

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
Parent-Child Perceptions of Career Planning

by

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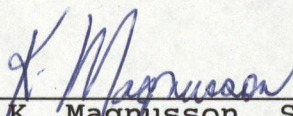
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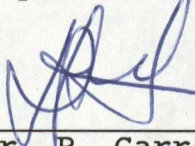
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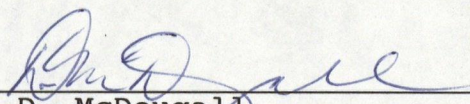


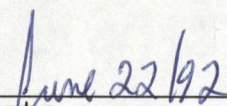
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## ABSTRACT

Although it has been recognized that parents play an important role in their children's career development, little consideration has been given to understanding how parents and children themselves perceive their collaborative career planning interactions, and how parents could be supported in becoming more effective career planning facilitators.

This study employed a qualitative methodology to provide insight into parent-child perceptions of career planning. Parents and Grade 12 students from 43 families completed open-ended questionnaires describing current and desired career planning collaboration. Data analysis included a summary of responses of parents and adolescents in general, as well as within-family comparisons of responses to illuminate similarities and differences in perceptions and typical patterns of interacting. The results indicate the existence of certain strengths and barriers to effective parental career planning facilitation. Implications of these findings for career counsellors and educators wishing to support parents in this regard are discussed.



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## CHAPTER 1

### Statement of the Problem

There is a need to better understand the role which parents can and do play in helping their adolescent children with the career planning process. The collaborative potential of the parent-child career planning relationship is established in recognizing that youth need and want career planning help and that parents wish to provide this assistance (Hummel & McDaniels, 1979; McDaniels & Hummel, 1984; Otto, 1984; Otto & Call, 1985; Shields, 1988). However, this potential is not being fully realized, resulting in the ultimate reduction of adolescent career management capability and in confusion and frustration on the part of children and parents alike.

A brief overview of relevant definitions and traditional approaches to fostering the parental role in adolescent career planning will establish the context in which this problem has developed.

*Adolescence* can be defined as the period of life from puberty to maturity, and as such represents a stage of growth and change during which an individual can be treated as neither a child nor an adult (Sisson, Hersen, & Van Hessel, 1987). However, traditional views of career planning place responsibility for significant decisions with lifelong implications upon youth, creating a basic incompatibility between resources and expectations.



Traditionally, *career planning* is perceived to be occupational decision-making which typically occurs during late adolescence and early adulthood. This definition supports the notion that youth should be narrowing down their occupational choices, then selecting and preparing for one occupation in particular. This approach focuses almost entirely on the future as determined by one's working role, and represents a favourable view of those decisions considered permanent and final (Grites, 1981). With these definitions in mind, we see that the term *adolescent career planning* is somewhat of an oxymoron, implying that individuals are expected to assume responsibility for significant long-term decision-making at a time in their lives when they are developing, refining, and changing the very values, skills, and interests which form a basis for the decisions.

Developmental theories of career planning modify, but do not alleviate the incompatibility experienced by youth related to career planning tasks. Super (1980, 1990) defines *career planning* as the intentional consideration of and preparation for all life roles during the entire lifespan. Comparing this definition to the traditional view, the issues which must be considered in career planning are broadened along two dimensions. First, since all life roles and their relative importance are taken into account, career planning includes but is not limited to

occupational planning. Secondly, the temporal dimension is expanded and a process of lifelong evaluation and adaptation is identified. Hence, for Super, *adolescent career planning* becomes merely one part of a broad-based, continual process of lifestyle planning. Implications for youth are that the need for finality and permanence of decisions during adolescence is removed, but that a larger set of issues must be considered at this time. The scope of issues to be considered is inconsistent with the limited life and work experience of youth, resulting in a discrepancy between demands and resources and indicating that adolescents need help with the development of career planning skills, both for immediate and long-term application.

Other barriers to youth readiness for career planning include rapid transformations in social and economic conditions which continually modify the context of the decision-making. Therefore adolescents cannot effectively perform career planning from a static perspective, and need to add the skills of evaluation and adaptability to their career management repertoires (Lopez & Andrews, 1987; Lotto, 1986; Magnusson, 1992; Magnusson & Redekopp, 1990).

In summary, it is clear that adolescents do not have the resources to perform the career planning tasks which are expected of them. Various authors have noted that youth are aware of their inadequacy and perceive a need for help

with career planning (Allen & Hiebert, 1991; Hummel & McDaniels, 1979; McDaniels & Hummel, 1984; Otto, 1984; Otto & Call, 1985; Shields, 1988). Herr and Cramer (1988) believe that many adolescents will turn to their parents for this assistance and advice. Parents are a logical choice to offer career planning support since they are well-acquainted with the individual histories of their children, are generally readily available, and are genuinely interested in the future well-being of their children.

However, many parents do not know, or think they do not know, how to facilitate adolescent career development. They are unsure of what type of help their children really want, and of how welcome their parental involvement would be (Herr & Cramer, 1988; Hummel & McDaniels, 1979; Shields, 1988). Furthermore, many parents question their own competence in career planning, and therefore feel inadequate to serve as facilitators to their children. Since career education represents a relatively new addition to the educational curriculum, most parents have not had the benefit of any study in the career planning process. Indeed, there has been little opportunity for parents to develop any sense of comfort in dealing with their own career planning issues, let alone their children's. Rapidly changing conditions in global economic and social structures further undermine any confidence parents have

developed related to career planning and contribute to their sense of uncertainty. In short, parents want to know how to help their children with career planning.

To date, insufficient efforts have been made to assist parents in this regard. Osipow (1983) expresses his puzzlement that so little theorizing exists on the family's role in vocational behavior, especially when extensive data show that family background influences the kinds of initial vocational choices made and how they are implemented. Whiston (1989) notes that "little is written...about specific techniques for working with parents on issues related to their children's career planning needs" (p. 344). Whiston adds that parents who turn to school counsellors for advice will find that the case loads of counsellors are too large to allow for individual parental consultation and instruction.

Limited resources which have been available to parents in the past include training programs, workbooks, and manuals, and have no doubt produced some benefit to those parents who were able to access them. However, these training efforts have been designed from a theoretical perspective and are based on assumptions about the type of help which parents and children desire and need regarding collaborative career planning. The perceptions of parents and children themselves have not been taken into account, significantly limiting the potential to understand and to



support them in mutual career planning efforts. Miles and Huberman (1984) note that considering perceptions "is crucial in understanding why social behavior takes the form it does" (p. 19).

For example, if parents do not believe they can help, or that their children want their help, they will hesitate to try to become involved in their children's career planning (Herr & Cramer, 1988; McDaniels & Hummel, 1984; Otto, 1984; Shields, 1988). If they are overwhelmed by the significance and implications of their children's career decisions, they may avoid or procrastinate in providing career planning support for youth. An equally harmful situation is created by parents who perceive a false sense of efficacy in career planning facilitation and who force well-meaning but inappropriate advice upon their children (Shields, 1988). This overly zealous approach may cause adolescents to make premature decisions, or to avoid the process entirely (Grites, 1981). In summary, the solution to maximizing parental potential for career planning facilitation must necessarily include consideration of parental and adolescent perceptions and attitudes.

Only recently have any researchers attempted to shed light on this issue. Young, Friesen, & Dillabough's (1991) study considers the activities that are perceived as influential in career planning by parents and children. Their research, however, does not differentiate between

parent and child responses, nor does it compare parent-child responses within families. Hence it provides no insight as to the congruence of perceptions between parent and child, nor as to what significance might be attributed to similarities or differences in perceptions. The present study has been designed to address this research gap.

A qualitative research design, represented by parallel forms of an open-ended questionnaire completed by adolescents and their parents, is employed to identify general themes and patterns related to the perceptions of current and desired career planning collaboration. This design allows for the comparison of responses within families, to determine how parent and adolescent perceptions differ. Specific questions which are addressed are:

How do parents and adolescents perceive the current career planning of the adolescent? What collaboration is perceived to be occurring and how effective is it perceived to be?

From the perspective of the parents and adolescents involved, what more could parents do to facilitate adolescent career planning, and what help or training would parents need to make these improvements?

In summary, the ultimate goal of this study is the enhancement of adolescent career planning efficacy through increased understanding of one very important resource,

namely parents as career planning facilitators. This research has been designed to provide an insight into patterns of interaction between parents and adolescents, and to identify perceived barriers to a collaborative career planning relationship. Clarification of these issues is needed before parental career facilitation potential can be maximized by those wishing to educate and support parents in this regard.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

The consideration of possible means to enhance the potential of parents to provide career planning support for their adolescent children necessitates the examination of the various personal factors involved and of the context in which these efforts would occur. Relevant literature will be reviewed in this chapter to provide this foundation.

First, developmental models will be considered to determine the resources and capabilities of adolescents. Next, an examination of career development theories will identify what career planning tasks are expected of youth and will assist in delineating requisite knowledge, skills, experience, and attitudes. A discrepancy between adolescent resources and career planning needs will become evident, indicating that assistance is needed in this regard.

Next, the significant role which parents can and do play in their children's career development will be identified in the literature. Facilitative characteristics will be discussed and previous efforts to provide support for parental involvement in adolescent career planning will be examined. It will be noted that most of these previous interventions are theory-driven.

Finally, the issue of how parents and children perceive collaborative career planning interactions will be discussed. It will be shown that little attention in the



literature has been paid to considering how differing parent-child perceptions might affect the nature and focus of the helping relationship. This represents a significant weakness regarding research-driven program design.

### Adolescent Development

This section will review literature related to the psychosocial and cognitive development of adolescents to identify the resources on which they have to draw, and hence their preparedness related to significant decision-making.

#### Psychosocial Development

In Erikson's (1965, 1980) epigenetic model of psychosocial development, an individual passes through eight stages during a lifetime, each stage defined by a conflict to be resolved or a balancing of individual needs with societal expectations. Adolescence falls into the fifth of these eight stages, supporting the notion that psychosocial abilities continue to develop past adolescence and cannot be considered to be fixed or complete at this age. In this model, subsequent changes in intimacy, generativity, and ego integrity which occur after adolescence would have significant impact on lifestyle considerations such as career planning.

Further, in this model each stage subsumes all preceding stages. An unresolved conflict at any stage jeopardizes future development. In other words, adolescents

may be unprepared to deal with tasks typically expected of them due to undecided issues in any of the four prior stages, namely (1) trust versus mistrust, (2) autonomy versus shame and doubt, (3) initiative versus guilt, and (4) industry versus inferiority.

Even if previous psychosocial development has progressed according to Erikson's (1965, 1980) model, many adolescents struggle with the task which faces them during the fifth stage: the achievement of identity versus identity diffusion and role confusion. This conflict often occurs in the arena of career development, as Erikson notes, "...it is primarily the inability to settle on an occupational identity which disturbs young people" (1980, p. 97). Raskin (1989) also recognizes the parallel and reciprocal nature of the processes of career development and psychosocial development.

In short, psychosocial development is seen to have major implications for the career planning potential of adolescents. As adolescent identity is evolving and changing, it is unrealistic to expect specific, committed decisions at this time, especially in the complementary area of occupational choice. The process is even more complex if earlier psychosocial conflicts are unresolved.

#### Cognitive Development

Piaget's (1972) theory of cognitive development describes the gradual transition of our schema, or personal

representations of the world, to a progressively more abstract and complex form. His hierarchical stage theory proposes four stages of cognition, each dependent on the previous. Adolescents are considered to be at the level of formal operational thought, moving from the capability of considering alternatives in early adolescence to efficacy in systematic evaluation in late adolescence. Thus Piaget sees adolescents as becoming progressively more prepared to be making decisions as their age increases, but he notes that they are unlikely to employ higher order thinking in unfamiliar situations unless optimum cognitive stimulation is provided. Thus there is little likelihood that adolescents would use formal operational thinking in new tasks of career planning. Although Piaget sees adolescents as becoming capable of systematic evaluation, they may lack the courage and encouragement to do so.

Perry (1970) describes cognitive development somewhat differently, as moving from basic dualism to multiplicity to relativism. Knefelkamp and Slepitz (1976) adapt this conceptualization to fit the career development of adolescents and young adults. On their 9-point developmental continuum, they place adolescents at levels 2 (late dualism) and 3 (early multiplicity). These stages are characterized by an external locus of control and reliance on the advice of others in decision-making. In other words, Knefelkamp and Slepitz see adolescents as being unprepared

to use their own judgement and cognitive processes in career planning.

In summary, this review of developmental literature has indicated that adolescents are in a transitory state of psychosocial and cognitive development and that fundamental resources needed for personal decision-making are limited at this time of life.

### Adolescent Career Development

A review of career development and sociological literature provides some understanding of what is expected from adolescents in terms of involvement in the career development process and of the central position which career planning issues assume in overall development. Stern and Eichorn (1989) explain: "Because adolescence has emerged historically as the period in industrial societies when individuals must make the transition from childhood and dependence to economically independent adulthood, the search for occupational identity can be considered the defining characteristic of contemporary adolescence" (p.4).

### Theories of Career Development

It is useful to consider both traditional and developmental views of adolescent career development, as each sets up different expectations. The developmental view will be examined in detail, largely as represented by Super's (1957, 1980, 1990) model, but first the traditional view will be considered.

Traditional view of career planning. Traditionally, career planning is equated with occupational selection, and is understood to be a matching or a structural linking between individual attributes and the world of work. Brown and Brooks (1990) describe this conceptualization as an outgrowth of the trait-factor approach of Frank Parsons.

Mitchell (1988) defines our traditional expectations of adolescents as a narrowing of occupational choice to one, two, or at the most, several career options. Grites (1981) maintains that parents, peers, teachers, and counsellors all press for adolescent vocational commitment, contributing to a "perceived negative stigma about being undecided" (p. 43) and to the view that any change in original choice is an admission of failure. Shields (1988) notes that youth are often operating with the motivation of pleasing others, leading to premature commitment regarding vocational choice. The implication of these prevailing views is that adolescents are pressured into decisions they are unprepared to make at their level of cognitive and psychosocial development. These traditional career planning expectations for youth are unrealistic because there is a discrepancy between their career development needs and coping resources.

Developmental view of career planning. Super's (1957, 1980, 1990) theory of career development has had more impact on vocational psychology than any other (Herr &



Cramer, 1988) and is the most comprehensive and well-researched (Brown, 1990). Osipow (1990) identifies Super's model as exemplifying the developmental approach. Due to these endorsements, Super's theory will be used in this study as the primary framework within which the career development tasks of adolescents are considered.

Super's (1957, 1980, 1990) model employs the fundamental developmental principle of an individual passing through a series of identifiable stages, each of which is defined by specific vocational tasks to be accomplished. The first of Super's stages is *growth*, during which children up to age 14 learn to identify liked/disliked activities and to evaluate their capabilities. The growth stage is followed by *exploration* (age 14-25), the stage in which adolescents are categorized. The primary tasks of the exploration stage are vocational crystallization and specification, meaning the formulation of ideas related to self-concept and its relation to work and the conversion of generalized interest into specific vocational choice. After the exploration stage, an individual progresses to the stages of *establishment* (age 25-45, during which occupational stabilization and advancement occur), *maintenance* (age 45-60, during which earlier occupational and lifestyle commitments are maintained), and *decline* (age 60 and above, during which individuals disengage from the world of work

and adjust to a new lifestyle).

In his early writings, Super (1957) viewed these stages as age-linked and as proceeding in a lockstep fashion through an unvarying, unidirectional sequence. Thus an individual's career maturity, or readiness for career decision-making, could be measured through a comparison to peers. More recently, Super (1980, 1990) has acknowledged the common practice of *recycling*, denoting the repetition of earlier stages and tasks several times throughout life. Hence, all persons of the same age are no longer expected to be at the same stage, and the notion of career maturity becomes outmoded. Instead, Super (1990) now speaks of career adaptability, representing an individual's ability to recognize and transfer skills and to respond to new events and influences. Career planning is seen to occur throughout a lifetime, and Super labels this the *lifespan* dimension of the career development process. Crites (1978) agrees that career decision-making can no longer be considered a once-in-a-lifetime event.

This view has several implications for adolescents and their needs for career planning skills. First, Super (1980) maintains that most individuals will begin to grapple with some career decision-making during adolescence, hence the same sort of discrepancy between the expectations and the developmental resources of adolescents exists as that which has already been noted in discussing traditional career

planning views. Secondly, since Super sees career planning as a lifelong process, the importance of learning good career planning skills in adolescence, to be reused throughout the lifetime, is heightened.

In addition to the revision of expectations caused by the notion of recycling, Super (1980, 1990) contends that individuals, including youth, must consider all life roles in career planning. This *lifespace* dimension of Super's career development model adds considerable complexity to the process. It requires that individuals consider the balance and salience of various life roles at various times. This task may be difficult for adolescents, whose identities, values, and capabilities are still evolving.

Another key element of Super's (1980, 1990) model is the notion of the implementation of one's self-concept in successful career decision-making. The process used is one of finding a continual congruence, or best fit, between knowledge of self and knowledge of the occupational world. Adolescents lack clear information on self and the world of work simply as a function of their age, making it difficult for them to engage in this process.

Thus, in considering the ability of adolescents to perform effective career planning within the framework provided by Super (1980, 1990), we must acknowledge the incompatibility which exists between the complexity of the required tasks and the limited resources possessed by youth

(Hoyt, 1984; Palmo, Lowry, Weldon, & Scioscia, 1984).

Further to Super's work, Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman (1984, 1990) note that career planning is an idiosyncratic process and that it is necessary to consider the unique meaning which individuals ascribe to their own environment and experience. In other words, there are multiple ways of looking at and understanding the world, and the way in which each adolescent approaches career planning depends not only on personal coping resources but also on personal perceptions of readiness, competence, and opportunity.

Krumboltz integrates Bandura's (1977b) social learning perspective with career development theory and explains how our contact with and cognitive analysis of positively and negatively reinforcing events impacts on the career decision-making process (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990). Thus the role modelling of parents and environmental factors such as socioeconomic status all serve to shape adolescent career choice.

Super's life-span, life-space theory combines with the phenomenological view of Tiedeman and the social learning perspective of Krumboltz to support the position that adolescents are unprepared for the complex process of career choice, that the facilitation of career planning must include an individual focus, and that parents play a significant role in influencing the career selection of their adolescent children.

### Current Context of Career Decision-Making

The difficulty which adolescents encounter in career planning is exacerbated by the context in which it is presently occurring. The current frequency and scope of changes in social, economic, political, and technological conditions related to the workplace are unprecedented (Lopez & Andrews, 1987; Lotto, 1986; Naisbitt, 1984; Van Hesteren & Pawlovich, 1989). Thus, the process of gathering accurate information about the world of work must be continual and is more complex than ever before.

Since adolescents are expected to perform career planning tasks in a context of limited resources, developmental immaturity, and rapidly changing conditions, it becomes clear that they may need help with the career development process. Studies of Canadian youth reflect that career planning does indeed represent a significant focus of concern (Allen & Hiebert, 1991; Holmes & Silverman, 1992; Posterski and Bibby, 1988).

### Characteristics Required by Adolescents in Career Planning

The literature review thus far has indicated that many adolescents may be unprepared for career planning but it has yet to be established what specific characteristics are desirable and hence what assistance might be most appropriate. Zingaro (1983) proposes three broad categorizations of adolescent career planning need: (1) increased knowledge, due to incomplete or inaccurate

notions of career and economic needs; (2) increased experience, due to limited exposure to the working world and limited awareness of abilities; and (3) better self-understanding in relation to level of motivation, perceptions of expectations, and attitudes which define the importance which work will occupy in each individual's life. This section will review helpful career planning characteristics using these categorizations.

Knowledge. The importance of being well-informed in career planning is emphasized by McDaniels and Hummel (1984), who contend that career choices can be made with inadequate information, but freedom of choice can only be possible with accurate and realistic information.

Related to a need for knowledge, adolescents must have both content and process knowledge: the first pertaining to information on self and the world of work and the latter pertaining to how information can be collected and applied (Shields, 1988; Super, 1980, 1990). It is not sufficient to possess information in this fast-changing world, but also necessary to know how and where to continue information-gathering. Process knowledge relates to identifying sources of occupational or personal information, knowing how to access the material, and finally, to evaluating and using the data in career planning (Shields, 1988).

Within the category of content knowledge, Hoyt (1984) and Herr and Cramer (1988) identify as a major drawback to

adolescent career decision-making the fact that youth are unable to see a relationship between their learning at school and the requirements of occupations. Acquisition of this knowledge would assist in the establishment of salience for their current involvements. Essential also is an understanding of the career development process. This comprehension would support youth in evaluating the feasibility of current expectations, in normalizing exploration, and in accepting the notion of career planning as a continual process.

Content knowledge also includes a wide variety of information on individual skills, interests, aptitudes, values, and data on specific occupations and work in general. Grites (1981) reports that 35% of university students graduate in fields that were generally unknown to them in high school, which indicates the narrow knowledge base of adolescents and supports the view that it would be limiting to pressure youth into vocational commitment.

In short, adolescents lack fundamental content and process knowledge related to career development. Some of this deficiency can be attributed to youth's inexperience, but much of it is a basic information gap which must be addressed throughout the general population.

Skills and experience. Adolescents lack experience as a function of their age. Their choices are reduced by their limited exposure to the world of work, including role

models and occupational fields (Herr & Cramer, 1988).

Inexperience also leads to a limited awareness of abilities because adolescents have not yet had the opportunity to develop, test, and integrate skills (Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990). Youth therefore need opportunities to develop and assess skills, abilities, and interests and to learn about lifestyle options.

Adolescents may not be the best judges of the skill training they need. Mangum (1987) contends that they tend to overemphasize the importance of specific skill training while overlooking employability and promotability skills. Mangum believes that job-getting and job-keeping skills are more important to employers than actual job-doing skills. Further, McDaniels and Hummel (1984) emphasize that experience in recreational and leisure activities is needed to understand the role of leisure in one's lifestyle.

Thus, the literature suggests that the skills and experience of youth are limited.

Attitudes. The knowledge and experience identified above as requisite for career planning are ineffective unless combined with the proper attitudes toward self, work, and the process of career development.

Van Hesteren and Pawlovich (1989) emphasize the importance of a sense of self-worth, which contributes to the conviction that career planning merits some effort and can produce positive results. Bandura's (1977a) theory of



self-efficacy further supports this reasoning: a belief in one's ability to perform will determine whether or not the behaviour will be attempted, how much effort will be expended, and how long the effort will be sustained. Providing adolescents with the tools to increase their sense of self-efficacy related to career planning should therefore increase the likelihood that they will engage in some form of career management.

A respect for the value and importance of work would also sustain career planning efforts, but McDaniels and Hummel (1984) point out that this attitude may be carried too far if one believes that work is meant to provide all of our satisfaction in life.

Grites (1981) suggests that it is acceptable to be undecided about occupational choice during adolescence. This attitude represents a fundamental shift from the traditional paradigm which values early occupational commitment and lifelong stability toward the new paradigm described by Capra (1982), Gelatt (1989) and Barker (1985), which calls for exploration and adaptability throughout the lifetime.

In summary, it is a complex composite of knowledge, skills, experience, and attitudes which are needed for career planning. It may be unrealistic to expect career education programs to address all of these factors, but since characteristics do not exist in isolation, training

related to any specific characteristic should provide a carryover effect to others through a process of reciprocal interaction. Also, since individual needs and circumstances vary, the full gamut of training would not be required by each adolescent.

This section has summarized the characteristics which logically should support or enhance adolescent career planning according to career development theory. However, little data exists to determine how congruent this summary might be with the perceived needs of adolescents themselves. The importance of considering the individual perspectives of career planning clients, in this case adolescents, is noted by Brown (1990) who interprets the work of Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman to emphasize that those interested in facilitating career planning "need to understand how they can experience the personal realities of clients, so that they can be of assistance in the life career dimension" (p. 359). This emphasis on understanding the individual's perspective suggests a need for research designed to clarify the perceptions of those we intend to help.

#### Parental Role and Influence in Career Decision-Making

Otto and Call (1985) conducted a comprehensive literature review and concluded that researchers from the fields of social psychology, child development, sociology, demography, and career development have long recognized the

major role which parents play in shaping their children's career decisions. Several authors (Fox & Noble, 1981; Hoyt, 1984; Otto, 1984) contend that parents are the strongest determinant in adolescents' career planning. Posterski and Bibby's (1988) survey of Canadian youth reports that most adolescents acknowledge parents as the strongest influence in their lives. Crysedale's (1991) cross-Canada research shows that while 67% of young adults gave high praise to the past involvement of their parent(s) in their career planning, only 25% of these parents perceived that their influence had any merit. Thus, parents are seemingly unaware of their potential to facilitate career planning.

Osipow (1990) reports that parental influence is a major theme which runs through all major theories of career development. He, along with Schulenberg, Vondracek, and Crouter (1984) and Shoffner and Klemer (1973), identifies the roles which parents play in their children's career planning as genetic contributors, role models, sources of reinforcement, controllers of environmental context, and providers of information. These categories will be used to structure the literature review on parental influence which follows, although it should be recognized that the categories are not absolute nor mutually exclusive.

Following the review of parental roles, the family systems perspective on parental influence on career development will be presented. This will include some

observations on the effect of parental expectations on children's occupational attainment.

This section will conclude with an examination of the characteristics which parents might require to become more effective facilitators in the career planning of youth.

#### Parents as Role Models

A fundamental principle of Bandura's (1977b) social learning theory is that people learn through observation and vicarious experience. Therefore parents would provide to their children a natural source of data regarding occupations and the world of work. Herr and Cramer (1988) note that parental behaviour and attitudes related to work serve as an example to children and that parents transmit information both purposefully and unconsciously. Mangum (1987) notes that the influence of parents can be positive or negative. Examples of conceptualizations which might be passed from parents to children are the importance of work compared to other life roles, the degree of satisfaction to be derived from work, definitions of what constitutes an acceptable job, and gender stereotypes.

Parents also serve as models of occupational achievement. Stern and Eichorn's (1989) status attainment model suggests that parental socioeconomic level affects the eventual occupational status of children. Further, parental career patterns set standards for occupational stability/flexibility and indicate to adolescents the

appropriateness of exploration as opposed to occupational commitment.

#### Parents as Sources of Reinforcement and Support

Roe (1957, 1958) was one of the first vocational theorists to devote attention to the role of parental support. In her model, the quality of early parent-child relationships determines the child's eventual orientation to people, especially as reflected in occupational choice. For example, cold, rejecting parents would foster a nonperson career orientation in their children.

Hummel and McDaniels (1979) stress the fundamental importance of parental approval and support in adolescent career development. Kanisberg and Levant's (1988) review of relevant research shows that when parent-child relationships include acceptance and respect for the child combined with clear rules and consequences, a positive self-concept results. Shoffner and Klemer (1973) suggest that parental attitudes are more important as affectors of self-concept than are purposeful parental techniques of reinforcement. Given the importance which Super (1980) attaches to the principle of implementing self-concept in good career management, it becomes clear that the reinforcement of parents is a critical factor in adolescent career development.

Hummel and McDaniels (1979) examine other ways in which parental reinforcement can influence the career

development of adolescents. From a behavioral perspective, the amount of reinforcement which children receive for academic achievement and learning directly influences the motivation to continue and to strive for success in these activities. Shoffner and Klemer (1973) suggest that the absence of reinforcement and encouragement for academic effort will lead to an underestimation of academic ability and subsequent limitation of further training. Otto (1984) observes that with increased socioeconomic status the value of learning is stressed more and higher education is more affordable, thus adolescents will pursue more training and will acquire jobs which are more financially rewarding.

#### Parents as Controllers of Environment and Context

Many factors related to the environment which parents provide will influence their children's career decisions. Important considerations are the geographical location (including what businesses and industries, and hence occupational opportunities, predominate), the variety of occupations to which the child is exposed, the amount of opportunity and resources provided for learning, and the degree to which basic nutritional and health needs are met (Hoyt, 1984; Otto & Call, 1985). Thus, since parents are able to control, to a large extent, the surroundings of their children and since environment is known to shape development, it follows that parents are able to influence adolescent career development.

### Parents as Providers of Information

The ability of parents to provide comprehensive and accurate career-related information to their children is another factor in parental impact on adolescent career planning. Herr and Cramer (1988) consider it natural that children would look to their parents for advice. However, Maynard (1990) maintains that many parents provide incorrect or incomplete occupational information and hence do their children a disservice. Herr and Cramer (1988) comment that against a context of economic turmoil, occupational restructuring, and changes in social values and family structures, many parents feel incapable of providing career assistance to their children. Parental familiarity with the process of accessing accurate current information is needed both to ensure that reliable information is being transmitted and to increase parents' perception that they have something to offer to their children.

### Parental Role from a Family Systems Perspective

Some recent attempts have been made to integrate family systems theory with career development theory. Parental influence in adolescent career planning is acknowledged by Lopez and Andrews (1987) and Zingaro (1983), who conclude that career planning problems are indicative of problems within the social system of an individual. For adolescents, this social system is largely

composed of parents and family.

Brachter (1982) suggests that adolescents must become more aware of their parents' influence and accept more personal responsibility for career choice. Youth have difficulty differentiating their own expectations from those of their parents since they are still struggling with achieving ego integrity (Erikson, 1965, 1980). Further, parental expectations may provide an unrealistic framework for adolescent career planning. Lewis and Gilhousen (1981) discuss the potential for certain parental attitudes to have a negative impact on their children's career development (e.g., parents wanting their children to exceed their own career achievements).

Crysdale (1991), a sociologist, acknowledges the impact which parental influence may have on adolescent career development, but is optimistic about the ability of adolescents to differentiate their own expectations from those of their parents. He believes that while young children are shaped by family and environment, they are not entirely plastic and that during adolescence they begin to assume responsibility for accepting and rejecting the plans of influential adults.

Thus, family systems theory clearly supports the view that parents have significant influence on adolescent career development, although the ability of adolescents to manage this influence wisely is perceived differently by



various researchers and theorists.

This section has considered the various ways in which parents affect the career decisions of their children. A study completed by the Centre for Career Development Innovation ("Kids and Careers", 1991) concludes that "parents will continue to be the major influence on their children's behaviour and decision-making" (p.3). This influence has not gone unrecognized by adolescents, who see their parents as logical sources of career planning help (Hummel & McDaniels, 1979; Otto, 1984; Posterski and Bibby, 1988; Splete & Freeman-George, 1985). However, parents may fail to maximize the potential for career planning facilitation due to inadequate preparation, inaccurate information, or because they are unsure how to help.

#### Characteristics Required by Parents for Career Planning Facilitation

A review of the literature provides a theoretical understanding of the broad range of capabilities required by parents to be effective in career planning facilitation. These characteristics will be summarized in this section under Zingaro's (1983) categorizations of facilitative knowledge, skill and experience, and attitudes.

Knowledge. It is not necessary that parents possess every item of information which their children need in career planning, however it is important that whatever content knowledge they do share is accurate. Parents should

also have a basic knowledge of adolescent development and career development, to provide a framework within which to understand the career planning situation of adolescents (Herr & Cramer, 1988). Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman (1990) would insist that parents become familiar with their child's unique conceptualization of his/her career planning situation.

Further, McDaniels and Hummel (1984) believe that it is helpful for parents to have process knowledge related to all aspects of career planning so that they can teach these processes to their children (e.g., accessing occupational information, evaluating, and decision-making).

Skills and experience. Shields (1988) notes that parents must have good communication skills and parenting techniques to be able to effectively participate in the career management of their children. The literature contains many descriptions of parental communication strategies (Faber & Mazlish, 1980; Ginot, 1979; Gordon, 1975; Sweeney, 1975). Generally these approaches focus on active listening, empathic responses, clarification of the ownership of a problem, and clear articulations of one's own feelings.

Specific vocational skills are not a necessity in career planning facilitation but some measure of experience related to work and occupational research is an asset.

Attitudes. Parental attitudes may either enhance or

detract from the career planning abilities of their children (Lewis and Gilhousen, 1981; Mangum, 1987).

Parental attitudes which are considered facilitative in career planning include a sense of respect for and faith in the adolescent (Hummel & McDaniels, 1979; Shields, 1988), encouragement of exploration of varied activities (McDaniels & Hummel, 1984), respect for all others to avoid stereotyping (Herr & Cramer, 1988), an interest in on-going training to prepare for the adaptability needed in the future (Lotto, 1986), a positive attitude toward the satisfying and significant role which work can play in one's life (McDaniels & Hummel, 1984), and an acknowledgement of the importance of a personally acceptable balance between work, leisure, and other life roles (Super, 1990). The research of Young, Friesen, and Dillabough (1991) suggests that merely voicing positive attitudes is not sufficient; parents must live them and be committed to them for these attitudes to have a beneficial impact on their children.

This section has summarized desirable parental characteristics according to career development theory. It reflects the fact that both the fields of parenting and career development must be considered in facilitating adolescent career management. Further, parental knowledge alone is not enough, but must be incorporated with appropriate skills, experience, and attitudes. Only

recently have any attempts been made to determine what parents think of career planning facilitation (Centre for Career Development and Innovation, 1991). The results of this preliminary research support the need for parental training, but further work is needed to clarify specific detail and to focus on understanding individual perspectives.

#### Efforts to Train Parents as Facilitators

Based on the needs identified in theoretical literature, various attempts have been made to train parents as career planning facilitators. These efforts indicate a recognition that parents are obvious career planning facilitators and that their facilitation potential can be enhanced by training. This section will briefly summarize the programs and materials directed toward parental career planning education.

#### Parental Training Programs

Amatea and Cross (1980) describe a career education program attended by parents and children. It includes discussion, reading, skill rehearsal, and at-home practice. This program was evaluated by anecdotal data from attendees, and was considered useful by its motivated and literate population. Laramore (1979) and Otto and Call (1985) provided parental training programs lasting from 8 to 30 hours. No indication of followup evaluation is provided.

Less structured efforts at increasing parental involvement in children's career planning have also been reported. Lea (1976) suggests a system of career development education for parents, followed by parent-child collaboration in the preparation of a vocational profile of the child. Whiston (1989) builds on the diverse views of many theorists to design a hypothetical training program on career planning for parents. Greenough (1976) describes the benefit of parental involvement in conferences with teachers related to the post-high school planning of their children.

These programs reflect the value of supporting parents in their involvement in adolescent career planning, however they appear to be theory-driven, with no prior needs assessments reported.

#### Exercises and Workbooks for Parents

Palmer and Cochran (1988) developed a series of 4 workbooks for parents and adolescents to complete collaboratively at home during a 4-week period. The impact of the intervention on career development was assessed using the Career Development Inventory (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordaan, & Myers, 1979) and a qualitative analysis of post-program interviews. There was no report of a needs assessment guiding the program design, but the steps taken to evaluate this intervention indicate a significant training effect.

A variety of other related guidebooks and manuals are available (cf. Sawtelle, 1985; North Dakota Council on Vocational Education, 1984; Bingham, 1987). A publication by Alberta Career Development and Employment ("Kids and Careers", 1987) is no longer in print. In none of these examples is evaluation data available to assess their benefit to parents.

#### Books on Career Planning Facilitation

Shields (1988) and Hummel and McDaniels (1979) provide books on assisting children in career decision-making. There is no mention of input from parents or children in the development of this material.

This section has reviewed a variety of programs and materials designed to support parental involvement in the career planning of their children. The design process of these efforts was seen to be theory-driven, neglecting the consideration of the career planning process as perceived by adolescents and parents themselves.

#### Parent-Child Perceptions of Facilitative

##### Career Planning Activities

Few efforts have been made to determine what activities are considered most helpful in a collaborative career planning relationship from the point of view of the parents and children involved. Young, Friesen, and Dillabough (1991) have recently begun to study how parents and young adults cognitively and socially construct

intentional efforts at career planning facilitation. Their sample performed a Q sort ranking of activities considered to be supportive of adolescent career planning. Results led to the identification of four person factors, or preferred characteristics: open communication, autonomy, active parental involvement, and parental encouragement. This study represents significant movement toward understanding parent and adolescent participation in career planning from the perspective of those involved, however the usefulness of the results is limited by the research design. The parental and adolescent responses are not differentiated in reports of research results, hence it is impossible to determine if differences existed between the constructs of parents and children. Furthermore, the study does not provide insight into within-family or between-family differences in career planning perceptions.

The Centre for Career Development Innovation has very recently begun collecting data regarding the role of parents in their children's career planning ("Kids and Careers", 1991) and concludes that most parents consider their role in the career process as important but believe they lack the skills and experience to provide quality assistance in this regard. Many parents in this study expressed a need for further career planning training or information, and these researchers recommend the development and provision of a variety of training

materials and courses both for parents and children. Further research is needed to establish the best means of providing this training to families, specifically as relates to the effects of congruence/incongruence of parent-child perceptions within families.

#### Summary

The review of the literature in this chapter supported the view that children are not equipped to manage the career planning tasks expected of them and that they desire help. The literature clearly indicated that career planning skills are essential for lifestyle management. Contributors from the fields of career development, systems theory, and sociology indicated the very significant role which parents can and do play in their children's career considerations. It was concluded that parents are a logical source of career planning facilitation for their children but need training to become more effective in this role. Characteristics which enhance adolescent career planning and parental career planning facilitation were discussed and previous theory-driven career education efforts were reviewed. The importance of considering individual perceptions of career planning was presented, and some recent attempts to gain some understanding of how parents and children view collaborative career planning were considered.

Further research in this area is needed to guide the



development of parental career planning interventions.

Naylor (1986) notes that only when career educators truly understand the role which parents play in their children's career planning can they develop effective strategies for helping parents.

Therefore, the focus of this study will be on examining collaborative career planning from the perspective of parents and children who are involved. Perceptions of both the current and the desired career planning relationship will be considered. Additionally, the research will be conducted in a manner which permits the comparison of perceptions within families to illuminate how varying degrees and types of congruence between parents and children could determine differing needs for career planning support.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Method

This study aims to enhance our understanding of how parents and adolescents perceive their current and desired collaborative career planning relationships. In this chapter, the methodology employed to study parent-child perceptions of career planning will be outlined. First, a rationale for the use of a qualitative approach will be presented. Next, research procedures will be explained, including discussions on the sample, the questionnaires which were used, the associated reliability and validity, the data-gathering procedures, and the analysis of data.

#### Qualitative Methodology

In the past, much psychological research has been founded on a philosophy of science employing deductive techniques and emphasizing causality and lawfulness, but these mainstream approaches are inappropriate and inadequate for the study of how individuals perceive, organize, give meaning to, and express their understandings of themselves (Heinemann & Schontz, 1985; Mischler, 1986). Heinemann & Schontz note that "understanding persons as complex, unique, pluralistic, and heterarchically organized entities requires a revision of conventional methods of research" (p. 112). Hermeneutical theory and qualitative methodology offer a viable alternate paradigm (Packer, 1985).

Stainback and Stainback (1988) trace the theoretical

roots of qualitative research design to phenomenology, which attempts to understand people's perceptions of events in their environment. This understanding is achieved through a subjective orientation, a dynamic view of reality, a holistic focus, and an emphasis on validity as the true picture (Eisner and Peshkin, 1990). Thus, a qualitative approach is particularly well-suited to the study of parent-child perceptions.

Open-ended questionnaires were selected as the data collection strategy. This research design combines the strengths of two methodologies: the standardized format provided by the written questionnaire allows for some comparative and cumulative analysis of responses, while the open-ended nature of the questions acknowledges a pluralism in values and permits the collection of data without the imposition of the researcher's preconceived schema and associated meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). Although the use of close-ended questions may have enabled less ambiguous reporting of the data, precision in measurement is traded off to achieve insight into individual perceptions. This compromise is standard for qualitative research, and is seen to enhance rather than detract from the current study.

Open-ended questionnaires represent an acknowledged form of qualitative research. Miles and Huberman (1984) note that an increasing number of ethnographers and researchers are using prestructured instrumentation. Goetz and LeCompte

(1984) support the hybridization of surveys and qualitative research to enhance the reliability and validity of results. Stainback and Stainback (1984) explain that the use of a *posteriori* specification of units or categories to classify and interpret data from open-ended questions "results in grounded theory or theory emergent from and verified by real-world data" (p. 102) and overcomes the limitations of positivistic and confirmation-oriented quantitative research designs.

In summary, qualitative methodology channelled through an open-ended questionnaire represented the most appropriate research design for this study.

#### The Sample

The sample consisted of 86 participants, comprising 43 student-parent pairs. Students attended Grade 12 at a large senior high school in Calgary during the fall of 1991. Grade 12 students are typically 17 to 18 years old, and have received some career planning training through the mandatory Career and Life Management curriculum in Grade 10 or 11.

Participation in the study was solicited through brief verbal presentations by the researcher during regular school classes. The classes selected represented a cross-section of the academic streams of Grade 12 students at this high school, and all students in the classes addressed were invited to participate. Students were told that to be included in the study, both a student and one of his/her

parents were required to complete a short questionnaire related to career planning. Completed questionnaires were to be returned to the researcher by prepaid mail. Participation in the research was totally voluntary. All completed and returned questionnaires were included in the data analysis.

The student sample was comprised of 19 males and 24 females. The parent sample included 21 males and 22 females. Complete demographic data is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1  
Demographic data on participants

<u>Participants</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Students	43	19	24
Parents	43	21	22
<u>Pairings</u>			
Mother-Daughter		11 (including 2 female guardians)	
Mother-Son		11	
Father-Daughter		13 (including 1 male guardian)	
Father-Son		8	
<u>Parent Age</u>		<u>Annual Family Income</u>	
Not given	3	Not given	3
Under 40 years	5	Less than \$15,000	1
40-44 years	16	\$15,000-29,999	3
45-49 years	13	\$30,000-44,999	4
Over 49 years	6	\$45,000-59,999	10
		\$60,000-80,000	15
		Over \$80,000	7
<u>Occupations of Responding Parents</u>			
Not given (2), Housewife (3), Administrator (1), Teacher (3), Accounting-Investments (3), Engineer (3), Business Management (4), Lab Technologist (2), Restaurant Manager (1), Daycare Operator (1), Salespersons (5), Geologist (2), Petroleum Landman (1), Medical Secretary (1), Clerk (1), Nurse (2), Principal (1), Occupational Therapist (1), Realtor (2), Banking (1), Contractor (1), Student (1), Electrical Technician (1)			

### Measures

A review of the literature was unable to identify any prior questionnaire or standardized instrument which would be suitable for use in the current research. Therefore, two versions of an open-ended questionnaire were specifically designed for this study. The Parent Questionnaire (see Appendix A) and the Adolescent Questionnaire (see Appendix B) contain questions related to career planning in a parallel format, which allows for the comparison of responses within families. To ensure that the same relationship was being used as a reference point by the parent and child, instructions on both questionnaire and the accompanying information sheet clearly specified that both the child and parent completing the forms were to refer only to their mutual relationship in their responses. Parents were advised not to describe any activities with other children in the family. Students were not to describe career planning activities with other parents or adults.

Except for question 2, all questions were open-ended, permitting individually phrased and framed responses. Question 1 calls for an individual definition of the term *career planning*. Question 2 requires a Likert-type scale rating of the importance of career planning to the adolescent. Questions 3-7 are open-ended inquiries into adult and child perceptions of who should play the major role in helping adolescents with career planning, the type

of activities involved in current parental efforts at career planning, the effectiveness of these efforts, the type of changes needed in parent-child collaboration, and the sort of help needed to achieve this desired state of involvement.

The questionnaires were pretested on a sample of 5 families. Based on their feedback and an analysis of their responses, minor modifications were made to the wording of questions to enhance clarity. Question 1 was added at this time to assist the researcher in determining the parameters which respondents were using in describing career planning activities.

#### Reliability and Validity

Kirk and Miller (1986) contend that descriptions of reliability and validity typically provided by nonqualitative social scientists do not seem relevant to qualitative research. Adaptations of these criteria of scientific rigor must therefore be considered in this study.

#### Reliability

Guba and Lincoln (1988) state that the criterion of reliability, or consistency in scientific inquiry, is frequently not an issue for the naturalistic evaluator who may be more interested in individual differences than in similarities. However, these authors do provide suggestions for demonstrating reliability from a qualitative perspective.

One possibility is to carefully document the data

collection and analysis procedures to permit efforts of replication. Chapter 3 of this study aims to provide a detailed methodological description, thereby satisfying this criterion. Another suggestion is to perform an independent audit to determine if the categories derived from the data pool make sense and if data have been appropriately arranged within categories. This was accomplished in the current research by having a subsample of 5 pairs of questionnaires coded by independent individuals using the codes and criterion emerging from the researcher's analysis of responses. Codes were modified until agreement on codings could be reached among all coders.

The steps described above signify that the reliability of this study has been demonstrated in a manner appropriate for qualitative research.

### Validity

Validity reflects the accuracy of the constructs employed and the degree to which results can be said to represent conditions in human life (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Guba and Lincoln (1988) suggest that the terms *credibility*, signifying truth value, and *fittingness*, signifying applicability, accurately reflect tests of validity in qualitative research. As will be explained later in this chapter (see Analysis of Data), the constructs used to frame results in the current study emerged from the analysis of real life descriptions of career planning provided by



participants, and these constructs reflect the multiple realities which exist in the minds of these people. Since these multiple realities are, in fact, the individual perceptions which are the focus of study, each participant's responses can be considered to be fitting and credible when considered as a statement of personal perspective. Therefore, according to Guba and Lincoln, the qualitative methodology employed supports the validity of this research.

#### Data Gathering Procedure

After the brief class presentation by the researcher, all interested students were given a research package to take home. Each package contained a letter of introduction (see Appendix C), an adult questionnaire, an adolescent questionnaire, informed consent forms (see Appendix D), 2 small envelopes in which to seal completed questionnaires, and one large, stamped, addressed envelope in which to return the completed materials to the researcher. To ensure the frankness and accuracy of responses, it was considered necessary to provide respondents with some method to safeguard the privacy of their completed questionnaires within their families. Thus each respondent was instructed to seal his/her completed questionnaire in one of the small envelopes provided immediately upon completion, and then both sealed questionnaires were to be returned together in the large envelope. Instructions indicated that approximately 20 minutes would be required to complete each

questionnaire and that completed questionnaires were to be mailed back within one week. Of the approximately 150 students who were addressed, 92 took questionnaire packages from the researcher, and 45 completed and returned materials. Of these 45 returned packages, 2 were incomplete and therefore unusable, resulting in a final sample of 43 families. These families represent a 46.74% response rate of those students who initially took questionnaire packages.

Although informed consent forms necessarily contained names of participants, these forms were not attached to questionnaires which were identified by number only. This procedure allowed for the comparison of responses within families while still protecting the anonymity of individual responses.

#### Analysis of Data

The qualitative analysis of data required a two-step process: first the coding of responses, representing analytic induction; and second, the enumeration and comprehensive summarization of responses and the comparison of these responses within families (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984).

#### Analysis of Individual Responses

Coding responses required the concurrent construction of a taxonomy of categories which covered all data and the classification of data according to this taxonomy (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). First, each question was considered in

isolation: responses to that question on each questionnaire were studied by the researcher and emerging themes were identified and labelled. Some themes recurred, allowing for the development of a pool of homogeneous groupings of responses. These categories were continually reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure the achievement of the criteria of internal homogeneity as well as external heterogeneity between categories. This process of distillation of data was repeated until all responses to all questions were coded.

The resultant categories were summarized in a coding book. Two independent research assistants used this book as the guideline to code a subsample of 5 pairs of questionnaires. Several discrepancies arose between coders, and the categories were reanalyzed and redefined until agreement was reached between the researcher and the research assistants on coding. Several of these modifications are described below.

Data analysis revealed overlapping responses to Questions 4 and 5, both referring to current collaborative career planning activities, and to Questions 6 and 7, both referring to the desired parent-child career planning relationship. It was decided to combine responses within each of these pairs of questions to provide a comprehensive and unified picture of each individual's perceptions of current and ideal career planning collaboration for the

purposes of qualitative analysis.

Additionally, attempts to categorize responses to Questions 4 and 5 in any simple manner produced codes which were inadequate in terms of consistent coding between research assistants. The interacting nature of the factors involved in responses to these questions precluded the absolute coding of an entire response to any one category or another. Even single statements could not necessarily be objectively classified. For example, both parent and student may describe mutual career planning conversations regarding university, but the parent may perceive the conversations as pleasant and supportive, while the student may perceive them as interfering and controlling. Some system was needed to reflect the similarity/dissimilarity of factors such as intent, type and autonomy of activity, and time frame of decision which appeared in answers to these questions. A matrix of codes was developed to allow for the systematic coding of each individual statement in each response on whichever factors were appropriate (see Figure 1). Once this coding system was initiated, it was possible to reach agreement between coders on virtually all response codings for the subsample.

This coding consistency allowed the process of data analysis for the entire sample to proceed. A frequency count of total responses for each code for each question was conducted, differentiating adolescent responses from parent

**Figure 1**

Coding Matrix developed for Questions 4 & 5: What is your/your parent's role in your child's/your career planning? Describe, list activities, rate effectiveness at helping with career planning, and provide reason for rating.

	1	2	3	4
<b>INTENT</b>	choose 1 occupation	choose several possible occupations	prepare for, know about a variety of occupations	broaden, explore, be aware of many options
<b>TYPE OF ACTIVITY</b>	review occupational literature, university calendars, student achievement records	discussions with parents	visiting job sites, attending career fairs, interviews, aptitude tests	consider broad range of activity such as travel, culture, sports, leisure
<b>FACTORS CONSIDERED</b>	one factor considered (skills or interests)	two factors considered	several factors considered	all life roles and factors considered
<b>TIME FRAME OF DECISION</b>	immediate decision needed	decision to be made at one specific future time	decision to be made at some unspecified future time	ongoing, constant decision-making
<b>AUTONOMY OF ACTIVITY</b>	parent does for child	parent does with child or arranges for child to do	child does, parent encourages	child does without support
<b>AUTONOMY OF DECISION</b>	parent decides on own	parent steers, imposes, directs, gives unsolicited opinions and advice	parent facilitates, encourages, suggests options, helps to evaluate in nondirective manner	child decides totally on own
<b>SPECIFICITY OF CHOICE</b>	one specific educational or occupational choice	specific occupational field or educational level	general occupational field or educational level	any decision acceptable

responses. For some questions, a second type of enumeration was conducted to ensure that the relative importance of items within a response was reflected. To illustrate,

responses to Question 3 indicated which persons or institutions were responsible for helping adolescents with career planning; some respondents emphatically identified one person or institution, others included lists of potential helpers. It was considered that the former response reflected more importance than if the same helper were included as one item in a list; in other words, the prominence or importance of a helper related to how many others were sharing the helping responsibility. A procedure of weighting responses was instituted, and a second weighted frequency count was conducted.

Similarly, the analysis of responses to Questions 4 and 5 included the consideration of total frequency response data as well as predominant response data. A first analysis simply counted all responses without reflecting the relative importance of items mentioned. The second analysis considered where respondents had placed emphasis through their wording or numbered effectiveness ratings. The predominant response for each individual was identified and coded, and finally, a frequency count was performed on these codings. The use of these secondary techniques of analysis safeguarded against the assumption that the most frequently cited responses were necessarily the most important.

#### Comparison of Data Within Families

The next stage of data analysis included the comparison of data within families to clarify congruence of

perceptions. Parent and adolescent questionnaires for each family were reviewed together, question by question, to determine the similarity and differences in responses. Identical codes indicated congruence. Different codes indicated some degree of incongruence and signalled the need to consider the direction in which the difference in perceptions occurred and whether or not it was a source of potential conflict between parent and child. For most questions, codings emerged in a type of hierarchical structure which eased the process of comparison, although some questions had a much clearer and more systematic hierarchy of responses than others. Through this process of carefully considering each parent-child pair of responses, it was possible to assign to each family a statement regarding their congruence in responses on each question, and then to provide a summary of the congruence in perceptions within families for each question.

#### Thematic Coding

Finally, by reviewing each questionnaire in its entirety and by considering it as a personal narrative on career planning, it was possible to develop a personal profile of career planning perceptions for that individual. These profiles, along with statements of congruence for individual questions, were compared within families, and each family was assigned a statement of overall congruence/incongruence and satisfaction related to career planning.

The qualitative process of grouping responses into homogeneous categories was employed to represent some organization of these family profile statements to reflect both similarities and differences between families. These similarities and differences were evident along two dimensions: (1) whether or not the child had made a career decision (in this case represented by any decision to pursue a specific level of education or training or to seek a particular type of employment), and (2) whether or not the parent was supportive of the child's status regarding career choice. The interaction of these two dimensions produced 7 themes of family career planning collaboration (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
Themes of Family Interaction Related to Career Planning

	CHILD HAS DECIDED	CHILD HAS NOT DECIDED	
		comfortable with indecision	uncomfortable with indecision
Parent accepts status of child	<b>Theme 1</b> -parent approves of child's decision (CP,CG)	<b>Theme 4</b> -parent does not pressure to make a decision (CP, CG)	<b>Theme 5</b> -parent does not pressure, but child is anxious (CP,IG)
Parent does not accept status of child	<b>Theme 2</b> -more exploration wanted by parent (CP, IG)  <b>Theme 3</b> -different choice wanted by parent (CP/IP, IG)	<b>Theme 6</b> -parent pressuring for decision (CP/IP, IG)	<b>Theme 7</b> -both child and parent anxious and desire a decision (CP, CG)

KEY: CP = Congruent Perceptions  
CG = Congruent Goals

IP = Incongruent Perceptions  
IG = Incongruent Goals



The thematic codes represent the differences and similarities both between families and within families and provide a useful framework within which to consider the implications of these issues on collaborative career planning potential. The themes also illustrate a basic principle of qualitative inquiry which was postulated by Miles and Huberman (1984): "no social phenomenon is wholly idiosyncratic; no overarching social pattern is unconditional" (p. 20).

#### Expectations of the Study

It should be noted that no explicit hypotheses are being tested in this study. Rather, the description of the overall pattern of responses and the comparison of responses within families is intended to contribute to the understanding of the perceptions of adolescents and their parents regarding career planning collaboration and to identify potential sources of conflict or strength within parent-child relationships.

This chapter has summarized the methodology used to design and conduct the current study. The use of a qualitative research approach was discussed, and a case was made for the appropriateness of this form of inquiry related to the focal point of this study, which is gaining an understanding of individual perceptions. A comprehensive description of data analysis methods was also provided.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate (1) how individual parents and children perceive current and desired career planning collaboration, and (2) the degree of congruence in perceptions between parent and child within the same family. Research results will be presented in this chapter in a format addressing this dual focus.

The presentation of results will follow the sequence of questions in the questionnaires used for data collection (see Appendices A & B). For most questions, a general summary of responses will be immediately followed by an analysis of within-family comparisons for that question. Discussion of within-family congruence for questions 4 and 5 will be withheld until the final section of this chapter which deals with the thematic coding of families. This organizational structure best illuminates the contribution of within-family responses for questions 4 and 5 toward the development of thematic codes.

#### Question 1: What does the term career planning mean to you?

##### General Summary of Responses

On the whole, respondents did not describe a broad orientation toward career planning (see Table 2). The answers ranged from very vague (e.g., "thinking about the future") to somewhat vague (e.g., "planning to reach my career goals") to increasingly specific (e.g., listing

various components and stages of career planning). The qualitative analysis of responses led to the establishment of codes which reflected a hierarchy of increasing complexity in the conceptualization of career planning.

The predominant view of career planning was as a once-in-a-lifetime choice or a straightforward match between the individual and an occupation, which is reminiscent of the traditional view of career planning. Of the 86 respondents, 54 (62.8%) had a simple view of career planning coded at level 2 or below. This represents 58% of all parents and 67% of all students. It was very rare to see any recognition of a lifelong, or even occasional need to reuse career planning skills as is suggested in Super's (1990) new paradigm of career adaptability. However, individuals may be better attuned to developmental career planning than their definitions indicate. Answers to other questions reflected a more sophisticated understanding of career planning, but respondents did not incorporate complex concepts into their definitions.

The most frequent personal factors taken into account by respondents were interests and skills (marks, aptitudes, abilities). Values were not mentioned. It may be concluded that there was little recognition of the scope and changing nature of factors which must be recognized in career decision-making.

Table 2

Responses to Question 1: What does the term career planning mean to you?

CODE	EXPLANATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	
0	Vague (e.g., "thinking about the future")	6	2 female students 1 female parent 3 male parents
1	Simple, single choice orientation, choosing one occupation or training program (e.g., "picking a job")	17	4 female students 2 male students 7 female parents 4 male parents
2	Simple, single choice orientation reflecting some matching (e.g., "deciding which courses are required in university to reach my career goal")	31	12 female students 8 male students 5 female parents 6 male parents
3	More complex single choice orientation, reflecting consideration of one personal characteristic (e.g., "decide on interests, research options, and plan for career")	13	2 female students 5 male students 3 female parents 3 male parents
4	Reflecting consideration of more than one personal characteristic (e.g., "attempts to choose and prepare for field closely related to the interests and expertise of person")	11	2 female students 1 male student 4 female parents 4 male parents
5	Many personal/lifestyle dimensions considered in occupational/educational choice (e.g., "choosing preferred occupation according to abilities, interests, motivation, finances, and planning how to get there, to have satisfying life")	7	2 female students 3 male students 2 female parents
6	Active management of all life roles continuously (e.g., "planning career to have options open and full and satisfying lifestyle, considering interests, abilities, short and long term goals")	1	1 male parent
TOTAL		86	

### Congruence of Within-Family Responses to Question 1

Table 3 summarizes the congruence of perceptions within families, with scores representing the difference between ratings of parental responses and ratings of student responses. Scores were achieved by subtracting the latter from the former. Thus a score at or near 0 represents a good degree of congruence in perceptions of what career planning means. Within 24 of the 43 families (55.8%) parent-child scores were within one point of each other and for 38 of the 43 families (88.4%) parent-child scores were within 2 rating levels of each other. Thus, not only was within-family congruence high but it also occurred at different levels

Table 3  
Congruence of responses within families to Question 1

Difference in coding represented by rating of parent response minus rating of student response	Number of families
+5	2
+4	0
+3	1
+2	9
+1	7
0*	12
-1	5
-2	5
-3	0
-4	2
TOTAL	43

\* represents perfect congruence

(i.e., within some families narrow views of career planning were shared, within others more complex views were shared). The regular shape of the distribution around 0 indicates that on the whole neither parents nor children had a more sophisticated or complex view.

Question 2: How important is career planning to you/your child at the present time?

General Summary of Responses

Career planning is perceived to be very important for Grade 12 students by both parents and adolescents (see Table 4). Note that with the exception of 4 out of 86 individuals, career planning importance was rated as greater than or equal to 3. Relating these results to responses in Question 1, the type of career planning which most are considering important is a simple procedure occurring only once.

Lower ratings do not necessarily indicate a disregard for career planning importance, but might mean a lack of

Table 4

Responses to Question 2: How important is career planning to you/your child at the present time?

RATING		TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS	NUMBER OF PARENTS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
very important	5	37	18	19
	4	31	13	18
	3	14	10	4
	2	4	2	2
not at all important	1	0	0	0

relevance at the present time. One student who rated career planning as "2" stated, "Career planning does not mean anything to me now. I think that because of where I am in life I still have alot of growing to do. Career planning is filled with resentment because it pressures at such a young age". These comments exemplify how the current salience of career planning to the client is inextricably linked to the client's willingness to participate in the process and how strong affect can be involved in career planning, in this case as a barrier to involvement.

#### Congruence of Within-Family Responses to Question 2

Within-family congruence related to the importance of career planning was very high (see Table 5). Within 31 of the 43 families (72.9%) ratings were within one level of each other. The even distribution pattern around 0 (perfect congruence) indicates that both parents and children acknowledge the importance of career planning.

Table 5  
Congruence of responses within families to Question 2

Difference in parent rating minus student rating	Number of families
+3	1
+2	4
+1	9
0	13
-1	9
-2	7
-3	0

However, since the ratings of all respondents were clustered very closely together, this may indicate not only within-family congruence, but also a universal view that career planning is important.

Question 3: Who, considering all persons and institutions, should take the major role in helping you/your child with the career planning process?

#### General Summary of Responses

Consistent with qualitative methodology, the coding categorization for the responses to this question reflects actual answers given and thus includes the category "student", although this question had been designed to illuminate perceptions of who, besides the student, should be involved. It is impossible to know how many others would have included "student" as a response had they considered it a possible alternative.

Frequency results were tabulated in both an unweighted and a weighted format to allow for the reflection of relative importance of potential helpers (see Table 6). Although this procedure represents a useful precautionary measure to avoid misinterpreting results, in this instance it was found to have little effect on the sequence in which responses emerged in order of importance. To achieve weighted scores, a code was assigned a weighting of 3 if it was the only response given, 2 if it was one of three or less responses given, and 1 if it was one of many responses.



**Table 6**

Responses to Question 3: Who considering all persons and institutions should take the major role in helping you/your child with career planning? Explain why.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES, STUDENTS AND PARENTS COMBINED		
Unweighted Frequency Score	Category of Response	Weighted Frequency Score
56	Parents	111
27	Counsellors	63
25	Student	52
15	School	34
9	University	19
7/5/5	Teachers/Peers/Others	13/9/11

RESPONSES OF STUDENTS AND PARENTS, SEPARATED					
Parent Responses			Student Responses		
N unweight-ed	Category	N weight-ed	N unweight-ed	Category	N weight-ed
39	Parent	70	17	Parent	41
14	Counsellor	30	13	Counsellor	33
12	School	25	13	Student	28
12	Student	24	4	Other	9
6	University	12	3	School	9
3	Teacher	6	4	Teacher	7
3	Peers	6	3	University	7
1	Other	2	2	Peers	3

Note that when arranged in order of frequency, the sequence of the most frequent responses for students and parents is almost identical. "Parents" and "counsellors" appear first and second, followed closely by "student" and a generic reference to "school".

A review of frequency scores and weighted results

reveals that "parents" were clearly recognized by both parents and students as being most responsible for helping adolescents with career planning. Accompanying explanations focused on parental knowledge of the history and preferences of the child. In other words, parents were most often seen as an expert resource on their children. Two students explained that parents should be involved because they were the ones paying the bills at the current time.

Thirty-nine out of 43 parents included "parents" on their lists, contradicting suggestions in the literature (e.g., Herr & Cramer, 1988) that parents are not aware of their potential for career planning facilitation. This finding does not necessarily imply that these parents believe themselves prepared to help, only that they are responsible for helping.

Almost all students who included "counsellors" (i.e., guidance counsellors) as a response indicated them as most important. Some reasons cited for this answer were: "because counsellors know the system and have information on career opportunities", "because they know the academic record of the student, their strengths and weaknesses, their marks and scores on aptitude tests", and "because it is their job to help students with problems". Thus students acknowledge the role which counsellors play in their career development, but see them as sources of information, not as experts in teaching the career development process.

Overall, the similar pattern of responses between parents and students suggests a congruence in perception regarding potential helpers. Parents, in general, listed more responses, indicating that they may be more aware of the variety of potential sources of career planning help.

#### Congruence of Within-Family Responses to Question 3

Comparing within-family parent and child responses to this question produced some indications of potential conflict. Of the 43 families, 4 had within-family congruence in the categories named and the importance afforded them. In 14 families, there was only partial overlap in categories named, but no apparent conflict. In 16 families, there was no overlap of categories, but no indication of conflict. However, in 9 families there was no similarity in categories named and clear evidence of friction between parent and student. In some cases, this occurred when the student did not welcome the parent's involvement in career planning. In other cases, the child believed the parent should be responsible for help with career planning, but the parent believed others should do it. In one family in which strong conflict was apparent, parent and student were mutually aware of differing opinions about who should be involved in the child's career planning; they were congruent in perception of the situation but not in beliefs. These examples illustrate the complexity of understanding the perceptions of others and that assumptions cannot be made

about the effects of congruent or incongruent perceptions.

Questions 4 and 5: What is your/your parent's role in your child's/your career planning? Describe current collaborative activities and rate their effectiveness.

Questions 4 and 5 both pertain to actual, as opposed to desired, career planning collaboration. Responses to both questions were of such a similar nature that it was decided to combine the results for analysis, with the intent of illuminating what parents and adolescents perceive to be occurring in their mutual career planning relationships.

#### General Summary of Responses

Recall, from Chapter 3, that the development of codes for these questions was confounded by the variety of interacting factors involved, obviating the possibility of coding any response into one absolute category. A coding matrix (see Figure 1) was developed to reflect the potential similarity of and difference between factors within responses. This coding matrix was employed twice for each questionnaire: the first time to categorize all items mentioned by each respondent (total frequencies of responses from this procedure are summarized in Table 7) and the second time to categorize only the predominant response of the individual which was determined by reading each respondent's answer to Questions 4 and 5 as a narrative and choosing codes which corresponded with the primary emphasis (results from this procedure are summarized in Table 8).

Table 7

Total Frequency of Responses to Questions 4 and 5, regarding actual collaborative career planning activities

FACTOR	1	2	3	4
INTENT	choose 1 occ. n=13 (6p; 7s)	choose several occs. n=22 (14p; 8s)	prepare for variety n=88 (60p; 28s)	broaden, explore n=20 (15p; 5s)
TYPE OF ACTIVITY	review occ. literature n=21 (14p; 7s)	discussions n=190 (102p; 88s)	visiting, interviews n=45 (26p; 19s)	broad focus n=27 (21p; 6s)
FACTORS CONSIDERED	one factor n=33 (17p; 16s)	two factors n=19 (6p; 13s)	several factors n=10 (7p; 3s)	all roles & factors n=2 (1p; 1s)
TIME FRAME OF DECISION	immediate n=6 (1p; 5s)	specific future time n=51 (29p; 22s)	unspecified future time n=11 (7p; 4s)	ongoing, constant n=2 (2p; 0s)
AUTONOMY OF ACTIVITY	parent does for child n=27 (18p; 9s)	parent does with child n=105 (61p; 44s)	child does, parent encourages n=92 (52p; 40s)	child does without support n=1 (0p; 1s)
AUTONOMY OF DECISION	parent decides n=1 (0p; 1s)	parent steers n=47 (24p; 23s)	parent facilitates n=236 (124p; 112s)	child decides n=20 (7p; 13s)
SPECIFICITY OF CHOICE	one specific occupational choice n=3 (3p; 0s)	specific occ. field or educ. level n=1 (1p; 0s)	general educ. or occ. level n=23 (15p; 8s)	any decision acceptable n=5 (2p; 3s)

KEY: p: parents      s: students      n: frequency of response

Although the latter process was conducted to avoid the assumption that most frequently mentioned items would necessarily be most important, it produced only minor alterations in results compared to the frequency count.

To adequately review these results, each factor will be discussed individually, with results from both Table 7 and Table 8 being considered.

Table 8

Frequency of Most Prominent Responses to Questions 4 and 5, regarding actual collaborative career planning activities

FACTOR	1	2	3	4
INTENT	choose 1 occ. n=8 (3p; 5s)	choose several occs. n=18 (11p; 7s)	prepare for variety n=32 (15p; 17s)	broaden, explore n=5 (4p; 1s)
TYPE OF ACTIVITY	review occ. literature n=5 (3p; 2s)	discussions n=64 (34p; 30s)	visiting, interviews n=12 (6p; 6s)	broad focus n=5 (4p; 1s)
FACTORS CONSIDERED	one factor n=14 (9p; 5s)	two factors n=12 (6p; 6s)	several factors n=10 (7p; 3s)	all roles & factors n=0 (0p; 0s)
TIME FRAME OF DECISION	immediate n=6 (1p; 5s)	specific future time n=27 (15p; 12s)	unspecified future time n=11 (7p; 4s)	ongoing, constant n=2 (2p; 0s)
AUTONOMY OF ACTIVITY	parent does for child n=3 (1p; 2s)	parent does with child n=34 (19p; 15s)	child does, parent encourages n=45 (21p; 24s)	child does without support n=1 (0p; 1s)
AUTONOMY OF DECISION	parent decides n=0 (0p; 0s)	parent steers n=12 (4p; 8s)	parent facilitates n=72 (37p; 35s)	child decides n=1 (0s; 1s)
SPECIFICITY OF CHOICE	one specific occupational choice n=0 (0p; 0s)	specific occ. field or educ. level n=0 (0p; 0s)	general educ. or occ. level n=21 (13p; 8s)	any decision acceptable n=1 (0p; 1s)

KEY: p: parents s: students n: frequency of response

Intent. The responses to this factor, the intent of career planning activities, showed an emphasis on preparing for a variety, or at least several, occupations. This finding indicates a broader focus of career planning than was implied by the responses to Question 1. However, responses were generally limited to an occupational focus and did not reflect Super's (1980, 1990) view of career

planning as involving all life roles. The distribution of responses was balanced between parents and students, and there was no apparent differentiation of response by gender.

Type of activity. Generally, the data indicated a very traditional understanding of what comprises career planning activities. There were no clear differences between male and female responses. More parents than students reflected a broad focus (box 4) regarding activities.

The data overwhelmingly indicated discussions as the primary career planning activity in which families engage. Also, visits to job sites, information-gathering interviews, and attending career fairs (box 3) were mentioned, showing some willingness to actively engage in career research. There was little evidence of reliance on reading career planning literature (box 1), which may indicate that individuals overlook this obvious information resource.

Although higher for parents, the overall low response rate for box 4 suggests that respondents were seemingly unaware of the scope of activities which might provide useful career and lifestyle management information. (e.g., recreation, travel, cultural events). This is seen as another indication that the career planning focus for most respondents is restricted to occupational choice.

Factors considered in career decision-making. This particular dimension was not able to be coded for most questionnaires, since specific factors were rarely noted.

However, the data do exhibit a focus on considering only one or two personal factors in career decision-making. There was no reflection of an awareness of Super's (1980) lifespace concept in which career planning is viewed as a process requiring the consideration of all life roles.

Time frame of decision. This particular factor was also very difficult to code without inference, as it was rarely mentioned specifically. However, most of those who acknowledged their time frame were looking at making one occupational decision at one specific future time (box 2). Only 2 individuals, both parents, reflected any understanding of Super's (1980) lifespan concept in which career planning recycles continuously to support adaptability and flexibility. There were few indications of a perceived need to make an immediate career decision (box 1) in spite of the pressure on adolescents suggested by the literature review (Grites, 1981).

Autonomy of career planning activity. Almost all questionnaires were able to be coded on this factor, indicating that most individuals were aware of the scope of possibilities regarding the autonomy of activities and framed their answers in such a way to make their particular perception clear.

Table 7 shows that 105 responses related to activities which parents perform with the child (box 2) as opposed to 92 activities in which the parent encourages the child's



performance (box 3). However, these results reverse in Table 8 which summarizes only the predominant answers, indicating more emphasis on parental support as encouragement.

Regardless of which table is consulted, the respondents clearly support a collaborative view of career planning as opposed to parental or student autonomy. Frequency of response was almost equally split between males and females and between parents and students.

Autonomy of decision. 83 of the 86 questionnaires were able to be coded on this factor, indicating an awareness among respondents of autonomy as a function in career planning.

Responses were overwhelmingly centred on a collaborative decision-making approach in which the student makes the decision after parental consultation. Note that these responses reflect what individuals perceived to be actually occurring, not what they wished were happening. This is an encouraging indication for those interested in supporting parental career planning facilitation. There was virtually no indication of the extreme perspectives of the child having no say or absolute say in career decision-making (boxes 1 and 4).

Responses were equally representative of parents and students and of males and females.

Specificity of career decision attained or desired.

Very few questionnaires explicitly addressed this issue, so

without inference it was difficult to code many responses. It seemed that if specific decisions were mentioned, it was in cases where the adolescent had already made an occupational or educational choice. It was impossible to know how other respondents perceived the specificity of choice needed in their career decisions. Parents and students were equally vague on this point.

Table 8 shows that out of 43 families, only 8 students and 13 parents mentioned an educational or occupational decision of even a general nature. The most frequently cited of these decisions was to go to university.

This concludes the general presentation of responses to questions 4 and 5. In summary, the data indicated that both parents and children shared a relatively narrow view of career planning which focused on discussion-based collaborative activities regarding occupational selection and did not reflect the continuous nature nor the broad scope of roles involved in career planning.

#### Congruence of Within-Family Responses to Question 4 and 5

The methodology of coding individual factors within responses allowed for the easy identification of differences in parent-child perceptions. Often these differences were subtle and would have been overlooked if responses had been more generally categorized. Further discussion of this issue will be delayed until later in this chapter when themes of family interaction are presented.

Questions 6 and 7: What other career planning activities should parents offer and what help would you/your parents need to achieve this involvement?

Since both questions 6 and 7 pertained to perceptions of the desired career planning relationship, responses were combined for data analysis. In general, respondents named specific changes or types of help needed to achieve a more ideal career planning situation and these fell into clear groupings which became the coding categories.

General Summary of Responses

Table 9 displays the frequency of specific responses indicating the types of changes or help individuals perceive as desirable in their career planning collaboration. The most common request by both parents and students is for more career information, suggesting a perceived information deficit. The types of information requested focus on occupational, labor market, and other content-specific topics, not on the career development and planning process. Individuals seem to believe that with more occupational data, they will be able to make good career decisions. Only 8 of the 114 answers suggested a need for parents to learn about the process of career planning. Recall that responses to Question 3 indicated that counsellors were seen as information resources, not experts on the career management process.

There were 15 responses which indicated that career

Table 9

Responses to Questions 6 and 7: What other career planning activities should parents be involved in, and what assistance is needed to achieve this involvement?

CODING	TOTAL	PARENTS	STUDENTS
Blank, don't know	7	4	3
No change is needed	15	7	8
Change in attitude/involvement			
better communication, less direction	4	0	4
better communication, more time	4	0	4
less involvement	2	0	2
More career information			
generic	15	8	7
on possible occupations	16	6	10
labor market	2	1	1
university prerequisites	9	4	5
More contact/help from school	16	14	2
Contacts for information interviews, summer jobs, etc.	9	5	4
Training for parents in career planning	8	4	4
Meetings with other parents	2	1	1
Financial management information	1	0	1
More money	4	3	1

planning collaboration was already effective and that no change was needed. These answers were divided almost equally between parents and students, however respondents were not necessarily from the same families.

A change in parental attitude or involvement was

desired by 10 respondents, all of them students. The apparent child dissatisfaction ranged from moderate (e.g., "Give me more support and assure me I will eventually be happy") to strong (e.g., "They should listen to me. It's MY decision"). There was no acknowledgement from parents of a need to change their own fundamental approach.

The desire for help from the school was primarily identified by parents. Of the 16 responses in this category, most referred to parents having more contact with counsellors or teachers. In several cases, parents wished to know more about what the school is doing related to career education.

#### Congruence of Within-Family Responses

The data related to questions 6 and 7 were rich sources of insight into the satisfaction level of individuals with their parent-child career planning relationship.

There are several indications that the same career planning relationship may be viewed differently by the individuals involved. First, only students indicated a need for change in parental attitude/involvement, whereas parents in these families desired either no change or other sorts of changes. Also supporting the idiosyncrasy of perceptions is the fact that the 7 parents and 8 students desiring no change in the current career planning relationship did not all come from the same families. Perceptions are seen to be personal and unique and not

necessarily accurate compared to objective observations or standards.

A within-family comparison of responses revealed that 8 families explicitly stated their satisfaction with the current situation, 13 families had some similarity of responses with no apparent conflict, 7 families had no overlap in responses at all with no apparent conflict, and 7 families had at least one member who very clearly expressed dissatisfaction with the mutual career planning relationship and experienced conflict. There was insufficient data on 9 families to determine a satisfaction rating.

This concludes the analysis of results to individual questions. Parents and students view career planning as very important for adolescents, and a substantial level of collaboration and satisfaction exists already within many of the families. On the whole, individuals have a lack of understanding of the career planning process. They perceive an occupational focus and isolated need for career planning skills. Parents were seen to be the most frequent sources of career planning support indicated by parents and students alike. A need for more information and resources on occupations, the world of work, and training opportunities was identified by the respondents. It was demonstrated that within-family perceptions of the career planning relationship were not always congruent, and that this incongruence was often associated with dissatisfaction with

parent-child collaboration.

### Thematic Coding of Families

The use of qualitative methodology in reviewing each questionnaire in its entirety, as a type of narrative, resulted in the emergence of several patterns of family interaction which supported the development of themes. This procedure was described in more detail in Chapter 3. The results of thematic coding are presented in Table 10 and will be discussed theme by theme.

Table 10  
Results of Thematic Coding of Families

	CHILD HAS DECIDED	CHILD HAS NOT DECIDED	
		comfortable with indecision	uncomfortable with indecision
Parent accepts status of child	<b>Theme 1</b> -parent approves of child's decision 12 FAMILIES Satisfaction Rating: 4	<b>Theme 4</b> -parent does not pressure to make a decision 14 FAMILIES Satisfaction rating: 3-4	<b>Theme 5</b> -parent does not pressure but child is anxious 4 FAMILIES Satisfaction rating: 1-2
Parent does not accept status of child	<b>Theme 2</b> -more exploration wanted by parent 3 FAMILIES Satisfaction rating: 2  <b>Theme 3</b> -different choice wanted by parent 1 FAMILY Satisfaction rating: 1	<b>Theme 6</b> -parent pressuring for decision 8 FAMILIES Satisfaction rating: 2-3	<b>Theme 7</b> -both child and parent anxious and desire a decision 1 FAMILY Satisfaction rating: 2
Key to Satisfaction Ratings	1 VERY POOR, TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE 2 NEEDS SOME CHANGES TO BE SATISFACTORY 3 GENERALLY GOOD, BUT SOME IMPROVEMENT POSSIBLE 4 VERY GOOD, NO CHANGE DESIRED		

### Theme 1

The first theme indicates parental approval of a career decision made by the adolescent, with decisions ranging from specific occupational choices to general educational or occupational goals. Parental support may have related to the particular decision, or may have been offered unconditionally. Therefore, congruence in goals was evident within the 12 families in Theme 1. Generally, there was a good within-family match between descriptions of current and desired career planning collaboration, indicating congruent perceptions.

Students categorized in this theme were typically very happy with the current career planning collaboration and did not desire significant changes. However, the harmony and congruence which characterize this theme do not represent the quality of the decision which has been made, merely its acceptability to student and parent.

### Theme 2

Within Theme 2, students had made career decisions similar to those in Theme 1, however parents in these families perceived the decisions to be premature and thus withheld their approval. Although goals were incongruent within the 3 families assigned to this theme, parents did not actively interfere with or undermine the student's efforts to pursue the decision which had been made, but did encourage further exploration. Students within these



families were dissatisfied with parental involvement, indicating that even if there is no interference, adolescents still desire the endorsement of their parents.

In some cases, parental suggestions that other options be considered served to reaffirm the original decision of the child. One student noted, "he [Dad] tried to convince me to be a doctor or a lawyer, but I still want to teach".

Similarity between parent and student descriptions of career planning collaboration indicated the existence of congruent perceptions in spite of differing goals.

### Theme 3

Theme 3 represents families in which the adolescent had made an educational or occupational decision and the parent was perceived to be actively interfering with the student's efforts to pursue that ambition. Incongruence in goals was fundamental to the conflict between parent and student. Only 1 family was classified in Theme 3, and in this case incongruent perceptions were also apparent. The father was seemingly unaware of the destructive impact of his efforts to have the child consider other options. Although the interference may only have existed in the perception of the student, it was of sufficient severity to elicit negative comments and indications of strong student dissatisfaction.

### Theme 4

In Theme 4, the adolescent had not yet made a career decision, and the parent was accepting of this situation, at

least for the present time. Theme 4 was the most prevalent of all themes, representing 14 of the 43 families. Generally, these families were involved in the process of career planning with the parental role most often described as "encouraging". Goals and perceptions both appeared congruent. Students were typically satisfied with the career planning relationship with their parents, although minor suggestions for improvement may have been noted.

In one case, no career planning activities of any significance appeared to be occurring, but as neither parent nor student was concerned about this situation, the satisfaction level of the student was still high.

#### Theme 5

In Theme 5, the parent was accepting of a child who had not made a career decision, but anxiety related to indecision was apparent on the student's part. The 4 families classified in this theme demonstrated that adolescent anxiety can exist independently of parental anxiety and pressure when career planning goals differ. Further, the important role which affective responses can play in career planning interactions was highlighted by these family dynamics.

Comments of these students indicated a very low level of satisfaction with parental help. They perceived their parents as uninvolved and disinterested. Parental responses showed that 3 of the 4 were aware of the anxiety of their

children, but were encouraging exploration of new opportunities rather than a narrowing of options. Since the students wanted parental advice or decision-making, they were resentful of their parents' lack of direction.

#### Theme 6

In this theme, parents desired some career decision and commitment although the student was unconcerned about being undecided. Parent-child goals of career planning were clearly incongruent, and most of the 8 families classified in Theme 6 acknowledged this. Negative family relationships were evident: either the child was dissatisfied because the parent was pushing for career decision (child satisfaction rating of 2) or the parent was dissatisfied because the child was so uninvolved in career planning (child satisfaction level of 3, since the child was ignoring parental pressure). In many of the cases, both parties were displeased. Perceptions of the situation were generally congruent, although descriptions placed the blame for family friction on the other family member.

#### Theme 7

Theme 7 represents families in which both parent and student are anxious about career indecision. Only 1 of the 43 families exhibited this pattern, and within this family, it was apparent that reciprocal interaction was exacerbating the discomfort for both. Although goals and perceptions were congruent, the student satisfaction rating was low. The

student perceived the parent to be inadequate as a helper.

To summarize, only 16 of the 43 families indicated that an occupational or educational decision had been made by the Grade 12 student. Of the 27 undecided students, 14 were from families in which the indecision was acceptable to both parents and students; in the other 13 cases either the parent, the student, or both were uncomfortable with the indecision.

Parents were found to be accepting of their children's status in 30 families, leading to a very high satisfaction rating when the child was also comfortable. In Theme 5, the child satisfaction rating was low in spite of parental acceptance. However, unaccepting parents were always associated with low satisfaction ratings.

Congruence in perception was evident in most families, accompanied by varying satisfaction levels. Incongruent perceptions were not necessarily associated with discontent.

Results indicate that only themes associated with congruent goals have high satisfaction ratings. As noted, harmonious themes do not necessarily indicate good career planning. In fact, parent-child agreement was seen to reinforce inertia and premature decision-making in several cases. Further, while incongruent goals appear to lead to low satisfaction, they are not necessarily harmful to career planning. In some families, parental disagreement

contributed to the child re-examining and modifying or reaffirming plans. In others, the child's resolve to maintain a course of action was unaccompanied by reassessment.

This section has identified that family career planning relationships have varying levels of congruence in goals, in perception, and in satisfaction. Depending on the interaction of these dynamic factors, career planning needs and desires differ.

### Conclusions

This chapter has presented the results of research designed to illuminate current and desired parent-child career planning collaboration. The data has been collected and analyzed in a manner which clarified the perceptions of parents and adolescents. General summaries of parent and student data were presented, followed by comparisons of parent-child data within families. This methodology allowed for the illumination of subtle differences between the perceptions of individuals.

Overall, a lack of awareness of the career development and planning processes was evident in both parent and adolescent responses. Most families demonstrated within-family congruence in perceptions, although it was noted that harmonious relationships do not necessarily signify that good career planning is occurring.

The next chapter will examine the implications of these

findings for the design of interventions aimed at enhancing parental career planning facilitation.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

The data presented in Chapter 4 illuminated the perceptions of parents and adolescents regarding collaborative career planning. Within-family congruence in perceptions was discussed and typical patterns of interaction were identified as themes. This chapter will include a discussion of key findings and their implications for career education and counselling, specifically as related to parental career planning facilitation. Additionally, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research will be addressed.

#### Discussion of Key Findings

##### Simple Conceptualization of Career Planning

Generally parents and students provided simple definitions and descriptions of career planning activities, focusing on occupational choice occurring at certain specific times. The centrality of decision-making to conceptualizations of career planning was further demonstrated by the emerging framework for organizing themes of family interaction: one dimension involved whether or not a choice had been made, the other involved the level of comfort of student and parent with the student's status related to choice. While rational decision-making has long been recognized as a fundamental aspect of career planning (Brown & Brooks, 1990), it can no longer be considered ample

to equip individuals with the skills of adaptability and flexibility suggested by Super (1990), Gelatt (1989), and Barker (1985) as being necessary for effective career management in the future. In this study, the emphasis on decision-making as the goal of career planning appeared to give rise to anxiety and impatience in many families and led to a concentration on tasks with a narrow occupational focus and short-term timelines which precluded effective career planning.

Additionally, the paradox exists that with a simple conceptualization of career planning, individuals are unaware of their true educational needs. This may prevent them from seeking help or cause them to concentrate on the wrong type of assistance. For example, parents and students in this study most frequently suggested content-oriented resources to help them with career planning. Individuals did not recognize Super's (1980, 1990) lifespan and lifespan concepts which dictate an on-going need for career planning skills and therefore necessitate process-oriented learning. It appears that parents and students are not aware of the type of training which they need.

#### Importance of Career Planning

Both parents and students rated adolescent career planning as very important, suggesting that a high value would be placed on the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge. However, since it has been demonstrated that most



people were not good judges of what skills and knowledge were most required, the efforts toward improvement which are sustained by a recognition of the importance of career planning would not necessarily be beneficial.

#### Affective Responses to Career Planning

The framework of thematic coding indicated that affective responses of both student and parent to career decision-making are major factors in determining the quality and type of parent-child interaction which exists. Theme 5 suggests that students will express dissatisfaction if they are uncomfortable with indecision, in spite of parental acceptance and support. Themes 3, 4, and 6 indicate that parental impatience and anxiety can serve as blocks to collaborative potential. These observations support Amundson's (1989) contention that primary factors such as affect must be considered before proceeding with career counselling.

It appears that the simple conceptualization of career planning, which emphasizes occupational choice, exacerbates emotional concerns. These emotional concerns may misdirect the efforts of students and of parent facilitators. For example, parents in Theme 5 may become directive to ease the discomfort of their adolescent children, or students may make premature decisions to avoid further anxiety (Grites, 1981).

### Role of Parents in Adolescent Career Planning

Both parents and students identified parents as being most responsible for facilitating adolescent career planning, overwhelmingly endorsing their right to be involved in adolescent career planning and their potential importance in the process. This finding suggests that both adolescents and parents would expect parental involvement in career planning, setting up the potential for intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict if parents are unable to meet these expectations. This study provides no conclusive results related to parental efficacy with career planning facilitation, hence it is quite possible that many of the parents perceived themselves to be unprepared to help and therefore, consistent with Bandura's (1977a) theory of self-efficacy, would hesitate to even try. This situation could cause parents to feel guilty for not fulfilling expectations and children to feel disappointed or resentful. Since parents are acknowledged as having prime responsibility for adolescent career planning facilitation, efforts to increase both their actual and perceived abilities are warranted.

Desired change. This study provided indications that some individuals believed that parental involvement could be improved. Training for parents in career planning was suggested by 8 individuals, and a change in parental attitude or level of involvement was suggested by 10 persons, all students. Parents typically viewed their needs

as resource-related: wanting more career information, more help from the school, and more contacts for interviews and summer jobs. These results suggest that while many respondents believed parents need help to become more effective career planning facilitators, they did not identify the type of help consistent with long-term career management principles. Others were unable to pinpoint desired change in parental involvement. Seven individuals were unsure of what help was needed and 15 individuals saw no need for improvement in parental facilitation. Since the need for assistance was absent or unclear, this portion of the sample would be unlikely to seek out or participate in training. In other words, parents and students in this sample had unclear or very restrictive notions of how the role of parental facilitation could be changed, and of what help would be needed to achieve this.

Encouragement and acceptance. The data supported the importance of the role of parents as supporters and encouragers in two ways: (1) only themes associated with parental acceptance reflected student satisfaction with the collaborative relationship, and (2) descriptions of current activities emphasized that parents are facilitating more than they are directing. It appears that the parental approach desired most by students and parents is one of facilitation, support, and encouragement. However, a consideration of various theoretical positions on adolescent

development and family interaction leads to an important distinction between parental support and unconditional acceptance and involvement.

Family systems theory postulates that differentiation from parents is necessary for effective adolescent career decision-making to occur (Lopez & Andrews, 1987; Zingaro, 1983). Erikson (1965, 1980) extends this to include a requisite differentiation from non-family members as well. Parents must therefore maintain a balance between the acceptance and support which is indicated as desirable in this study, and the family enmeshment which is considered disadvantageous by family systems theorists. Implications of this view will be discussed further in later sections of this chapter.

#### Parent-Child Interaction

Satisfaction ratings. The data provided much evidence of parent-child relationships which appeared satisfactory from the student perspective. The thematic coding indicates that individuals interpret the success of the parent-child relationship based on their comfort with the status of decision-making. Therefore satisfaction ratings cannot be seen to be indicators of effective career planning, but merely of the acceptability of the situation to the individuals involved. Some respondents did not recognize that collaborative career planning could or should be improved, although the relationships appeared ineffective to

the researcher. For example, parent-child agreement and high satisfaction ratings were seen on occasion to reinforce premature occupational commitment or inertia. It is unlikely that these individuals would seek career planning assistance, although their mutual efforts are, in fact, a disservice to the adolescent.

Since satisfaction does not necessarily indicate good career planning relationships, it cannot be the primary goal of career planning facilitation. Similarly, dissatisfaction cannot always be avoided on the short-term basis. Career planning is a complex process involving many factors and much hard work. There will inevitably be periods of discontent, and they cannot always be interpreted to mean that the career planning process is awry.

Congruence in perception. The high degree of parent-child congruence in perception indicates that similar educational interests and needs would be shared within families. For example, since the complexity of definitions of career planning varied between families but not within families, it could be assumed that a parent and adolescent from the same family would approach career education with roughly the same degree of understanding.

Results of thematic coding (see Table 10) indicate congruence occurring consistently in 4 themes (representing 31 families) and in all 7 themes on occasion. When incongruence did occur, it usually signalled that the career

planning relationship was in need of some improvement. For example, a parent and child may describe the same mutual discussions related to career planning; the parent may use facilitative words to describe a situation of parental support while the child uses words to indicate parental control and interference. Clearly, this incongruence indicates the need to clarify what is in fact occurring and to increase mutual understanding.

It has been noted that subjective perceptions are not necessarily accurate, meaning that parents and children cannot be assumed to be good judges of the success of current collaboration nor of need for improvement.

#### Idiosyncrasy of Perceptions Illustrated by Thematic Coding

The qualitative nature of this study illuminated the individuality of career planning conceptualizations, indicating that education needs vary from family to family. Depending on the status of decision-making, the comfort with that status, and the satisfaction with parental interactions, different families need different types of help.

Further, and perhaps more importantly, different families perceived their needs differently. Whether or not the perceptions were accurate and needs did in fact differ, individual perceptions formed the frames of reference which guided individual behavior, thoughts, and feelings. It is therefore important that individual perceptions be

considered in understanding how to involve families in career planning training. Thus, this study may be seen to support Tiedeman and Miller-Tiedeman's (1984) postulate that it is not only individual experience which must be considered in career planning, but also individual meaning of that experience. This concept will be further explored in the next section.

### Implications of Key Findings for Career

#### Education and Planning

Several implications for career education and planning follow from the findings of this study; these will be outlined below.

#### Process Orientation

The simplistic view of career planning which was illuminated by this study resulted in parents and adolescents having a narrow focus, working on inappropriate tasks, and being preoccupied with and anxious about career decision-making. This indicates that efforts aimed at individual career counselling or at training parents for career planning facilitation must have as a central goal the enhancement of understanding of the processes of career development and planning. Gelatt (1989) stresses that rational decision-making paradigms which worked in the past are no longer adequate and must be complemented by more creative and intuitive approaches to support the management

of change and uncertainty. It is imperative that career education expand conceptualizations of career planning from the present preoccupation with rational decision-making. Through an increased understanding of the many factors which should be considered, parents and adolescents could become more accepting of exploration and experimentation during adolescence.

An appropriate model to form the base of this career education is Super's (1980, 1990) lifespace-lifespan career planning orientation, which normalizes exploration during adolescence. This heightened awareness would reduce anxiety and would result in satisfaction ratings being more consistent with good career management.

#### Communication Training

Since discussion was identified as the basic form in which career planning collaboration was occurring, any training aimed at enhancing parental facilitative potential must include communication skills training as an essential component. Efforts directed at fostering a parental familiarity with empathic responding and conflict resolution could be provided through training in the basic principles of programs such as Parent Effectiveness Training (Gordon, 1975). This would increase the possibility of mutual understanding and collaboration occurring. Similarly, career counsellors, like all counsellors, must recognize that their communication skills will have a direct bearing on the



success of intervention.

### Consideration of Individual Perceptions

The idiosyncrasy of perceptions which was illuminated by this methodology suggests that career education and career counselling must have an individual focus. This conclusion has several important implications.

Theoretically, it provides a clue as to why Super's (1980, 1990) comprehensive career development model has failed to gain acceptance with the general population. Although Super's theory addresses the importance of salience in career planning, it does not provide attention to personal reality. Brown (1990) comments that Super's theory is primarily based on the tradition of logical positivism, and that future theory building must consider the qualitative aspect of career decision making as articulated by Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman (1990).

In practice, the exploration and clarification of personal perceptions would be integral to the actual educational or counselling process with individuals and groups. The exercise of re-examining and clarifying one's understanding of career planning would serve to reaffirm or modify perceptions. Further, articulating and communicating individual perceptions within families would increase mutual understanding and enhance parent-child interaction. A byproduct of this personal attention is an increase in the salience of career education or training for each

individual.

Amundson (1989) advocates the consideration of primary factors to determine individual context and need before preceding with career counselling. In working with individual families, a within-family comparison of perceptions would highlight potential sources of conflict and would assist in determining the similarity of training need between parent and adolescent. In considering group counselling or education, the thematic coding of family career planning interaction represents an appropriate means to either determine the variance in needs within a predetermined group or to assign individuals to groups according to theme to achieve some homogeneity of training needs within each group. These preassessment techniques, based on individual perception, would maximize individual benefit from training or counselling.

#### Consideration of Common Perceptions and Needs

While the importance of examining individual perceptions cannot be overemphasized, the study does suggest that many common perceptions exist within families. These could represent building blocks for effective collaboration, but should not be automatically seen as such. Recall that family systems theory (Lopez & Andrews, 1987; Zingaro, 1983) warns that family enmeshment precludes adolescent differentiation from parents and hence, the ability for effective career planning by the adolescent. Identical or

very similar perceptions between parents and adolescents could indicate enmeshment and an over-reliance on parental views. Therefore, even in families where common perceptions prevail, some exploration of the family dynamics is warranted during counselling or education. Since family systems theory recognizes that change within any member of the system will impact on other members of the system, this exploration is beneficial whether or not it is the parents or the adolescents who are involved in treatment or training.

Incongruent perceptions usually pinpointed some specific career planning need. Employing the methodology of preassessing within-family congruence in perceptions would contribute to the development of personally-tailored interventions to address these needs.

There was no evidence in the study suggesting that males and females require different career planning orientations. What differences do exist would be accounted for in the consideration of idiosyncratic perceptions as a part of career education and counselling.

#### Consideration of Affect

Affect was primarily seen to be associated with comfort with career decision-making status, and would be influenced indirectly by efforts to educate about the career decision-making and career planning processes. Mitchell and Krumboltz (1990) use social learning theory to outline how education

(learning experiences) influences expectations (self-observation generalizations and world-view generalizations), and hence, affective reactions.

However, the importance of affect as a pivotal reference point in determining the quality of within-family interactions suggests that it should also be directly addressed as a part of any career education or counselling efforts. Exploration and clarification of feelings would complement the behavioral and cognitive modifications occurring through other program components.

As well, the study showed support of Amundson's (1989) belief that affect is a primary factor to be considered in assessing preparedness for career education or counselling. Some evaluation of an individual's affective response to career planning should be completed by counsellors or educators prior to treatment, with the understanding that the assessment would influence the way in which training or counselling was presented as well as what work might have to be done before actual training or counselling commenced.

Finally, family systems theory suggests that parents who attempt to make changes in their interactions with their adolescents in an effort to foster career planning should expect initial resistance and negative affective responses from their adolescents (Lopez & Andrews, 1987). Some appreciation of the principle of complementary resistance to change would help parents to understand the reactions of

their children.

#### Chance of Success

Several findings from this study suggest that parents may not make the effort to enhance their capabilities at career planning facilitation, primarily due to a lack of awareness of the need for such efforts or inaccurate perceptions related to their educational needs. Career educators and counsellors therefore must consider means to encourage individuals to become involved. Since the simple viewpoint of many respondents precluded an accurate evaluation of educational need, public education might be used to raise the awareness level of lifespan-lifespans concepts (Super, 1980, 1990), leading to an increased recognition of need for career education. A promotional emphasis on the important role which parents can and do play in career planning may strengthen parental beliefs that training efforts would be worthwhile. Additionally, career counsellors and educators might consider attracting parents through advertising directed at simple and immediate career planning concerns, and once this initial salience has been established, using the opportunity to educate about more complex career planning concepts.

Two positive factors were identified which would assist in attracting individuals to career education or counselling: there was an almost universal acknowledgement of the importance of career planning and some perceived need

for assistance, albeit related to information and resources.

In summary, the key findings of this study suggest that help is needed with parental facilitation of adolescent career planning. Education or counselling efforts must include a process-orientation, training in communication skills, and consideration of individual perceptions and affective responses concerning career planning. Further, it was concluded that the use of preassessment devices to evaluate individual perceptions and affective responses would be useful in tailoring counselling and educational interventions to meet the needs of participants. Various suggestions for involving parents in training or counselling were provided.

#### Limitations of the Study

##### Sample

The sample size provides a good basis for qualitative analysis; however, results of this study may not be generalizable to other populations. Adolescents in this study were Grade 12 students from primarily middle-class neighbourhoods with limited cultural diversity, whose parents had agreed to take the time to complete a questionnaire related to career planning. Perceptions of collaborative career planning may be considerably different for adolescents of the same age who have left high school and who may desire more or less parental involvement.

Similarly, variance in socioeconomic status and/or cultural expectations could impact on the parent-child career planning relationship.

#### Methodology

Qualitative research design has limitations. It is criticized by quantitative researchers on the basis of a lack of control; qualitative research does not provide for the manipulation of variables nor for randomization to control variance, hence improper interpretation is a risk (Kerlinger, 1986). Considering these limitations as related to the current study, we see that variables to be studied and hypotheses to be tested were not identified, manipulation and measurement of variables did not occur, group statistics were not generated, and group comparisons were not possible. Statements regarding conditional relationships between groups within the sample could not be made on the basis of the data collected.

These limitations are acknowledged; however, they are inconsistent with the purpose of this study, which was to illuminate individual perceptions regarding parent-child career planning collaboration and typical patterns of within-family interaction. Meaning, rather than frequency and correlation, assumes paramount importance in this type of study (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Kerlinger (1986) notes that we must choose our research methodology based on our research goals and problems. Qualitative methodology is

clearly most consistent with the aims of this study.

As an example of qualitative research, this project did not employ typical interview or ethnographic field work techniques. The insight provided into the understanding of individual perceptions was limited by the ability of respondents to articulate their thoughts in writing. Further, although individual perceptions of career planning were illuminated, the categorization of perceptions was taken from the respondents' own choice of words and from the associations they made in their comments regarding collaborative career planning, hence interpretation was necessarily ambiguous and imprecise at times.

Finally, the overlapping of responses for some questions suggests that the format and wording of the questionnaire could be improved. Specifically, questions 4 and 5 and questions 6 and 7 could be combined or clarified.

#### Implications for Further Research

The above limitations dictate that results may not be generalized beyond this study; nevertheless, the findings indicate several directions for future research.

This exploratory study has resulted in a useful organizing structure within which to understand individual perceptions of parent-child career planning collaboration. This framework provides productive parameters to guide further research. It identifies variables which were fundamental to individual understanding of career planning,



and which therefore provide an established focus for further study. Subsequent related research could be either quantitative or qualitative in nature.

To consider quantitative extensions of the current work, the thematic categorizations which emerged could be used to separate families into research groups. Future research questions might be: (1) What differences in perceived training needs exist between families in which the parent is accepting of the career-decision status of the child and families in which the parent is not accepting? (2) What differences in training needs exist between families in which the adolescent has made a career decision and families in which they child has not? (3) Families from which themes benefit most from communication skills training? (4) What personality variables are associated with individuals in each theme? (5) Does process-oriented career education modify career planning conceptualizations framed around occupational decision-making and does it result in a reduction in anxiety and an increase in the effectiveness of perceived parent-child collaboration? These future research efforts would determine if thematic coding is useful as a preassessment device to tailor individual career planning interventions.

Another method of using quantitative analysis to further the findings of the current study would be to employ the semantic differential technique of Osgood, Suci, and

Tannenbaum (1957) to measure and compare perceptions of career planning, using adjectives related to decision-making status and comfort with status, as identified in this study, as descriptors for scales.

Further qualitative research could be conducted by using in-depth interviews with participants to enrich and expand our understanding of individual career-planning perceptions. Questions related to career decision-making status, comfort with status, and parental acceptance could provide a focus.

Additional research is also needed to structurally corroborate the framework of themes and to determine if it is generalizable to other populations.

#### Summary

This study represents an exploratory project directed at increasing understanding of parent-child career planning collaboration. The qualitative methodology employed provided insight into the way in which parents and adolescents perceive career planning, illuminating similarities and differences in perceptions between families and within families. This insight, in turn, contributed to key findings associated with the design and provision of programs aimed at making adolescents better career planners and parents better career planning facilitators.

Specific gaps in the knowledge and theoretical understanding of parents and students were identified,

indicating a focus for needed educational efforts. Potential barriers to effective parent-child career planning collaboration were noted, including the faulty assumptions which accompany simplistic career planning conceptualizations and the important role which emotions can play in the career planning process.

The methodology of considering individual perceptions illuminated sources of potential conflict or strength between parent and child; thus, it was concluded that this procedure would be useful in both preassessment and treatment related to career planning and with both individuals and groups.

Finally, the identification of patterns of family interaction based on decision-making status and associated emotional comfort provided a useful new framework within which to consider the issue of parent-child career planning collaboration.

In summary, this study was successful in filling a research gap. It clarified how parents and adolescents perceived their mutual career planning relationship, and indicated what types of help might be needed and desired. It suggested specific improvements which would ultimately enhance the adolescent career management efficacy and parental facilitation ability.

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## APPENDIX A: PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

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## PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

FAMILY IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

THIS INFORMATION IS TO BE COMPLETED BY ONLY ONE PARENT FROM THE FAMILY.

ALL ANSWERS WILL BE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. THE PURPOSE OF COLLECTING INFORMATION REGARDING INCOME IS TO DETERMINE IF SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS HAVE ANY EFFECT ON CAREER PLANNING.

PARENT COMPLETING FORM IS: ☐ FATHER ☐ MOTHER ☐ OTHER (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_ OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_

PERSONAL INCOME:

TOTAL INCOME FOR HOUSEHOLD:

Under \$15,000	_____	Under \$15,000	_____
\$15,000-29,999	_____	\$15,000 - 29,999	_____
\$30,000-44,999	_____	\$30,000 - 44,999	_____
\$45,000-59,999	_____	\$45,000 - 59,999	_____
\$60,000-79,999	_____	\$60,000 - 79,999	_____
Over \$80,000	_____	Over \$80,000	_____

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS RELATED TO HELPING YOUR GRADE 12 CHILD WITH CAREER PLANNING. FEEL FREE TO WRITE ABOUT ANYTHING YOU BELIEVE RELATES TO CAREER PLANNING. UNLESS SPECIFICALLY ASKED, DO NOT INCLUDE INFORMATION RELATED TO WHAT ANY OTHER ADULT MAY DO WITH YOUR CHILD, OR INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT YOU MAY DO WITH ANY OTHER CHILDREN. THIS INFORMATION PERTAINS ONLY TO YOU AND YOUR GRADE 12 CHILD.

1. What does the term "career planning" mean to you?

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2. How important is career planning to your child at the present time?

not at all					very
important					important
1	2	3	4	5	

3. Who, considering all persons and institutions, should take the major role in helping your child with career planning? Explain why.

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4. What is your role in your child's career planning?

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5(a). What help have you given, or are you currently giving your Grade 12 child with career planning? Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

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(b) List each activity described in #4(a) above on a separate line below, rate the its effectiveness at helping your child with career planning, and provide a reason for your answer. Use another page if necessary to complete your answer.

E  
X  
A  
M  
P  
L  
E  
S

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Content/Focus</u>	<u>Effectiveness</u>					<u>Reason for Rating</u>
		very ineffective				very effective	
		1	2	3	4	5	
talking	about university						could not convince son that university is important
travelling on summer vacation	how much son enjoys travelling and seeing new things	1	2	3	4	5	I could see that my son was starting to wonder how he could find a career with lots of travelling on the job or with job that made enough money to allow him to travel in his free time.
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	

6. What other activities do you think parents should provide regarding career planning?

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7. (a) What other involvement would you like to have in your child's career planning?

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(b) What help would you need to achieve this involvement?

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PLEASE MAIL BACK COMPLETED FORMS NO LATER THAN MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1991.

If you have questions, you may contact the researcher (Dorothy Holden) through the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Calgary 220-5651 (leave message)

## ADOLESCENT QUESTIONNAIRE

FAMILY IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ SEX: \_\_\_\_\_

WHICH PARENT IS COMPLETING THE OTHER QUESTIONNAIRE? \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING CAREER PLANNING QUESTIONS RELATED ONLY TO YOUR PARENT NAMED ABOVE. IN OTHER WORDS, IF YOUR DAD IS COMPLETING THE PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE, ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN RELATION TO HIM. FEEL FREE TO WRITE ABOUT ANYTHING YOU BELIEVE RELATES TO CAREER PLANNING.

1. What does the term "career planning" mean to you?

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2. How important is career planning to you?  
at the present time?

not at all			very	
important			important	
1	2	3	4	5

3. Who, considering all persons and institutions, should take the major role in helping you with career planning? Explain why.

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4. What is your parent's role in your career planning?

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5a). What help has your parent given you, or is your parent giving you, with career planning? Remember to refer only to the parent filling out the questionnaire. Describe: \_\_\_\_\_

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- (b) List each activity described in #4(a) above on a separate line below, rate its effectiveness at helping you with career planning, and provide a reason for your answer. Use another page if necessary to complete your answer.

Activity	Content/Focus	Effectiveness					Reason for Rating
		very ineffective 1	2	3	4	very effective 5	
EXA H P L E S	talking about university	1	2	3	4	5	could not convince Dad that I don't want to go to university
	travelling on summer vacation	1	2	3	4	5	Travelling around gave me the chance to see how much I liked it; talking about this with Dad made me realize that some jobs will let me travel alot more than others
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	

6. What other activities do you think parents should provide regarding career planning?

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7. (a) What other involvement would you like your parent to have in your career planning?

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(b) What help would your parent need to achieve this involvement?

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PLEASE MAIL BACK COMPLETED FORMS NO LATER THAN MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11., 1991  
If you have questions, you may contact the researcher (Dorothy Holden) through the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Calgary 220-5651 (leave message)

November 1, 1991

Dear Parents and Students,

As a graduate student in the University of Calgary's Department of Educational Psychology, I am conducting a thesis study related to the potential of parents to help their adolescent children with career planning. More specifically, I am looking at what parents currently do to help their children in this regard, and what they feel they should be doing. Grade 12 students and one of their parents will fill out separate versions of a questionnaire. To keep answers confidential within families, envelopes which can be sealed will be provided with each questionnaire.

To assure confidentiality, questionnaires are coded by number, so that parent-child responses may be compared within a family without need for the use of names. Questionnaires will be accessible only to the researchers and thesis supervisor, and will be destroyed at the completion of the study. If you and your child are willing to participate in this study, please complete the attached questionnaires (it should take about 20 minutes) and sign the accompanying consent forms. Return the 2 completed consent forms and 2 completed questionnaires in the large, stamped envelope provided.

Your participation is discretionary, and if you choose not to volunteer simply dispose of the enclosed material. There is no penalty for not participating. Furthermore, you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Upon the completion of the study, participating parents will be invited to a presentation on the results and conclusions of the research.

For further information, contact the numbers listed below. Thank you for your consideration.

Dorothy Holden  
University of Calgary  
Department of Educational Psychology  
Phone: 220-5651 (leave message)  
Home: 249-7859

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. K. Magnusson  
University of Calgary  
Department of Educational Psychology  
Phone: 220-7573

PLEASE RETURN 2 COMPLETED CONSENT FORMS AND 2 COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES NO LATER THAN  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1991



## STUDY OF PARENT-CHILD PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER PLANNING NEEDS

## CONSENT FORMS

PARENT PORTION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have been informed of the nature of this research project regarding the role of parents in adolescent career planning. I have voluntarily chosen to participate, and am aware that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I also am aware that the researcher may terminate my involvement in the study at any time.

I understand that my involvement will require approximately 20 minutes to complete a questionnaire. My responses will remain confidential, and my name will not appear on the questionnaire.

PLEASE SIGN BELOW\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT SIGNATURESTUDENT PORTION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have been informed of the nature of this research project regarding the role of parents in adolescent career planning. I have voluntarily chosen to participate, and am aware that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I also am aware that the researcher may terminate my involvement in the study at any time.

I understand that my involvement will require approximately 20 minutes to complete a questionnaire. My responses will remain confidential, and my name will not appear on the questionnaire.

PLEASE SIGN BELOW:\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE\_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT SIGNATURE

Please indicate by checking appropriate box if you would be willing to participate in a followup interview with the researcher regarding your views of adolescent career planning.

I would be willing to be interviewed

☐

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

I would prefer not to be interviewed

☐