother described her sense of helplessness in terms of a lack of information:

Personally, I am feeling very lost myself. Because there are so many more career options out there and we ourselves are trying to understand our own career and job market out there. As you say, everything is changing, I feel that I am not really capable of giving any advice at this stage. And I find myself more and more attempting to have my daughter look within herself, especially after going through this program. I think that is the right direction to go in, because I still feel that I am not capable enough to really push her in any particular direction, but as you say, using this coaching technique, might be the best way to go. It is just that am finding my daughter is too focused on wanting to do well. Rather than wanting to take that step to see how can I apply everything I am learning, and getting great marks on it, where is it going to take her. I still have to try and

focus her, and I think that I am beginning to start seeing her now becoming anxious about now deciding: I have to make a choice here, fine I've got a major sorted out, but now what am I going to do with it. Hoping, and for the first time she said, Okay this winter you and I are going to sit down and we're going to talk about this, and I said okay, I will bring these techniques, and we'll see where we go,.. Now, whether we get anything done or not, I don't know, she is a very strong willed and single minded person, and she may not want to do anything that I've done, but at least this is a start and getting her thinking about it. After this workshop I am much more hopeful that I have some things I can try and help my daughter.

Many parents do not realize how much influence they really have, as one parent describes:

In general, my kids haven't resisted what I have suggested. I've made them take summer jobs, and trying things, and summer camp, and being counsellors, so that they learn how to be parents, and while I don't think that they have resisted my efforts, I don't pretend to be a career counsellor, I think that is for the professionals, but I am just a well intentioned parent. I don't have high expectations

either, I am not going to choose my kids careers, because their peers are way more important to them, and other people in the world, you know, So the decisions they make are based on these influences.

**QUESTION SIX: What general concerns do you have?**

Lack of information was the primary concern that the majority of parents expressed. Lack of communication was the second most frequent comment, and also the frustration of trying to keep the dialogue open. Need for resources and information was referred to a great deal in this question and the following question. Many parents repeated their concern that they have been too controlling and directive, and perhaps in some ways, limiting their child's options. One participant expressed her concern that her daughter's goal has always been for good grades, first to get accepted into university and then to maintain her scholarships. Other parents echoed this concern. "Well my major concern would be, and I know that I am being very repetitive here, is trying to be helpful, yet not pushing my own values or ideas or thoughts or opinions out there too far. That's a very difficult line to walk."

One father tried to explain that he wants to support his son in following his interests:

For us, I won't push too hard on what we want him to do, but I remind him about changes in the society and changes in the world, and that he should be aware. I told him that if he thinks that if his career path or his studies needs to be changed for the better, then okay. Because I know that he is working hard. I said if he finds changes that will help him better and that will make him happier, then I say just go for it.

One mother tried to explain her concerns of her daughter doing too much career exploration by following her interests:

I think I worry a little bit about whether I am going to give her enough concrete, help, or I worry a bit that if I just support her in pursuing what she is interests she has or in what things catch her eye at the time, whether she will have a result that will be helpful for her at the end. I think it is kind of a long process. I don't know if she'll get left in the lurch at the end of University or whether she'll have the interest to go on to the next step. I hope that she doesn't, and I don't know can you miss the boat as long as you are just going from one interest to the next?

Many parents agreed with these statements and then also the following, which introduced the concept of providing balance in their children's lives:

My concern is in a very different line. My concern is that we that we are now becoming so bogged down, with what is your career going to be, what is your career going to be? That I am afraid that they might lose the balance in their life. There are other important things to think about besides a career, your emotional state, your family status, your own health and wellbeing, and I try to encourage them to not forget that goal. Because sometimes they forget that, and especially in the sciences it is so intense, that it is always, my project has to come first before I go and visit my grandfather, and I know that she really wants to visit her grandfather very much, and I have to step in sometimes and say no, I think your grandfather is more important, he may not be here for ever. So that this time it is more important, and then she says, I've lost this time, I don't know when I'm going to catch it up, and I have to try to instill a bit more balance in her life, and tell there are priorities.

**QUESTION SEVEN: What additional skills do you feel you need to be more effective?**

One parent summarized for the group and the others in this group of eight participants agreed:

More resources, and learn to be less controlling. My children seem to be more influenced by their peers and less by parents as they get older, it would be nice to know I still have some influence. He leans on his friends for information, but they are not always right and it can be quite limiting. I realize this is an anxiety situation, but I now feel I can go away from these workshops with a sense that things will work out, that I don't need to worry so much, my son will figure it out, and now I can help him.

One of the fathers in another group shared his concerns at trying to reach his son, and the difficulty of the difference in cultures.

How can we break into their attitude that they know, or their friends know. And I would like to get more involved and show options and push him to explore and try and experience. We come from a culture that says don't waste your youth. Learn all you can and get out into the workforce as soon as possible. But the western culture says take it easy, you have

lots of time. If you are 35 and you still don't know what you want, that is okay. We are fighting against that in our children all the time.

In this same group the issue of controlling and over directing also arose. One parent added her concerns and frustration of the ambiguity of the future.

Yes, our household is very controlling and achievement oriented and it is hard for my children to be in this society that says take it easy and have fun, when in our home we value hard work. Engendering a sense that she can talk to us without being influenced. You know, that she can pick and choose and I think she needs confidence that she can do what she wants to do in the long range and just enjoy the learning while she is looking for what she wants. I don't know that she really believes yet, that she has to pick something and that she can wait and pick something that she feels passionate about. I think that she feels intimidated as well, she should have a goal, and have a place that should be obvious, that there should be already a pattern there, I think she probably would be happy if she knew that being a dentist would be what she would like to do. Perhaps what she would like to do is something that doesn't exist yet.

Yeah, I think there is hope for her, cause now, before, when we were qualifying, dentistry was just one profession, you were in it that's it. But now there are so many combinations that you can pursue, even in the dentistry field, that I am sure that she can find something. That is the one hope I have now, cause in comparing her future with mine, that she can combine skills and interests and make a career for herself, it was never thought of in our time. When we grew up we were locked in to one profession or the other.

Well, yeah, that makes me feel much better. I think that what she needs at this stage is courage and that is really hard to come by. Courage that yes, opportunities will keep arising, things are going to keep changing, and you are still going to be alright. I think change is quite intimidating for most of us. That is what they are hearing so much of now, you are going to always be working with change.

**QUESTION EIGHT: What does career success for your son or daughter mean to you?**

This question seemed to help the parents to really look at what might be the goals of their children and the similarities and differences of their concept of success for themselves. One mother described how difficult it is to convey her desires of assistance to her daughter:

I want her to focus more on her career and get it done, and then allow for fun later, but my feedback to her is too strong, and she does less the more I push. I would like her to do less and enjoy herself, and get more sleep, because now she is pushing herself too hard. I want her to find her goal as fast as she can and get on with her career. Success based on her previous goals would be good for me. She used to have just one goal to be a paediatrician, but now she is wanting to experience other things. I think she should finish her career but perhaps not too fast and not too stressed, so that she can enjoy herself more. But I feel lost and I sense that she is lost too without her goal.

Another mother shared her appreciation for the workshop:

I am thankful for this workshop. I feel a sense of hope and more opportunities for my daughter and I can support her in exploring diversity. I have much more hope for her success than I had before I came.

In another focus group, there was more discussion about the different cultural expectations and meaning of success:

Well a lot of it depends on your values and what cultural background you come from. I come from a culture where family is very important. And with having to be there for your family, you can not get that engrossed and that intensely involved in your career to neglect family. So back in the east, you've got your 60 hours of your career, and then neglect your family. I don't think that would be a good measure of success.

Yes, family values, even your own spiritual values, and the way that you give to the community, either your immediate community or cultural community, anyway, it is important to volunteer. That aspect in our culture is very, very strong. So she has to learn to preserve that as well.

I agree, community involvement is very important – volunteering and giving back to the community.

One father in another focus group summarized:

Well I think of it as sort of a Zen of fulfilment which includes of course, balance, as you referred to, family, job related challenges that reflects on their needs, whether they like working in groups or whether they like to work individually, and the environment that they work in, all rolled together. I guess and then we would want our kids to be happy, healthy involved in honest work, or honest lives. I guess I shouldn't specify just work, but honest lives that contribute. And I think that is basically it, I suppose.

Yes, that is really it, isn't it. It is always interesting in hearing what others have to say, because my first reaction was, I really want her to take pleasure in all the things that she is doing. And I think that is, when I hear you talk about values, I think that is really important, I want her to be able to enjoy whatever family life she chooses to have, and not have such a

huge tension between family and work. I mean I hear this, and I think this has more to do with me sometimes, than it has to do with her. And maybe we are always trying to help our children to achieve the goals that we think we didn't achieve as well.

**Written Response: What insight have you gained from this discussion?**

1. From this discussion, I learned that I could be a life coach (more than a career coach). And I should be more supportive to my children
2. I know more about this than I thought I did. And I need to follow my child again (just like in elementary school)
3. I learned about the importance of communication and how I need to work at it with my daughter.
4. I realize that parents think more or less the same. This is reassuring to me.
5. These workshops have given me the confidence to believe in what I always believe in.
6. "I have to follow my child" A great quote from Montessori, that I already know, but it is really important to keep this in mind at all times.
7. Learning about how my daughter's peers are also struggling with career and personal issues at this stage in their lives, and struggle of parents to see them through this.
8. What I found most valuable in this workshop is I get reminded of many aspects about our son's career and life, as well as various areas of value. Overall, this workshop improved my understanding about young adults. Thanks a lot!

9. I can and should talk with my son more, including about his career. Most parents have more care and concern than have on their children. I am happy with the way I am! Parent coaching is a newly developing field, and I am finding it very helpful ideas.
10. I think I see more success in the coaching parenting role with less pressuring. I am encouraged to worry less and convey confidence in their future more.
11. Regardless of our different culture, background and experiences, we all feel the same about our desire to help and support our children. It is helpful to hear about other parent's strategies and outlook.
12. That we are not alone with problems and worries; that we can get help and our sons/ daughters can; how we can open their mind and ours to opportunities available; that we all want the best for our children.
13. To appears that we have the same concerns and have the same goals for our children. It could be a different situation but with these workshops, especially for me, it opened my mind in other areas.
14. I gained enormous things in this workshop. I hope that more parents will get involved in this program.
15. I understand more about my children's needs. I got information on career planning and I am more aware of respect for children's decisions. I learned about communication and I liked the open discussion.

16. I have learned about good methods of parent coaching, availability of different resources and information in this aspect. I feel more ready and better equipped in communication with my son.
17. Left me with a feeling of not always having to solve every problem for my child, rather listen and coach her whenever possible.
18. We all have the same feelings and same worries, we need to communicate more to discuss issues, their issues to make sure that we are normal parents and help each other to go through this transition in our life as parents. This workshop has helped us to do this.

## **THEMES**

One of the key steps in data analysis undertaken was in searching for patterns and key phrases into coding categories. The theoretical approach to determining these categories came from the concerns of the parents themselves and my own observations and concerns.

Recommendations were listed according to consistency and frequency of issues discussed. To ensure that the analysis of the qualitative data was systematic, the two focus group facilitators reviewed their field notes from each of the focus group sessions to confirm the interpretations of the transcripts. One additional researcher independently analyzed the qualitative data and prepared independent interpretations. Comparing statements within and across the focus group sessions allowed for assessment of reliability.

### Frequency of Responses

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>FREQUENCY of RESPONSES</b>
Parent Anxiety (Lack of Information)	215
Communication	178
Parenting Styles	112
Changing Roles	88
Efficacy of Workshops	127

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of parents as they attempt to guide their children in the transition from highschool to university. The general experience has been one of frustration and lack of knowledge of resources available and knowledge of the current labour market trends. The purpose of the workshops was to provide a basic sense of what resources are available for their students attending UBC as well as to provide them with general knowledge about coaching their sons and daughters in their career exploration. The emphasis in the workshops was on the fact that it was the student's responsibility and that it was the students future career that was the focus of the decision making process. Many parents realized through attending the workshops that they have been much too controlling and pushing.

The initial concerns of the parents when the first came to the workshops were that they felt anxious about how their children were doing in adjusting to university. Many parents noticed a change in the goals of their children and felt that they were changing the goals that they had all through highschool. "I am concerned for my son, because there is so much pressure to make choices, and no one really working with him, I want to know what career options are now, as I feel so out of touch with the world of work." Several parents were concerned whether their children were choosing the right career for them, "I want help with gaining the ability to help my son, who is bored and doesn't want to be a doctor anymore."

Recognizing that the parenting skills that they have been using up to this point are not as effective in the past was a major theme for many parents and this was discussed in the workshops as well. The fact that their children are being treated as adults by the university and yet are still dependent upon the parents financially has caused changes in the dynamic of the parent child relationship. It was mentioned repeatedly by many parents that "being a parent of a university student is a new experience for me, my position, my role with my son has changed".

## **Parent Anxiety - Need for information and resources**

When asked about their experience so far, several parents expressed frustration, confusion and a general lack of knowledge of how to help. "My daughter asks questions and I know that the consequence of what I say is important, and I am not aware of the kinds of choices she can make. I am not sure if I am aware of her strengths and weaknesses. How can I assess? I was wondering where I could go to find this out, were there tests she could take? Up until now, I didn't feel confident that I knew enough to help. This workshop is helping me to find the resources." Over half of the parents mentioned that they try to give advice, but their sons and daughters resist, "My daughter is living in residence, so I feel more removed from it for the first time. She is feeling a lot of stress, I am not, and this is a new role for me, not to be a part of it all. I am usually a hands on parent and this is difficult for me, I keep feeling that maybe I should be more supportive" "I don't think I was very effective in the past, he didn't ask for my advice because he knew I didn't have any answers. I worry about the future and don't have much experience to share with my son, I only know how I did it, and after these workshops, I can see that I can get the knowledge and resources to help my son. The ideas and strategies will be very helpful in keeping the dialogue open. I know things now, I didn't know then."

One mother explained that her experience in helping her son was haphazard, and indirect. She did not know how to help:

I feel I was a role model for my son, to strive for an education and then get out there and work, but also to be a part of the community. He says he wants to be a doctor, no matter what. I didn't know how to help him. I know that UBC expects the students to ask for help, but I know my son, he is like me, he will not ask for help. But now, I know after this that there is help out there and I can try to influence him to look for it.

More parents found that their experiences have not been as positive as their children move from adolescence into adulthood.

Well on the topic of career and counselling about career, I found that somewhat difficult, my son doesn't talk to me about it a lot, because I think part of that is that he vacillates a little on what he wants to do, but when he does sort out what he wants to do, there have been one or two constant kind of strains, and they sound very unrealistic to me. And so I've tried to not say that, and to just kind of listen and say uh huh. And the other thing that I think I struggle with a bit is that I'd got lots of ideas about what I think would be great of what he could do, and so therefore, trying not to push those on to him, or put those forward, so I just stay very, very neutral. And just sort of react to what he says,

rather than putting my own things forward. And that's a constant struggle, and it keeps me quiet most of the time.

Many parents were pleased to receive information about the resources available to their students at UBC, and found it "very encouraging" to learn that there are people at UBC who are available. One mother expressed her appreciation for the workshops and "that you at UBC understand my situation, and what me and my son are going through". Over 15 of the parents discussed the practical strategies and new ideas that they thought would be helpful in creating dialogue with their children.

## **Communication**

Communication was an issues for almost all of the parents, and they found that they "like the strategies, these are practical things that we can do to help without telling them what to do". "I learned that we can make them think more, there are strategies to help, and very useful information. This is such a good thing, such a wonderful service. UBC is so big and there is so much to know. My daughter can't find out everything on her own, this is so good to include parents, as we can then be a resource for our children too."

One mother explained how learning coaching strategies could help her daughter:

I am much more confident that I can help my child to avoid stepping into the same muddy puddles as I stepped in. My own experience here at UBC was isolation, and I had no focus. It is reassuring to see that my child will benefit from the new resources in regards to skill building and self development – these were not available when I came here as a student. It is good to find out that some of the things I am doing – listening and understanding – is the right thing to do.

Parents were learning from each other. In one group, one mother shared how she has been able to keep communication open with her two sons, driving them to school each morning, and developing the habit of “sharing every time they come into the car.

Basically, what I’ve found is that they use me as a sounding board, sometimes if they feel unsure about where they are going, they just want to voice their concerns. And sometimes I share with them my experience, sometimes, they may or may not, and more often than not they disagree with me. But in the end, they find an answer and they say, well

maybe this is what I may do, and it is not necessarily something I've said to them, it is just the fact that they have been able to talk to me about it, and that they have worked it through. And they've gone through a talking process and found a way out for themselves.

Sharing of experiences and problems was a common theme for many parents, hearing that others are going through the same struggles and dealing with the same issues was normalizing for many parents. "The best thing for me is to realize that we're all in the same boat, same problems, it is nice to know this. Also learning coaching skills, and learning the importance of listening were mentioned several times. Understanding what the students are experiencing was also a benefit of these workshops. "my greatest fear was how do I say this to my son. I didn't want to upset my son. I am learning that it is not so difficult to start these conversations." One father shared his attempts that he has already started in engaging his son in career exploration:

I talked with my son and he spoke about the constraints of UBC. He talked about exploring as an undergraduate and he said you're so constrained in 2<sup>nd</sup> year because you have a set number of courses. So I tried the possible selves activity in a sort of informal way, and he became more animated and more interested. He said he could explore with extracurricular

activities, but he has to find a summer job. We talked about how he could pursue your suggestion about connecting with UBC Career Services. We also talked about the overhead you had about geography, and all the possible careers you could have with that. So now, he will investigate the world a bit more.

A mother shared her experience talking with her daughter and how she found out things she was not aware of, and what her daughter was going through:

I tried the Pattern Identification Exercise with my daughter, and she came to realize things about herself that I knew, but I don't think she did. She gained some valuable insight. This led us to talking about her current interests, and she told me she was failing physics. This was a shock to me; she hadn't said anything before. I also think that she is quite depressed, which I hadn't noticed before, I thought she was just stressed about midterms. I suggested that she go see someone in the Counselling Services. I don't think that conversation would have happened if I hadn't attended these workshops.

Several parents in this group and others shared this same experience, that because they realize how much influence they do have, and how lacking of information they feel, they quite often say nothing. "my experience is that he doesn't use me as a sounding board at all. I just try to throw in a few, just a few little, you know, comments in edgewise whenever I can. And I try to listen whenever he is willing to talk, but those times are few and far between. It is very frustrating as a parent."

## Parenting Styles

Seven parents commented on their own expectations and how they try not to push, and over 15 parents did say that they have found that they may push too much. Several parents shared their experience in coming to Canada and how their children's experience is very different from their own. "As a career coach, right now, my son is coaching me. He tells me what it is like in this country. I had certain expectations and he is telling me that things don't work like that here. I have hope that now I can be more informed to help him reach his goal."

Several parents discussed the different relationships that they have with their different children, feeling that they have been effective with one and not so much with the other. Some parents with older or younger children felt that they were effective with one child but not another.

We have two sons, one is very open and he tells me everything, about what he thinks, his school life, what he talks about with his friends. And actually we talk a lot about his career, he told me he wants to work at NASA... And we have another son, and he just shuts himself down to us. He doesn't want to talk to us about his career or what he wants to do, after highschool, whether he wants to go to UBC. but when he needs money, he talks to us. So they are like that, they were brought up the same, same

family, same education, but they are very different. As the father, I was always busy outside kind of. I have had very little influence on them; a bit like my parents, who had very little influence on my development.

When asked how effective they felt as parents in the area of career coaching up to this point, 24 parents felt that they have not been effective. Several parents felt that they were too controlling and directive.

I have been influencing my daughter too much, but she was the one who always said she wanted to be a doctor, and I was forcing her to do, but now that she is saying she wants to do something else, I see it as getting away from her goal, and from what she wants. I feel lost and helpless now, because she doesn't want to be a doctor. I am afraid she will get too far behind from her dream and end up with nothing. I felt like I had to keep her on track. But now I see that she is trying to tell me that she needs to look in other areas. But I find that so difficult. I can't let go of her wanting to be a doctor.

Seven of the parents felt that they were effective in some ways, through encouragement, helping to get volunteer and work experience, helping to find

resources. One parent said that she has done a great deal of research for her daughter in helping to choose courses, "It was a lot of research that I know she wouldn't do for herself. But I have to be careful not to pressure her in specific areas. I think that is being effective, I hope, I try to give information, but I guess you have to give the bigger picture sometimes, it is not just about specific courses." Another parent felt that being less involved was effective. "I think I have been effective without realizing. We have always allowed her to follow her interests and supported her in trying things out. We haven't tried to influence too much"

### **Changing Roles**

An important issue that arose was the changing role of the parent, as their children become adults and more independent. While this was covered quite a bit in the workshops, it seemed to be a new concept to many parents. The idea that their children want independence even though they may still be living at home, and the parents are still responsible financially. One mother described her experience and many parents in the group were nodding their heads in agreement, as she spoke:

I feel like I am in the middle of a storm, and my role is changing so fast I realize that I have to change from a hands on parent to meet my daughter in the middle somehow.

This workshop has helped be to see that I can be a coach, and I think my daughter will accept me more as a coach, and I can reach her more in that middle ground. I got some excellent ideas from this workshop and some insight about myself that will help me to communicate better with my daughter. I realize she doesn't need parenting in the same sense, but she still needs my support and encouragement.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

In many programs for parents it is often said by teachers and counsellors in highschool that it is the parents who need it the most do not participate. However for parents of first year university students, it may quite possibly be that the reverse is true. For research studies such as this one, it is often the parents who are more committed and involved who volunteer. I found many parents who attended the workshops and then the focus groups, realized that they may be too controlling over their children, and too involved and directive. Many parents realized that they may need to back off a little, and allow their young adult children to take more responsibility for their own career exploration and decision making. One father in particular stated that he realized that he has pushing his son too much. He came to me after the workshop with tears in his eyes and said:

I realized just this evening that I have been strongly urging my son to go to veterinarian school, but I have gained insight that it had always been a dream of mine when I was a child, but I did not have the opportunity in my country. Now, as I think about my son's goals, he does like science, but he doesn't like animals, but he had agreed to go be a vet

because I was always pushing it. I will go home this evening and ask my son what he wants to do with his life.

### **Evaluation of the Parent as Career Coaches Workshops**

Whether the workshops have accomplished what is set out to do was not something that could adequately be evaluated from these focus groups, however from the many comments of parents stating how they have helped to give them a sense of hope in term of how they can support and encourage their students, shows there was some effect. In order to say whether this would have an impact upon the success of the students would have to be determined by the long term study of family and student success. This would also depend upon the individual goals of the parents, according to their own personal values. To measure the effectiveness of the intervention, I would like to do follow up interviews with some of the students with their parents. This would give a great indication of the efficacy of the workshops. To truly measure the effectiveness of the intervention, it would be necessary to do follow up interviews with some of the students with their parents over a longer period of time, perhaps even following some of the families throughout the university career of the student

## **LIMITATIONS**

The focus group following the workshops may have influenced the parent's answers in some of the questions, particularly in the area of what has been their experience so far, as well as what career/life success means to them. Focus group can cause inhibiting effect on some members, and some more dominant focus group members could create a polarization of attitudes. However, the purpose of this study was to explore the efficacy of providing parents with psycho-educational workshops in helping them to develop the attitudes and skills to coach their son or daughter in the area of career exploration and decision making.

The workshops helped to clarify and focus the discussion, opening with brainstorming of concerns which were mainly academic, and became much more career and future oriented during the focus groups. Workshops promoted discussion of new ideas. The focus group questions provided direction of the discussion.

One limitation of this sample was the required commitment of these particular volunteers to attend two workshops plus one focus group. Focus groups can cause inhibiting effect on some members, and some more dominant focus group members could create a polarization of attitudes. Nevertheless, great care was taken by the moderator and myself to ensure that one member did not dominate the discussion or overly influence the input of the individual focus

group. The data was drawn from discussions with the parents rather than a discussion of parents with the students themselves, and perhaps in future research, inclusion of the students within the focus groups would enhance the results.

Holding the focus groups immediately following the workshops may have influenced the parent's answers in some of the questions, particularly in the area of their major concerns, as well as what career/life success means to them. However, the workshops helped to clarify and focus the discussion, opening with brainstorming of concerns which were mainly academic, and became much more career and future oriented during the focus groups. Workshops promoted discussion of new ideas, and there were some major shifts in attitude of some of the parents. However, the purpose of this study was to explore the efficacy of providing parents with psycho-educational workshops in helping them to develop the attitudes and skills to coach their son or daughter in the area of career exploration and decision making.

In general, the diversity of parents reflected the diversity of students attending UBC. On reflection, asking more deeply about the cultural background of parents may have provided more information and this was particularly evident in the issues of expectations for their children. In the first focus group, it became apparent that cultural background had an influence on either parenting style or parent expectations. While we did not investigate during the first discussion group, the parents in the following focus groups were asked their cultural background briefly. Many parents were relatively new to Canada. Also it

appeared that for parents of some cultures control and respect was an important issue, along with imposing certain occupations on their children. Perhaps a question of comparing their own experiences to that of their children would have helped to get more depth in the discussion about their cultural background.

The cultural bias inherent in Western career counselling became evident in the focus group discussions, for example, the western idea of individual responsibility of career choice, and the different expectations of parents and families of other cultures. McCormick and Amundson (1997) found that the participation of parents, extended family as well as the community proved to have a great influence and benefit to the career exploration of youth in First Nations cultures.

## **Strengths**

In terms of the focus group design, there were several positive outcomes. Having another person act as moderator of the focus groups allowed for me to observe; taking notes and writing down specific thoughts and observations. It was very powerful to witness the sharing of experience and interaction of ideas of the parents as they learned from each other, compared themselves to each other, and realized that others share the same concerns.

When the parents were asked what their initial concerns were why they came to these workshops, at the beginning of the first workshop, the answers were specific to the students immediate needs and frustrations with classes. When

asked why they came to the workshops at the start of the focus groups, after the two workshop sessions, the parents were much more focused on the bigger picture of career development. They were much more aware of the process and importance of career exploration and decision making. In this sense already the workshops were shown to be an intervention in that the expected change in attitude and awareness of the parents would be affecting the focus group discussion. The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which parents can become more aware of the career exploration and development of their students. The procedures of this study provided an interesting demonstration of the shift in thinking of many of the parents. The questions provided the specific responses to each question systematically, however, many of the actual answers to the questions (particularly the one asking how did these workshops help you) were answered sporadically throughout the discussion of all of the focus groups.

To truly understand and gain insight into the experience of others, their perspective must be drawn out; to really get a grasp of the essence of the experience of parents experience of career coaching their children, it would have perhaps been more effective to have asked fewer questions, and just allowed the parents to tell their stories more. The focus group moderator did a good job in making sure that each parent had a chance to comment on each question, however he was quite intent on making sure all questions were asked in each focus group. On reflection, some of the questions were really not necessary, such as how they define career/life success. However, it did show that parents truly care for the

success and happiness in their children's future. Perhaps more secondary questions, to draw out a deeper level of meaning of their experiences in terms of their cultural backgrounds, would have been better.

I think that many parents do not realize that they are already providing career coaching to their children and have been throughout the parental relationship; I think that the parents were saying that if they were more consciously aware of the influence they have they could better inform themselves and provide more intentional and timely assistance. Many parents stated that they would have preferred this kind of workshop while their sons and daughters were still in highschool, so that they could have been more encouraging, supportive, and less controlling and directive.

Since the workshops, I have been receiving many emails from concerned parents whose students are failing courses. They are asking for assistance in further coaching their children or referrals to advisors. I hope to expand this research into more in depth to look at the experience of UBC students that are considering dropping out of UBC, from the experience of the parents and students together. I am interested in understanding the experience in terms of the parents, and how they can become better career coaches for their children. Perhaps in the future UBC would then be able to provide more preventative help in student success.

The real issues for the parents came at the end of the workshop, when the parents were discussing how they could implement some of the suggestions I gave

on how to be a career coach. This indicates more issues such as communication concerns that would not necessarily arise in questionnaires or individual questioning. I was interested in understanding how parents feel and think about career coaching, so that I can better develop a workshop that can more accurately meet their needs.

In summary, the focus groups turned out to be a very effective way of getting at a broad range of experiences of the parents, and most parents gained from participating in group discussions. However, greater depth could have been obtained with fewer questions. I also would have done one focus group first, and analysed the data, and then perhaps reformulated or eliminated some of the questions for the remaining groups. I felt that I was able to understand the frustrations of the parents in their sense of lack of information and frustrations at not knowing what resources were available. A great deal of labour market information, websites, handouts, and information about UBC resources were provided and parents appreciated this a great deal. In retrospect, the workshops did provide a good background about what it means to be a coach for your own children, as well as an overview of career exploration and the decision making process of career development.

## **Suggestions for Further Research**

There were many suggestions from the parents for further research and follow up support. A study exploring what the students need from their parents would also be beneficial. Also research specifically studying the cultural differences would be important as indicated by the present study, showing that parents new to Canada have different values and expectations. McCormick and Amundson (1997) found that career exploration for First Nations students requires the support and participation of parents and community, and this study indicates that other cultures may also be enhanced with the participation of parents.

## **Implications for practice**

Several parents recommended that the same workshops be offered to parents of highschool students, as they indicated that they would have benefited from this kind of information and support earlier. Other parents suggested the workshops be held with the parents and students together to stimulate dialogue.

Previous research has shown how much influence parents have in the career development of the adolescent in highschool, both in terms of being helpful and encouraging, and in terms of being overly directive and limiting, and that there are many issues involved. I was interested in knowing how this relationship can be enhanced for students struggling with their university education, what it means for the student, but more specifically, what it means for the parent. I would also like to take this workshop to the parents of highschool students.

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## **APPENDIXES**

Sent as an email

October 22, 2001

Dear Parents:

I am writing to parents in the Lower Mainland who attended Parent Orientation 2001 to invite you to participate in two distinctive opportunities, as you continue to support your son or daughter during their university studies. The first opportunity is a career-planning workshop. The second opportunity is the formation of a Parent's Advisory Council.

### **Parents as Career Coaches**

UBC is piloting a program called "*Parents as Career Coaches*". These workshops are designed to guide parents to coach their sons or daughters to develop an awareness of interests, values and skills that help define career choices and to examine the changing world of work. You will discuss strategies to assist them with exploration and goal-setting skills that will help to:

- identify meaningful occupational possibilities
- set priorities and goals
- implement effective decision-making strategies.

This program comprises two workshops scheduled one week apart during November. Each session will be 2 hours and will be offered at the University of British Columbia.

These workshops are one component of a program to encourage and support involvement in first-year student career development. After attending both workshops, you will be invited to participate in an optional focus group to help researchers understand the parent's issues and concerns in the area of career development.

Janet Beddoes, the group facilitator, is a Career and Employment Educator who has been working with students at UBC Career Services for over three years. To register for these workshops please complete the attached registration form or send an email with the registration information to [parent.orientation@ubc.ca](mailto:parent.orientation@ubc.ca). To find out more information, please call 604-822-3644 or email [janet.beddoes@ubc.ca](mailto:janet.beddoes@ubc.ca) directly.

I am sure that this year will be a unique learning experience for your son or daughter – and we want you to be involved too. The first year of university is exciting and challenging. At UBC, we are committed to supporting our students in their transition to university life. We invite you to join us in our efforts to achieve our shared goals.

Sincerely,

Janet Teasdale  
Director, Student Development

Dr. Margery Fee  
Associate Dean of Students,  
Faculty of Arts

**Registration For Parents as Career Coaches Workshops**

Please check off which set of workshops you would like to attend. These workshops are free of charge and refreshments will be available.

☐ Saturday, November 10 and Saturday, November 17 at 10:00 am to 11:45 am

☐ Monday, November 12 and Monday November 19 at 7:00 pm to 8:45 pm

☐ Thursday, November 15 and Thursday, November 22 at 7:00 pm to 8:45 pm

☐ Number attending. \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Return completed forms to:

Parents Program  
Office of the VP Students  
6328 Memorial Road  
Vancouver, BC  
V6T 1Z2

Or fax: 604-822-8194

Or email: [parent.orientation@ubc.ca](mailto:parent.orientation@ubc.ca) with the details of your attendance.

**Questions for Focus Group**

1. Why did you come to the “Parents as Career Coaches” workshops?
2. What did you find useful about the workshops?
3. What has been your experience with career development of your son/daughter in the past?
4. How effective do you feel you were in assisting your son/daughter in career exploration and planning?
5. How has your son/daughter responded to your attempts to actively engage them in career exploration?
6. What general concerns do you have?
7. What additional skills, information and resources do you feel you and your son/daughter would require?
8. What is your definition of career/life success for your son/daughter?

During the last 10 to 15 minutes of the group, the facilitator summarized the group discussion and elicited feedback from participants regarding the accuracy of the summary.

The pre-group individual written questions:

1. What has been your experience with career advising in the past?
2. What did you find useful about the workshops?

The post-group written question:

Participants were asked to respond individually in written form, to the following questions:

1. What have insights have you gained during this discussion?

## Parents as Career Coaches WORKSHOP OUTLINE

### WEEK ONE

#### A. Introduction and Welcome

- Welcome parents Introduce facilitators and nature of Parent program
- Overview of workshops – two workshops – and one optional focus group

#### Objectives

- to understand the career development
- to learn ways of coaching (changing role of parent)
- to understand changing world of work
- to understand the decision making process

#### B. Warm up activity

Before we begin, I'd like to ask you to turn to a person around you and introduce yourself, your son or daughter's faculty/program, and what you are hoping to get from these workshops...

#### ▪ Think-Pair Share

##### Debrief:

1. Faculties – how many Arts? Science? AgSc? Eng?
2. List expectations – list relevant issues on Yellow poster , and other questions on Blue
3. Talk about what will be in this workshop, and next weeks.

#### C. Meandering, Manoeuvring, Meaning

Lynne Bezanson and Sareena Hopkins – Canadian Career Development Foundation.

#### D. Common Career Myths

#### E. Career Development Process

#### F. Meandering = Exploration

- Self awareness – identity
- Trying things out
- Having a balanced life
- Researching options

#### Think-Pair Share

1. Think back to when you were 18 – what were your goals? Share with a partner. How many are doing that now?
2. If I knew then what I know now....

**Debrief:** What did you find? Any surprises? Write them on flip chart

## WEEK TWO

### A. Introduction and Welcome

- Welcome parents
- How did conversations go with students?
- What was useful?

### B. 7 Career Realities

- Trends
- Employability skills
- Life skills

### C. Manoeuvring

**\*Brainstorming** - What is coaching? **"Seek first to understand, then to be understood"**

- Encouraging and supporting
- Teaching
- Mentoring and role modeling

Developing strategies of effective communication – (listening and understanding first)

### D. Meaning

- Career Values
- Mattering -
- Setting Goals

### E. Career Coaching strategies

- **Pattern Identification Exercise** – demonstration with a volunteer
- Career Exploration Questions
- Chance Events and Serendipity
- IDEAL DAY - imagine a day from the time you get up and go to work ....
- I AM . . . .
- Genogram - a family tree with occupations
- Career as Metaphor – what metaphor can you use to describe your career/life right now?
- Possible selves mapping

### F. Conclusion - I will prepare myself and my time will come Roots and Wings

Discussion of focus group participation and sign up sheets

### G. Evaluation for Parent workshops

## WEEK THREE - Focus Group Discussions

Sent as an email

December 28, 2001

Dear Ms. Beddoes:

Thank you for your e-mail dated Dec. 13. Yes, I have now, over the Christmas break, had an opportunity to sit down with both my daughters individually, (Tamara\* who is in her 3rd year, and Alanna\* who is in her 1st year), and share with them the ideas and methods provided to us at the two sessions we had with you in November.

First of all, from the perspective of a parent, I must admit that I have had to exercise some change in my approach to choosing a career. I was a subscriber to following trends, and equating high paying professions with security. Job satisfaction was not such a high priority for me - something that my generation has undervalued.

Speaking to my daughters however, I found that both felt that the approaches shown by you made a great deal of sense to them. I have been able to enable them to identify what qualities to search for in their future professions, and to provide them with a strategy on how to continue their search for that fulfilling career - a good beginning.

Tamara is more resistant to change, less driven to acquire public recognition or make an impact on society, does not like stress, enjoys working with children and must have an opportunity to indulge in her personal passion which is to compose music. So, she is looking into Paediatric Dentistry, or (more likely) at Education. I have advised her to see if Career Counselling can advise her on other professions that we do not know of, that might fit her work values.

Alanna is quite the opposite - enjoys team work, wants to make a difference, does not mind stress, is challenged by new situations (gets bored otherwise). It is more difficult at this stage to identify anything more clearly for her. She is intending to try out a Co-op program, and is beginning her search by identifying which one to subscribe to.

I have communicated your offer to meet and talk with them, to see if you can assist them further in their quests. Both seemed eager to do that, so they may contact you during the next term to perhaps show you how far I was able to help them, and perhaps get some new ideas on how they can further their search. I am thinking more in terms of contacts that they could talk to regarding their choices.

Both have voiced the same laments that have come through from other parents at the sessions in November - they find their course schedules restricting and too demanding to be able to find the freedom and time to "explore", especially as both want to continue to qualify for the USP and Chancellor's scholarships respectively, and finance themselves through university independently.

Thank you once again for your help.

Regards

C. Neuman\*

\* names have been changed