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PARENTAL INFLUENCES, ENVIRONMENT, AND SELF-CONCEPT AS KEY FACTORS IN CHILD VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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FACTORS IN CHILD VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By

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ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Vocational Research has been limited within the field of Education. Other forms of vocational research focuses on mature teens and young adults. This Major Research Paper focuses on the seminal literature of children to the age of twelve. Two participants from a University in Ontario were qualitatively interviewed. Both participants were females, from upper-class homes and European descent.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Major Research Paper to my Grandparents, Ivan and Beulah Clarke; Parents Patti and David Wiebe; Brother Clark Wiebe; Husband Anthony Simone and my dearly loved unborn child. Thank you for all your support and encouragement throughout this academic journey. I hope to make you proud.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my Advisor Dr. Zhou, second reader Dr. Salinitri, and other professors from the program- who guided me and encouraged me- resulting in the achievement of a Masters of Education. I will forever be grateful for their transient yet crucial role in my life.

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CHAPTER 1

IMPORTANCE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Unlimited brain connections are forming as early as the first breath infants take. These wirings will shape their lives entirely. While infants become preschoolers they still form connections that lay a foundation for future choices. The age between four and seven indicate the beginning of curiosity and fantasy (Cinamon & Dan, 2010). Curiosity is a basic drive in children and is often satisfied through exploration. This exploratory play leads to the construction of occupational information development. Auger, Blackhurst and Wahl (2005) adds that at approximately age 5, children's career aspirations begin to be shaped by social influences, gender expectations, social prestige and the perceived difficulty of the career. This understanding enforces that childhood is a pivotal period for developing career realization.

Career development is a life-long process; therefore it is very important that we understand the different influences affecting this development. In this research paper, I will be discussing the importance of child vocational development and exploring which influences are most substantial. I will be focusing on the children to the age of twelve. In trying to understand the role of early experiences in shaping ones career choice, I will use a retrospective approach to understand how adults view early family and school experiences that may have influenced their decisions about their current workforce participation.

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of how parents and educators can help develop positive vocational development through building good self-concept in children and understanding the factors, which influence this development.

Such influences include: family relations, SES and occupational gender stereotyping.

I want to research and understand how parents can make a difference in their child's vocational development because I feel that all parents want their child to do well and have a safe, happy and financially stable life in the future. I want to know how parents can help their child in making choices which will improve their lives and help avoid stressful life issues such as unemployment, suicide and health problems. If there are ways to improve the lives of our future generations through research and understanding the value of developing positive vocational development and self-concept, then all children will have the tools to make decisions that allow them to master skills they are interested in and help others.

This major paper gives us knowledge on how to prevent possible unemployment for our children in the future, in addition to preventing poverty. It prepares children to be active in the development of our economy. It gives us information, which will help children feel valued and feel they can make a positive impact in the world. It makes the child feel they have a "purpose". Researching this topic may allow parents to understand the impact they have on their child and how they can help teach their children positive vocational development through setting up the environment to enhance career development and acting as a positive role model. The questions being addressed are important and beneficial to parents, teachers and economists.

There is limited research in the field of early child vocational development. Three key factors play a role in this development: parental influences, the environment and self-concept.

There is a rapidly growing body of research on young adult career aspirations (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001), but little knowledge on educational aspirations of younger children (Blackhurst, Auger & Wahl, 2003) and how it affects the career path they take (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001). Most of the research's attention has been focused on high school students. However, the career beliefs, knowledge and aspirations of elementary-school children are a very fascinating focus of research (Auger, Blackhurst & Wahl, 2005). Occupational choice plays a key role in setting the course of lifestyle trajectories with diverse impacts across the lifespan. Surprisingly, this area of personal development has received little attention in developmental psychology (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001). The limited research focused on young children prompts my attempt to fill this void. Knowing that early family and school experiences are important to developing trajectories, identifying specific early experiences may give us insight into how early family and school experiences of working adults contribute to career decision-making. Other factors such as socioeconomic status and schools also play a role. How can parents and educators help children create a healthy environment for positive vocational development? What are the implications if children do not develop good vocational development in the early years? What would be the effects? What are the benefits?

The literature suggests that the developmental career approach coincides with child development theories such as Piaget (1977) and Vygotsky (1978). Piaget depicted the developmental nature of learning as being one through which the child acquires new knowledge by exploring the environment. Vygotsky stressed that parents play a role in mediation and modeling in particular, highlighting the central role of adults in social-

developmental processes, regardless if they are educators or parents (Cinamon & Da, 2010). Therefore, identifying this is the key role adults have in young children's lives.

Havighurst (1964) described a model of six stages of career development, three of the six occurring during childhood and adolescence. Havighurt's first stage, identification with a worker, occurs between the ages of five to ten. At this stage of life, the concept of working becomes integrated in the child's perception of his or her adult life. Parents and other adults close to the child are important models in creating this vision (Auger, Blackhurst & Wahl, 2005). Children have more understanding of their parent's occupation than other occupations (Cinamon and Dan, 2010). Parents also play a large role in occupational development and pursuits. As children begin to gain a stronger sense of self-confidence in their choices, they are more likely to aspire to more difficult occupations, whereas if children have a low sense of confidence in achieving desired outcomes, they will be hesitant to pursue occupations believed to be beyond their capabilities (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001). Proactive parental confidence in the child's capabilities affect child development much more than parents whom lack confidence in their child's abilities. Therefore, parents with high academic efficiency would favour high educational aspirations and influence their child's academic aspirations (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001).

Another factor that contributes to successful vocational development is socioeconomic status (SES). Socioeconomic status has long been considered an antecedent of vocational awareness and vocational choice (Cinamon & Dan, 2010). Social class has been shown to account for most of the variance in children's knowledge about occupations, with children from upper class homes demonstrating more knowledge

than their peers from lower SES levels (Cinamon & Dan, 2010).

Learning is a holistic process and involves thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving as individuals relating to past experiences and ongoing interaction with the world throughout their lives. The notion of learning as an ongoing process throughout life coincides with theoretical views of individuals as active agents and shapers of their careers (Lapan, 2004).

Lapan (2004) proposed individuals learn through interaction with the environment and his segmental model drew attention to many sources of learning such as family, school, society, peer group, community and the labour market, sources which are also evident in other career theories.

A combination of career building and education would allow the theoretical rationale for preschool career interventions that aim to promote career awareness, exploration and career planning skills to help shape the future. These early interventions allow active engagement in the world of work and to foster the development of initial concern about the future (Cinamon & Dan, 2010).

Do parents have an influence on their child's vocational development? Does socio-economic status of the child and/or their families have an influence on their child's vocational development? Does occupational gender stereotyping play a significant role in the child's vocational development? How important is self-concept in children when trying to acquire positive vocational development? The answers to these questions will be better understood through this study.

After receiving clearance from REB, I was only able to interview two participants for my study. This was good for coding the data, but limited the amount of possible

factors, which affected their career development. With more participants I would have

been able to gather possibly, more accurate and valid data. When asking my participants

questions about the past, some of their memories they were not able to recall. Some

questions they did not have complete answers too. Also, as a researcher, I was not aware

if they provided any inaccuracies in their self-report data.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

How early is too early to begin thinking about what one wants to do with his or her life? Magnuson and Starr (2000) propose that it is never too early to consider ways to help children achieve self-fulfillment. A major contribution to self-fulfillment is determined through vocational development. Throughout this paper I will be looking at three theories including Holland's theory of vocational development (Holland, 1959), John B. Watson's theory of behavior (Moore, 2013) and Herzberg's theory on motivation. Each are equally and substantially important in the process of life-long vocational development.

Holland's theory is important because it provides a powerful framework for studying students' learning and development (Pike, Smart & Ethington, 2012). It also has had an enormous impact on vocational theories, career counseling practice, and vocational assessment (Mei, 2009). At the heart of Holland's theory is the premise that individuals and environments can be classified using one or more types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Although personality types and environments are usually identified by their dominant Holland type (e.g., Investigative), individuals and environments are more properly classified using a three-part code (e.g., Investigative–Artistic–Enterprising) representing primary, secondary, and tertiary Holland types (Mei, 2009).

The second theory being discussed is John B. Watson's theory on behaviorism (as cited in Moore, 2013)) and incorporated within are the elements of the mind (e.g., acts, states, mechanisms) of which have certain operating characteristics. By understanding

these operating characteristics and how the elements relate to each other—the functional content and architecture of the mind—we understand what causes behaviour (Moore, 2013).

The third theory explored is Herzberg's theory on motivation. Motivation is important because it is incorporated in vocational identity, which also positively relates to psychological wellbeing. People with clear and stable career goals are more likely than those with diffuse and unstable goals to perceive a high degree of purpose in their lives (Yun-Jeong & Kelly, 2013). Early childhood vocational development is influenced by many factors including: ideologies of vocational choice, motivation and behaviorism.

The seminal work by Holland (1959) discusses six occupational environments in which occupations fit into the categories. Holland (1959) also touches on how these areas are normally ranked based on the person's daily activities and interest. Most people rank themselves in a hierarchy based on their interests. The motoric orientation involves people who enjoy vocations involving physical strength and like to deal with concrete problems. The people whom fit into the intellectual orientation like to think through situations rather than act out. Likewise, people in the supportive orientation category prefer to teach others and/or have therapeutic roles. People in the comforting orientation prefer structured verbal and numerical activities. People in the persuasive orientation prefer to have opportunities for dominating, selling or leading others and finally people in the esthetic orientation enjoy indirect relationships with others. People in this category prefer dealing with environmental problems through self-expression in artistic media (Holland, 1959).

This is important to study because people with good self-knowledge will make more accurate choices, whereas people with low self-evaluation will make inadequate decisions. People who have more vocational knowledge will also be able to differentiate between these categories and mark their hierarchy in their preferred order.

Young children actively construct knowledge of themselves and others in classroom settings as they engage in social comparison activities and seek an answer to the query 'Who am I?' The conceptualization of oneself as being different from others is essential to the development of self-identity; the understanding necessitates a shift from an egocentric to a sociocentric perspective because egocentrism supposes a lack of differentiation between oneself and others. Providing children, through play, opportunities to interact and self-differentiate allows for the beginnings of vocational development to occur.

Children who are unable to differentiate between these categories and have little self-knowledge may be at risk of unemployment in the future. As of August 2013, Canada's unemployment rate was 7.1%. Equaling 201,944 people unemployed (Stats Canada website, 2013). The government and taxpayers will be influenced by these young children's future choices. If they do not decide to work or continue with their education they will be unable to find the motivation or desire to work. It is important that these children are able to gain an understanding of themselves and the vocational choice that is right for them.

Some potential research suggested by Holland (1959) would be to outline specific extension of this developmental hierarchy. A set of well-integrated portraits obtained by

reviewing the evidence, classifying it, and interpreting it in terms of meaningful patterns and variables needs to be established.

To extend on Holland's (1959) theory, Bates, Parker and McCoy (1970) researched and tested three hypotheses derived from Holland's theory of vocational choice. Levels of Holland's study hypothesized personality dimensions for person-environment interactions (congruency, consistency and homogeneity) and two work adjustment variables (satisfaction and satisfactoriness) from the Minnesota studies in vocational rehabilitation. A total of 124 males and 76 females, classified as having psychological or physical disabilities, were administered the Holland Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) and the short-form Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). Levels of congruency, consistency, and homogeneity derived from the VPI were hypothesized to levels of the MSQ and MSS scores. No overall confirmation was found for the hypotheses; however, some encouragement for further exploration of the efficacy of Holland's personality dimensions was indicated (Bates, Parker & McCoy, 1970).

This information gathered is important because Holland's theory of vocational choice proposed that the interaction of personality and environment explains a person's vocational behavior and the vocational choice process. Therefore, the environment plays a key role in vocational development and it is something educators and parents need to be open to establishing for their young children (Bates et al., 1970).

The findings in Bates et al. (1970) seemed to suggest that the distortion of the hypothesized relationships between personality dimensions and work adjustment resulted from the nature of the dimensions as constructs and variables. The dimensions might have been valid constructs when related to work adjustment of college-level students but

failed to hold for rehabilitants with psychological and physical disabilities. Holland (1966) hypothesized that consistent codes implied psychological integration. Further exploration of Holland's theoretical formulations with more research-supported coding of vocational environments may be worthwhile.

The second seminal work is by Watson (1913) who discussed that the theoretical goal is to understand the prediction and control of behaviour. Watson (1913) agreed that psychology, as it is generally thought of, has something esoteric in its methods. If you fail to reproduce findings it is not due to some fault in apparatus or in the control of stimulus, but it is due to the fact that introspection is untrained. The attack is made upon the observer and not upon the experimental setting (Watson, 1913).

Behaviour plays a role in understanding why people choose what they choose. Through looking at someone's behaviour we can see if the environment or experiences exposed to him or her serve as influential.

The years from infancy through early childhood are the most important years for development and understanding behaviour is essential to the development of the child's understanding of the world around them and where they belong in it. This leads to their choices in what vocation they chose, eventually determining their economic contribution to the world.

Future research needs to be conducted on behaviour that does not involve the consciousness as the main aspect. It is an advantage to understand that perspective is taken into account when discussing and studying behaviour. Since most studies are based on observation, it was hard to gather exact representation of feelings, because feelings are never fully clear (Watson, 1913)

To extend on Watson's (1913) theory, Watson and Rayner (2000) discussed The Little Albert Study that included an infant looking at a variety of animals and objects without fear of them. After introducing a loud sound from a hammer on a pipe the second time the rat was shown, it caused the infant to cry. After doing this back and forth multiple times, it was found the infant would cry when seeing the rat even when the sound was absent. This is important to understand because there has been a lack of experimentation on emotional conditioning of infants. Also, many phobias are true conditioned emotional reactions either of the direct or the transferred type. One may possibly have to believe that such persistence of early conditioned responses will be found only in persons who are constitutionally inferior. Watson and Rayner's (2000) argument was meant to be constructive. Emotional disturbances in adults cannot be traced back to gender alone. They must be retraced along at least three collateral lines to conditioned and transferred responses set up in infancy and early youth in all three of the fundamental human emotions (Watson & Rayner, 2000).

The children who are exposed to stimulants that might hurt them will be more adaptable and able to protect themselves in addition to sustaining future judgments. Therefore, the parents and educators need to remember to provide natural stimulations to children when they are young so that when they grow up they are not afraid of unworthy fears.

Some next steps Watson and Rayner (2000) discussed were to use this view as the basis of the experimental evidence of which they have gathered and elaborate and continue studies focusing on this basis. Fear is as primal a factor as love in influencing personality. Fear does not gather its potency in any derived manner from love. Therefore,

the influence on the environment and stimuli presented to infants has an important influence in later life.

The final theory developed by Herzberg (2003), previous evidence discussed the importance of motivation in the work place. It discusses different forms of motivation including the KITA (kick in the butt) method, which includes incentives or consequences. It takes more than extrinsic motivation to change people as there needs to be intrinsic motivators as well. The article discussed that positive KITA's include reducing time spent at work, spiraling wages, fringe benefits, human relations training, communication, two-way communication, job participation and employee counseling.

This is important to the field of study because understanding how to motivate people intrinsically will allow for children to become aware on how they can be motivated and make vocational choices which will allow them to make differentiations of whether or not it is a choice that will allow them to grow and become experts in their interest fields.

Building intrinsic motivation is important because it allows us to feel a sense of calling. Tisdale (2004) states that, the word vocation comes from the Latin vocare, which means "to call" and vocatio, which means "summons." Vocation, then, is understood as a summons or a strong inclination to a particular state or course of action. If we feel a strong inclination toward a certain type of work and if we feel some divine urging or prompting toward that endeavor, we can then view our practice as a calling or vocation (Tisdale, 2004). Unfortunately, there were no next steps for further research outlined in this article.

To extend on the research by Herzberg (2003), Smerek and Peterson (2007) discussed the results of a survey of 2700 employees in business operations at a large public research university. The analysis tests Herzberg et al.'s (1959) well-known, duality theory of motivators and hygiene factors and the impact of personal characteristics and job characteristics on perceptions of the work environment and job satisfaction. The results offer inconclusive support of Herzberg's theory although the work itself is the strongest predictor of job satisfaction after controlling for both personal and job characteristics. The study concludes by discussing both practical implications, for those in leadership positions in a university, and theoretical implications for researchers interested in exploring job satisfaction in a higher education context (Smerek & Peterson, 2007).

The importance of this study was to determine the factors that can be verified in a higher education context. The importance of this research is not only in testing Herzberg's duality theory and expanding our knowledge of this concept in higher education, but also in pinpointing the levers to improve the work life in a university. Thus, this research has both theoretical and practical implications for understanding higher education.

The findings by Smerek and Peterson (2007) would be that job satisfaction is important, not only because of a humanistic desire to improve the quality of work life, but also its potential impact on outcomes such as productivity and turnover. Therefore, taking a theory that describes "events" that are motivating or dissatisfying and applying it to the "stable attitude" of job satisfaction has dubious worth. Therefore, an implication of this study is to be mindful of the approach you are taking because theoretical findings are

highly contingent upon the method used, more so than many social scientists might want to believe. There were no next steps discussed in this article, although it is important to understanding the value vocational development has later on in life.

People play a variety of roles as they mature, some of these roles beginning early in life, e.g., that of child, and others beginning late in life, e.g., that of pensioner. At some life stages a person plays only one role (e.g., that of child when still a neonate), and at others a number of roles, such as those of spouse, parent, homemaker, and worker when at the prime of life (Donald, n.d).

Vocational development research and interventions have focused primarily on adolescents and young adults. The lack of attention to career development antecedents in children has led to serious neglect of this period of life when the foundation is laid for career choices and outcomes later in life. The necessity to study and act upon children's vocational development is currently as acute as ever (Porteli, Hartung & Vondracek, 2008). Despite the theoretical advances within the field, empirical research on children's career behavior has gone largely unappreciated and unexplored in the broader child development and career literatures. Researchers commonly view childhood as a period of fantasy and play that is cognitively disconnected from the world of work. Porteli, Hartung & Vondracek (2008) suggest that vocational development may be linked to an emerging sense of self as early as the grade school years. However, few studies have approached many of these questions with a longitudinal design. Helping elementary school students cope with the vocational tasks they confront fosters school success and positive self-perceptions.

Splete and Freeman-George (1985) provide evidence of the influence in which individuals from better educated, higher income families expected to attain significantly more education and aspired to higher status occupations. They also suggest that most often children identify with their like-sexed parent in developing their self-image and career orientations. Persons from smaller families have more support than those of larger families. Siblings also appear to affect each other in the home environment.

Splete and Freeman-George (1985), explain that Roe (1957) proposed a theory that parental attitudes toward children could be characterized as accepting, rejecting, or over-attending. Children whose parents were rejecting would choose jobs with little personal contact and those whose parents were accepting would choose person-orientated jobs. Holland (1973) suggested that the individual develops a personality orientation based on interactions and experiences including those in the family context. He suggested that one would choose an occupation that matches their personality. It is evident that parental influence on children's personalities and self-concepts is strong, and personality and self-concept are significant factors in career decisions and career development (p.58). Most parental expectations may vary. As an example, parents may signal to females that if they behave well, good things will happen for them and to males that if they perform well, good things will happen for them. Splete and Freeman-George (1985) state women working in male-dominated professions are likely to have had working mothers or have close relationships with their fathers, whereas males in atypical professions frequently report having had employed mothers and distant relationships or no relationships with their fathers.

It is crucial that children are given the opportunities to play and engage in early vocational development. Through learning self-identity and self-differentiation, children will later be able to decide which vocation is right for them, meaning a career that will allow them to feel self-fulfilled and make a difference in our world. My intent is to fill that void through focusing my research on the very critical primary years of vocational development.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLODY

This case study met the criteria of a qualitative study. Research that investigates aspects of social life is amenable to qualitative research; it incorporates feelings, perspectives, impressions and experiences. The main concern that I will be addressing will include exploring the subjective meanings through which people interpret the world and understanding from an adult perspective (P.Tierney, Personal Communication, October 24th 2016). I analyzed texts, which involved the coding of themes, their patterns, and linkages. I have decided to use the case study method because it allowed me to investigate my topic in great detail through the use of anecdotal observations and interviews that might not have been possible if I had to deal with a large number of research participants (McLeod, 2008).

I chose this method because it allowed me to categorize information obtained by asking open-ended questions. I was able to find similarities within the data that allowed me to form themes that addressed how family and school experiences influence career choice. I was able to research parental roles, perspectives and modeling that reinforced Roe's quote "quality of early family experiences leads to the formation of basic personality, which in turn determines occupational choice."

Two participants were interviewed at an Ontario University Library in a study room. Participants contacted me after viewing my recruitment poster at the University. Following this, we went through the consent form and both agreed to participate. Both participants are educators themselves and have a passion for early years development. Both were in their late forties to early fifties and were females of higher SES and

originated from Eastern Europe. I have used pseudonym to keep their information confidential. Once we assigned a meeting time in the library at a University. I went over the types of questions and informed the participants of their rights to refuse to answer any questions. I went over the rationale of the study and received consent.

I used a retrospective questionnaire to collect my data, including Chope's Family Protocol, Critical Incidences and the Career O-Gram (located in the appendix).

Chopes Family Protocol addressed a wide variety of questions including: information about careers, choices of schooling, family beliefs about certain genders working specific jobs, force into a specific field based on their beliefs or interests.

The Career O-Gram focused on early career ambition and the participant's early memories on their confidence, interest and knowledge of this career.

The Critical Incidences questions allowed me to find out what ages the participant recollects influences on career decision-making. This was related back to the research on early childhood vocational stages and either confirmed or left open for interpretation.

Both participants were interviewed separately. The questionnaire asked the participants to answer some retrospective questions that were open-ended which allowed me to gather an insight on their families (expectations, values, beliefs, SES, birth order) and history (jobs of previous family members, values, working ethics). To possibly gain a better understanding of the early years, I have asked participants to outline critical incidences (from age 0-5, 5-10, 10-20 and 30+) that have impacted their career choice.

I used a code-and-retrieve program, which allowed me to attach codes to lines, sentences, paragraphs, or blocks of text. I used the Nvivo program because it permitted multiple codes for the same data. It helped me organize codes for areas of similarity. I

also was able to track connections among the codes, and among the data to which the codes refer. It allowed me to organize data from multiple sources (Neuman & Robson, 2012). For my study I used a cross-case perspective and used a deductive approach because I want to investigate Roe's theory (Neuman & Robson, 2012).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

PARTICIPANT ONE: SARAH

Family Relationships

Career Information

We first discussed parental influences on choosing careers. Sarah stated, "We never talked about careers. I imagine they gave me advice…but I do not remember. They give me possibility to compare/contrast between careers, for example, a nurse and policeman. They would tell me something like when you become a nurse you can help people, and you will have more money."

Role Models

We moved on to the topic of role models, and discussed how her family made an impact on her. Sarah stated, "my father was an engineer, my mother was a teacher for primary school. My father travels a lot. Some of my school was at home. My uncle and others were also engineers. Half [of my family] was military police … and the others were teachers. Higher education was important [in my family]. My mother was always [at home] with the books to teach us; and because of the discipline we had at home it was a positive impact on my school. For example, she would say, you have one hour of TV, one hour of school work, one hour to eat, and go to bed."

Support

The topic of support was required to see if the participant was encouraged at a young age. Sarah states, "There was a positive impact in my future as a youth and adult. [My parents were] very open. They always say things for me to be happy. They never had

boundaries. My father was not often present at home, mostly my mother. I was so happy when my father came home because he always said yes…and if you wanted to become something it was easy, but if you do not have it in your mind, then you cannot do it."

Socioeconomic Status

Sarah states, "They did always guide me, but they would say you have to decide it yourself. After the age of 13, they always supported me. They always supported me to go to school." From this topic we can discover if her parents' education had any impact on her decisions.

Gender Roles

The gender roles were discussed to get her thoughts on stereotypes or inequality at a young age. Sarah stated, "never [was there a difference] between me as a girl and my brother as a boy…I was raised in an open family…lovely family. All children have the same equality for love, and experience everything."

Environment

Free Play

We spoke about the times she remembers as a child during free play where she was open to decide what she wanted to. Sarah stated, "I was always the role of a doctor with my brother. I always said to my sister, 'ok you will be sick and I will take care of you.' I always wanted to be a nurse or a doctor. There was not a lot of related toys."

School Influences

School influences could be from home school, public, or private school. We talked about any experiences or memories. Sarah stated, "The first year of high school sometimes I would study at home because of my parent's jobs. [When I was in school]

exercising outside was a rule. It was a lovely school for me. It was very nice structure, a good memory for me."

Self-Concept

Earliest Career Ambition

I introduced Sarah to the Career O-Gram, which outlined specific ages. Sarah stated, "When I was a child I wanted to be a policeman. At 13 years old I wanted to become nurse. In Belgium I was a nurse. From the age of 1-3 all I remember is I played. At age 5, in preschool, I started to like to go to school. I studied at home when I was between 6 and 9. It was structured. At age 13 I had my first boyfriend. It was a nice period for me because I knew I wanted to go to high school. I think because of my mother we loved to study."

Personality

On this topic we will see how her personality adapts to her career aspirations. Sarah stated, "I always wanted to help people. I was intelligent, because of my mother I did two years of school in one year. I always worked with handicap people, because I participated with the Red Cross. It was not difficult to become a nurse. I was able to study quickly. It is not difficult for me to change careers or attain my goals."

PARTICIPANT TWO: ALYSSA

Family Relations

Career Information

I asked my second participant questions about her early career experiences. Alyssa said, "we had a lot of teachers in my family. My uncle was the principal of the

teacher-training program in town. I remember papers piled up. My aunt worked at an all girls' school…My father wanted us to go to the University. That was almost required of us.. I remember my Nanny holding me up and watching the boys doing cadets by the university."

Role Models

We then discussed how her parents played a role in modeling. Alyssa stated, "Dad was a doctor, mom was a nurse. In those days it was tough for a woman. There were few doctor women. Social work was not an option to my father…I was interested in occupational therapy. There was not a degree program for social work. Therefore, my options were limited."

Support

I asked what type of support Alyssa received from her family. Alyssa said, "When I was really little, I went to private girl school at two-and-a-half. My mom believed in early education and was aware of child development…I went to a girls' school. I was there until grade 4. Then I went to another girls' school when I moved cities.

Gender Roles

The question was asked about gender and the influence it may have had on career realizations in Alyssa's family. Alyssa stated, "My dad used to say, it is too difficult to be a female doctor. High school teaching was deemed to be an acceptable position for a woman coming from a professional family…on my mother side there were a lot of female teachers…My father always wanted us to feel as though we did not have to rely on a man."

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

To gather some information on family SES I asked in detail about her family traditions. Alyssa stated "some things were acceptable for girls in my parent's circle. My parents were doctors, lawyers, and my uncle was the chancellor of the university. They were mostly professional people. It was expected to go to university, have a career, get married and have children. My father also told us we have a responsibility to serve the community and our socioeconomic status was very well known."

Environment

Free Play

I wanted to know what free play looked like in Alyssa's childhood. Alyssa said, "I grew up in a secure but different childhood. We were more 'seen and not heard'. We played outside a lot. My mother was adventurous so we climbed mountains and we road horses. We were very free to play and explore. I was always very happy to play."

School Influences

I asked Alyssa about her schooling history. Alyssa commented, "I would go to privileged schools and schools where disadvantaged children attended with my uncle. We helped out with the projects in town and I loved school. I remember the crafts and teachers. I loved school. I liked learning and being busy and with other children. I loved my teachers. It was a lovely school."

Self-Concept

Earliest Career Ambition

Alyssa was able to address some early memories of career realization. Alyssa said, "I remember playing school. We had a clipboard and a chalk board, as well as

pencils and pens. We had far fewer toys than today's children but we had enough

toys…My mom was involved in a school with nursery children. I would go with her and

make sure they had food for the week…I wanted to be a teacher around the age of 8."

Personality

I continued to ask participant two about her childhood confidence. Alyssa

commented, "I was sociable. I liked school. I enjoyed learning and being around young

children. I never doubted that I wouldn't [become a teacher], or that I wouldn't get a job.

Then it was easy to get a job. I knew I had to get a degree and a bachelor of education."

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ECE

There is a rapid growing body of research on young adult career aspirations (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001), but little knowledge on educational aspirations of younger children (Blackhurst, Auger & Wahl, 20013) and how it affects the career path they take (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001). The career beliefs, knowledge and aspirations of elementary school children have become a very fascinating focus of research.

The drive of this study is to develop an understanding of how parents and educators can help develop positive vocational development through building good self-concept in children and understanding the factors that influence this development. Such influencing factors include: family relations, the environment and self-concept.

I have chosen to focus on interviewing adults because they now can look back and offer their knowledge and childhood experiences. This study scratches the surface of a relatively unexplored area of research – the enduring long-term effects of early vocational experiences (Anderson, 2011). Some benefits of focusing on retrospective questionnaires include coding data through characteristics or behaviour of the same individuals over time. The result is person specific and it can document these characteristics from arbitrarily specified points, for example, at particular ages of respondents or particular calendar dates. It contains more information than researchers yet know how to take advantage of, either conceptually or statistically (Butz, 1981).

This study followed a qualitative design approach that allows connections between past vocational events and future job choice. It incorporates feelings,

perspectives, impressions and experiences. My main concern was to address and explore the subjective meanings through which people interpret the world from an adult perspective. I then analyzed these texts through coding, finding patterns and linkages within the data. Chope's family protocol, critical incidences and the Career O'Gram have been used to collect this data. Choosing a limited amount of participants allowed me to gather very specific data. Some major themes I found while conducting interviews were impacts of family relationships, the environment and self-concept. These major themes were extended into specific subthemes in relation to families, including the amount of career information given to the participant during their childhood, their parent's involvement as role models, the amount of parental support, gender roles and the socioeconomic status of the family. The environment discussed the importance of free play and school influences also have been noted to influence career decisions. As well, Self-Concept incorporated early career recognition and personality; these have also been recognized to predispose later career decisions.

Many influences affect a person in accomplishing tasks related to career development. Splete and Freeman-George (1985) suggest there are significant family influence factors that affect one's career decision-making and career development: background, socioeconomic status and parental work-related attitudes. Socioeconomic status strongly influences career choice.

Sarah and Alyssa had displayed some very interesting results. When Sarah was very young she stated she wanted to become a policeman and Alyssa wanted to be a teacher at the age of eight. They both displayed Havighurst's first stage of career development, identification with a worker. They were both able to integrate conception of

their adult lives at such a young age. Both Sarah and Alyssa were also learning about careers through building self-concept. Surprisingly both Alyssa and Sarah were very confident in their abilities. Sarah states in her interview, "I was very intelligent", and "it was not difficult for me to change careers or to attain a goal." Alyssa commented, "I never doubted that I wouldn't become a teacher, or that I wouldn't get a job." Sarah and Alyssa began to gain stronger senses of self-confidence in their choices. They were more likely to believe they were able to achieve more difficult occupations (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001).

Sarah's family was able to provide opportunities to compare and contrast between careers, for example, a nurse and a policeman. Higher education was very important to her family. Her mother always supported her to go to school and would make learning fun and structured. Sarah states, "My mother would always have books out." Since Sarah valued her family's opinions, she was able to build intrinsic motivation to attend school and pursue her path of choice (Herzberg, 2003). Alyssa's mother was an advocate for young children and worked for a school. Alyssa was able to attend her mother's nursery school and learned to love school. She also demonstrated intrinsic motivation (Herzberg, 2003).

Splete and Freeman-George (1985) provide evidence of the influence in which individuals from highly educated, higher income families are expected to attain significantly more education and aspire to higher status occupations. Half of Sarah's family was military police, engineers, continued to higher education or were teachers. Although Sarah's families' income is unknown, all of her family had professional occupations, which could have impacted her to pursue a second master's degree at the

University of Windsor. Alyssa's family was well known in their town for their socioeconomic status and felt the need to serve the community. Her father was very focused in stating the importance of obtaining degrees for his girls. Alyssa was expected to aspire to higher occupations and as she said in her interview, "High school teaching was deemed to be an acceptable position for a woman coming from a professional family."

Palmer and Cochran (1988) stress the importance of the parental role in forming a partnership that involved warmth, active attention, reciprocity, and more mutual balance of power. Parents might offer the opportunity for personal attention to help their child sort out ideas, information, values and so on. Both Sarah and Alyssa's families demonstrated these very qualities. Sarah's dad stressed the importance of him not losing her if she became a policeman. She outlined how open her family was, which allowed for an equality of power in the household. There was always equality between genders in her family. Her father always believed in her, which affected her development immensely (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001). Interestingly, Sarah became a nurse and then a counselor (both therapeutic roles) that, Holland (1953) defined stems from a supportive orientation, which Sarah displayed throughout her childhood. Alyssa too was provided with support from her family to attend school and always felt appreciated.

The environment also might have played a role in Sarah and Alyssa's career path. Surprisingly, Sarah always played the role of a doctor with her brother, even though there were not a lot of toys. Sarah was able to use her imagination and use the tools she had to create a playful environment. Alyssa was able to play with her siblings and use a chalk board, pens, pencils and paper to play teacher. Both families provided opportunities to

interact and self-differentiate, which forms the beginnings of vocational development to occur (Chafel, 2003).

Career building should be combined with education (Cinamon & Dan, 2010). Sarah was always involved in learning even though she would switch from private to public to home education because her family moved ever year. Alyssa attended school as young as two-and-a-half and continued to attend school and was active in her community's schools, both for privileged and non-privileged children. Both Sarah and Alyssa had the ability to be engaged in the world of work and fostered the development of concern about their futures (Cinamon & Dan, 2010).

Palmer and Cochran (1988) conclude that parents view themselves as central figures in their children's career development and tend to want to play an active role. In turn, children expect their parents to be important influences and help with career planning more than anyone else. Therefore, it is very important for educators to collaborate with parents and help children gather the knowledge and experiences to help them succeed in vocational development. Palmer and Cochran (1988) stress the importance of the parental role in forming a partnership that involves warmth, active attention, reciprocity, and more mutual balance of power. Parents might offer the opportunity for personal attention to help their children sort out ideas, information, values, and so on.

This study set early childhood education as its central focus. Auger, Blackhurst and Wahl (2005) states that at age 5, children's career aspirations begin to become shaped by social influences, gender expectations, social prestige and the perceived

difficulty of the career. This understanding enforces that childhood is a critical period for developing career realization.

This major paper confirms much past research of which I have discussed in Chapter 2. It confirms Havighurst's model of the six stages of career development, and also reflects the importance of intrinsic motivation to career development (Herzberg, 2003). Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, (2001) state that self-confidence relates to achieving more difficult occupations, which is evident in this study. Children from better-educated parents aspire to higher status occupations (Splete & Freeman-George) as seen with Sarah and Alyssa. Holland's (1953) research was based on supportive orientation effect on career decision-making, and Chafel's (2003) research on the importance of building opportunities for interaction and self-defiance in young children are shown in the discussions with the participants of the study.

My main goal was to bring forward the importance of focusing on the early years in terms of vocational development. I wanted to discuss the importance of family relations, SES and gender stereotyping. I found family relations, the environment, and self-concept to be crucial factors in the influence of child vocational development. It was evident in this paper the importance parents play as positive role models for their child. In addition to their beliefs and opinions on gender roles and career standards, a family who holds a high regard for a certain job may influence their child unconsciously. Children who gain a positive sense of self and confidence in the early years will aspire for more difficult occupations in the future. In this paper, the term "difficult" can be understood as one that needs much effort or skill to accomplish, maintain, or understand physically, emotionally, socially or mentally. In addition to parental roles and personality of the

child, the environment is important and it must stimulate an informative and play based atmosphere for children to learn and question different careers.

For educators, some ways to help stimulate career development would be to inform parents their roles. Set up a positive stimulating environment where children can become successful in their goals and conquer them through small group and independent play. Reach out to professionals who are not gender specific to show children early on, their choices for careers. Set up a dramatic play area that has stuffed animals, puppets or dress-up clothing that displays a vast majority of occupations. If it is not possible to introduce the children to professionals, educators could plan a field trip for children to learn about different options. Within the classroom library or bookshelf, books should be displayed to demonstrate many occupations and include many cultures and ethnicities that allow children to visualize careers in different countries and different genders.

Educators and parents want to provide healthy experiences, supportive environments, and build positive self-concept in young children. There is still a demand for more research within the field of early childhood vocational development. We have addressed some of the factors that influence this development and can happily address that parents and educators can and do have the power to create a fulfilling and satisfying future for their children.

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW TOOLS

Chope's Family Protocol:
      1. What kind of career related information did your family provide?
A. Did your family help you generate different possibilities and new experiences?

B. What alternatives did your family suggest regarding schools, training or careers? How did this affect you? Were you placed in a public, private school, and daycare or did you stay at home?

C. What was your family's impression of gender roles? How did this affect you? (Example: did your parents only focus on certain genders having specific jobs based on their gender?).

D. What family traditions or legends existed? When you were under the age of 13?

E. Was there forced guidance, a tendency to push you in a direction more reflective of your families interest rather than your own?

      2. What type of emotional support did your family provide?

A. Were you always given emotional support to attend school?
B. Did your family take a hands off but supportive approach? (Example: allow pretend play of careers, which interested you?)
C. Was there subtle emotional pressure to pursue a particular path (example: toys, which represented the specific job, recommended? Caregivers brought you to the workplace of interest to them?)
D. Were you told by your family to "just be happy?"
E. Were you told your plans would not amount to much?
F. Who was supportive and who was not?

The Career O-Gram:

1. Recall your earliest career ambition
   - How old were you?
   - What aspects appealed to you?
   - What were your chances of obtaining this position?
   - What did you think you had to do to attain this goal?

Critical Incidences:

      In four categories (age 1-3, 3-6, 6-9 and 9-13) list five critical incidences, which may have influenced or impacted your career decision-making (personal or related to news events that were taken place).

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