
Adolescents' Perceptions of Career Concern: Student Discouragement in Career Development

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ABSTRACT

This study used the Comprehensive Career Needs Survey to assess how junior high and high school students perceive career concerns and how these concerns may change from Grades 7 to 12. An examination of participants' responses about the sources of their discouragement in career planning revealed seven themes: training and education concerns, security, satisfaction, failing, commitment, wrong occupational choice, and having to decide. Implications for career professionals are discussed.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude a utilisé le *Comprehensive Career Needs Survey* [enquête exhaustive sur les besoins en matière de carrière] pour évaluer comment les élèves des premier et second cycles du secondaire perçoivent leurs inquiétudes relatives à la carrière et comment celles-ci peuvent évoluer du secondaire I au secondaire V (de la 7^e à la 12^e année). Une étude des réactions des participants aux sources de leur découragement a révélé sept thèmes : inquiétudes relatives à la formation et à l'éducation, sécurité, satisfaction, échec, engagement, erreur dans le choix de carrière, et obligation de décider. Des répercussions pour les professionnels de la planification de carrière sont discutées.

Merriam-Webster (1997) defines "concern" as an "uneasy state of blended interest, uncertainty and apprehension." In the area of career development research, the Career Pattern Study (CPS) was one of the first research studies that attempted to characterize the career concerns of adolescents (Super, 1957). Data from this study were originally intended to assess the life course of ninth graders' careers until they reached the age of 35. However, the CPS findings were used to order vocational developmental tasks and coping behaviours in terms of age periods and stages. As a result, Super (1957, 1980) postulated life stages of career development; his work was informed by that of Buehler (1933) and Havinghurst (1953). On the basis of data from the CPS, Super (1957, 1980) discovered that development tasks could be divided into stages, substages, and thematic issues denoted by periods of concern about vocational growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. In other words, Super's (1990) model of vocational life stages depicted stages during which people were found to experience similar vocational situations, demands, and concerns as they progressed from childhood to adulthood. Although Super (1990) proposed that an adolescent's ability to select and commit to a career choice was associated with vocational development concerns, he did not clearly define the word "concern" in his written work.

According to the life-span, life-space approach developed by Super (1990), the central process guiding adolescent career development is the readiness to make educational and vocational choices focused on resolving exploration stage tasks and concerns (i.e., crystallizing, specifying, and implementing an occupational preference). Super believed that people require career adaptability to choose occupations and to cope with vocational concerns that surface within the exploration stage of the life-span. Career adaptability “means the quality of being able to change, without great difficulty, to fit new or changed circumstances” (Savickas, 1997, p. 5). Researchers have characterized this stage of exploration as a transitional process for adolescents “with developmental tasks of crystallizing and specifying; attitudes toward planning and exploring; beliefs about the work world and succeeding in it; competencies for decision making and problem solving; and coping behaviors” (Savickas, 2001, p. 308). Previously, the term career adaptability had been used only to refer to the career development of adults (Super & Knasel, 1981). Because adaptation emphasizes the unending change for contemporary career seekers and the continual need to respond to new circumstances and novel career concerns, Savickas (1997) proposed that career adaptability replace career maturity as an appropriate term for describing the career development of children and adolescents.

Anderson and Niles’ (1995) study of career and personal concerns by career counselling clients operationally defined a career concern as any concern related to work, planning for work, or feelings about work. In contrast, non-career concerns lacked any reference to work. The researchers themselves admitted that their suggested categories of career concerns appeared to be narrowly focused around work and occupation, so they also included a category to allow for a mixture of career and non-career concerns. This research, which dealt with career counselling clients, found that there was a substantial overlap between career and non-career issues. The inference to be drawn was that the issues and problems of clients could not always be precisely categorized as reflecting concerns with the role of work (Niles, Anderson, Hartung, & Straton, 1999). Similarly, Savickas (1997) defines career adaptability as the “readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustment prompted by changes in work and working conditions” (p. 5). Whether for adolescents or adults, career concerns have been described as those concerns that are precipitated by the work role and may arise any time a person thinks about his or her career.

The term “career adaptability” also coincides with the contemporary approach to career development theory; the emphasis is on the personal nature of both making and adjusting to career decisions and situating the role of work within the broader context of an individual’s life (Gysbers, 1998). The adoption of a holistic meaning for the term career is also broad, incorporating the total self-development of an individual’s experience over the life-span. In the vocational matching of occupational interests and goals, by contrast, the word “career” is narrowly defined to describe an occupational fit (Niles, Anderson, &

Cover, 2000). Likewise, there is an increasing recognition in developmental career counselling and interventions that many of the concerns arising within the exploration stage of the life-span "cannot be precisely categorized as reflecting either 'personal' or 'career' concerns" (Niles et al., 1999, p. 173; see also Anderson & Niles, 1995; Niles et al., 2000).

Super developed the Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI) (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Myers, & Jordaan, 1986) as an instrument for assessing the vocational development status of two groups: older adolescents who were about to enter the workforce and adults who were thinking about their career choices, changes, and development (Savickas & Super, 1993). Due to the success of the ACCI, Savickas and Super built upon the ideas of Super's (1990) structural model of career choice readiness and melded them with the descriptions of personality characteristics outlined in Erikson's (1963, 1968) model of psychosocial development. Savickas and Super categorized psychosocial and vocational traits and linked these traits to vocational development tasks; they intended to produce a Student Career Concerns Inventory for use in the research and counselling of children and adolescents. These vocational traits of Super's (1990) model were defined as internal locus of control, curiosity, information, identification with key figures, and self-esteem. In the preparation of a research form of this inventory, Savickas and Super conceptually linked those vocational traits that support an individual's career planning, exploration, and decision making in Super's web model with the personality characteristics of hope, willpower, purpose, competence, and fidelity described in Erikson's (1963, 1968) model of psychosocial development.

The attempt at categorizing student career concerns was undertaken by process theorists such as Savickas and Super (1993), who posited that development tasks and life stages could be identified and measured in students as they had been for adults. Their attempt at categorizing student life stages was built on the thematic issues and career concerns that denoted characteristic career developmental tasks in the stages of childhood and adolescence (Savickas & Super). Although a Student Career Concerns Inventory has yet to materialize, Super and Savickas postulated four substages of career concerns: confidence, control, conviction, and competence. Each of these substages was theorized to be a multicomponent blend of vocational and psychosocial development tasks and personality characteristics. However, Savickas (2001) suggests that these thematic issues of growth and development might remain generally the same throughout the life-span, and the list has been revised to include a system of career concern, control, conviction, competence, and commitment issues (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). Thus, Savickas and Super have proposed a list of common concerns that adolescents may share in their behaviour and experience during the process of career development.

A subtle distinction exists between the strong vocational basis of Super's substages, which reside in the domain of work, and the list of thematic issues, which embraces career concerns as a concept that encompasses factors such as life role salience and value expression across life roles. For instance, while Super's substage of exploration (i.e., crystallizing, specifying, and implementing) refers to com-

mon vocational tasks, these concerns refer to characteristic career issues in the development of adolescents. In the study of personality development, concerns are commonly described in relation to what individuals perceive to be personally important and essential to their personal, social, and age-typical development (Cantor, Acker, & Cook-Flanagan, 1992; McAdams, 1995; Savickas, 2001). In the vocational realm, personal issues represent a substantial overlap between career and non-career issues. It has therefore been proposed that personal issues represent characteristic career concerns as adolescents prepare for the end of secondary school and their future vocations (Savickas, 2001).

Adolescents' perceptions of problems regarding their career (Julien, 1999) and factors that might hinder their post-high-school transition (Amundson, Borgen, & Trench, 1995; Borgen & Amundson, 1995) have been identified in previous studies. In a study of adolescents in transition, Borgen and Amundson found that depression and anxiety were correlated with a range of perceived concerns about money, lack of support, internal attribution of general transition problems, external attribution of career/employment difficulties, a lack of job satisfaction, and a lack of educational opportunities. The study revealed that adolescents often perceived problems about their career and left high school feeling unprepared to meet current career realities. Julien found that adolescents had concerns and unclear notions about an appropriate process of career decision making, and that this "lack of clarity led many adolescents to feel anxious and overwhelmed by the decision they made" (p. 47). These studies appear to support the conclusions of Anderson and Niles (1995), who found that clients in career counselling often experienced high levels of psychological stress and unpleasant emotional states in regards to their concerns. Thus, these findings support the need to attend to issues such as the anxiety and affective distress (i.e., negative feelings, decrease in hope, and increase in stress) that individuals seem to experience in association with their career concerns (Niles et al., 1999, 2000).

However, these studies were designed to obtain data regarding the career barriers of students in Grade 12, but did not deal with students' concerns throughout secondary school. It is not known how junior high school and high school students perceive their career concerns or if these career concerns change from Grades 7 to 12. Despite theoretical developments and advancements in the topic of adolescents' career concerns, few researchers since the Career Pattern Study (Super, 1957) have investigated the career concerns that adolescents perceive to be personally important and essential to the development of their careers.

Adolescents' perceptions and feelings of discouragement appear to be important factors associated with their career concerns. Accordingly, this literature review reveals another important gap in the literature regarding adolescent development and career concern, namely, career concerns as perceived by adolescents. To assess these career concerns adequately, researchers must ask students directly what discourages them about their present and anticipated careers. Obtaining the perceptions of adolescents may provide valuable feedback to help prepare secondary students for a smoother transition from high school to the workplace.

The purpose of this research was to examine the sources of adolescents' perceived discouragement about their careers and to assess their career development and adjustment concerns.

METHOD

This study was based on data from the Comprehensive Career Needs Survey (CCNS) (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002), designed to assess the career needs of junior high and senior high students in Southern Alberta, Canada. The CCNS used five different questionnaire forms (junior high student, senior high student, parent, teacher, administrator and counsellor) to determine stakeholders' perceptions about students' career needs. Survey forms were distributed among schools in the Southern Alberta region. Fifty-two out of 54 schools returned completed forms. The survey asked for sociodemographic information from four categories and consisted of questions regarding the individual evaluation of students' career education needs within each school.

Respondents

This article explores the responses of 6,481 students in Grades 7 through 12 who participated in the CCNS. The mean age for participants was 14.60 years, with a range of 11 to 19 years. Sociodemographic information was divided into four categories: age, grade, community size, and school size (see Table 1). The data obtained were divided according to the demographic of each school's community size. Participant responses were sorted according to whether a school was located in a large community (10,000 population or more), a medium-sized community (1,000 or more but fewer than 10,000), or a smaller community (fewer than 1,000). Student responses from schools located in each category were used in this research. Twenty-four randomly selected responses were collected from each grade level within each community category. The statements from the surveys were transcribed by a member of the research team. Of the 432 responses sampled, 72 responses (16%) were collected from each grade.

Question and Data Analysis

The present study focuses on one question from the junior high and senior high student surveys. The specific survey item used for this research was the open-ended question, "What discourages you when you think about your career?" The verb "discourage" was used to best capture the intended aspect of the broader term "concern," which has been described as the uneasy state of blended interest, uncertainty, and apprehension.

For the purpose of coding, every written statement sampled was examined and themes were extracted. Responses from the open-ended survey question were examined and coded with the use of a constant comparison process analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Potential themes emerging from the surveys were recorded by a member of the research team. When a new theme emerged, it was compared

Table 1
Sociodemographic Information on Junior High and Senior High Respondents

<i>Junior high respondents</i>											
Students' age			Students' grade			School size			Community size		
	<i>n</i>	(%)		<i>n</i>	(%)		<i>n</i>	(%)		<i>n</i>	(%)
11	17	(0.5)	7	1,146	(32.2)	<100	88	(2.5)	<1,000	426	(12.0)
12	890	(25.0)	8	1,214	(34.1)	100 to 500	2,252	(71.9)	1,000 to 10,000	1,772	(49.7)
13	1,181	(33.2)	9	1,195	(33.6)	500 to 1,000	903	(25.4)	>10,000	1,334	(37.7)
14	1,162	(32.6)									
15	304	(8.5)				>1000	13	(0.3)			
<i>Senior high respondents</i>											
Students' age			Students' grade			School size			Community size		
	<i>n</i>	(%)		<i>n</i>	(%)		<i>n</i>	(%)		<i>n</i>	(%)
15	758	(25.9)	10	1,072	(36.3)	<100	16	(0.7)	<1,000	177	(7.4)
16	969	(33.1)	11	957	(32.7)	100 to 500	2,201	(92.5)	1,000 to 10,000	1,072	(82.8)
17	935	(32.0)	12	897	(30.7)	500 to 1,000	33	(1.4)	>10,000	232	(9.7)
18	238	(8.1)									
19	26	(0.9)				>1000	130	(5.5)			

Note. Some responses were inaccurately recorded, so only accurate responses are provided.

to previous statement samples and reviewed for relevance to the themes that had already emerged. The recorded statements were recorded in the same words that the student had used; however, the labels eventually given to the themes reflected the researchers' perspective. When it appeared that data saturation had been reached, all collected statements were reviewed and then sorted into relevant themes. Themes were then validated by three disinterested judges who were not involved in conducting the research.

Content analysis revealed that some responses shared distinctive features and that certain themes represented several similarities to other themes. Responses sharing substantive content were coded and recorded according to their similarities. The main similarities of themes that shared substantive content with one another were recorded to represent main themes. For example, statements related to job, financial, and physical stability were themes that shared substantive content corresponding to the main theme of security. Main themes were derived from this content analysis, which organized relevant statements according to the substantive content shared between themes.

RESULTS

Junior High Students

In response to the question "What discourages you when you think about your career?" five main issues emerged from the responses of junior high school students. Content analysis of the open-ended question revealed five main themes: (a) training and education concerns, (b) security, (c) satisfaction, (d) failing, and (e) commitment.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION CONCERNS

Junior high students appeared to have specific sources of career concern related to educational, occupational, and career-related training requirements. Some individual responses of discouragement relating to the "training and education" theme included examples such as "getting into the program" and "finishing school with good enough grades." Students with these concerns appeared to be apprehensive about meeting entrance standards and other post-secondary requirements. Junior high and senior high students appeared to be looking for "the right training" and "education for [a] job." They were discouraged by "the amount of schooling needed" and "not being able to afford" related "cost[s] for training." Students appeared to want applicable training and educational opportunities, but seemed to have a combination of concerns related to the length of the training period and financial requirements. Often, losses related to time, energy, and finances were perceived sacrifices that students reported as associated with their "training and education concerns."

SECURITY

Junior high students appeared to desire secure employment, but feared that vocational, financial, and physical obstacles could threaten that sense of security.

Students' perceptions revealed that their notion of "security" depended on each of these domains.

Junior high students highlighted their perceived difficulty of leaving home for new and unfamiliar environments in order to pursue their career goals. In other words, some students reported that they would have to leave their primary sources of support that provided a sense of stability. Some individual responses of discouragement related to the "security" theme included "might not be able to support myself," "leaving my parents and having to support myself," and "if I can survive off my career, by myself." Students appeared to view social support and self-support as important factors in obtaining a sense of security.

Junior high students appeared to wonder about their future job security and financial stability. Other individual responses of discouragement relating to the "security" theme included concerns about "job opportunities," whether they "will be able to find a job," and "if there are enough job[s] available." Students' perceptions also revealed inconsistencies regarding the unpredictability of job security. One respondent mentioned "not being able to move up in my field," while others noted "losing my job" and "job cuts" as examples of concern. Paradoxically, many students appeared to be interested in the attainment of job security despite their perceptions of a highly competitive and unpredictable job market. As well, students were concerned about their ability to support themselves financially and, at the same time, about the amount of expense they could incur while following their career paths. Concerns about "costs," "low wages," and "getting out of debt" appeared to intimidate students and cause them to worry about their financial stability. In other words, student perceptions of financial security depended on job security. Junior high students desired secure employment, but feared that vocational and financial obstacles could threaten that sense of security.

Interestingly, junior high students appeared to have concerns about threats to their physical security and safety. Students considering a career in the military or in law enforcement, for example, reported concerns about occupations that would involve observing or inflicting physical injury in the work environment. Students who reported security as a source of concern perceived that injury and death could affect them directly as well as indirectly. In either instance, students perceived hazardous aspects of work as threats to their sense of physical stability.

Students reported that perceived threats to stabilizing a job and career were primary sources of career concern. A loss in any one domain that was perceived to provide stability appeared to threaten students' sense of security overall.

SATISFACTION

Junior high students appeared to have concerns that some work might be difficult and that this work might also include negative occupational tasks. Some individual responses of discouragement relating to the "satisfaction" theme included "long hours," "strenuous work tasks," and "stressful days." It appeared that some students viewed work as long, arduous, and a precursor of stress. These

occupational factors were perceived to be undesirable outcomes of having a career, especially if students were to become “discouraged about it because [they] would not have time for other activities.” One respondent mentioned “doing something that I won’t be interested in,” while others noted “doing the same thing every day,” “not getting the job I want,” and “getting stuck with a career I don’t enjoy” as examples of concern. Sources of concern related to this theme appeared to involve difficult work tasks that would be either too difficult or too boring. Thus, different types of work were perceived to be unattractive if work was viewed as potentially disappointing or unfulfilling. Students with these concerns appeared to be worried that employment in an occupation they found objectionable could contribute to a dissatisfying career in the long term.

FAILING

Junior high students appeared to have concerns related to job fears, making mistakes, and failing that threatened their ability to be successful in their careers. Hesitation about performing work tasks appeared to pervade many students’ statements about their present and future career prospects. “I will not be able to reach the expectations of my employers” was an example of many students’ responses of discouragement related to the “failing” theme. It appears that students were expressing their concerns about a perceived inability to perform some future task adequately. They often reported concerns about difficult tasks that arose out of different work environments, and they appeared hesitant about performing work tasks that they perceived as unpleasant, difficult, or frightening. Others appeared to perceive failing, or being unsuccessful, as simply bad and a consequence of “not getting it” or “doing something wrong”; thus one alternative would be to simply “be the best” in order to avoid failure and to maintain success. These responses suggested that students wanted to be successful but had fears and doubts about their abilities to perform future tasks adequately.

COMMITMENT

Junior high students appeared to have concerns related to an inability to decide and make a commitment to a career choice. Some individual responses of discouragement related to the “commitment” theme included “having to work all the time and not having any leisure time,” “having to do everything on my own,” and “having to work at night,” rather than “spend[ing] time with my family.” It appears that students were concerned about the expectations placed on them by their roles in life and about their ability to perform and find a good balance among these different roles. Students often reported concerns that making a commitment to one role or career decision might make it difficult to do justice to another role. These responses suggest that students’ perceptions about responsibility and role commitments arose from considering certain types of work and career-related alternatives. “I don’t know what I really want to do” was an example of many students’ responses of discouragement related to the commitment theme. Students with these concerns appeared hesitant about making a career choice that would require a commitment to that choice. Students may want to make commitments

in their career decisions but they also appeared confused and uncertain in making career choices.

Senior High Students

In response to the same question, “What discourages you when you think about your career?” the majority of senior high students’ responses fell into the same five themes reported by junior high school students. However, two additional themes were found among high school respondents, for a total of seven themes overall. These seven themes were (a) training and education concerns, (b) security, (c) satisfaction, (d) failing, (e) commitment, (f) wrong occupational choice, and (g) having to decide. These additional themes appear to share substantive content with all secondary students’ concerns related to the satisfaction and commitment themes. Although the substantive content of these concerns is the same, concerns appeared to be more pressing at the high school level for students who realized that the time remaining to make a career decision was quickly coming to an end. Thus, the main difference between the career concerns of junior and senior high students appears to be that senior high students felt more urgency in regards to these concerns about satisfaction and commitment.

WRONG OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

Senior high students’ concerns regarding the theme of satisfaction seemed to intensify in the 10th grade, when they mentioned making a wrong occupational choice as a new source of career concern. This theme emerged with increased frequency as students reported more difficulty with occupational tasks that they perceived to be negative and stressful. Respondents who expressed this concern foresaw that their tentative choice might not fulfill their expectations. Questions such as “Do I really want to do that for the rest of my life?” and “What if I don’t like it?” reflected students’ uncertainty. Thus, it appeared each respondent had indeed made a decision, and had chosen a particular occupation, but was concerned that this choice might potentially be the wrong one for him or her.

HAVING TO DECIDE

In all grades, students reported the theme of commitment as an important concern. However, starting in the 10th grade, students were also concerned about making an occupational choice that they could eventually come to regret. Senior high students’ concerns regarding the theme of commitment also seemed to intensify in both Grade 11 and Grade 12, when they reported “having to decide” as a new source of concern. Students reported experiencing difficulty with their ability to choose. Committing to a choice was now complicated further by the limited time remaining in which to decide. Responses such as “I don’t know what to do” and “I don’t know what career to go into” expressed the frustration experienced by these students. It appeared that respondents with this concern simply felt unable to state a preference, yet they also felt burdened by the lack of remaining time in which to make a decision. While some students believed that they did not have “to think about it now,” many considered the necessity of making a choice soon.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to examine the sources of junior high and senior high students' discouragement and to assess their career and educational concerns. Adolescents in this study were able to express their perceptions and thus provide findings that could be useful in enhancing career program planning at both the junior high and senior high level. The results of this research suggest that junior high and senior high students perceived a variety of concerns regarding their career. Students indicated that they were discouraged by factors related to seven themes. These seven themes were (a) training and education concerns, (b) security, (c) satisfaction, (d) failing, (e) commitment, (f) wrong occupational choice, and (g) having to decide. To date, no research could be located concerning rural adolescent career development, aside from the career planning needs identified in this sample. Therefore, the relevance of these concerns for a rural student could not be compared with any research beyond this sample, and the authors were unaware of any differences between urban or rural students and their stated concerns.

Secondary students appeared to share similar career concerns. The first five themes could be found as early as Grade 7 and were often reported as sources of discouragement when adolescents thought about their present and future career paths. This result suggests that junior high and senior high students shared specific transition concerns, regardless of their career development stage or age. Other than secondary students' shared transition concerns, two additional themes, "wrong occupational choice" and "having to decide," were found among high school respondents. These findings may indicate that the high school students realize that the time remaining to make a career decision was quickly coming to an end, but felt unprepared for their post-high-school transition. Another unique aspect about the senior high level was that some students appeared to have chosen a particular occupation, but were still concerned that this choice could be the wrong one for them. This finding of making a "wrong occupational choice" as a new source of career concern for some senior high students could suggest that a career choice might be unsatisfactory unless their concerns about this potential career have been adequately addressed.

The main difference between the career concerns of junior and senior high students appears to be that senior high students felt more urgency in regards to their concerns. Interestingly, this sense of urgency coincided with the time that Grade 11 and 12 students received a career unit in the curriculum course called Career and Life Management (CALM).

Adolescents are required to take CALM as a 3-credit course in Grade 11 or 12 to graduate in the educational curriculum of Alberta (Alberta Learning, 2002). The content of the CALM unit was small and included the more traditional definition of career; it assisted students in identifying their interests and how they might relate these interests to a possible career preference. This traditional view of career development was narrowly defined to describe an occupational fit, rather

than conforming to the more contemporary view that career preparation required a broader incorporation of adolescent development than the vocational matching of occupational interests and goals.

If this study had sampled only Grade 11 and 12 students, one could interpret these results to suggest that students' career concerns arose because of their exposure to this career unit. Nevertheless, the first five appraisals were found to be shared concerns regardless of age or grade, and that result does not support this interpretation. However, exposure to CALM curriculum instruction does suggest the possibility that the CALM career unit might have contributed to Grade 11 and 12 students' sense of urgency about committing to a career decision. This influence appears entirely possible, especially for Grade 11 and 12 students who reported "having to decide" as an additional career concern at roughly the same time that they began instruction in CALM.

The appearance of "having to decide" as an additional career concern at roughly the same time that instruction in CALM began could indicate that adolescents' sense of urgency was influenced by their exposure to the CALM course. Admittedly, it is difficult to ascertain whether this sense of urgency is influenced by adolescents' exposure to the CALM course or whether this urgency was solely the result of adolescents' feeling unprepared for their transition after high school. However, one implication of this finding is clear. Because students perceived a variety of concerns regarding their career *before* their exposure to CALM instruction, earlier interventions are required at the junior high school level in order to address junior high students' career concerns and to help senior high students feel better prepared for their impending post-high-school transition.

Adolescents also often reported concerns about difficult tasks that could arise in different work environments, and they appeared hesitant about performing work tasks that they perceived as unpleasant, difficult, or frightening. Though their responses did not explicitly reveal their emotional state, adolescents' statements did contain an emotive tone loaded with affective meaning and expression that seemed to convey overarching degrees of nervousness and anxiety. For instance, adolescents used subjective words such as "stress," "frustrated," "doubt," "worried," "scared," "nervous," "afraid," and "discouraged" that indicated tension in conjunction with their career concern descriptions. Although the emotive tone appeared to vary from student to student, the transition anxieties revealed by students' expressions of affective distress were prevalent from Grades 7 to 12. Although little research has investigated the career concerns of adolescents, these findings support the research conducted by Borgen and Amundson (1995), who found that depression and anxiety correlated with a range of perceived concerns, and the research conducted by Julien (1999), who found that some adolescents felt anxious and overwhelmed about their concerns. Thus, adolescents in this study appeared to struggle with forms of affective distress in regard to their career concerns. These findings support the recommendation that career counselling interventions attend to emotional, as well as cognitive, concerns about career development (Niles et al., 1999).

Although Super's (1990) stage of exploration refers to common vocational tasks (i.e., crystallizing, specifying, and implementing a vocational preference), the career concerns in this study referred to what adolescents perceived to be personally important and essential to the development of their career. The results of this research appear to support the existence of themes of control, conviction, and competence as originally described by Savickas and Super (1993), as well as the existence of themes of concern and commitment as described by Super et al. (1996). However, Savickas (2001) proposed that these thematic issues (i.e., concern, control, conviction, competence, and commitment) were the foundation for possible career development tasks throughout life. The career concerns of adolescents, on the other hand, appear to be training and education concerns, security, satisfaction, failing, and commitment.

The primary emphasis of developmental career counselling and intervention is on helping adolescents cope with vocational concerns arising within the exploration stage of the life-span, life-space approach (Super, 1957; Super et al., 1996). This study supports the developmental perspective by indicating that adolescents appear to experience high levels of stress and discuss concerns that are related to personal needs and non-work roles. Furthermore, the stress on these personal issues suggest a substantial overlap between career and non-career issues and between work and non-work roles; students' concerns about their careers are not limited to vocational development tasks. However, adolescents' career concerns do appear to be categorically similar to the career development tasks proposed by Super et al. (1996). Left unaddressed, neglected personal and career concerns that accumulated to an unmanageable degree could create difficulty in the transition to work or to further education.

Adolescent career counselling might be best directed toward moving beyond a vocationally based perspective and toward addressing the full spectrum of life-span career development concerns. Tailoring career programs, interventions, and tools to respect and include adolescents' perceived concerns would help to reflect these perceptions and would put the career planning process back in the hands of adolescents. The results of this study substantiate the need for an integrated career planning curriculum at the junior high and senior high level or as a coordinated effort at both levels.

An integrated career planning curriculum beginning at the junior high level may address some of the career concerns indicated by students in this study. First, a proactive and integrated career counselling approach would include adolescents' own perceptions of their career concerns in order to improve the communication and understanding between career facilitators and adolescents. Second, earlier interventions are required at the junior high school level to address these career concerns and to help senior high students feel better prepared for their impending post-high-school transition. Third, the development of community-based partnerships among schools, community agencies, and businesses would enhance the options available for adolescents and provide a number of opportunities for them to address their concerns. Fourth, students should have increased access to

individuals well-versed in career planning (e.g., career counsellors) who would be knowledgeable in helping students cope with their vocational and career development concerns. If student concerns are included in the career planning process, students may also become more actively involved in preparing for their post-high-school transition.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research revealed that adolescents experience a range of concerns about their post-high-school transition and future careers. Students' career concerns include distinct transition and career adjustment difficulties related to (a) training and education concerns, (b) security, (c) satisfaction, (d) failing, (e) commitment, (f) wrong occupational choice, and (g) having to decide. The results suggest that the introduction of an integrated career planning curriculum beginning at the junior high level may help to address students' unanswered questions and unaddressed career concerns. By involving adolescents' own perceptions of their career concerns, the career-planning process may become more relevant and students may receive better preparation for the post-high-school transition.

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