

# THE OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS

by

STEPHANIE ANNE JONES

(Under the Direction of Mary Ann Fitzgerald)

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this narrative research study was to identify and explore the reasons that five graduate students in a school library media program had for selecting the occupation of school library media specialist. Savickas' career construction theory served as the framework for understanding the vocational behavior of the participants. The primary data collection method was through life story interviews. Narrative analysis was used to create first-person career stories for each of the individual participants. The data was also examined in relation to the three major components of career construction theory: vocational personality, life theme, and career adaptability. Lastly, a comparative analysis was conducted to locate commonalities across all the participants' life stories.

Looking at the life stories of the participants through the lens of career construction theory provided a comprehensive picture of the complex network of elements that accompany any occupational choice. This examination revealed the substantial value placed on educational achievement by the participants and their families. Also significant was the finding that the influence of a librarian was instrumental in bringing these five individuals into the profession. Lastly, this analysis evinced the importance of vocational personality in occupational choice. In career construction theory vocational personality is portrayed as resemblances to socially constructed

categories, specifically Holland RIASEC codes. The finding that all of the participants had a resemblance to the Artistic type has implications for recruitment.

The comparative analysis found that the reasons these five people had for becoming media specialists are similar to those previously identified in the occupational choice research literature. These motivations are a love of books and reading, library experiences, altruism–service, and a desire to work with children. Reasons specific to the choice of school librarianship include financial stability and security, flexibility of work schedule, and emotional distance. These findings suggest that the reasons that these five participants had for becoming school library media specialists are not significantly different than those applicable to other library specialties. Finally, this study reiterated the library profession’s persistent problem of the public not even being aware of librarianship as a possible occupation.

**INDEX WORDS:** Career Change, Career Choice, Career Construction Theory, Employees – Recruiting, Librarian, Librarians – Supply and Demand, Librarianship, Library Media Specialist, Library Science Students – Attitudes, Library Workforce, Motivational Factors, Occupational Choice, School Librarian, Vocational Behavior

THE OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS

by

STEPHANIE ANNE JONES

B.A., University of North Carolina – Greensboro, 1975

M.L.N., Emory University, 1986

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2008

© 2008

Stephanie Anne Jones

All Rights Reserved

THE OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS

by

STEPHANIE ANNE JONES

Major Professor: Mary Ann Fitzgerald

Committee: Julie A. Moore  
Michael A. Orey  
Pam Paisley

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
August 2008

## DEDICATION

In loving memory of my mother, Lou Maxon, who shared my dream of becoming a librarian,

and

To my husband Ron, whose steadfast love and support made this endeavor possible.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am who I am today because of my wonderful, smart parents, Don and Lou Maxon. Their belief in the value of education instilled within me a love of learning. I will be forever grateful to them for not giving me the answers to my many questions, but instead making me look them up in the encyclopedia. Little did they know that strategy would eventually lead me to the library profession and now to library education.

After fifteen years as a librarian, I made a leap of faith as I sought to fulfill the dream of earning my doctorate. As this dream becomes reality I would like to acknowledge the many people who have helped to make this achievement possible.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to my major adviser, Mary Ann Fitzgerald, for her inspiration, encouragement, and friendship throughout this four-year adventure. I am also deeply grateful to all of my committee members for their support and guidance in this research. I am amazed at how even the smallest of their suggestions became significant. Dr. Julie Moore casually handed me a qualitative methodology book which became instrumental to my data analysis. What would I have done if Dr. Pam Paisley had not introduced me to Dr. Mark Savickas' wonderfully elegant career construction theory? Dr. Mike Orey saved the day when he generously volunteered to serve during my defense. Lastly, I would never have entered this program without the warm welcome given to me by Dr. Julie Tallman. My deepest thanks go to all of you.

This study would not have been possible without the contributions of the nine very special people who took part in this research. I am deeply indebted to Annalee Sorenson, Claire Smith, Charles Houston, Gene Reed, Lynn Parker, Sharon Turner, Susan Davis, Tom Daniel, and

Virginia Clark for their willingness to share their time and life stories. I extend a heartfelt thanks to each of you.

Throughout these four years at Georgia I have benefitted from the help and friendship of my fellow doctoral students. Myung-Hwa Koh's gentle spirit and intelligence were an inspiration to me. Boyoung Chae's companionship, laughter and sage advice were a constant encouragement during the hard times. I am also grateful to Elizabeth E. G. Friese for her friendship, humor and willing ear. I will continue to watch her rising star with admiration.

Completing this doctorate has required a fair amount of concentration and self-absorption on my part. Luckily, my children have been there to bring me back down to earth occasionally for joyous events like weddings, homecomings, and the births of grandchildren. I am so grateful to Christy, Adam, Matthew, Diane, Jacob and Janet for reminding me of all that is important in life. I am truly blessed.

Finally, I confess that I owe the completion of this degree to my wonderful husband Ron, who often had to remind me to "just do it." Thanks, Honey. This Ph.D. is for you.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Occupational Choice Research Studies.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	5
Chapter Summary.....	6
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	7
School Library Media Specialists Today.....	7
Research Studies of Occupational Choice for Librarianship.....	9
Synopsis.....	17
Overview of Career Construction Theory.....	18
Chapter Summary.....	28
3 METHODOLOGY.....	29
Research Design.....	30
Participant Selection.....	33
Ethical Considerations.....	34

	Data Collection.....	35
	Data Analysis .....	38
	Limitations.....	50
	Validity and Reliability .....	52
	Researcher’s Perspective .....	54
	Chapter Summary.....	56
4	RESULTS: INDIVIDUAL PROFILES.....	57
	Lynn Parker .....	59
	Virginia Clark.....	74
	Tom Daniel.....	87
	Susan Davis .....	103
	Charles Houston .....	121
	Chapter Summary.....	135
5	COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.....	136
	The Participants.....	137
	Career Construction Theory Commonalities.....	137
	Common Themes .....	145
	Chapter Summary.....	159
6	DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION .....	160
	Discussion of Findings .....	161
	Common Themes .....	169
	Recommendations for Future Research .....	173
	Implications for Practice .....	173

Conclusion.....	175
REFERENCES .....	177
APPENDICES .....	190
A Participant Recruitment Email.....	191
B Participant Informed Consent Agreement .....	192
C Career Construction Theory Propositions.....	193
D The Life Story Interview.....	196
E Career Style Interview .....	205
F Example of Narrative Analysis.....	206
G Holland’s RIASEC Typology .....	212
H Brief Answers to Research Questions.....	217

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: Labov’s Framework for Narratives .....	41
Table 3.2: Career Adaptability Dimensions.....	51
Table 4.1: Participants’ Data .....	58
Table 5.1: Participants’ Holland Codes .....	140
Table 5.2: Educational Levels and Occupations of the Participants’ Parents.....	146

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, research has shown that students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized test scores than their peers in schools without libraries. From Alaska to North Carolina, more than 60 studies have shown clear evidence of this connection between student achievement and the presence of school libraries with qualified school library media specialists (*School Libraries Work*, 2006, p. 4).

#### Background

*Information Power* (American Association of School Librarians [AASL] & Association for Educational Communications and Technology [AECT], 1998), the national guidelines for the school library profession, recommends that in order to have an effective school library media program every school should have a minimum of one full-time, certified library media specialist with qualified support staff. However, approximately 25% of public schools lack a full-time, state-certified library media specialist (American Library Association [ALA], 2006a). The 2003-2004 National Center for Education Statistics School and Staffing Survey (Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter & Orlofsk, 2006) states that there are only 50,553 full-time, paid, state-certified library media specialists for an estimated 82,569 public schools with library media centers. There are a variety of reasons for this disparity. Some states do not require a certified school library media specialist in every school and others allow non-certified personnel to staff the library (Everhart, 1998, 2000, 2002; Thomas & Snyder, 2006). Sometimes budgetary difficulties

result in librarian positions being eliminated (Harada, 1996). A significant reason for the shortfall is the critical shortage of qualified school library media specialists in the United States (Everhart, 2000, 2002).

In a 2002 staffing survey (Everhart, 2002), 40 states and the District of Columbia reported severe or extremely severe shortages of certified library media specialists. This situation even attracted national attention in an article in *U.S. News & World Report* (Lord, 2000) that asked “Where Have All the Librarians Gone?” The answer is that many of them are retiring. By some estimates, approximately 68 percent of today’s librarians will have retired by 2017 (Lynch, 2002). While these figures refer to all librarians, they are equally applicable to school librarians. School librarians are part of the phenomenon known as “the graying of the library profession” (Lenzini & Lipscomb, 2002, p. 88). Many practicing librarians were born during the Baby Boom years between 1946 and 1964 and are now on average 45 years old (Matarazzo & Mika, 2006). In Georgia school library media specialists have an average age of 49 years and have 18 years work experience (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2006). A Colorado survey on recruitment and retention found that 9 out of 10 school librarians are 45 years or older; almost half stated they intend to retire within five years (Steffen, Lance, Russell & Lietzau, 2004). The problem is that when these librarians retire, there are fewer librarians to replace them. One reason is the small pool of qualified candidates (Shannon, 2004). Some of those individuals who desire to work in the information field are lured away by lucrative careers outside traditional library venues (Matarazzo & Mika, 2006). Other individuals are stymied by limited access to library education programs and strict certification rules (Everhart, 2000).

The most recent study (Shannon, 2004) shows that the number of library education preparation programs decreased from a high of more than 200 in the 1980’s to less than 173 in

2004 . Many of these programs are geographically inaccessible to students. Some universities have responded to the need by offering library media certification through distance education programs. States are responding to the shortage by changing school library certification requirements to encourage classroom teachers and career-changers into the field. Some states have eliminated the requirement for teaching certification or classroom teaching experience as a prerequisite for earning school library media certification (Thomas & Snyder, 2006). Across the nation, libraries, library associations and schools of information science have implemented a variety of recruitment programs with the goal of increasing the number and diversity of qualified applicants. According to recruitment theory, knowing what motivates individuals to enter the library profession aids these recruitment efforts (Winston, 2001).

#### Occupational Choice Research Studies

Historically, whenever there has been a personnel shortage in the library profession there has also been a concurrent flurry of studies aimed at ferreting out those motivations (Dewey, 1985). The majority of these occupational choice studies are quantitative studies that use questionnaires to gather data. Many are surveys of graduate students in library and information science (LIS) schools. These studies are usually restricted to one of the programs accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). This limitation excludes those school library media specialists who earn their degrees at non-ALA accredited institutions. Studies of the motivations of practicing librarians are typically limited to a single type of librarian, such as academic, special, or public librarians. Of special note is that the most recent study specifically targeting the occupational choice for school librarians is an unpublished dissertation from 1963 (McCreedy). Although the occupational choice studies of LIS graduate students included individuals specializing in school library media, the findings were not linked to that group

specifically. As a consequence, the reasons that individuals select school librarianship as a career are indeterminate. The need for a new study was clear, especially given how much change has occurred in the school library media field in the ensuing years (Kelsey, 2006). This study endeavored to address that need through qualitative research into the reasons that individuals select the occupation of school library media specialist. My selection of a qualitative method was in response to the shortcomings of existing research.

A limitation of the existing research studies is the heavy reliance on survey methodology. This overemphasis “has shaped the range and nature of variables that have been considered as well as the results that have been generated” (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992, p. 52). The studies tend to focus on factors such as demographic characteristics, reasons for selecting a particular library and information science program, specialization interests, timing, prior job experiences, and influence of mentor librarians on occupational choice. Rarely do the respondents have the opportunity to provide additional “outside the box” information that might lead to greater insights into the unique reasons that individuals become librarians. Such insights are more likely to be obtained by using a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research can illustrate the underlying reasons for an individual’s actions (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

The theoretical framework for this study was career construction theory. Briefly, this theory explains “how individuals choose and use work” (Savickas, 2006a, p. 84). Career construction theory will be fully described in the next chapter.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify and explore the reasons that graduate students in a school library media program have for selecting the occupation of school library media specialist. The following questions guided the study:



- How have the participants reached this decision point in their lives, both personally and professionally?
- What themes are revealed in the life stories of the participants?
- How do the life stories reveal the influence of the participants' social context (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, family, etc.) on their careers?
- What commonalities exist across all participants' life stories?

#### Significance of the Study

This study contributed to the body of knowledge concerning the occupational choice of school library media specialists. The information gained from this research may be used to inform recruitment efforts.

#### Definition of Terms

In an attempt to alleviate any confusion due to the use of different terminologies, the following terms are defined based on how they are used in this study.

**Career** – (1) “the course of a person’s life, particularly in some pursuit or integrated set of pursuits as in a lifework. It is what would be included if one were to write the story of his or her life” (Cochran, 1990, p. 71). (2) The sequence of occupations in the life of an individual.

**Career development** – “the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors that combine to influence the nature and significance of work in the total life span of any given individual (Engles, 1994, p.2)” (Zunker, 2002, p. 9).

**Objective career** - the series of positions that an individual occupies from school through retirement.

**Occupation** – an activity that serves as one’s regular source of livelihood; a vocation.

**Subjective career** - the imposition of meaning on vocational behavior.

**School librarian / School library media specialist** – “Library Media Specialists guide and direct library media programs in schools. Provide leadership in the planning, management and evaluation of school library media programs. Instruct students on a formal and informal basis in skills related to reading, research, productions of materials, and the use of informaiton [sic] and instructional technologies. Provide access to information and ideas by assisting students and staff in identifying information resources and in interpreting and communicating intellectual content” (New Hampshire Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, 2005). For the purposes of this study the terms school library media specialist and school librarian will be used interchangeably.

#### Chapter Summary

In this chapter I presented the background of the problem, stated the purpose of the study, and defined significant terms. In the next chapter, I examine relevant literature on the present status of the school library media specialist, career development theories, and existing occupational choice studies of librarians.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore the reasons that individuals choose to become school library media specialists. In this chapter I review three major areas of literature that were most helpful in conducting this research. The first section is a discussion of the current status of school library media specialists including educational requirements and job role. The second section is a review of research studies investigating motivations for the occupational choice into librarianship. The final section describes career construction theory, a comprehensive career theory that serves as the theoretical framework for this study.

#### School Library Media Specialists Today

School library media specialists are educational professionals who work in PreK-12 school libraries. They are responsible for meeting students' informational needs and acting as instructional partners with teachers, while also carrying out the functions of running school media centers on a day-to-day basis. As of 2003-04, there were 97,275 full and part-time school library media specialists in the United States (Strizek, et al., 2006), but of these only 54.1% had a master's degree in a library-related education field. Many individuals who enter the library media field do so after several years of classroom teaching, although in some states this is not a requirement. Most public schools require the library media specialist to have state teacher certification in addition to a master's degree.

Certification requirements for school library media specialists vary considerably from state to state, but some specialized coursework in library and information science is a minimal

requirement (Thomas & Snyder, 2006). While the majority of states require teacher certification, actual classroom teaching experience is required by only a handful. Seventy percent of the states require some type of field experience or internship and fifty-five percent require that media specialists pass a subject specific examination such as the PRAXIS II. Currently 14 states require a master's degree in library and information science or the equivalent (Thomas & Snyder, 2006).

Individuals desiring a graduate degree in school library media have several educational options. One option is to earn their degree from one of the 56 university programs accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). This degree, most often referred to as the Master of Library and Information Science (MLS), entitles them to work in any type of library including a school library media center provided they also meet state teacher certification requirements. Another route to school library media certification is through a university or college program accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in cooperation with the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). These colleges and universities offer degrees for school library media certification only. Finally, interested individuals may earn a degree from one of the more than 100 (Underwood, 2007) state approved college or university library media programs.

The job of the library media specialist is a demanding one. *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (American Association of School Librarians [AASL] & Association for Education Communication and Technology [AECT], 1998), the most recent guidelines for school library media programs, describes the media specialist as a “curriculum, instructional, and technology leader who collaborates with all members of the learning community to create a student-centered library media program” (Shannon, 2002, ¶ 11). These guidelines delineate four roles for the school library media specialist: information specialist, program administrator,

instructional partner and teacher. The media specialist of the 21<sup>st</sup> century “works with both students and teachers to facilitate access to information in a wide variety of formats, instruct students and teachers how to acquire, evaluate and use information and the technology needed in this process, and introduces children and young adults to literature and other resources to broaden their horizons. As a collaborator, change agent, and leader, the school library media specialist develops, promotes and implements a program that will help prepare students to be effective users of ideas and information, a lifelong skill” (ALA, 2006b, ¶ 1). It is essential that individuals desiring to enter the profession have the motivations and personality traits essential for success in this demanding job. Ideally they should be service-oriented people who are energetic, flexible, capable, and enthusiastically proactive (Roys, 2004; Shannon, 2002). Additionally, they should be aware of all the dimensions of the role they are seeking to fill.

#### Research Studies of Occupational Choice for Librarianship

This section is a review of the literature on studies conducted from 1963 to the present that examine the reasons why people choose librarianship as a career. Although only one of these studies investigated school library media specialists specifically, many of the studies included graduate students who indicated that they intended to pursue school library media careers. Although there are some differences in the various subtypes of librarians, they have much more in common. Therefore, the motivations for occupational choice revealed by these studies do have relevance to this research.

#### *Prior Library Work Experiences*

There have been many surveys to determine why students seek a Master of Library Science (MLS) degree. The results of these studies often conclude that a primary influence is previous work experience in libraries, either as a paraprofessional or a volunteer. In a 1979

survey of 56 full-time library science students at George Peabody College in Tennessee, Julian found that 87% had previous library work experience and wanted better job opportunities. In 1988, Heim and Moen (1989) undertook a comprehensive study for the American Library Association's Office for Library Personnel Resources to identify the attitudes and aspirations of library and information science students. They distributed the Library and Information Science Students' Attitudes, Demographics, and Aspirations Survey (LISSADA) to students in 54 accredited library and information science programs. The 3,484 responses contributed to a detailed and comprehensive analysis of student behavior in choosing the profession, as well as school/program selection with the findings cross-tabulated by gender, ethnicity and enrollment status (Heim & Moen, 1989). One of the study's findings was that 52% of the students had previous library work experience.

That same year McClenney's (1989) study of library science students at three universities in North Carolina showed that 32% entered graduate school because they needed the master's degree to advance their careers. A 1999 (Chapman, Feis, Joiner, Reid, & Wells) study at the University of Texas found that 48% of the MLS students had previous library employment. A comparable study at the University of Alabama found that 31% of the library and information science students surveyed indicated that their prior experience working in libraries was a strong motivation in their return to school (Ard, Clemmons, Morgan, Sessions, Spencer et al., 2006). Research studies among ethnic groups of librarians have met with similar results. For example, Hussey's (2006) study of 33 minority library students found that for 45% of them, previous volunteer or paid work experiences served as motivation to seek their MLS degree.

Occupational choice studies that have sought information from working professional librarians affirm that many of them had worked in libraries in some capacity before seeking

professional certification. Luzius (2005) conducted a web-based survey of academic librarians from 39 academic research institutions. Of the 453 respondents, 69% had worked in libraries as paraprofessionals. Carmichael's 1992 study of 482 male librarians found that 45.8% had previous experience in libraries. In a study of 164 minority librarians, Buttlar and Caynon (1992) found that "a fair share (43 or 26%) 'fell into' nonprofessional jobs that resulted in their pursuing a career into librarianship" (p. 272).

### *Career Changers*

It is worth noting that a lot of people who eventually become librarians do not follow a direct route to the profession. The explanation that many professionals just 'happened into' library work is a common one. One of the key issues that Deeming and Chelin (2001) identified in their study of 21 professional librarians in the United Kingdom was the phenomenon of "drift versus active choice," (p. 18) defined as the "extent to which librarianship was actively considered as a potential career." They noted that "overall, the level of active choice of librarianship as a profession was low" (p. 22) and that most librarians had found their career serendipitously.

Most studies find that for the majority of people, librarianship is a second or even third career, and not one that individuals had long planned for or even contemplated. In Julian's study (1979) 30% of the students indicated that they had other types of work experience before they considered a career in librarianship. The study at the University of Texas (Chapman et al., 1999) found that about 67% of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science students became interested in a library career sometime during the five year interval after earning their bachelor's degree. Similarly, Luzius (2005) found that 78% of the professional librarians in his study made the decision to enter librarianship only after completing their bachelor's degree.

Thirty percent of the University of Alabama students did not decide to pursue a library and information science career until five or more years after college (Ard et al., 2006). The data from these studies provides evidence that, historically, librarianship has not been a first career. According to Matarazzo and Mika (2006), new librarians “start off a decade or more older on average than novices in other professions” (p. 39).

In 1988, the median age of library and information science students was 35 (Heim & Moen, 1989). Likewise today, most library science students are in their mid to late 30s (Matarazzo & Mika, 2006). “The primary factor that has led to the aging MLS workforce is a decline in young people choosing library and information science as a career during the past two decades” (p. 39). There are a variety of reasons for this: “less-than-competitive salaries,” “a negative professional image,” and the lack of “a good bachelor’s-degree feeder program” are just a few (p. 39). One implication is that since individuals become librarians later in their lifetime, their working career will not span as many years. On the other hand, there are other benefits that second career librarians bring to the field, as evidenced in the research studies discussed next.

Several studies that are specifically related to the topic of second career librarians aim to discover the impact the first career has on the second. Fikar and Corral (2001) conducted a web-based survey of health professionals who decided to become librarians. They received 118 responses from health professionals who were either currently working as librarians or who were in the process of obtaining their master’s degree. Approximately 90% of the respondents were working in biomedical libraries. The respondents stated that their expertise in both the vocabulary and subject matter of medicine learned as a health professional were useful in helping them understand the information needs of their library patrons. Another plus was that their former work in a health profession gave them “higher credibility” (p. 64) when providing



medical reference services. Whitten and Nozero (1997) surveyed 57 second and third career reference librarians in Nevada to determine when and how they became librarians and also what effect their previous career had on their reference philosophy. Of the 26 respondents, the majority had a first career in education, while the remainder had worked in business and government. These librarians found that their subject matter expertise and the customer service skills learned in their first career enhanced their abilities as reference librarians. Both of these studies found that most professional librarians believed that the expertise they gained in their previous work experiences had only a beneficial influence on their library work.

#### *Librarians and Other Mentors*

Several research studies have tried to determine whether interactions with librarians influence individuals to select a library career. McCreedy (1963) studied factors affecting the selection of school librarianship. She surveyed 560 working school librarians and 1,594 students who were enrolled in undergraduate and graduate library science programs. Approximately 54% of the students stated that they were influenced to enter the field to some extent by a librarian. Almost 34% of the students in Julian's 1979 study credited the influence of librarians with their choice to obtain their MLS. Dewey (1985) determined that personal contact from librarians and other MLS students was an influential factor for 46% of the students. Almost 36% of the students in the LISSADA study stated that they were influenced in their career decision by a librarian (Heim & Moen, 1989). Both Buttlar and Caynon (1992) and Hussey (2006) found that the influence of a librarian mentor was particularly important in recruiting minority librarians. Other types of mentors who have encouraged individuals to seek a library career include friends, employers, professors, and family members (Ard et al., 2006; Hussey, 2006; and McClenney, 1989). On the other hand, not all studies conclude that mentors have an effect on this

occupational choice. Deeming and Chelin (2001) found in their study that the influence of other people was a minor factor in people's decision to enter librarianship, although most respondents reported that they viewed contact with librarians as very positive.

### *The Nature of Library Work*

Many people are drawn to librarianship by their interest in the nature of library work (Buttler & Caynon, 1992; Deeming & Chelin, 2001). This is the primary reason given by 81% of MLS students in the study by Van House (1988) who said they "liked (or thought would like) working in a library," followed closely by "wanted a career, marketable skills" (p. 161). Van House stated that, "interest of work is generally a strong motivator in career choice" (1988, p. 162). McClenney (1989) found similar results; almost 80% of the students surveyed in this study gave "liked the field" (p. 27) as their reason for choosing librarianship. Ten years later Chapman et al. (1999) found that 40% of the MLS students at the University of Texas were influenced by the job description or functions to seek a library degree. Far more individuals choose librarianship for its interest rather than compensation or prestige (Chapman, et al., 1999). Just 24% of the MLS students at the University of Alabama, who were surveyed in the spring of 2004, listed compensation as a major influence in their career decision (Ard, et al., 2006, p. 241).

### *Intrinsic Motivations*

These occupational choice studies support the idea that individuals are drawn to librarianship by external factors such as previous library experience, the influence of mentors, and the nature of the library work environment. There are fewer studies that give support for intrinsic motivations which cause people to engage in behaviors with no apparent reward except for the pleasure and satisfaction of the activity itself (Lefton, 2000). Many of the occupational studies use closed-choice library surveys though, and do not offer this as an option.

One study that did consider intrinsic motivators was conducted by Bello (1996) who surveyed 150 librarians in Nigeria about their career choice. He wanted to ascertain whether the choice of librarianship was (a) externally influenced by individuals such as parents, friends, employers, or counselors; (b) influenced by characteristics of the library profession such as stability, social status, and salary; or (c) influenced by self-expressed values such as aptitude, creativity and the opportunity to work with people. The results of the study showed that choice of librarianship for this population of librarians was significantly influenced by both external and professional factors, but not by self-expressed values. A recent study of graduate students at the University of Alabama lends support to Bello's conclusion that intrinsic motivators are not a significant factor in library career choice. Only about 2% of students cited "love of books" as attracting them to the library profession (Ard, et al., 2006). This was true despite the fact that 32% of the students expressed an interest in pursuing a career as a school library media specialist, a specialty in which reading advocacy is prominent. These conclusions about the reasons for selecting a library career run counter to the popular belief that librarians choose their careers primarily because "they love books."

The study of school librarians and library students conducted by McCreedy (1963) found that the highest ranking factors for selecting librarianship were a liking for people, enjoyment of books, and the desire for intellectually stimulating work. The students in Julian's (1979) study listed "understanding and appreciation for helping people" and "liking and appreciation for books & reading" (p. 23) as the most important attributes for a librarian to possess. Concomitantly, they ranked "like books and reading" (p. 27) as a primary factor in their choice of librarianship as a career.

Two informal surveys from the late 1990s also provide insight into intrinsic motivations for the selection of librarianship. A career satisfaction survey was sent in the summer of 1997 to ten pre-selected electronic library listing services (Houdyshell, Robles, & Yi, 1999). The ease of the electronic format was credited for the more than 500 responses received from working librarians. The opportunity to be part of a service-oriented profession was cited by 95% of the librarians as a reason for choosing their career, followed by the intellectual challenge of the work environment at 82%. In May of 1998, Gordon and Nesbeitt (1999) posted a web-based online survey to investigate what drew librarians to librarianship. Of the 391 responses, the number one reason given was “love of books, reading.” Other popular responses included “enjoy working with technology,” “enjoy working with people,” “enjoy research,” and “love learning.” Almost half the respondents also agreed that they viewed librarianship as a calling. These surveys may be criticized in that the respondents were self-selecting and that it was limited to listserv members or individuals who happened upon the website. Nevertheless, they do provide anecdotal evidence of the importance for intrinsic motivators in the choice of a library career.

#### *Deterrents to Choice*

A recent study addressed the issue of deterrents to the library profession. In 2003, 1,241 Colorado librarians and other library workers participated in a voluntary statewide survey asking about retirement, retention, and recruitment issues (Steffen, Lance, Russell, & Lietzau, 2004). Respondents to the survey came from every type of library all over the state. The survey subdivided the participants into four groups: imminent retirees who planned to retire within the next five years, incumbent librarians, library and information science (LIS) students, and library paraprofessionals. These subgroups were asked different questions. The two groups of credentialed librarians and the LIS students were all asked to identify the factors that most

discourage people from pursuing a career in librarianship. Overwhelmingly, the number one response given by all three groups was low financial compensation. Next cited were misconceptions about what librarians do, and negative stereotypes of librarians. Other answers that were frequently given included low prestige, perceived obsolescence of libraries, and lack of opportunities for advancement. These reasons can be divided into “two major categories: practical career considerations (including pay, employment, and advancement) and negative or uninformed views of librarianship” (p. 74). Library employers can work toward addressing the first category, but the second has proven much more difficult for the library profession to overcome.

### Synopsis

This review of 43 years of occupational choice studies reveals a number of motivations for individuals to enter librarianship. The most prominent reasons given are previous work experiences in libraries, the desire to advance their career with the MLS degree, the influence of librarian or family mentors, and liking the nature of libraries and library work. For many, librarianship is not their first choice of career, but a second or third. Other reasons given include a desire for intellectually stimulating work, a liking for people, and liking books and reading. It is interesting to note that these same factors recur across all of the studies. Perhaps this is the result of the single-survey methodology. The set format provides only a limited number of choices and thus tends to oversimplify the reasons for occupational choice and disassociate them from the social and historical context in which they were made (Rhodes, 2000).

I stated in the first chapter that whenever there is a shortage of librarians, there is also an upsurge in the number of studies of librarian occupational choice. The premise is that if the motivations for selecting this occupation are known, then the profession will be able to develop

recruitment strategies based on those findings. In the past, such strategies have been used effectively for recruitment campaigns. The library profession now faces new challenges in recruiting the next generation of librarians. Having a fresh perspective on the occupational choice issue is increasingly important if the expected shortage of librarians materializes in the next ten years as has been predicted.

Qualitative methods of inquiry can add to the existing body of occupational research studies by gathering richer, more detailed data, as well as attending to the social context in which these important career choices are made. This approach to data collection and analysis, although time consuming, can lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena under investigation. In the next section I present career construction theory, which formed the foundation for my research.

#### Overview of Career Construction Theory

Mark L. Savickas is a preeminent scholar in the field of vocational psychology. He conducted his doctoral studies with the guidance of Donald E. Super, John Holland and John Crites (Collin, 2001) and has continued the work of Super throughout his career. Savickas has incorporated key aspects of John Holland's personality typology and refined and integrated Super's career development theories into a comprehensive theory. This theory, which he termed career construction theory, is based upon sixteen propositions. Many of these propositions were originally the basis for Super's career development theories and have been incorporated, updated and expanded upon by Savickas. These propositions can be found in Appendix C.

Savickas intends for this theory to be used to provide a framework for researchers and practitioners in career education and counseling. In this theory, Savickas uses social constructivist epistemology as the lens through which he re-envisioned the traditional theories of Holland and Super.

Within the last decade vocational psychologists have begun to view vocational behavior and development in light of constructivist thinking. One reason given is the increasing recognition of the importance that the social, cultural, and political context has on vocational behavior (Blustein, Kenna, Murphy, DeVoy, & DeWine, 2005). Constructivists view career development as a function of adapting to a changing environment, not simply a matter of the “maturation of inner structures” (Savickas, 2002, p. 154) or matching a person to a job through an interest inventory.

Career construction theory “asserts that individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behavior and occupational experiences” (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). The strength of this theory is that it focuses on the unique meaning that careers have for each individual. Career can be defined both objectively and subjectively. “Viewed objectively, career is the series of positions that an individual occupies from school through retirement. Viewed subjectively, career is the imposition of meaning on vocational behavior. Individuals construct their careers by using subjective meanings both to guide their selection of occupational positions and to make their work roles matter to themselves and others” (Savickas, 2006b, p. 851).

Typically career theories have addressed only one aspect of vocational behavior. Career construction theory seeks to be comprehensive by incorporating three classic segments of vocational psychology into one overarching theory. These segments are differential, developmental, and dynamic, representing the *what*, *how*, and *why* of vocational behavior. Career construction theory explains them under the headings “vocational personality types, career adaptability, and life themes” (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). They work together to explain “how individuals choose and use work” (Savickas, 2006a, p. 84).

### *Vocational Personality – The What*

This part of the theory is derived from differential psychology that highlights people's individual differences. It “examines the content of vocational personality types and *what* different people prefer to do” (Savickas, 2006a, p. 84). “*Vocational personality* is defined as an individual's career-related abilities, needs, values, and interests” (Savickas, 2005, p. 47). People form their personalities within the context of their particular home, community, and school. Their distinct vocational interests are developed through the many and various activities they pursue as they grow from youth through adolescence and finally adulthood. These interests are not static, but continue to change throughout a person's lifetime.

Vocational personality types have been well explicated in trait-and-factor or person-environment fit theories. Trait-and-factor theories assume that individuals have interests, abilities, and skills that can be objectively assessed in order to match them to work environments where they will best fit and be successful. Person-environment fit theory is an enhancement of the trait-and-factor theory. It adds the assumption that “individuals bring requirements to a work environment, and the work environment makes its requirements of individuals” (Zunker, 2002, p. 76). Of these theories Holland's *RIASEC* career development model is one of the most well-researched and empirically supported.

#### *Holland's Theory of Personality Types*

“In 1959, John Holland presented his theory of career choice, in which the underlying premise was that individuals choose situations and environments that satisfy their personality orientation. In 1969, he introduced his circular and hexagonal structure of his six personality orientations” (Shoffner, 2006 p.42) which is commonly called the *RIASEC* Hexagon. By organizing the vast amount of occupational information, Holland's typology functions as a



practical tool to “suggest how people make vocational choices and explain how job satisfaction and vocational achievement occur” (Shahnasarian, 2006, p. 352).

Holland’s theory is based on the following four major assumptions (Shoffner, 2006):

1. In American culture most individuals can be categorized as one of six types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional.
2. There are six corresponding environments.
3. People search for environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles.
4. A person’s behavior is determined by an interaction between personality and the characteristics of the environment.

The personality orientations are succinctly defined into six types:

- Realistic: Those who do things; includes skill trades, many technical occupations and several service occupations
- Investigative: Those who think about things; includes scientific occupations, and several technical occupations
- Artistic: Those who create things; includes artistic, literary and musical occupations
- Social: Those who help others; includes social welfare occupation and education
- Enterprising: Those who persuade others; includes sales and managerial occupations
- Conventional: Those who organize; includes clerical occupations

Each personality is a combination of each of these types to a greater or lesser degree.

Holland aligns these types in order based on the numerical strength assigned from the personality type assessment instrument. The resulting three-letter code characterizes the individual’s personality organization and matches the ability of the individual to the previously determined

requirements of the work environments, creating an increased likelihood of person-environment fit.

Holland's hexagon also has the six types positioned according to their similarity to one another. The adjacent types are more similar to one another and the types across the hexagon are considered to be opposites. The hexagonal model introduces five key concepts (Zunker, 2002):

1. **Congruence:** A calculation of fit or a comparison of the level of closeness between an individual's type code and that of the work environment.
2. **Consistency:** The degree to which an individual's dominant types are similar; the closer these types are to one another on the hexagon the more consistent the individual's profile.
3. **Differentiation:** Measures and compares the relative strength of each type code one to another.
4. **Identity:** A stable and clear picture of one's goals, interests and talents.
5. **Calculus:** The theoretical relationships between types of occupational environments lend themselves to empirical research techniques.

Holland's theory has resulted in more empirical studies than any other and has made him one of the most influential people in the field of vocational research and career counseling.

Savickas acknowledges the value and primacy of Holland's typology and has incorporated it as the primary tool in the vocational personality construct of career construction theory. Counselors who use career construction theory may administer Holland's interest inventory; the results are not to be viewed as prescriptive, but as "simply resemblances to socially constructed clusters of attitudes and skills" (Savickas, 2005, p. 47). The usefulness of Holland's typology to career construction theory is to provide counselors and clients with an

enhanced understanding of the client's person-environment fit and lead to increased possibilities for occupational choice.

During their lifetime, individuals are faced with the challenge of finding an occupation which suits their own abilities, interests and needs and that also meets the expectations pertinent to the specific cultural, geographical, and social context in which they live. These decisions are not made in a vacuum, but in the context of all of the roles that the individual has in society. The work role is only one of many roles that are more or less central in an individual's life. The more central of these roles constitute the core of an individual and are fundamental to finding life satisfaction (Šverko, 2006, p. 791). "Viewing career construction as a series of attempts to implement a self-concept in social roles focuses attention on adaptation to a series of transitions from school to work, from job to job, and from occupation to occupation" (Savickas, 2006a, p. 87).

#### *Career Adaptability – The How*

The construct of career adaptability was introduced by Super and Knasel in a 1981 journal article to complement Super's construct of career maturity. Career maturity was devised as a way to describe and assess the readiness of students to make educational and vocational decisions (Savickas, 1997). Unfortunately, the use of a concept linked with chronological age did not adequately address the career development challenges of adults. Therefore the construct of career adaptability was employed to describe one's "readiness to cope with changing work and working conditions" (Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004, p. 293). Later, Savickas proposed that career adaptability could be used to integrate what Super himself referred to as his segmental life-span, life-space theory (Savickas, 1997). In career construction theory, career adaptability integrates the life theme and vocational personality components.

### *Career Adaptability Construct*

“Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual’s readiness and resources for coping with current and imminent vocational developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas” (Savickas, 2005, p. 51). Savickas (2005) devised a three-tiered structural model to explain career adaptability:

1. At the highest and most abstract level are the four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. These dimensions represent an individual’s general adaptive resources.
2. “At the intermediate level, the model articulates a distinct set of functionally homogeneous variables for each of the four dimensions. Each set of intermediate variables includes the specific attitudes, beliefs, and competencies – the ABCs of career construction – which shape the concrete coping behaviors used to master developmental tasks, negotiate occupational transitions, and resolve personal traumas” (2005, p. 51).
3. The third and most concrete level in the structural model of career adaptability is vocational behavior. Vocational behaviors flow from cognitive competencies, resulting in numerous coping responses that result in vocational development and career construction. Savickas (2005) describes the ABCs of career construction as a specific set of attitudes, beliefs, and competencies. Attitudes and beliefs are feelings and inclinations that dispose individuals to behave in certain ways. The dispositions of attitudes and beliefs shape the development and use of cognitive competencies, such as comprehension and problem-solving abilities, which then regulate vocational behavior. Individuals employ these problem-solving strategies and coping behaviors as they synthesize their vocational self-concepts and construct their careers.

Adaptive individuals are conceptualized using the four dimensions that are described above in number one of the structural model (Savickas, 2005, p. 52):

1. Becoming *concerned* about their future as a worker.
2. Increasing personal *control* over their vocational future.
3. Displaying *curiosity* by exploring possible selves and future scenarios.
4. Strengthening *confidence* to pursue their aspirations.

As an individual's career adaptability improves, he should improve along all of these four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity and confidence (Savickas, 2005). The failure of an individual to adapt often results in career problems that necessitate career interventions.

Career adaptability is activated in order to address the developmental tasks that an individual faces in constructing a career, and the adaptive response that an individual makes in completing the tasks. Both of these aspects are derived from Super's life-space, life-span theory, but have been slightly modified and updated in career construction theory. The developmental tasks occur during five major career stages, named for the primary activity that occurs in each one: growth, exploration, establishment, management and disengagement. Just as described in Super's life-span theory, these five stages represent a macro-cycle across an entire life span from birth to death. They also represent a micro-cycle of activities that occur during transitional periods such as when individuals change jobs, or leave the workplace to return to school or take care of children. Individuals must successfully accomplish all of the developmental tasks in each career stage as preparation for progressing to the next stage.

### *Career Stages*

Growth is the first stage, extending from ages 4 to 13. The goal of this stage is for individuals to form their vocational self-concept. This is accomplished as children "engage in

play, hobbies, chores and schoolwork” and begin to “form self-perceptions and make social comparisons” that develop the specific attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that “constitute their vocational self-concepts, as well as conceptions of the work role” (Savickas, 2002, p. 162).

Exploration is the second stage, generally defined as the years from 14 to 24.

Exploration’s goal involves “fitting oneself into society in a way that unifies one’s inner and outer worlds” (Savickas, 2002, p. 171). During this stage young people are expected to form a vocational identity through vocational information-seeking behavior that eventually leads to an occupational choice. There are three developmental tasks that youth must complete in order to accomplish this successfully: crystallization, specification, and actualization. The first task calls for the adolescents to crystallize their vocational preference through examining a wide variety of occupations that match their developing interests and abilities. The next task requires that individuals narrow their preferences and specify an occupational choice. The final task of the exploration stage requires the individual to put their choice into action through getting a job.

The third career stage is establishment, ranging approximately from ages 25 to 44. The goal is for the individual to fully implement his vocational self-concept through fulfilling and satisfactory work.

The fourth career stage, management, calls for individuals to maintain what they have established. During this stage individuals may reflect on their career and ask themselves whether they want to continue along this career path or find another. Those individuals who decide to switch occupations or fields must pass through a micro-cycle of growth and exploration before stabilizing in a new position (Savickas, 2002). Those individuals who decide to remain in the same occupation until retirement manage to function successfully in their chosen occupation by continuously updating their skills and knowledge.

The final career stage is disengagement, which involves the developmental tasks of decelerating and, if later in the life span, retirement planning. During this stage individuals increasingly lose interest in their occupation. They often develop interests in other social activities such as hobbies or travel.

The story of the career stages has been depicted as occurring in a linear order in specific chronological phases. In truth, these are just approximations that may occur for some individuals. The original schema was devised by Super during the 1950s, when most career theories were based upon the occupational habits of white males who often continued in the same occupation for their entire working life. This grand narrative of careers (Savickas, 2002) does not seem to be as relevant in today's global economy. The new world of work emphasizes flexibility and mobility rather than continuity. Individuals today are constructing new career stories that focus on the micro-cycle of career adaptations they must make as they confront new and unexpected challenges and frequent transitions.

#### *Life Theme – The Why*

The life theme component “emerged from Donald E. Super’s postulate that in expressing vocational preferences, individuals put into occupational terminology their ideas of the kind of people they are; that in entering an occupation, they seek to implement a concept of themselves; and that after stabilizing in an occupation, they seek to realize their potential and preserve self-esteem” (Savickas, 2006a, p. 86). The life theme reveals how a person makes meaning through his life’s work and why that work matters to the individual and to society.

Through narrative the life theme component of career construction theory is found in the career stories that people tell about themselves and their work. These stories are unique to each individual and place them in a particular place and time. No two individuals will tell the same

story, although similar patterns and themes may emerge across the many stories. Through telling their career stories individuals make sense of their own lives: the paths they have taken, the choices they have made, the stops and starts, and how they have dealt with the curve balls that life may have thrown them. The stories are not necessarily historically factual. People may recreate the past in story to align with and explain the present truth. In telling their stories people reveal who they are and what is important to them. An individual's story of his life tells the tale of the many roles he has played and their importance to him. Through story individuals explain why they make the choices that they do and the private meaning that guides these choices.

### Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a context for the design and interpretation of my study. Since the occupation of school librarians was the focus of my research, in the first section I provided a brief overview of the educational requirements and work role of school library media specialists. Next I summarized forty-three years of occupational choice studies of librarianship. The results of these studies illustrated the need for an alternate methodology for examining the complex process of selecting an occupation. Finally, I presented career construction theory which seeks to explain the what, how, and why of career choice. The next chapter describes the methodology for this study.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this narrative research study was to identify and explore the reasons that graduate students in a school library media program had for selecting the occupation of school library media specialist. For the purposes of this study the terms school library media specialist and school librarian will be used interchangeably.

The following questions guided the study:

- How have the participants reached this decision point in their lives, both personally and professionally?
- What themes are revealed in the life stories of the participants?
- How do the life stories reveal the influence of the participants' social context (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, family, etc.) on their careers?
- What commonalities occur across the participants' stories?

The choice of an occupation does not involve a single decision, but is the result of many factors in an individual's life. These include, but are not limited to, the individual's personality, values, attitudes and beliefs, as well as the social and cultural milieu in which the individual was born and raised (Savickas, 2002). Traditional quantitative research into occupational choice customarily targets only one of those factors (Bujold, 2004; Collin, 1998). The results of these studies are isolated, fragmentary data that do not provide a comprehensive picture of the complex process involved when an individual selects an occupation (Cohen & Mallon, 2001, p. 51; Ezzy, 2002, p. 95). Qualitative research methods aim "at understanding the meaning of

human action” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 213). Researchers use qualitative methods to seek an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern that behavior. In simpler words, qualitative research can illuminate the how and why of individual decision making (Cohen & Mallon, 2001).

Researchers have a variety of qualitative research types from which to choose depending upon their research question and its theoretical framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2002). Creswell (2007) describes five major approaches to qualitative inquiry: narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. In the next section I explain my rationale for selecting narrative research as the most appropriate methodology.

### Research Design

Narrative research is a particular type of qualitative inquiry that uses a “variety of approaches that are concerned with the search for and analysis of the stories that people employ to understand their lives and the world around them” (Bryman, 2004, p. 412). It is interdisciplinary in nature and includes “elements of literary, historical, anthropological, sociological, psychological, and cultural studies” (Casey, 1995/1996, p. 212). The feature that distinguishes narrative research from other qualitative methodologies is that the unit of study is some form of story.

My choice of this approach is based upon two bodies of literature; the first supports narrative as a way of understanding human experience, and the second advances narrative as an especially useful format for gaining understanding of the complexities of career development. In his seminal book *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986), the cognitive psychologist, Jerome Bruner, proposed that people have two different modes of thinking: paradigmatic and narrative. Paradigmatic cognition is the logico-scientific form of thought that functions to classify “a

particular instance as belonging to a category or concept” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 9). This type of thought involves “abstract generalizations” (Baumeister & Newman, 1994, p. 676) and is “essentially the sphere of science, logic, and mathematics” (p. 677). Alternatively, narrative cognition “involves coherent stories about particular experiences,... best captures the experiential particularity of human action and intentionality, and it involves reasons, intentions, beliefs, and goals” (Baumeister & Newman, 1994, p. 677). According to narrative theory, humans understand their lives in a storied form; consequently, narrative is an appropriate way to explore their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; McAdams, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988; Polkinghorne, 1995).

In the past twenty years interest in narrative inquiry has increased substantially across all fields of the social sciences (Chase, 2005; Herman, Jahn, & Ryan, 2005). Career researchers have also advanced the “use of narrative as a paradigm for career research” (Bujold, 2004, p. 476). Bujold describes career development as a creative process full of unpredictability and requiring individuals to make multiple decisions as they deal with “obstacles, unforeseen events, various circumstances, chance, and inner conflicts” (2002, p. 471). In contrast to the traditional, positivistic career development research that assessed independent variables such as “career interests, job characteristics, mentor behavior, career indecision, and career satisfaction” (Inkson, 2007, p. 228), narrative research provides “a more holistic view” (Cohen & Mallon, 2001, p. 52) of the complexities of careers.

Cohen and Mallon (2001) conducted a study of 60 individuals experiencing career transitions that clearly illustrates the benefits of a narrative research methodology for career research. While conducting interviews, the researchers “noted that specific questions which aimed to interrogate the whys and hows of individuals’ career transitions yielded less rich data

than expected. Participants seemed to find it difficult to articulate their reasons in the abstract, giving bland answers” (p. 54). However, one of the participants responded with an elaborate story that referenced both the work and non-work aspects of her life. Cohen and Mallon realized that in order to answer “questions about their career transition ... participants needed to situate that event within a meaningful context [that was] both temporal (the sequence of events leading up to the decision to leave the organization) and social (including the important people and events which were seen to influence the decision)” (p. 55). As Cohen and Mallon (2001) discovered, “explaining a major transition may require knowledge of the whole story, the story of the entire career; otherwise the experience may be like walking in on the last scene of a movie” (Inkson, 2007, p. 240). This study demonstrates that narrative methodology can produce “information-rich” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140) data when the participants are enabled to tell stories that include any and all aspects of their lives that they deem relevant to their experiences.

My research into the occupational choice of school librarianship benefitted from a narrative research methodology because it gave primacy to the participants’ stories. According to Polkinghorne (1988), in the process of articulating their stories people give meaning to their experiences, they “join incidents together in coherent wholes”, and “understand past events and plan future ones” (Inkson, 2007, p. 230). Furthermore, narrative supported the theory underlying this research, career construction theory.

As I explained in Chapter 2, career construction theory states that “individuals build their careers by imposing meaning on vocational behavior” (Savickas, 2005, p. 85). These meanings are revealed in career stories “that explain why individuals make the choices that they do and the private meaning that guides these choices” (2005, p. 85). This narrative aspect of career construction theory was a key to answering my research question and guided my selection of an

appropriate research methodology. I employed narrative research, a form of qualitative research that “takes as its object of investigation the story itself” (Riessman, 1993, p.1).

### Participant Selection

In selecting participants for this study I employed maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002). Maximum variation calls for the selection of participants with widely dissimilar attributes. Patton states that “for small samples, a great deal of heterogeneity can be a problem because individual cases are so different from each other” (2002, p. 235). At the same time the strength of this strategy is that “any common patterns that emerge” (p. 235) from the heterogeneous sample lend significance to the findings. Additionally, one of the purposes of interviews is to produce quality data that may reveal “unexpected and unanticipated aspects of an experience” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 143). This may be accomplished through selecting diverse participants who may reveal a wide variety of perspectives for selecting school librarianship, possibly leading to identification of hitherto unknown reasons for choosing this occupation.

In keeping with the goal of maximum variation, I used the following criteria for participant selection. The participants should include both men and women of all ages and ethnicities. The participants should include educators, educational paraprofessionals, and individuals with a non-education background. The one caveat was that individuals who had worked as school library media specialists would not be participants in this study.

I solicited potential participants via an email sent to members of the School Library Media Listserv at a large southeastern research university. I invited graduate students who had recently matriculated into the university’s School Library Media Program to participate in the study. This contact was followed by a face-to-face meeting during the students’ introductory library class where I described the study in more detail and asked for people to volunteer.

I was able to schedule interviews with six of the new students who volunteered. These six students were all teachers who had decided to become media specialists. Given that my goal was to have maximum variation, I sent further emails in order to solicit participants who were not teachers. An additional three students without an education background volunteered for the study for a total of nine participants.

The nine participants in this study were graduate students in the school library media program at a large research university. All were seeking initial school library media certification. The rationale for selecting school library media students rather than professional school librarians was my assumption that current students would be more closely tied to their original motivations (Van House, 1988) and the reasons for their choice would not be influenced by the passing of time or by working in the school library field.

#### Ethical Considerations

To ensure that the participants were treated in an ethical manner, I established precautions regarding ethical issues in research with human subjects. Prior to beginning research I obtained Institutional Review Board approval for the research from the university. During the initial meetings with the participants, I explained the research purpose and life history method and had them sign the informed consent form. The consent form clearly stated that the interview would proceed only with the participant's consent, that they could end their participation at any time, and that they did not have to answer any questions they did not wish to answer. I also informed the participants that they could request the digital and analog recorders to be turned off at any point during the interview, although none did so.

To protect the participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality, I asked each of the participants to select their own pseudonym. I informed the participants that their real names

would not be attached or referred to in any publication or presentation ensuing from this study. As a further protection for the participants, I would omit from any publications or presentations any irrelevant information that could potentially be of a sensitive or personal nature.

I have made every effort to protect participants from disclosure. All the digitally recorded interview files are stored on my computer hard drive with password protection. None of the participants' real names are on any of the digital or analog recordings. The audiocassette tapes have been stored in a secure location in my home and are identified by pseudonyms. All documentation linking the participants to the data are in password protected files.

#### Data Collection

As is typical for narrative research (Murray, 2003), the primary sources of data for this study were qualitative interviews. The qualitative interview continuum ranges from a series of tightly structured questions to a completely unstructured, informal conversation (Patton, 2002). There are a variety of interview types along this continuum, specifically designed to elicit certain data.

Flick states that researchers should select a data collection method “on the basis of the character of the material” (2006, p. 205) they want to collect. This method should elicit data that will best address the research question. My research question investigated the reasons that individuals select the occupation of school library media specialist. As stated earlier, the reasons for choosing an occupation are varied and complex. In order to move beyond facile, superficial answers, I required a research method that would elicit a fairly complete picture of each participant's life in all its complexity. By examining the entire life from the viewpoint of the participant, I hoped to “comprehend the motivation and meaning (the why) that constructs

careers” (Savickas, 2005, p. 58). For this reason I chose the Life Story Interview (McAdams, 1995) as my primary data collection method (see Appendix D).

A life story interview (Atkinson, 2002) is designed to generate the telling of an individual’s life story. The terms “life history,” “oral history,” and “life story” are often used interchangeably, although some researchers make distinctions due to emphasis or scope. Atkinson describes the life story in this way (2004, p. 566):

A life story is the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived as completely and honestly as possible, what that person remembers of it, and what he or she wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided INTERVIEW by another ... It includes the important events, experiences, and feelings of a lifetime.

The life story interview is the most extended version of the personal narrative interviews. It has as its focus the entire life of a person from birth to the present. The life story interview typically consists of a set of loosely-structured open-ended questions designed to encourage detailed, in-depth responses from the participant teller. In addition to using the Life Story Interview as designed by McAdams (1995), I also used Savickas’s Career Style Interview (see Appendix E) which was designed to “elicit self-defining stories” (Savickas, 2005, p. 60). The Career Style Interview is similar in many ways to the Life Story Interview protocol. For example, they both include questions about early memories and role models. Alternatively, the Career Style Interview has questions about favorite school subjects and hobbies that are not part of the LSI. I primarily used the LSI during the interviews, but I also asked my participants the additional questions from the CSI. My goal was to elicit stories that would help me learn about many aspects of my participants’ lives.



The number and length of interviews needed depend on the research purpose. Atkinson suggests that two or three interviews lasting from one to one and one half hours will provide “more than enough information to gain a good understanding of the person’s life or the research topic” (2004, p. 568). Polkinghorne (2005) argues that more than a “one-shot, 1-hr session” is needed in order for the interviewer to establish a rapport with the participant that will result in “full and rich descriptions necessary for worthwhile findings” (p. 142). Based upon these recommendations, I conducted a minimum of two 1½ hour interviews with each participant. For three of the participants it was necessary to have a third interview in order to complete the interview protocol (Seidman, 1991).

Each of the interviews was recorded with both digital and analog audio recorders. This proved useful when the memory on the digital recorder became full during an interview and I was able to use the analog tape as a backup. I took notes during and after each interview. This allowed me to note my initial impressions, as well as keep track of logistical details. Before the second and third interviews I listened to the recordings in order to become familiar with the data and also to make note of topics which I wanted to pursue in further detail with the participant. I conducted a total of 21 interviews with nine participants during the months of September and October, 2007. The time and place for each of the interviews were scheduled at the participants’ convenience. I did encourage the participants to select a location in which we would have privacy so that they would feel more comfortable sharing their private thoughts and feelings. Most of the interviews took place in the participants’ homes, but some were held in my office on campus or in empty school classrooms. After the final interview, I sent each of the participants a thank you note and a gift card to a bookstore as a token of my appreciation.

Throughout the study I kept a research journal on my computer in which I record my thoughts, personal reflections, and preliminary findings. Creswell (1997) states that such a journal increases reliability in a qualitative research study. I also created a password-protected Excel spreadsheet that included vital information for each of the participants including their real name, chosen pseudonym, contact information, age, and the dates of each interview.

### Data Analysis

The purpose of data analysis is to make meaning from the data. There are a “variety of procedures for interpreting the narratives or stories generated in research” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 169). These procedures are not formulas to be followed precisely, but are general guidelines that allow the researcher flexibility during the interpretation of the data (Riessman, 1993). For my data analysis, I followed the narrative analysis guidelines described by Riessman (1993) in combination with those of Polkinghorne (1995) and Seidman (2006).

My intention in analyzing the data was to first examine the participants as individuals and subsequently to look across those findings for commonalities across the participants. In doing this I followed the two-stage process described by Seidman (2006). The first stage was to develop profiles of individual participants. I also examined each participant’s life story in relation to career construction theory. The second stage was to analyze the interview data looking for thematic connections. The latter method, which involves finding codes, creating categories, and discovering themes, is a common process in qualitative research. Polkinghorne (1995) also alludes to a two-step process. He states that researchers often present a set of individual profiles followed by a “commentary chapter in which the differences and similarities among the cases is highlighted” (p. 21). I followed a similar process by first analyzing my

participants individually and then analyzing the data to find themes that showed connections within and across the participants' stories.

### *Preliminary Analysis*

The first step of data analysis was to organize and manage the voluminous amount of material generated during data collection. I kept digital files on my computer as well as hard copies in a filing cabinet. A professional transcriptionist was hired to transcribe the interviews per my instructions. This resulted in approximately 80-120 pages of text for each participant depending on the length and number of interviews. My first task after I received the typed transcripts was to listen to each of the interviews and edit the transcripts, filling in any missing words, adding punctuation, and correcting any typographical errors. Through listening and reading the transcripts in this manner I began to immerse myself in the data. During the entire process of data analysis I often listened again to parts of the interviews. Doing this helped me to envision the interview and recall the manner in which the participant told the story. The performance style of the participants' storytelling which includes timing, volume, emphasis, pitch, and repetition, and body language (Riessman, 1993) is lost in the written transcripts, but is valuable as an indicator of the participant's affective behavior. Understanding the participants' emotions when telling their stories is important to interpreting those stories.

Several interviews with nine participants had resulted in a significant amount of data, both in terms of volume and depth. As I began the process of analyzing the data I understood the traditional wisdom of narrative researchers who advise limiting the number of participants to as few as one or two (Creswell, 2007). Interestingly enough, I also found a study in which the researchers were in personal communication with Professor Polkinghorne who told them that presenting case studies and commentaries for all 18 of their participants was "unrealistic" and

they should reduce the number to “around six” (McCance, McKenna, & Boore, 2001, p. 355). Given that my goal was an in-depth examination of each of the participant’s lives using career construction theory as a framework, I considered whether analyzing data for all nine of my participants was also unrealistic. I discussed this dilemma with my advisor and with other departmental professors. They agreed that I should reduce the number of participants to five in order to obtain a deep level of analysis. The data from the other four participants has not been discarded, but has been retained for analysis at a later time.

In selecting the five participants for deeper analysis I took into consideration the goal of maximum variation. I also reviewed the participants’ data in relation to the research questions. One participant was not included because she had not been very forthcoming about her life during the interviews. Another participant was not included because his interview data revealed that he was not committed to the school library media field. The five participants who were eventually selected for further analysis included two men and three women. Three of the participants were teachers and two had worked in fields outside of education. The other two participants who were not chosen were female teachers.

Data analysis requires the researcher to winnow the data in an effort to find what is of most significance and interest (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Seidman states that the “first step in reducing the text is to read it and mark with brackets the passages that are interesting” (2006, p. 117). During this step I read the hard copies of the transcripts and began marking interesting passages with a highlighter. I also wrote notes in the margins of any thoughts that I had. During this initial coding I tried to have an open attitude for what might emerge from the text. Eventually I hoped to discover themes across the participants’ stories. At this point I made the decision to concentrate on each of the participants individually.

During my next pass through the data I used Labov and Waletzky's (Labov, 2006) framework to identify the stories in the transcripts. Labov's framework for narratives includes six components as outlined in Table 3.1 below (Simpson, 2004). Each of these components has a function in the narrative that can be used in interpretation. As I identified the stories I took particular note of the evaluation component, which explains the importance of the story and indicates the meaning that the story holds for the participant.

Table 3.1 Labov's Framework for Narratives

Narrative Category	Narrative Function
Abstract	What was this about? Signals the story is about to begin and draws in the listener
Orientation	Who is involved in the story? Helps the listener identify time, place, location
Complicating Action	Then what happened? The core narrative element of the story
Resolution	What finally happened? The final key event of a story
Evaluation	So what? Functions to make the point of the story clear
Coda	How does it end? Signals the story has ended and brings listener back to the present

At this point I faced two major roadblocks to further analysis. The first was that I soon discovered that there were other narrative elements in the transcripts that could not be classified as stories. The second was that identifying individual stories in the transcripts seemed to fragment the data. Interpreting the meaning of those stories did not appear to shed light on my

research question. For example, one participant told me the story of her daughter's birth. I could find the story elements, but what did that tell me about occupational choice? As I struggled with how to interpret the data I turned to the literature on narrative research methods for guidance. Initially, I found answers to my first question of how to identify the various narrative elements in the texts that were not stories.

Riessman in her seminal text on narrative analysis (1993) stated that the majority of interview transcripts are not in narrative form, but consist of "question-and-answer exchanges, arguments, and other forms of discourse" (p. 3). She did not give guidance however on how to analyze these forms. Perusing Clandinin's *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (2006) led me to the narrative research methods devised by Coralie McCormack for her dissertation research. McCormack built on the work of Rosenthal (1993) to describe four types of narrative processes that tellers use in addition to stories (McCormack, 2000, p. 286):

During an interview, a storyteller may become reflective—trying to work out the "why?"— attempting to *theorize* their experience. Often, as the interview proceeds, a storyteller will add information to stories already told, as the conversation stimulates recollection of additional story pieces (a process of *augmentation*). Sometimes the added part may not be part of an already told story, but may be an abstracted element from outside a story (a process of *argumentation*). Such elements bring to a story other factors the narrator feels add meaning to the story. Storytellers may also take the time to describe particular people, places, or things in detail. While these *descriptions* when read alone offer little in the way of interpretation or explanation, they do inform the listener by adding detail to the picture built up through other narrative processes.

As I continued to read and study the transcripts, I found that McCormack's categorization of types could be used in coordination with Labov's framework to identify many of the narrative processes. I went through each transcript and labeled appropriate sections of text as theorizing, augmentation, argumentation, or description. This still left me with the dilemma of interpretation.

I discovered, or more appropriately rediscovered, a solution in several sources. As I reread Polkinghorne's (1995) description of narrative cognition I had an "Aha" moment. Polkinghorne explained that "narrative cognition gives us explanatory knowledge of why a person acted as he or she did" and that "narrative knowledge is maintained in emplotted stories" (p. 11). It was as I read this explanation that I recalled that I had chosen a narrative research methodology based on narrative cognition because I wanted to discover why people choose the occupation of school librarian. Therefore it followed that I should use the type of inquiry that corresponds to narrative cognition, which Polkinghorne calls narrative analysis. In narrative analysis "researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). This process of plot construction is known as *narrative emplotment* (Ezzy, 1998). My goal during data collection was to elicit stories from the participants that I could then analyze. I determined that the individual stories that the participants told were only part of their larger story. It was up to me as a researcher to use narrative analysis to locate that larger story.

#### *Narrative analysis*

Polkinghorne provides only general guidelines for constructing "an emplotted narrative" (1995, p. 15). I found more specific guidelines in Seidman's book on interviewing. Seidman (2006) recommends that one appropriate way to share interview data is through crafting first

person profiles of individual participants. He states that “a profile in the words of the participant...allows us to present the participant in context, to clarify his or her intentions, and to convey a sense of process and time” which are “all central components of qualitative analysis” (p. 119). Because career construction theory is interested in the subjective career stories of individuals, I decided that I could best represent those stories by using the actual words of the participants. The use of first person voice rather than the third person voice can also lend credibility to the research. “Using the third-person voice distances the reader from the participant and allows the researcher to intrude more easily than when he or she is limited to selecting compelling material and weaving it together into a first-person narrative” (p. 121). Seidman also acknowledges that the crafted story “is both the participant’s and the interviewer’s. It is in the participant’s words, but it is crafted by the interviewer from what the participant has said” (p. 120). Seidman provides specific steps for crafting the profiles. Another strategy for “constructing an interpretive story from the many pages of transcript generated from an in-depth interview with a participant” (2004, p. 220) is outlined by McCormack. She developed an approach based upon Polkinghorne’s narrative analysis (1995), which she calls “storying stories” (2000, 2004). I used the strategies explained by Polkinghorne, Seidman, and McCormack to develop my procedure for constructing first person profiles of my participants.

The first step was to create a chronological outline of the life story. I marked passages in the transcripts that gave demographic data such as number of siblings, year of birth and places lived. I created an outline of this information to serve as a beginning skeleton or framework for *restorying* the life story. Restorying is the process by which “researchers retell the stories of individual experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p. 234) resulting in a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end. Without meaning this framework would be nothing more than a vita or resume.



What makes it a story is the purpose of the plot. Polkinghorne recommends that the researcher begin with the dénouement of the story and seek backward for the plot. Although the dénouement that I sought was the decision to become a school library media specialist, I still found that I had to ponder what made this particular person “tick.” What was this person’s motivation for making certain choices? Discerning the person’s life theme (Savickas, 2005) was quite a challenge, but I knew that I had succeeded when suddenly all the choices and actions of the person’s life seemed to make sense. The life theme revealed the glue that held the pieces of the story together (Savickas, 2005). I could then include the events and decisions which seemed to lead step by step to the dénouement of the person’s story.

During this restorying process I moved back and forth from the transcripts to the emplotted narrative. Per Seidman’s (2006) instructions I tried to present material in the order in which it was told to me, but that was not always possible. It was at this point that McCormack’s four categories of narrative elements were most useful. For example, even though they were in a different place in the transcript, I could insert passages that augmented a story or served to provide greater description because doing so did not change the participant’s original story, but only enhanced it. I took into consideration both the theorizing and argumentation passages as I constructed the stories because they helped to highlight the importance of particular episodes to the participant.

Sometimes in constructing the profiles I would find missing pieces that seemed important to the story or items that needed clarification. I filled these in by contacting the participants by email and asking them for elaboration. I also found it necessary at times to add my own words to a participant’s sentence in order to have it make sense. Typically, the words that I added were taken from a question that I asked. For example if I asked "What were your parents' expectations

for your future?" the participant might simply answer with a phrase such as "To go to college." In order to clarify that phrase I would insert words in brackets in front of their phrase to make a complete sentence like this: [My parents expected me] to go to college.

Because data analysis involves reduction of the original data, it was vital to include only those parts of the story that addressed the purpose of the research. At times it was wrenching to exclude particularly interesting, albeit inconsequential, episodes because of considerations of length. In the end I reduced approximately 80 - 120 single-spaced pages of transcript for each participant to profiles that are approximately ten double-spaced pages in length. An example of this narrative analysis process is shown in Appendix F.

#### *Member Checking*

After I completed constructing each participant's profile I emailed it as an attachment to the participant for feedback. I included these questions, which I adapted from McCormack (2000), for the participants to consider:

- Does what I have written make sense to you?
- How does this account compare to your experience? Please feel free to correct any errors I have made.
- Have I omitted anything that you feel is vital to the story? Please include these wherever you feel it is appropriate.
- Do you wish to remove any portions from this text?
- Please feel free to make any other comments.

Only one of the participants asked that I delete some sentences and I honored that request. A few made minor suggestions to correct grammar. The most common response of the participants was that of dismay for the way their oral language translated to print. Oral language

is much less formal than written, because of the naturalness and spontaneity of speech, which often includes colloquialisms. This reaction was expressed quite well by one participant who said, “Everything looks good to me-except that I kind of sound like a doofus when you put my comments into text! I guess that is the difference between the spoken and written word.” Once the profiles had been approved by the participants, a peer reviewer read the profiles for readability and consistency in the story.

### *Individual Commentaries*

As a final step in individual analysis I examined each person’s data using the lens of career construction theory. My rationale for doing this was based on one of the important functions of career construction theory: its applicability to the practice of vocational guidance counselors. In his many articles, book chapters, presentations and seminars, Savickas (1995; 1998; 2000; 2002; 2005) demonstrates strategies for counselors to use in helping their clients to successfully negotiate important vocational development tasks. During career assessment Savickas looks for specific things in the client’s stories that allow him to assess each dimension of career construction theory. All three dimensions are necessary for a complete picture of the client’s situation. Vocational personality tells how a person views his work interests, abilities and preferred occupations. Career adaptability tells how a person faces the transitions of school to work, and occupation to occupation. The life theme component explains why a person made certain choices and the private meaning that guided those choices.

Savickas begins counseling for career construction by using a Career Style Interview to “elicit self-defining stories” (Savickas, 2005, p. 60). “From these prototypical stories about work life, counselors attempt to comprehend the motivation and meaning (the why) that constructs careers” (Savickas, 2005, p. 58). Because I used the questions from the Career Style Interview

for the same purpose, the data from my participants closely resembled the types of information that Savickas elicits from his clients (2005). Many of the strategies that Savickas uses to address his clients' career concerns were relevant to my analysis. I wanted to assess my participants' stories, not for diagnostic purposes, but rather to determine the what, how, and why of their career construction. Instead of using them as a counselor would, I used these techniques to examine the participants' stories as they related to the three major components of career construction. Given the different purposes of my analysis, not all of Savickas' career counseling techniques were relevant to my study. Also to effectively employ some of his techniques required professional knowledge and skills that I did not possess. Nevertheless, I was able to use Savickas' sample case studies as a model for analyzing the life stories of my participants.

In order to assess the vocational personality Savickas views a person's interests, activities, and past work experiences through the lens of the six RIASEC codes. I was able to approximate each of the participant's RIASEC codes using these strategies. First I familiarized myself with the attributes of each of the RIASEC types. Then I searched the participant's stories for clues that would reveal their resemblance to the types. For some of the individuals determining the primary type was easy. For example, Tom was a musician and strongly represented the Artistic type. Lynn's desire to teach and help others put her strongly in the Social type. Sometimes I had to ask the participant for more information about their outside interests, especially in determining the second and third types. The final RIASEC code is my best guess of each person's vocational personality.

“In career construction theory, the theme is what matters in the life story” (Savickas, 2005, p. 59). The life theme shows the underlying motivation that guides the choices a person makes, both personally and professionally. It reveals what matters to a person. “Often the person

cannot verbalize the elements of such a theme, yet his or her actions and words only make sense by assuming that it does indeed exist” (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979, p. 50). To identify the life theme “or secret that makes a whole of the life” (p. 58), Savickas recommends that “counselors listen not for the facts but for the glue that holds the facts together” (p. 58). “They should concentrate on identifying and understanding his or her personal paradigm for turning essence into interest, tension into intention, and obsession into profession” (p. 59).

One of the methods that Savickas uses to identify the life theme is to look for the metaphors and favorite words the person uses in their stories. He also looks for the verbs used in the childhood recollections as they show “a particularly important form of movement in the life” (2005, p. 63) of the individual. With these strategies in mind I read the transcripts and listened to the recording, and most of all, thought about what I knew of the person’s life. I wrote memos suggesting possible themes and then looked again at the person’s actions to see if the theme remained valid. When the person’s life choices only made sense if one considered that particular life theme, then I felt that I had come close to assessing the life theme.

Savickas’ structural model for assessing career adaptability is shown in Table 3.2. The table shows the four dimensions of career concern, control, curiosity, and confidence that guide an individual’s behavior as they cope with career transitions. For each of the dimensions there is the question that individuals ask themselves as they consider their future. Also in the table are the dispositions, competencies, and coping behaviors that align with each dimension and that are used by the individual during adaptation or when making and implementing choices. Career adaptability can be measured by examining an individual’s story using the schema outlined in the model. By looking at career adaptability in my participants I could see how they negotiated the

transitions in their life. In the analysis I primarily focused upon the participant's most recent transition in choosing the school library media field.

### *Comparative Analysis*

The second stage of analysis occurred after I had completed individual profiles and commentaries for each participant. The purpose of this analysis was to find the similarities for the participants' reasons for their occupational choice. In an effort to ensure validity of the findings, I returned to the original transcripts for this step rather than using the first person profiles that I had crafted (Polkinghorne, 1995). Before beginning the individual analysis I marked and highlighted the interesting sections in the transcripts. I had also made some notes while thinking about tentative codes. At that time, though, I became bogged down in the minutiae of the participants' stories and was not able to see beyond that. Now that I had totally immersed myself in the participants' stories and analyzed them through career construction theory I had a much better idea of what motivated each of these individuals to choose to become school library media specialists. For this comparative analysis, I looked for those things that were similar in the participants' life stories. Additionally, I decided that it would be fruitful to see if the motivations for choosing librarianship that I had identified in the research literature could also be found in this research data. As I searched the transcripts I remained open to new findings. The results of this second stage of analysis are reported in Chapter 5.

### *Limitations*

One of the limitations of my study is the small sample size. As a rule, the numbers of participants in qualitative research studies are smaller than those in quantitative studies. In narrative studies they tend to be even smaller; sometimes only one participant is studied. This raises the issue of whether the results can be generalized to a larger population. Generalization is

Table 3.2 Career Adaptability Dimensions

Career Question	Career Problem	Adaptability Dimension	Attitudes and Beliefs	Competence	Coping Behaviors	Relationship Perspective	Career Intervention
Do I have a future?	Indifference	Concern	Planful	Planning	Aware Involved Preparatory	Dependent	Orientation exercises
Who owns my future?	Indecision	Control	Decisive	Decision making	Assertive Disciplined Willful	Independent	Decisional training
What do I want to do with my future?	Unrealism	Curiosity	Inquisitive	Exploring	Experimenting Risk-taking Inquiring	Interdependent	Information-seeking activities
Can I do it?	Inhibition	Confidence	Efficacious	Problem-solving	Persistent Striving Industrious	Equal	Self-esteem building

usually not the goal of qualitative research, and in this study, my priority was rather to understand “the particular in depth” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 28).

The study was also limited by the restriction of the participants to graduate students at one university. This was done for several reasons. One, the program has a rigorous selection procedure, thus helping to ensure that the students in the program are truly committed to school library media. Second, as a graduate assistant in the school library media program, I was in a unique position to become acquainted with the students. This helped me to establish friendly relationships and encouraged the participants to feel that it was safe to reveal personal information and feelings during the interviews. Finally, I wanted to study individuals who had just recently entered a graduate program. My assumption was that the motivations of individuals who had just made the choice to enter a school library program would reflect their expectations of the occupation, and would not be influenced by library work experience or the passage of time. One of the ramifications of this restriction was the possibility that the study might include participants who later discover they have made a poor occupational choice. Indeed that seemed to be true of one participant.

A third limitation of this study was that the participants might not be representative of other master’s students in school library media programs in the United States. Similar studies from other programs may result in quite different findings.

#### Validity and Reliability

Riessman states that “traditional notions of reliability simply do not apply to narrative studies, and validity must be radically reconceptualized” (1993, p. 65). We must acknowledge that when people tell stories of their lives, they are selectively reconstructing the past in light of the present. Rather than looking for truth in the narratives, Riessman (1993, 2002) states that



researchers should look for trustworthiness. Atkinson (1998) points out that there is not a formal set of procedures for determining validity in narratives because the process is highly subjective. Instead, he describes three standards against which the findings can be measured for trustworthiness. Taken together, the three measures of internal consistency, corroboration, and persuasion serve to enhance the credibility of the research.

The first and foremost of these is internal consistency in the life story. This means that what the teller says in “one part of the narrative should not contradict another part” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 60). I accounted for internal consistency through informal member checks. Several times during data collection and analysis, I contacted participants via email seeking clarification from them about any misunderstood words or episodes in their stories. No matter how many questions that I had, the participants promptly answered them.

A second standard is corroboration, often referred to as member checking (Atkinson, 1998; Creswell, 2007). Corroboration occurs when the storytellers read their transcribed and edited life story, and decide whether it conveys what was said originally. I sought corroborative feedback from the participant tellers by returning the first person profiles to them for review. One participant requested that I delete some passages, which I did. Others made grammatical corrections. All the participants approved their final profiles.

A third measure is the persuasive quality of the life story (Atkinson, 1998). Does the life story seem plausible to the outside reader? Does it resonate or strike a chord with others who read it? Persuasion measures how reasonable and convincing the story is to others. The strategy that I used to account for persuasion was through peer feedback from a fellow doctoral student who did not know the participants. My husband who is a high school counselor also read the

completed profiles. Frankly, I was amazed at how much he could tell me about the person after reading the profile.

In addition to the above measures, I kept a research journal in which I wrote my reflections during data collection and analysis. I have also tried to make explicit the steps that I took during data analysis and my thought processes concerning the findings. I included the actual words of the participants in my writing so that readers would have evidence to make their own decision about the validity of my findings.

One final aspect that must be considered when addressing the trustworthiness of the study is the subjectivities that the researcher brings to the work. My own perspectives surrounding this work are detailed in the following section.

#### Researcher's Perspective

In qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. As such, every step in the research process is influenced by the researcher's personal values, beliefs, experiences and expectations. It is virtually impossible to eliminate the researcher's biases, but it is necessary to account for them "so that the reader understands the researcher's position" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208).

This research study developed from my own personal and professional interests in librarianship. I am a white, middle-aged woman in a gender traditional profession populated by mostly white middle aged females. At 50+ years old, I am a part of the graying of the library profession. Like many of my colleagues, I entered the field after pursuing a variety of other occupations. In my case, I was a wife and mother foremost, but I also had a few part-time jobs beginning in high school. Most of my jobs were as a nonprofessional in public libraries. I have shelved my share of books through the years, but I also drove a bookmobile in New Jersey, and

conducted puppet shows in Georgia. Eventually, I obtained my MLS degree and became a professional librarian in a public library. When that job interfered with my roles as a wife and mother, I returned to school to earn my school library media certification. I was 36 years old when I began my school library career. I worked as a media specialist in the same elementary school for over 14 years.

As I considered the question of why people want to become school library media specialists, I was also compelled to question myself. Why did I want to become a librarian? Although I could provide a reason, in truth, there is no single answer. For me, as for my participants, my decision to become a school librarian was a result of a complex combination of many factors including my interests and abilities, my parents' expectations and resources, and the opportunities and barriers I encountered while growing up in a particular social and historical context. My experiences also influenced my approach to this research study.

In narrative research the researcher actively collaborates with the participant in the construction of the stories being told. The fact that I was older than my participants and had experience as a school library media specialist may have affected what stories the participants chose to tell me. My gender, ethnicity, and position as a graduate assistant may also have been influencing factors. During the interview process I was very aware that my actions and utterances could affect the participant's telling. I strived to find a balance between being a willing listener and being a participant in the conversation so that the voice of the participant was primary. This was especially difficult when my participants became emotional and cried.

The final subjectivity issue that I did not anticipate prior to this study was that I found I simply enjoyed listening to some of my participants more than others. I had to strive to keep an open a mind and monitor my subjectivities as much as possible.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a description of the methodological framework of narrative research which guided this study along with a rationale for its use. I described this study's design, sample selection, data collection techniques, data analysis techniques, concerns about validity and reliability, and researcher subjectivity. In the next chapter I present the first-person profiles of the five participants followed by an individual commentary based upon career construction theory.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS: INDIVIDUAL PROFILES

In this chapter, I present individual profiles of the five participants who were the focus of my study, while the next chapter provides a comparative analysis of the participants' life stories. Because the emphasis in this study is on the uniqueness of each person's life, it is important for the reader to gain an understanding of each participant as an individual before the comparisons are presented (Fitzgerald, 1998). As described in the previous chapter, narrative analysis was the methodology employed to create career stories for each of the participants (Polkinghorne, 1995). These stories are presented in the words of the participants in order to preserve the unique character of each of the individuals and their life experiences. Words in brackets represent those inserted by the researcher to clarify something the participant said or to make a sentence complete.

The profiles begin with a brief introduction to the participant followed by the participant's career story. Each person's profile concludes with an individual commentary that views the life story through the lens of Savickas' career construction theory. In this discussion the participant's life story is examined for all three of the major components of career construction theory: vocational personality, life theme, and career adaptability. Each participant's first person career story addresses research questions one, two and three. The examination of career adaptability in the commentary also addresses question one. The discussion of life theme specifically answers questions two and three.

The following table shows pertinent data about the five people who participated in my study. There are two men and three women who ranged in age from 28 to 40. All the participants are graduate students in a school library media program at a large university in the Southeast. Three are currently working as teachers; two are full-time students.

Table 4.1 Participants' Data

Participant	Age	Prior Occupations	Current Occupation
Lynn Parker	28	None	Elementary Teacher (5 Yrs.)
Virginia Clark	35	Assistant Manager Party Store (3 Yrs.)  National Program Manager, AT&T (3 Yrs.)	Elementary Teacher (5 Yrs.)
Tom Daniel	40	Computer Programmer (11 Yrs.)	Middle School Teacher (6 Yrs.)
Susan Davis	35	Systems Analyst, BellSouth (5 Yrs.)  Manager, Electronic Data Systems (3 Yrs.)	Full-Time Student
Charles Houston	41	Grassroots Organizer (4 Yrs.)  Financial Planner (7 Yrs.)  Public Library Assistant (5 Yrs.)	Full-Time Student

The profiles are presented in the order listed in the table above. The teachers are presented first, followed by those of the full-time students. The first profile is of Lynn Parker, the youngest participant in the study.

## Lynn Parker

Lynn Parker is a pretty, soft-spoken, single White woman in her late twenties. She became a teacher immediately after college graduation and has been teaching elementary school for six years. She describes herself as an optimist, but also as a realist. In high school she enjoyed her history, reading, and science classes and at one point during college she considered becoming an anthropologist. At the time of this study Lynn was in her first semester in the school library media graduate program. Our two interviews took place in an otherwise empty classroom on Saturday afternoons after one of her library classes ended for the day.

Lynn's first interview was the first one in my study, and I was frankly unprepared for the intensity of her emotions as she related her story. She began weeping early in the interview and continued to laugh and cry throughout the hour and a half session. I tried to be an empathetic listener, but I also felt the need to maintain some emotional distance from her distress. My normal reactions would have included more sympathy and perhaps a hug, but since we had only met a couple of times prior to this first interview, I felt it would be inappropriate. I did offer tissues however and asked her if she needed a break.

Lynn's philosophy about life and learning is illustrated by a banner on the wall of her classroom that says, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you fail, you'll still land among the stars." She says, "You know, you might not be a genius, but if you try your best, you're still going to be smarter and you're still going to succeed at something. But if you don't try at all, then you're not even going to be anywhere in the ballpark." Lynn's life story demonstrates that she lives those words.

### *Lynn's Career Story*

I grew up in a big family with two sisters and a brother. I am the second child of my family. My dad was a scientist per se by field. My mom, I think she wanted to be a teacher, but she is a social worker instead. She chose to help children in a different way. It was always instilled in us that education is the key to the future. Even when I was playing Barbies as a little girl, Barbie always had a career. I remember Mom saying “And what is Barbie today? What job does Barbie have?” Barbie always had a job. If we had schoolwork we sat down with Mom and she always went over it with us. There was never just a “you do it on your own and then you’re done.” No, it was just like “let’s make sure you’ve done this right” kind of situation. College was always stressed. It wasn’t an option; you were going to college.

I struggled a bit with learning to read. I could not read until third grade. When I was growing up the whole push was on phonics, and I just did not understand phonics. My mom bought books and we worked at home. I grew up thinking I was kind of stupid, because I was in the little redbird reading group. When you’re sitting there and trying to put the words together and sound them out and you still can’t do it, you feel like a failure when everybody else is reading and you can’t. I think it’s had the greatest impact on my life. I have always felt insecure since then. It really played a toll on me. I remember other students and having friends in the other reading groups and just knowing in school that I was different. None of my teachers ever singled me out and it was never broadcast to everybody that I wasn’t where I should be or that I couldn’t do probably what I should have been able to do, if I had the proper instruction. If we had known what to do besides phonics early on, then it would have been better. But that single-handedly has really shaped my life, just in my views of my students today. I always feel very sympathetic and empathetic to the kids who struggle to read. I know where they are coming



from. I try to make every time that I have them in reading groups or guided groups a fun time where they're learning something interesting. I don't ever want them to feel like "oh, we're behind so we have to do this skills practice." We always try to do something so that they feel like they are actually learning and it's something that they're interested in.

So again with books—I was going to the library and books were not some of my favorite things to do. I remember sitting with my dad reading at night and I would memorize the books so that I would think that I was reading. Because I would listen to him say them so much that I would memorize them and so I could go to school and say them [getting teary]. But when I got to third grade I had a teacher who really had a holistic approach to reading, the whole language approach, and between her and my mom they got me back on track. She also met with me after school and would sit down with me so that I wasn't around the other kids when I was doing or learning new things. She had a compassionate heart. I feel she really cared. She didn't ever make me feel stupid. I don't think she ever worried about what time we were there until; it was always just "I am here to help you. We're going get this," just very encouraging. "It's going to work, don't worry about it. It's going to happen." She played a great role in my life. I always knew that I wanted to teach early childhood education, but I think that I did choose to go into third grade because of her. I think that it is a safe year for me. I actually felt safe that year and happy. I felt that third grade has always been a safe place for me, among the grades. I am not so sure I would have been as comfortable with kindergarten or first, or even second, but third grade is a happy time and I really owe that to her. She did play a profound role.

I still struggled throughout elementary school to be right on par with my peers, but I was determined enough to make sure that I was never behind again that by middle school I had caught up to my peers. In high school I could read and did fairly well in school and I guess my

area of weakness would be math by that time. Books had become sort of an escape for me. I could not be found without a book in my hand and always wanted to have books. It was a way to compensate for not knowing how to do math! So my parents struggled to teach me algebra [sighed] and geometry and trig. I graduated high school by the skin of my teeth with honors, with like a 90 average. I always just felt like in my family that was kind of low, for what I should have done. I think my parents know that I did the best that could, but I think to myself I could've done better if I had applied myself more and really had not just gone to books instead of doing math.

When I was in sixth grade my older sister was in eighth grade. We found out that Jen had a brain tumor. Today she's fine, but it was a rough time for my family. I specifically remember the day she went and had surgery on it. My mother gave me a locket and she said to me that it might seem like I wasn't getting a lot of attention, but that didn't mean that her and my dad didn't care. They were just really worried about Jen and they were just going to try and do everything they could to keep everybody safe. She wanted me to know that I was still special and that she still loved me. I have the locket still and I think about that and that conversation every time I see that locket. I remember going to school that day and just holding on to it and just knowing that they were there even if they weren't. It was pretty traumatic, but I think it stuck with me just because there was a lot of love behind that. I think that signifies that my family is extremely close. Like I said, no matter what, my parent have always tried to show us that we were special and that they loved us and that's one of the moments that makes me feel special, too.

College opened a brand new set of experiences for me. I went to college knowing that I wanted to teach. I think that the elementary school had shaped my ideas, because I couldn't read

and knew how that felt. I wanted to make sure that I could help another child learn to read, and I knew that I wanted to teach elementary school. I went to West Georgia and loved the program there. I just knew that I was going to teach for the rest of my life and was quite happy with that.

The lowest point that I think I have ever experienced in my life happened in my sophomore year of college. At West Georgia they have a requirement to take an XIDS [interdisciplinary] course; mine was called anti-war film. It combined the study of film wars and the history behind the wars. It was not an easy course for me. I took this course with my roommate. At the time she was going through a rough patch. She got very depressed and she stopped going to class. One day the dean of the College of Arts & Sciences called my name and my roommate's name up to the front of the room. He said that he needed to have a meeting with us before class on Thursday. I remember being very apprehensive for two days. I worried about it and I didn't tell anybody about it and I was real embarrassed. I had no idea what was going on. I went in there and he said that he had a concern about our papers. He handed both of us a copy of our last papers; he said I want you to read them. I looked at mine. It was exactly what I had written. Then I looked over at my roommate's and the first paragraph was different but after that everything was exactly as mine was. I remember thinking, "Oh God, how could she do this?" I said, "This is my paper and this is what I wrote," and my roommate said "She's right. That's her paper. I got on her computer and I didn't have time to write my own so I wrote a beginning paragraph and then I copy-pasted the rest of her paper and I didn't think that you would notice." I was so hurt and so betrayed and remember thinking that this is something that could have gotten me kicked out of college completely. It was so against everything I ever stood for. I have never, never, even when I couldn't do my work, would I ever have cheated. I remember thinking that somebody I was so close to should have never done that; all trust had just been broken. To

this day I don't think I'm over it. I came out of it a stronger person. I came out of it a little more cynical of people. I will say I did learn the value of putting a password on your computer, and guarding your work, and making sure that my work is my work and not other people's work. I came out of it a whole lot stronger too, in knowing that I never would have done that. I know that I am an ethical person. I know what it feels like to have somebody cheat on me. I know that in my life I would never do that to somebody else. I know that I will never plagiarize. I'm very conscious of the rules now of copyrighting and plagiarism. I think I am a better person for doing that, but it was an extremely low point of my life.

I have to say the peak experience of my life would have to be when I graduated magna cum laude from college. I remember when I found out in high school that I was going to graduate with honors; it was after everybody else had learned. I didn't feel like I was successful and that I had done everything that I should do in order to get it. So I had made a vow on that day. I told my mom that I would go to college and I would graduate with honors and there would be no question about it whatsoever. I remember thinking on that day that I did it! I actually had the piece of paper in my hand and it had a gold sticker on it that said magna cum laude. I thought, "Nobody can take this away from me." [Crying] It was hard and I'm very emotional because I just remember being that little girl who couldn't read. I always thought she was not as good as her brothers and sisters. Truly, everybody is different and I have come to peace with that. I wasn't stupid and it's okay to struggle with things, but in that moment I felt like I had validated myself. I felt like I could rule the world! I'll never forget hearing my name called out and them saying magna cum laude and knowing that I had mastered all the courses I needed to in order to get that degree. That was just the epitome of everything, knowing that I made that goal. It was just undescrivable.

It's funny, because when you get a job it really doesn't matter what that GPA was, but ever since then I'm just like, well you know [chuckle], I did do pretty well in college. So even if I didn't do so well to start off, I just know that in everything in the future I am always going to try my best. At times I think I am my own worst enemy. If I get negative and think that I can't do something, I am just going to stop; but when I put my mind to it, I can do anything. I think that is what that taught me. That it can happen and I can do it.

I have lived in Georgia all my life. I have always gone to Fayette County schools. I actually went to elementary school there, middle school and high school, then went to West Georgia for college. Upon graduating I returned to Fayette County. I actually interviewed at the school I went to elementary school at, and then I noticed that all my other teachers were there. The same day I had an interview at another elementary school that was down the street and they offered me the job. I just decided that I didn't want the pressure of working with everybody that had taught me and decided to get kind of a brand new start. I am just glad that I did because I feel like I'm in a faculty that feels like a family to me, that has always been very supportive and encouraging in whatever means that they could be.

I teach third grade and I have always lived in a climate of accountability. No Child Left Behind has been in place since I have been a teacher. I have never known anything other than knowing that the third grade students *must* read and they *must* pass a minimum standards test in order to move on to fourth grade. I'm not going to place a judgment on that right now, but I do think it's unfair to expect every child to learn to read at the same time. It's very frustrating for me because I do have struggling readers. I just want to show them the wonders of a book or let them find something they're interested in and show them that information they can learn from a book. For them to find themselves and have the, I guess, the confidence in themselves to know

that they can do this, too. I think it's important that when I'm teaching I don't expect kids to all be on the same grade level. I think it's important to stress that we all learn at different rates. We're all good at different things. You're not going to be a master at everything, but if you try you're going to learn something. I think that's always been very important for me to show somebody that if you give me an inch, I'll work the best I can to make you succeed too.

Beginning with my first year teaching my school librarian has been a mentor to me. I grew up knowing her. She had been good friends with my mom and my mom kept her two children when she first went back to work. So she kind of took me under her wing. We would collaborate. I would bring the kids in there and I would just enjoy being around her. I got to really see her environment. [I began] thinking how wonderful it would be to not have the stress of making sure that every kid could read, [but] to actually help them find and enjoy reading. As a classroom teacher I stress reading and stress reading and stress reading and I feel like I am just bullying these children. I want to show them the pleasure that I have found through reading.

When I was considering what to do for my master's, right after school, I considered several different things. I didn't ever want to be an administrator, but I thought about going back and being a counselor or a media specialist. Those were the two big things that I was torn between. I remember my mom saying, pushing me, she's like, "I really think that you are geared more toward media specialist. I think that's a good fit for you. I think you'd be comfortable." She just said that I'd probably get too involved with peoples' lives if I was a counselor. She was thinking "You are just not going to let that go. I just don't know if you can handle that."

About three years ago I was talking to the media specialist at our school. I was like, "What was your background?" and we were talking about it and at that point in time it really hit me that, "Oh, this would be a doable thing." I could do this. I remember her saying that she

taught in a classroom for seven years and then she had gotten her [school library media] degree. And I thought that after about that amount of time that I would kind of consider leaving the classroom too. We were talking about just some of her responsibilities and she's a great advocate. She loves her job and so she is a great seller on the job too. At that point in time I finally had decided I'd rather do this than a counselor any day. I just felt that it's a very safe haven and I want to pursue that as a career for myself now and in the future.

I guess there is a little more to the story. I had set this as a goal for myself to start back to a master's program but I kept putting it off, and putting it off, and putting it off. Finally last year I got to the point where I had 14 students who were EIP [Early Intervention Program]. You don't have enough time to give them the individual attention that every single one of those 14 needed. I have 23 students in all and so I still had about 9 other students who I felt I was neglecting if I spent a lot of time on the other ones. I guess I want to make a difference, but I want to do it in a way that I actually feel like I'm making a difference. I think that is what I'm looking for now in life. I'm hoping that I at least see where I think I would be happier, moving in another direction besides teaching in the classroom.

What I think is so cool about it is that you get to deal with every kid in the school. You get to transfer your love to them. I love to go and hear Judy read to the kids out loud. She does all the voices and she's a great storyteller, but you can really tell that she loves the books that she's reading. It's obvious that she really cares about what she's doing. I've done several read-alouds for other classes, dramatic interpretations, because I like to do that. I just think that to be surrounded by books all day and to be able to share that and then to do stories and just to deal with matters that I want to deal with all day would be great.

I like reading. Reading is huge. If you could make a job out of staying in Barnes & Noble or Books-A-Million or Border's Books I would be rich. I just love being in there and around books and reading. I carry a book with me everywhere just in case. I think reading is kind of a safety net for me. If I don't feel comfortable anywhere, then I know that I can open up a book. There's a book in my car at all times. Sometimes I just feel more comfortable reading a book than like even trying to venture out and talk to the people around me or something. It's just a safety net.

I usually buy a couple books towards the beginning of the month and then as the month wears on, I go to the library more and more. I found I really enjoy going to the media center at our school and checking out the award winners. I think it's kind of cool to keep up with the trends of what is going on. I go in the children's section and just pick up a book. I'm one of those cover people; a pretty cover does kind of spark my interest. I look at the cover and then read the back and if it hooks me then I'll get it.

I think that wherever in my life I have been since about fourth grade, I've known where the library is. I have felt comfortable being in one. I remember when I got to West Georgia my freshman year, the first thing I did that weekend—I think it was on Saturday—I went and checked out their library. It's a university library. They didn't have a whole lot of fiction to check out. So I was a little disappointed, but then the next week I discovered the Carroll County library so it really didn't matter. I've always had a membership to a library since I was in fifth grade. I've been a library card-carrying member. [Laughter] I've used them since my mom took us when we were little to go see and hear stories at the public library. She's always taken us to the library. We would go and be able to check out books. I remember getting in trouble when I was little for not remembering where my book was and having to try and find a book at the last minute. We



were going to have a fine and I remember that. In elementary school I have vague memories of going to the media center in second grade. They had a mural on the wall and every year they redid the mural and when I was in second grade it was painted in dinosaurs. I remember sitting in story time and her saying, "That in honor of second grade this year we have painted the mural dinosaurs." I thought that was really cool. That's the first memory of a public school library from that time.

I have to admit that at the beginning of the [school library media] program I was a little concerned. I'm computer literate and I'm pretty technology savvy, but the terminology and keeping up with the technology is still something that I'm going to have to work on. At my school we do have a technology specialist and I have had a lot of fun sitting down and talking to her about the more technical things. I'm on the technology/media committee; we have it together at my school. It's kind of cool because I've been able to sit between the two of them and really talk and really know the terms and the lingo and what they're talking about and see how they collaborate together. It's really cool to see how those two would go together, but I also see if you didn't have that technology person, how that would be my responsibility. I would need to know that too. I think it's important. You would need to be the instructional technology helper.

I believe that it's a service-oriented career choice. I think that it is your job to help people find out information and to hook people up with books that they'll be successful with. I think it's a very current position. You have to stay up-to-date. You have to know how to access information and you have to know how to match students to books. You need to be a teacher. I think you need to be a specialist at everything a little bit. You're a resource for other people.

I like to be around people. I think I have chosen a career where I will be surrounded by people. I don't mind collaborating because of course I like talking to people about what I'm

doing. So that has never been a problem with me. I genuinely want to help people find information. I genuinely want to be there to guide and to tell the stories. I genuinely see myself as someone who wants to jump in and help people and to find the books and to get involved.

I like the kid ethic too. I think kids are a puzzle to me. I like trying to figure them out. So just sitting there and listening to them and hearing their thinking is just really cool, because it's never what I think it's going to be. They'll just come up with something and you're like, "And how'd you come up with that?" They can tell you and you're like, "Okay, I see. [Laughter] I never would have thought of it like that; that's very cool."

I think that part of the job that does appeal to me is being able to find out things. Finding out that I like science so much is kind of funny. I like figuring out how things work. So the information and finding out the information is going to be fabulous. Just to see what all is going on and just to figure out things; that's going to be great.

I would describe myself as being a person who likes to help people, a person who loves to be around people. I always like to have a good time. I like to be positive and happy. I'm a problem solver. I'm a person who has her mind aimed towards the future. I'm working on a goal and I'm pretty adamant I'm going to reach it. It's going to take some time and I think I'm a person who's impatient sometimes and wants to reach that goal, but I think that I'm a pretty, pretty happy girl—just working towards a goal, driven. [Laughter] I think the one constant is that there is no constant; it changes. Every day is a different day and every day I have a chance to be happy. It's just a choice.

#### *Commentary*

Lynn's career story relates the events that preceded her decision to become a school library media specialist. That choice was influenced by her vocational personality and life theme

and accomplished by the process of career adaptation (Savickas, 2005). In the following three parts of the commentary I discuss those three components of career construction theory as they are manifested in Lynn's life stories.

### *Vocational Personality*

The vocational personality indicates the types of occupations in which a person will find job satisfaction. It is represented by a resemblance to Holland's personality types (Appendix G).

#### *Investigative.*

Lynn strongly resembles the Investigative type. She sees many things as puzzles or problems that she likes to solve. Although she did not like math when she was a student, now she does. She also likes science. She said in the second interview "Yes, math was not my favorite thing. It's changed now though. As I've grown up and have taught the subject I have a different order for what I like to teach. Science is my favorite and I'm actually the county contact person for my school in science. Then reading, and then I actually like math, to teach math."

#### *Social.*

Lynn also strongly resembles the Social type. Lynn is an agreeable person who likes to be with people. She also has a strong desire to help others through teaching. She says, "I like to be surrounded by people. I also think that doing a solitary job or one where I'm by myself would drive me crazy. I think that's the epitome of a really bad job for me, just having to work by myself and figure things out. I like the social interaction. Being alone is a great fear of mine. That would be horrible."

#### *Artistic.*

Lynn's resemblance to the Artistic type is revealed by her sensitive nature. She shares her feelings easily. She empathizes with students who have learning difficulties, especially in

reading. She is also musical. She took piano lessons as a child and began clarinet lessons in the fifth grade. She played clarinet in her high school band and the orchestra in college. Her high school interest in drama today manifests itself at work in the dramatic read-alouds she likes to do for her students. Her hobbies also demonstrate her Artistic side. She has begun taking dance lessons, and she crochets, and grows roses. She says “I like rose bushes and I just will piddle around in the garden. I’m not very good at it, but I try at least to make it look nice and presentable.”

### *Life Theme*

More than any other thing, Lynn’s life has been shaped by her difficulties in learning to read. She says she felt stupid, not as smart as her brother and sisters, and different from the other students. She always felt she had parental support, but they did not know how to help her with her reading until her third grade teacher gave them direction. Lynn’s reading difficulties have caused a fierce determination in her to succeed and to help others succeed also. She needed to prove herself to overcome her image of herself as someone who felt like a failure. About her problems learning to read she said, “That has played a *huge* role in who I have become and of what guides me in life. If I could take that away from another child, I would.” This was a primary motivation in her desire to be a teacher. She chose to teach third grade because that was the grade in which she finally learned to read and she greatly admired her third grade teacher who served as a model of patience and understanding for her. She also said that third grade felt safe to her.

Safety and support are important themes in Lynn’s life. She used the word “safe,” “secure” or “security” 13 times in the first interview and 4 times in the second interview. She said “support” 9 times in the first interview and 8 times in the second interview. Lynn helps

explain what she means by these terms when she says, “I want to live a happy life. What I would define as living a happy life is to be secure with myself.” The kind of security she is speaking about is emotional. She finds that type of security in environments where she feels supported. Her family provides one of these supportive environments. She says her family “keeps her grounded.” She extends the family to include her work environment; she says her school is like a family and encouraging. Because of several incidents in her life during college, she says that she is skeptical of people outside her family and has difficulty trusting people. She considers the library “a very safe haven.”

### *Career Adaptability*

Career adaptability governs how people cope with occupational transitions. Individuals typically pass through four phases during the process of making an occupational choice: *orientation* toward the future, *exploration* of suitable occupations, *implementing* their choice, and finally *stabilizing* in their chosen occupation. Their readiness for these tasks can be measured along the four dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence as shown in Table 3.2. In this part I explain how Lynn coped with the tasks inherent in her decision to become a media specialist.

#### *Orientation.*

In college and during her first years as a teacher, Lynn thought she would always teach. Several things occurred to make her question that decision. She had a class that had a large proportion of EIP students that demanded a lot of her time. She was frustrated with the rules emanating from the No Child Left Behind Act. She said she feels like she is “bullying” her students to read. As a result of these events, Lynn experienced *career concern*, which led to the need for her to consider different options for her future.

*Exploration.*

Lynn's *career concern* manifested itself in her exploration of various occupations including school counseling or school librarianship. She evinced *career curiosity* during this phase by questioning and observing the media specialist at her school. She spoke to her mother who told her she would be "more comfortable" as a media specialist than a counselor. Her mother's comment is another indicator of how her family recognizes and supports Lynn's need to work in a safe environment. Lynn showed *career control* by making her own decision to apply to the school library media program in a timely manner. Lynn related, "I was very excited; my librarian at school forwarded me the e-mail about this program and I was just ecstatic. It just seemed to fit; it came at the right time." She did suffer from a lack of *career confidence* in her ability to be accepted to the program of her choice. As an undergraduate, she had been waitlisted by her first choice of universities, consequently, as a graduate student she was apprehensive about being accepted to that university this time.

*Implementation.*

After Lynn was accepted into the school library media program, she said, "I am really excited that I have the chance to go back and see another goal or dream come true through the program I'm in now." Lynn's comment that, "It's a good fit so far" is a reflection that her *career confidence* has increased.

Virginia Clark

Virginia Clark is a willowy brunette in her mid-thirties. She is married with one child and expecting a second child in April 2008. Our two interviews were conducted in her pleasantly furnished suburban home. The interviews were often punctuated with the barking of her two dogs and the cheerful sounds of her daughter and husband playing. At the time of the study

Virginia was in her fifth year teaching in an elementary school. She had just begun the school library media program and hoped to complete her Educational Specialist degree in 2009.

My impression of Virginia was that she was quite serene and self-confident. She laughs easily and seems quite happy. She said, “I have my little family and our house and it’s good. I really have not too many complaints.”

### *Virginia’s Career Story*

I was born in upstate New York in Elmira. I had two brothers; we’re three years apart so my youngest one is six years younger than me. My dad worked for AT&T so he was transferred a lot. [My mother] went back to work after I was born until my brother was born, the second one. She was a lab technician in a hospital. We lived in upstate New York until I was in the sixth grade and then we moved to a suburb of Chicago. We were there for four years before we moved down to Atlanta. My parents are still married so it was always the five of us everywhere in the big van, traveling.

Growing up we lived in the neighborhoods where all the kids were out riding their bikes. Everyone played together and all the parents knew each other. I was a swimmer; that was my sport pretty much all the way up through high school. I think through swimming not only did I meet a lot of people that I wouldn’t have otherwise known, but it also gave me a good work ethic. I didn’t give up on things quickly and that really just transferred into other areas of my life. I could get along with people pretty much anywhere even as an adult, because I just kept working with different types of people on a team.

I don’t remember much about school, which I think is weird. I don’t remember exactly learning to read. I remember learning my multiplication facts in fourth grade. That’s one thing I

remember. Maybe because it came easy to me; I didn't really have to struggle in school. I pretty much made mostly A's all the time in high school. My brothers called me a nerd.

[My parents] brought us up the way that they were raised. It was expected of you that you were going to try your hardest at school. In our family it's kind of like, "Don't do anything halfway." My dad was a firm believer of that. I was always expected to do the best that I could. I was expected to make A's in school because I was perfectly capable of that. I was definitely going to college for sure. My brothers weren't quite as capable, but they were still expected to do their best and try their hardest. [My parents] tried to raise us to be good people. They expected us to respect adults. [My dad] traveled and worked long hours. As a child we didn't really understand why he was gone so much but when you look back as an adult you realize everything that he did was for us. My mom stayed home; they thought it was important that she was there when we got off the bus or walked home. Financially they made a lot of sacrifices for me to be on the swim team and my brothers to be on their traveling soccer teams. We didn't take the fancy vacations and do some of the things that other people did. We didn't have all the fanciest designer clothes. Maybe we got our clothes at Venture and the JC Penney catalog; that was big for school shopping. Of course we didn't realize it when we were younger but they sacrificed a lot so that we could do what we wanted to do. Everything was all about us.

One of my super low points was when I was 15 and we moved Georgia. My dad had promised me that we would not move once I was in high school. I was just about finished with my first year in high school and he told me that he had been transferred to Atlanta. He had turned down so many other opportunities that he was afraid they were going to make him move somewhere, and he would rather go to Atlanta than Newark. So we were told we were going to Atlanta. I can remember my friend Andrea and I just crying and crying and crying because I



didn't want to move. I didn't want to leave. I'd made all these fabulous friends and I was on the varsity swim team and we were going to State and I just was enjoying my life at that point in time. I remember the day that they had to put the For Sale sign out in the yard and it was just dreadful, because since that sign was actually there then it truly meant we were going to have to leave. It took me a long time to adjust once we moved here. I didn't want to speak to my parents for months and when we moved my dad bought me a typewriter and had it waiting for me in my bedroom [Laughter] and thought that was going to [Laughter] make everything all better. He was like, "Look I got you this typewriter and look we have this blue ceiling fan installed in your room." You know, dads they don't know. But I think I'm maybe a little bit more able to adapt to change and just kind of take things as they come. Because there are things you're just not going to have control over and you have to deal with them or you're going to make yourself more miserable. Really you have a lot to do with that. Looking back as an adult, I probably made myself more miserable than I needed to. Now we're much wiser.

I went to Georgia for my undergraduate degree. I'd grown up actually with the Georgia Bulldogs even though we didn't live in Georgia and never imagined I would actually go to Georgia for college because before we lived in Illinois and New York. That was the only place I applied because that's the only place I wanted to go to. I majored in health promotion. I was in the College of Education, but I wasn't certified to teach, because I went the corporate non-profit route. My dad told me when I was in school, "You should just stay those extra couple semesters and get certified to teach and you'll have that," and I said, "No, no, no you know, I'm not going do that." And then years later I go back to school, again, and get certified to teach. [Laughter]

I actually met Dave, my husband, right after I finished school. I had to do an internship that last summer even though I was done with all my classes, which of course I didn't get paid

for. My brother's friend at the time was a manager of a Domino's Pizza and Dave was one of the delivery drivers there. He was working his way through school at the time and so we met at Domino's Pizza. Actually it wasn't until 2 ½, almost 3 years later when we got married. We were married for 7 years before I had Tyler. Dave spent my whole pregnancy in Iraq because he's a Marine reservist. So this pregnancy is a little bit different. [Laughter] He's actually seeing what goes on. And here we are—I have two dogs, one child, one on the way. Typically suburban household life, I guess.

When I first got out of college I sent out some resumes but I didn't really work hard at getting the job I wanted at that point in time. I really wanted to do non-profit; Children's Healthcare had a big health promotion program. I guess I didn't pursue it enough. I didn't work hard enough at it and looking back I should've just gone and volunteered because then the people know you and then eventually that can lead you into a job.

As a 22 year old I didn't do what I really needed to do to get the job that I was looking for at the time. I ended up working at a party store. I was an assistant manager there so it's not like I was just flipping burgers. I was there for 3 years. I kind of just got settled and didn't make an effort to get out of there. I'm like "okay, I went to school for 4 years and have a 3.7 GPA and I'm blowing up balloons?" When I left someone that my dad knew from AT&T Wireless [told him], "These people need someone. It sounds like it would be great for Virginia." I almost didn't even go for the interview because I had interviewed with AT&T once before and the people I interviewed with just rubbed me the wrong way. They didn't call me back and stuff like that so I almost didn't even go. Dave said, "No. You need to go. You just need to go. Give it a shot." So I went and they hired me. I was there for 3 years. I enjoyed it. I got a lot of really good experience dealing with people. I set up national accounts so I was working with CFO's and telecom

managers and people like that [who have a] leadership role in the business world. I wasn't afraid to talk to them and deal with them, which I think serves me well now because whether it's the assistant principal or principal I don't feel like they're way above me that I can't talk to them. [I learned] how to work with other people and deal with them.

I was really settled in my job [with AT&T] and liked it and had made some good friends. They tell us all of a sudden they're restructuring and basically doing away with two-thirds of the people in my position. It was the week before my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday nonetheless. Of course I was one of the ones that lost my job. I was kind of wanting to because my dad was the AT&T representative for the corporate council which helped plan the Olympics and he said if I lost my job then I could just come to Salt Lake City with him and volunteer in the Olympics which I really wanted to do. Still, that day that they told me I was bothered by it. Of course we had a severance package and stuff, but that only lasts for so long. While I was trying to figure out what to do, my dad asked me what my favorite previous job had been. I came up with coaching swim team. I coached swim team the summer after my senior year in high school and my freshman and sophomore years in college. That led me to education.

[Losing] that job was what made me decide to go back to school and get certified to teach and basically started me on that whole other career path that I had thought about for so long and never had really been able to do anything about. Not that I hadn't been able to; I just didn't. I had been thinking about going back for about two years, but up until that point the timing hadn't been right. Previously, I couldn't afford to stop working or work part time. When I lost my job at AT&T, we were in a better position financially, although it was still a struggle with a part time job and student loans.

You can do anything for 16 months; that's what I had to think of when I went back to school. I was working part-time and doing field experience in the schools and then having class three or four nights a week from 4:00 to 7:00. It was long and it was hard to go back after eight years. But it was my motivating factor that made me make a change. I went to Oglethorpe and got my M.A.T. [Master of Arts in Teaching] degree in 2003. I spent the last part of that time as a parapro at the elementary school I work at. I was able to slide into a teaching position the following year. So this is now my fifth year there and I'm teaching fourth grade. So now I'm moving on again. But it pointed me in this direction. [Laughter]

I'd say I have high expectations for both myself and my kids at school, and that comes from [my dad]. I like to feel like I'm making a difference. I want to be able to see, not necessarily a change, but just know that what I'm doing is worthwhile. Simple things like when after 45 minutes of frustration, banging my head against the wall [and thinking], "Why can't you understand this?" and then all of a sudden they do. That I guess gives me that feedback and that reassurance that okay, I am doing the right thing here. I am helping them. I am making a difference. I've been able to see that.

Sometimes in some kids it's hard. At our school especially we work so hard on the academics, but there's so much more that we deal with like the single parent households and the DFACS [Department of Family and Children's Services] referrals and things like that that weigh heavily on your heart. Just knowing that I'm doing everything I can do to try to keep them safe and hopefully make some little difference to them to where they will think, "Okay, I can do this. I don't have to be 16 and get pregnant and live in a one bedroom apartment with seven other people." Just somehow give them at least the hope that they can get out of that cycle. My dad

said, “If you can make a difference in one kid’s life each year, that’s huge.” I believe that. Make a difference.

My last year was just so hard. I don’t know that my heart can take any more of this. Obviously you can’t always have a year like that, but I don’t think I can take it anymore. I know that’s almost bad to say because so much of my day with those kids was getting to know them and know about their families and their circumstances. I still wanted to be involved with the kids and help them learn and everything but I just didn’t know that I could continue on. [Becoming a library media specialist] seemed like another alternative that would allow me to still work with them and help them and make a difference but not just weigh so heavily on me and my emotions. I get sucked in with the emotions.

Eventually I thought I’d go back and get my specialist degree but I didn’t have any immediate plans for anything. It just kind of happened. The past couple of years I’ve worked closely with a media specialist, and it just kind of opened up a whole new world to me. It’s just been very interesting to me that there’s so much more that goes on there than what I realized before. It’s so much more beyond the books. Throughout the year I had been working with our media specialists, going down and getting recommendations for books. They would do a class with us. “Oh Virginia, you’ve got to bring your class in here to let me show them how to look up books. You’ve got to bring your class in here to show them this.” My class would have their lesson, PowerPoint, a Jeopardy game, the dictionary skills, just all sorts of fun stuff. We have some fun media specialists at our school so that helps.

The whole reason I’m in this [school library media] program is because I talked to [the media specialist] and half jokingly said, “How long until you’re going to retire? How long do I have to get certified to do this job?” and she just kind of laughed. A week later she got an e-mail

that had come from [the program coordinator] saying, “We’re looking for more people to fill up this cohort.” She knew the year I had last year with my kids and the DFACS referrals. It was heartbreaking some of the stuff that was going on, and as bad as it sounds [as a media specialist] you’re not as close. You get to know all of the kids but you’re not as close to them so you can be there for them and be their friends and stuff but you don’t necessarily have that heartbreak and that heartache that I was experiencing last year in my classroom. You get to see the kids grow up. My school is pretty transient but there’s still some that stay and so you get to see them progress. You get to see them in a different light, whereas they may be a behavior problem in the classroom.

One of my boys last year wasn’t a bad kid; [he was] very charming, just bouncing off the walls. He was one of those kids [who] would race to the computer to try to take an AR [Accelerated Reader] test while I was writing a problem on the board. So he was so into that whole AR thing and wanting to get his hat and wanting to get his buttons and he was like, “Can I go to the library? Can I go to the library?” So that was like a special thing for him because he knew that if he couldn’t stay in his seat while I was teaching, he wasn’t going to the library. So for the folks down in the library he was seen as this child who was really excited about AR and wanted to read. [They would say], “Just send him down. You need to get him out of your hair for a while, just send him down here” because it’s a whole different world to them down here. I’m like “Yeah, that’s true. I never thought of that.”

[The media specialist] sent [the e-mail] to me and said, “Is this the new you?” We were talking about it and she was saying that a lot of times you’ll find more flexibility in media specialist positions. They have more part-time, or two people will share a full-time job. The flexibility [was attractive], thinking that maybe I could have one day a week off. With having

young children if I got off earlier in the day I could make sure I was home [when] they got off the bus.

She just had lots of really good points. I'm like, yeah, this sounds really cool. I could do this. You only have to go to class two times a month and the other classes are online. The pieces just kind of seemed to fit, although it kind of came together really quickly. It wasn't something I'd thought about really up until the week before the e-mail came out. I just thought it seemed like a cool job and you got to do lots of fun stuff besides the books. I guess it's a new challenge, something new, and like I said, school comes kind of easy to me.

### *Commentary*

Virginia's career story relates the events that preceded her decision to become a school library media specialist. That choice was influenced by her vocational personality and life theme and accomplished by the process of career adaptation (Savickas, 2005). In the following three parts of the commentary I discuss those three components of career construction theory as they are manifested in Virginia's life stories.

### *Vocational Personality*

The vocational personality indicates the types of occupations in which a person will find job satisfaction. It is represented by a resemblance to Holland's personality types.

### *Social.*

Virginia most resembles the Social type. She credits her experiences "knowing so many different kids" and "working with different types of people" on swim teams with her ability to "pretty much get along with anyone." She also loves to teach and wants to make a difference in children's lives. She switched from business to teaching even "knowing that I was going to make

nowhere close to the same amount of money that I was making before. That's truly what I want to do and feel like I need to do for the kids."

*Investigative.*

Virginia also shows resemblance to the Investigative type. In school one of her favorite subjects was math. "I'm that kind of math, logical thinking kind of person so most of the time it made sense until I got to calculus." She now enjoys teaching math as a fourth grade teacher. She also likes to read and she enjoys researching on the Internet before she makes purchases.

*Artistic.*

Virginia also shows some resemblance to the Artistic type as manifested in her leisure activities. At home she likes to garden and says she has "a whole grand scheme of what I'd like the backyard to look like in my mind." She likes to take pictures, and also likes to sew and cross-stitch and would like to learn quilting.

*Life Theme*

Virginia's life theme is that of taking control of her life and successfully coping with unexpected change and loss. Virginia grew up in a very "typical family" and has led what she calls a "normal" life. Her family is very important to her and she gratefully acknowledges the sacrifices her parents made for her. For the most part her parents sheltered her from the vicissitudes of life by providing stability and security. Her mother was always there for her at home and her father tried to attend all of her sporting events.

The first major change in Virginia's life occurred when her father was transferred to Georgia when she was fifteen. She called this move the low point of her life, but believes having to adjust to that move prepared her for work. She said, "When I worked in wireless it was constant change--between the technology changing and the restructuring and buyouts and all



that. Teaching is the same way. Every so many years the curriculum changes and then you get new textbooks and you get a different principal who doesn't do things the same way as your last principal; and new teaching strategies and No Child Left Behind. I mean it's just constant change. So I think it probably has helped me later in life being able to adjust to change."

Virginia has had to learn to adapt to events that were beyond her control, such as losing her job with AT&T and her husband's deployment to Iraq during her first pregnancy. In doing so she increased her confidence in her ability to take care of herself. She said, "Whatever was thrown at me I could make it through. I found out I was a stronger person than I thought I was." She views those events as learning experiences and sees them in a positive light. She also believes that she can empathize with "how my kids feel, because we have a very transient population at my school."

She sums up her life theme this way, "Don't give up. Have confidence in yourself that you can make it, and you can do it if you put your mind to it. It may be a struggle, but use the help that you're being given, the support from family or friends or whatever. You can get through it and get yourself to a better place."

#### *Career Adaptability*

Virginia ruefully acknowledges that she did not exhibit much *career control* when she graduated from college. Instead of pursuing her dreams of working in the health care profession, she worked in a party store blowing up balloons. She had to be pushed by her father and her husband before she applied for her job with AT&T. Concerning this current transition she says, "I feel like I somehow have more of that internal motivation to go and make a change and do what I want to do. I think I just got discouraged before because I tried, but still only half-

heartedly to get those jobs. So I think now I'm a little bit better taking that initiative, a little bit more assertive, definitely more assertive than I was at 22."

*Orientation.*

Virginia had been teaching 4 years and had not thought about changing directions until she had what she called "a hard year." The social and emotional difficulties that her students experienced took such a toll on her own emotions that she began to question if she could remain a classroom teacher. Her *career concern* prompted her to think about her future in education.

*Exploration.*

One day Virginia impulsively asked the media specialist at her school when she was going to retire. This led to a conversation about the "requirements, routines, and rewards" (Savickas, 2007, p. 92) of being a media specialist. Virginia's display of *career curiosity* about the job prompted the media specialist to send her an e-mail promoting a school library media program at a nearby university.

*Implementation.*

Virginia demonstrated *career control* by promptly applying for the program. One thing that spurred her to action was that her GRE scores were about to expire and she didn't want to retake the test. Her previous successes as a student increased her *career confidence* that she could complete the school library media program despite the difficulties of juggling a pregnancy, working, and taking classes. She said, "I do what I need to do and I've proven that I can do it. Even though I doubt myself at times, I have to look back to other things that have happened and other things I've made it through, whether it's going back to graduate school the first time or making it through Dave being in Iraq. I can get through it and it's only two years."

## Tom Daniel

Tom Daniel is a compact, athletic, White male who wears his graying hair military short. Our two interviews were conducted in his beautifully appointed townhouse while seated at the dining room table overlooking a sunroom filled with plants. The first day he told me that he had spent the morning shopping at yard sales or *yard-saling* as he called it. He always looks for bargain books for the teachers at the charter school where he teaches music and computers. He also buys belts which he keeps stockpiled in his desk drawer for students who might need one to meet the school dress code. He likes to do things for other people.

During our conversation he speaks quickly, but with a distinct accent that reveals his southern heritage. He is verbose and frequently loses track of the original question that I have asked, which he attributes to the way he was raised. The stories he tells me are at times both shocking and hilarious. He laughingly tells me that they are not secret, that he has told them many times before.

When asked to describe his personality Tom says, “I constantly describe myself as lazy because I am. But most other people say, ‘Oh, my God, you do more than anybody else I know.’ Other people would probably say energetic, funny. I’m outgoing. I’ll talk to anybody about anything. I want to know everything about everybody.”

Our final interview was held one week before Tom’s 40th birthday. Age forty is a significant milestone in most of our lives, but even more so in Tom’s. He was raised with the family story that all Daniels die at age 40. He never knew his paternal grandfather. He watched his own father have a massive heart attack at 40. As a consequence, Tom is fervent about exercising and eating right both for his heart and to control his borderline diabetes. His hope is to stay healthy and live long enough to collect “so-so security.”

### *Tom's Career Story*

So we start with birth, October 31, 1967. Third of three children. Sister, 7 years older. An older brother 22 months older, who was always one year ahead of me in school because we went to Catholic school and I could start early because they didn't care when my birth date was.

Dad was an industrial plumber in a paper mill, Rome, Georgia. My dad was the first Daniel to live past 40 because all of the Daniel males died of a heart attack by the time they were 40. We've been raised with the story all our life that if your last name was Daniel, 40 was going to be it for you. We never knew our paternal grandfather because he died before he was 40. When our dad had his heart attack around 40, it was just like, "Oh, yeah, I guess it's true." One of my favorite jokes about the whole family is, "Please, God, let us look more like the milkman." Our dad didn't die at 40, but the years after that heart attack weren't living. Trust me, anytime he had to live with my mother after we were all gone, that definitely wasn't living. But fortunately, he had worked in that industrial mill his whole life, so he couldn't hear very well anymore, so he could just sit there and nod yes and keep going. So we're hoping that the milkman looked a lot like me and my brother and sister.

Mother never worked a day in her life and has been, at times, diagnosed as clinically insane and spent some time in the looney bin before my brother was born, which is an important chapter in the whole scheme of the way of things.

My dad's mother, [my] grandmother, was the guiding force of our life. Had she not been around to steer us in the right direction, all three of us would be in a trailer park somewhere—probably had no teeth from meth [Methamphetamine]. Ask any of the three of us kids; she's like Mother Teresa to us. She had known our mother was crazy. When she was gone we all knew we were on our own then. We all knew that our champion, the person that was looking out for us,

was gone. Because our dad just buried his head in the sand. I saw him stand up to my mom twice his whole life.

I'll just tell you some of the crazy stories about my mother. She was convinced that fluoride was a government mind control device. And so we had no fluoridated toothpaste and were also encouraged not to drink from the water fountains. If you would look, I have a lot of cavities. Now the Winston cigarettes she chained smoked. She had no qualms that there was no government mind control devices in those. She went through a phase where she thought that the U.S. government was going to fail, so we converted all of our liquid assets into gold and silver bars. I remember driving to Marietta in the middle of the night and coming home with a car dragging the ground. They made wine every year, but never touched a drop of alcohol. We had a three-acre garden. We lived in the middle of 57 acres with a bomb shelter. It was the whole paranoid, schizophrenic thing. Our dad treated the whole thing like an ostrich. He just buried his head in the sand like nothing was going on. We always joke; they were like hippies without the drugs and the acid, but they would have been so much more pleasant had they done the drugs or the acid.

Fourth grade I nearly went into a diabetic coma from too much sugar in my diet from an undiagnosed diabetic condition. It was a Tuesday afternoon; we had gotten out of school at 12:30. We're in some thrift type store, and all of a sudden my tongue starts to swell up. She took me to the emergency room and they gave me some Compazine for the nausea. And she slipped me out before the doctor ever saw me and she never took me to the doctor ever again. She ceased and desisted all sugar in my life. And as a result of that, I've had problems for the rest of my life, but it was one of those things where it was just nobody ever talked about it. I was denied medical care for so many years. I'd get sinus infections. Not that we are all racing to the doctor, because

she wasn't that fond of them anyway because she had spent the time in mental institution, so immediately, she's got something against doctors to begin with. I never saw a doctor until I was out on my own and I tore cartilage in my right knee and I had to have it fixed because I wanted to continue playing hockey.

We grew up seven miles from anywhere. And apart from the other problems she had, our mother was agoraphobic, just wouldn't leave the house. So she would go to the flea market on Wednesday and the grocery store on Wednesday and that would be it. So if it was the summertime, you were stuck at home and you're out in the middle of nowhere. So until we could drive, we weren't going many places. We went to maybe two vacations my whole life. It was a very strange childhood, but it made me and my brother and sister who we are today. All three of us have stuck together through all of it.

I remember kindergarten, learning your ABC's. And then Catholic school, first through eighth grade. Catholic school years I had the best educational experience of my entire life, much better than college, way better than high school. It was eight wonderful years with the same 30 kids the whole time. If there was a troubled kid, he was gone. It was like living in a bubble. I mean, when I got to high school, "Drugs! Oh, my God, they exist" because we had none of those problems in Catholic school. The downside was you went to mass six days a week, which got really old really fast. Except we played guitar in the guitar mass, so that took some of the edge off having to sit there through the whole thing.

The first day of second grade. New kid comes to Catholic school. They sit him next to me. We become friends instantly and stayed all the way through grammar school, high school, college, even through now. We still hang out all the time and do stuff. Like today, I'll go eat dinner with him and his wife. He was the biggest influence on both me and my brother growing

up. He was the one that was into computers and we just followed what he did and got into computers and learned all the programming. We got in a group of just total nerds. We were like the little geeky kids, which was perfectly fine with me. I've never been influenced by peer pressure. I'm 40. I've never drank a drop of alcohol. I've never taken an illegal drug or smoked or any of that, even though I played in bands all the time. Basically he kept us out of trouble. Had I not met him, I wouldn't be where I am today. Because it was being friends with him and following what he did and learning from him that led to success.

So the Catholic school years were great. High school wasn't terrible. It's just we didn't really fit in with the rest of the kids. We hadn't spent the eight years they'd spent together, so we just stuck together with the kids that we went to Catholic school with and hung out with them. I can never remember going to a high school football game. We spent all our high school years as the total nerd, geeks, working in the computer science lab at school, fixing them. My senior year of high school they signed me up for the year of typing that I didn't have and let me be the teacher's aide and gave me an A in typing for that year because I could do computers and take care of a lot of the teachers' problems and they wouldn't have to go do them.

My grandmother had our mother make us take piano lessons or guitar lessons. I stuck with that through my whole life. Once I started taking piano lessons, my brother was taking guitar lessons, and when he would get a new guitar, I would get his old guitar and just watch him play. When I was younger, that was it. I would come home from school and just go straight to the piano. We got like two channels of television out in the middle of nowhere. Then when I got older and got into the computers I was either on the keyboard this way or on the keyboard the other way the whole time.

Like one week a year we were cool because at the talent show we would just listen to what everybody else was playing, listening to, and then we would play the song in the talent show. One year a group lip-synced the song in the first half of the talent show and then we came out in the second half and actually played it. So for like one week a year, we were the cool kids, and then we were back to just being the nerds.

Our grandmother died when I was a high school senior, and left us the money to go to college. [My parents] were determined that we were all three going to go to college, but when I said music, they said there's no way we're giving you the money for that. Well my mother did; my dad didn't really care. My brother and sister both went to Berry College, but I couldn't see going there for a computer science degree because it was a liberal arts college, plus I was desperate to get out of Rome, Georgia. But because I had started grammar school early, I had graduated high school when I was still 16. I had a couple of years before I was 18 and then I can legally get out of the house and get away from them. So I went to Floyd Junior College, which they called grades 13 and 14. They were great because I got all my calculus done with seven kids in a calculus class instead of two hundred kids in a lecture hall. I took way more math than I needed to just because, "Well, this was easy enough. I'll take the next one." I had all my English by the time I got to Southern Tech.

The other theme of my life is I never make decisions. When I went to Floyd Junior, it was just the only obvious thing to do. I wasn't going to Berry and there was only one other college in Rome besides Shorter College, which was a religious college and there was no way I was going to do that. We were raised Catholic. Then one of the kids that I carpoled to Floyd Junior with said he was going to Southern Tech and I had no idea what I was going to do after that. So I just



followed him to there. So two years at Southern Tech where all I took were the computer classes. Not to toot my own horn, but I was a natural at programming. I think that logical top-down way.

That's when I started working in the library, because I also wanted to start playing hockey because I had always been a good roller skater and then I turned out to be a good ice skater. I wanted money to do that because the only money I was getting from my mom, my parents, my dad – they were married their whole lives – was for school. I would get a little extra because she was desperate for it to cost more for me to go to school than my older brother. My older brother was the favorite. He's it. Me and my sister were just like non-entities to her through the whole time.

I got a job in the library and loved it, and the ladies loved me. They found out after about the third week that I could handle computers. That was it. I never shelved another book. I was always fixing their computers. We had InfoTrac, which was the first CD-ROM. They would call me at home, "One of them is dead." At one time, one was broke for a week because the floppy disk had gone bad. I was like, "You're kidding me." So I took it and copied the disk from a good one and stuck it in one of the four machines and it worked again. They would just save stuff up and wait for me to come in, or they'd call me at home if they were desperate, "Can you come fix this?" At that point, they had no idea what a word processor was. This was 1987. So I brought in one that someone had given me and installed it on their machine and typed in the reference list and you would have thought that it was Christmas to the reference librarian because now every time she got a new reference book, she didn't have to retype that whole list. We could just insert one into the middle of it. If I was working at night, which I would a lot, I would work the circulation desk and that's where I would do all my homework and I knew everybody that went to school there. All the three years I went there, I worked in the library, and I loved it. The ladies

there said, “You’re so good. This library stuff is what you’re supposed to be doing. We’ll get you a scholarship.” But there was no money in it and computer [programming] paid a lot more and didn’t require any more schooling like a Library Science Master’s would have. I was also playing hockey and I had to have a job in order to keep playing.

In the library there was a guy there that was influential on me. He’s, “Oh, read this. You’ll like this.” So that’s when I started reading. Then I would just read all the time. Before then, I had not been a reader at all. I would read what I was forced to read. I don’t remember ever just going to the library at Catholic school just to get a book. The only reason I ever went to the library in high school was either to cut through it to get to the other side of the hallway or the two ladies that were in there were having to complete some audiovisual course and I wrote them a little credit sequence on the computer and then we recorded it into the VCR. Once again, I was fixing a lot of people’s computers and doing stuff like that. I just never read. I would watch TV. My mom read all the time, just constantly, those crappy romance novels, Ayn Rand and stuff like that, but she was always reading. My older sister read a lot, but my brother doesn’t read. I don’t know if he’s read a book start to finish. Ever since then, it’s just constant. I’ve always got a book in my hand no matter where I am. If I’m sitting on the playground watching the kids at school, I’ve got a book. I got two hours that I do the detention lunch every day from 11:20 until 1:30. The kids that are bad had to sit in this room and eat their lunch and they can’t go out to recess. So that’s two hours, usually realistically an hour and a half that I can sit there and read. I’m always reading, all the time.

I graduated in 1989 with honors from Southern Tech. I got a job straight out of college as a computer programmer for a software company called Transaction Software in Norcross, which was right close to where my sister lived, and I lived with her for two years. For eleven years, two

months, and ten days, I wrote banking software and COBOL for banks such as Sun Trust, Bank of America. I played ice hockey. I played guitar and piano, but it was all programming, programming, programming. I loved it. It was fun, mostly fun people, a lot of nerds like me, so it was easy to fit in with those kind of people. The cool people didn't last because they weren't very smart in that field. So I did that for 11 years and then I just got tired of it because I wasn't ever going to get anywhere there. But the bad part was I had watched the whole technology parade pass me by because I was good at what I did. It was very easy, but I didn't update my skills. So when the technology bubble burst and the company went out of business, I didn't really have anywhere to go. I applied to UGA to go back to get a music degree because I had saved a lot of money.

Before I moved to Athens I had an eye operation. I had a diabetic problem. They were going to fix it and I said, "Let's go ahead and do the Lasik." Well it didn't work. I couldn't see for six months and I didn't know if I would ever see out of my left eye again. It was just a big turning point in my life. The job was gone. I didn't know what I was going to do next. I just didn't do anything for a year. It was sweet. I was going through my savings, but I'm a frugal person. I don't spend a lot. I drove the last truck I had for 17 years and I would still be in it had the transmission not died.

The lady that I had worked with her husband had opened a charter school. She had promised the parents music because music improves math scores, but she couldn't find anybody to do it because at the time she only wanted them two days a week. Well, that was perfect for me because I needed baby steps back into the working world because I was used to having all my time free. The next year it became four days, and then after that they said, "Look, go get your

certification.” I took the PRAXIS for technology education and passed it. Then it became a regular five-day-a-week and I got to do all the crap the other people did.

I try and play ball with them at school, whatever they need me to do, because I like the place. It’s really a cushy job, but I do a lot. I am the student activities guy. We do nine homework dances a year. If you do all your homework you got to come to the dance. We’re doing that reading and literacy project—everybody who reads “x” number of pages gets an invitation to the dance. I do all the dances. I do the perfect paycheck parties every once in a while. Just randomly, Friday, we had a water balloon toss party for the kids that didn’t have any zeros or no problems. So I do all that kind of stuff.

Two years ago, first graduating class from the charter school. We started with fifth graders and every year we added another grade. I started with them the first day they started with school. Made it through all four years and that was the first year that we were able, for some reason, with Dekalb County to be involved with the Teacher of the Year thing. Several of the other teachers had nominated me, but the principal has a tight control over everything and I wasn’t even on the nomination list. The valedictorian kid comes up with, “Out of all four years, we’ve only had one person here who’s always done stuff for us, always been there for us, but he never gets the recognition he deserves.” And it was me. That was something big for me because I didn’t get Teacher of the Year. I didn’t get the star teacher. But I was the only teacher out of all the speech that he said, “This guy does so much for us, but nobody ever recognizes him.” So that validates four years of being there and makes you want to keep coming back. Because I had always worked hard, just because that’s what I do. That’s the way we were raised. So that was a pretty good minute when I get that and none of the other teachers get it. I asked the lady who had

helped him write the speech, I said, “You made him say that, didn’t you?” And she said, “Nope, it was in his first draft.”

I’ve been six years teaching there and I enjoy where I am. I’d like to stay at the school I’m at for as long as it lasts. I think they’d keep me around. I used to teach more music than computers, but now I teach more computers than music. So that makes me highly qualified for No Child Left Behind. I love music. I would love to keep teaching it, but I would have to go back to get a music degree and an education degree in order to be a highly qualified teacher in that field and it would take too long.

I met Beth R. who I guess would be the third influential person, after the guy in grammar school that got us into computers, and then the guy in college that got me into reading. She worked for six months at the school as a science teacher while she was finishing this [school library media] program. I told her, “I’ve only got five years [on my certificate] and I don’t know what I’m going to do at the end of those five.” She’s like, “Dude, if you’ve got to go do something, this is you. You love books. You love computers. You love audiovisual equipment. You handle all this stuff for the school already. This is made for you. Apply to this.” I thought, “Great, I love working in the middle school.” But I forgot about it for a while and then she emailed me, asking, “Did you every get in that program?” I was like, “That’s right. I was supposed to look into that.”

And so within a week, I had filled out the packet, got the letters of recommendation, and sent the whole the thing in, minus the GRE scores that I had to go back and redo. Once again somebody else pointing me where to go instead of me figuring out for myself “Yeah, go there. That’s it. I love books. I like working with kids.” I worked in a college library for three years and I fell in love with it. I would have done it then because I loved the books. I loved, believe it or

not, the quiet, the orderliness of it. I like order and everything's in place in the library. Every book's got one place for it to be. I like to read and I love audiovisual equipment, and it just seemed like it was made for me. It was awesome, and I would have done it for the rest of my life, but computer paid a lot more and didn't require any more schooling like a Library Science Master's would have.

I was looking at the starting salaries for the amount of teaching experience years I've got, because sadly, money is a factor in life. You have to make money. [With] the bump I'll get for having a master's, and actually getting paid for my years of service instead of constantly making the minimum, I'll make enough to survive. Retirement is also much better because nobody has a retirement plan anymore. I got the retirement statement from Teacher's Retirement and realized that's a significant amount of money, even having missed twenty years that a lot of people have already. But the other thing is I never really ever in my life considered thinking of retirement because every Daniel male died at 40. So now, I've got to do something and I decided this would be much better for me. All those things kind of went together and then I just went in that direction.

When I was preparing for the GRE last spring the students were typing and I was walking around reading the vocabulary words and they all got into it and were so excited when I passed it. They were, "Why you doing this." And I told them, I said, "Well, it's this job where you do books and audiovisual equipment." They're like, "Man, that is you." Because where I'm at, I'm the audio-video guy. If you need a VCR, a TV, PA system set up, they need a DVD slide show of these pictures set to this music, I'm the guy that they come to, to do it. That's why I chose to come to do this.

My philosophy is reading is the key to success. Read, read, read, read, read. That's what I tell them all now. The smartest kids I knew growing up were the ones that read the most. My nieces are ridiculously smart, and all they do is read. Every person I've ever known that's gone far in life was a reader. People I know that didn't go very far in life didn't like to read and wouldn't read. Everything in the library isn't about technology. There's still books. Books are way more important. Because everybody doesn't have access to a computer. I'm not against technology, obviously. I fix computers. I do all that networking stuff at school. I know how to utilize it. I teach classes in PowerPoint. I teach classes in Word. I teach classes in Excel. Where I'm teaching, reading's way more important than the technology. Every kid in there knows how to turn the computer on, boot it up, go to Google, or go to the typing stuff on their own after two or three times of showing them how to save a file. The way these kids are being raised they learn it through osmosis. They use it every day. They want to do something they do it. From where I see it, the kids integrate into the technology seamlessly on their own just because they see somebody else doing it or they just want to use it. Even these kids that have been in the U.S. for like two, three months, no problem. They click right into it because it's what's going on. The stuff I do, teaching technology, I don't think about it in the library sense. Because technology's just so second nature to me, I don't even think about it. I think of it more as reading and books and encouraging people to read and figuring out what they like to read and getting them to read it. The way I see it coming from the outside basically, is that librarians are the keepers of the book and I don't see any problem with that. The technology's no problem to me. So I don't think about it the same way everybody else thinks about it. I don't look at the technology aspect of it as the important part. I look at the book thing because from what I see, the kids integrate into the technology on their own or with just a little bit of help.

I like working with other people, doing things for other people. I love working with kids. And that combined with the books and the technology is why I'm working towards this degree. I feel like I have direction. The goal is to be able to do this job and ride the library wave to retirement. So that would be it.

### *Commentary*

Tom's career story relates the events that preceded his decision to become a school library media specialist. That choice was influenced by her vocational personality and life theme and accomplished by the process of career adaptation (Savickas, 2005). In the following three parts of the commentary I discuss those three components of career construction theory as they are manifested in Tom's life stories.

#### *Vocational Personality*

The vocational personality indicates the types of occupations in which a person will find job satisfaction. It is represented by a resemblance to Holland's personality types.

##### *Artistic.*

Tom strongly resembles the Artistic type in Holland's typology. He has been passionate about his music since he began piano lessons as a child. He learned to play a guitar from watching his older brother. He has played in bands; he teaches music to children and adults. The primary outlet for Tom's Artistic type is through his recreational pursuits.

##### *Investigative.*

Tom also resembles the Investigative type. He has been adept with computers since he was quite young and as an adult he worked as a programmer for eleven years. He enjoys combining his computer technology abilities with his love of music to create multimedia presentations.



*Social.*

Tom also resembles the Social type to some degree because he likes to help people and has learned that he enjoys teaching children.

*Life Theme*

The theme that guided Tom's life and early occupational choices was the ever-present expectation that all Daniel males die at the age of forty. This belief was reinforced when, as a teenager, Tom witnessed his father having a severe heart attack. Even though his father did not die, Tom stated that his dad did not have much of a life after that. Tom's belief that he would die young guided his choices in life. His goal upon college graduation was to make a lot of money doing something he liked and was good at, which in his case was computer programming. He also wanted to have money so he could play ice hockey. Tom's belief that he would not have a long life is evidenced by his career indifference toward planning for the future (Savickas, 2007). During his eleven years working as a computer programmer he did not update his technology skills. This lack of career concern (Savickas, 2005) was a disadvantage when he lost that job because his skills were not current.

When Tom was 33 years old, he lost his computer job and he had to have eye surgery because of his diabetic condition. The eye surgery was botched and he was blind in one eye for six months. He did not know if he would see again and was dependent on others for transportation. After one year spent recuperating, he accepted a part time job teaching music in a charter school. When the job became full-time after two years, he was required to obtain teacher certification. He took the PRAXIS test in Information Technology, which enabled him to get a provisional teacher's certificate that was valid for only five years. As the expiration date for his

certificate came closer, Tom began to consider his options. He loved teaching music, but thought it would take too long to get a music degree.

It is during this transitional time that several events occurred that resulted in a paradigm shift in Tom's life theme. Tom discovered that he liked teaching and working with kids. He liked participating in the school environment and helping others. Tom's brother, who was less than two years older than him, passed the age of 40 with no major health issues. This circumstance refuted the myth that all Daniels die at 40. Tom considered that the cycle of early death may have been broken. In doing so he came to the realization that he needed to plan for the future and possible retirement. Tom's earlier life theme was no longer applicable.

#### *Career Adaptability*

Tom's life story shows that he has some problems with career adaptability (Savickas, 2005), specifically *career concern* about planning for the future, and *career control* over that future. He said, "I never have had direction in my life for anything. I just kind of floated along the whole time, just here to there with no goal or it's just been, oh, this seems like fun for now and then move on to the next thing." These decisional difficulties can be explained in part by his early life theme. Although that theme has recently changed, Tom still has a lack of *career control* because he tends to "follow the directions of significant others" (Savickas, 2007, p. 91) rather than determining his own direction.

#### *Orientation.*

Tom had some *career concern* because he knew that his provisional teaching certificate would eventually expire. He did not assert *career control* though because he delayed making a decision about what to do. A school library media student who was substituting at his school suggested that he should become a school library media specialist. Tom did not follow through

on this advice until several years later when she sent him an e-mail inquiring whether he was pursuing his school library media certificate. It was at that point that Tom reasserted some *career control* and applied for the school library media program at a local university.

*Exploration.*

Tom did not evince much *career curiosity* about the school library field. He made the decision to enter the school library media program without doing much information gathering beyond the need to find out application procedures.

*Implementation.*

Tom exhibits *career confidence* about his ability to do the job of a school library media specialist. He recognizes that he has many of the skills to do the job, especially the technology skills. About library work he said, "I've got experience doing it. It's not like I'm going into something I've never seen before. The college library isn't the same as a middle school library, they kept telling me, but it's awfully similar."

Susan Davis

Susan Davis is an attractive White woman in her early thirties with red hair, freckles, brown eyes and a smile that reveals her cheerful, optimistic nature. At the time of our interviews she was just beginning her second year in the school library media program. I was pleased when she volunteered to be a participant because she had a business rather than an education background. Both interviews were held in her gracious country home where I was delighted to meet her youngest son and her very friendly dog. Susan describes herself as extroverted, driven, Type A personality, "way too talkative," and "project-oriented."

### *Susan's Career Story*

My mother is from a very classic southern family in Virginia. She and my dad met on Virginia Beach. He was from Georgia. His father was a career Marine, 34 years in the Corps, and they moved everywhere. I think that is why he never really has been great at making friends, because every few years they moved. His senior year in high school they moved to France. My grandfather was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross, and was made Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps before he retired. The whole military attitude--Take what they give you, suck it up, march through, make it happen, get it done--that whole thing is big in my family. Our family [is] very conservative, very traditional, and [has] very high expectations with regard to education. I mean, we were all going to college.

My [paternal] grandmother is from a family in North Carolina. There were ten kids in her family. All ten kids went to college during the Depression. They were going to make that happen for their kids. Each child, after they graduated would have to go to work for however long it took to pay for the next child to go to college. We still all get together up in North Carolina twice a year for a weekend on a farm. We have a big time; the kids love it. We're very close-knit.

My father is probably the most influential person in my life. That's backed off in the last few years, now that I've really developed my own family, but up until the last few years, yeah. His opinion is the one that matters to me most about everything, and always has, and he's usually, generally, right. It's irritating. My brother and I say that he can speak things into existence. He'll say it, and it will happen. Very, very wise man. Not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but a good father, and a really good positive influence on us behaviorally. I wish they'd pushed me more. They wanted me to go to college and graduate and get a job and get married and have kids, but they never really pushed me to do anything way beyond that. I don't

think they really wanted to make me do something I didn't want to. They wanted me to find my own way. In addition to him, his mother's family, the ones in North Carolina that we go see several times a year, I worry about what they think with regard to me as a person, my accomplishments, my children. I love them to death, I love what they think, how they are. How I am as a person is very much like the way they express themselves, how they think about an issue, and how I want to be is like that family. My father and my grandmother and my grandfather and that whole side of the family really, everything that I am today is because of how they are and their influence on me.

When I was a child we lived in Monroe in a little house set way back from the road. We actually lived not far from where I'm living now, which is kind of funny to me. My parents both had college educations and went to the University of Georgia, but never, ever made lots of money, so we always lived kind of month-to-month. We didn't really go a lot of places; we just were home. I have a brother [who] is about a year and a half younger than me. We didn't really have an awful lot of friends that we played with outside of the two of us. We did everything together. We played all the time and we went to school. Mom was home with us until she went back to work when I was in the fourth grade. My brother and I just played and played, and we just did everything and got into trouble together, and we just had a big time. I mention that because to this day, he and I are still very close. He lives right down the road. We talk every day. Our families are close, our kids are close together, we're still very close, and I think it was because those first years we just kind of had each other. We went to church and all kinds of stuff. It wasn't that anybody was trying to isolate us, it was just my parents aren't real social people, so we didn't have lots of extra friends. My parents have always had cattle and kind of a farm type thing, so we always played outside all the time.

I went to a really good primary school, but technically speaking, we weren't going to the school we were supposed to go to. We were supposed to be in the Social Circle city schools, which were at the time not very good at all, and so my mom put me in a school in Monroe that was really good. The best school I've ever been to was a primary school. About the second grade they figured out that we were in the district incorrectly, and there were several families that were this way, and they forced my parents into a Social Circle city school, so my parents decided to move. We moved to Newton County, which they thought had a better school system, and it was very nice.

My parents bought a huge farm with 80 acres. [There was] an old farmhouse and my parents fixed it up. It had no heat; it had no air conditioning. We had a wood burning stove in the back part of the house, the den, which was the new part of the house. My mother found some cabinets at a yard sale which she bought and refinished and put up in the kitchen. The doors wouldn't even really close on them. They would pop back open because they were so old. There was no dishwasher. My father put in a little bitty dishwasher one time and hooked it up, and it ran and dumped a bunch of water all over the floor, and he said, "*(Bronx cheer)* on the dishwasher, I'll never use it again!" [Laughter] All my life we had to wash those dishes. Now the farm was cool, it really was. Dad had cattle, and we had dogs. We had a goat at one time that lived there for a long time. He was kind of a funny goat. He would get out in the road if we weren't careful, and so every morning we'd hook him to a tire full of rocks and take him to the back pasture, and all day long he'd work his way up to the front, so by the time someone got home in the afternoon, he hadn't gone out into the road. We all had to work. There was always work that had to be done. Every Saturday we had to cut wood to go in the one heating source we had, which was the wood-burning stove. My room was not in the heated part of the house. No

one's was, no one's. You just snuggled down and got warm. To this day I never get up in the middle of the night because it was just too cold in the winter; it was not worth it. My parents still live on that farm. Of course, after I graduated from high school and got a job, they bulldozed the old farmhouse with no heating and air conditioning that smelled bad all the time, and put up a brand new house. [Laughter]

Anyway, my brother and I had a big time on the farm. We did so much stuff and played, and he liked to hunt and fish, and I never really caught onto the hunting and fishing thing, but we still had a good time. We played cowboys and Indians and all that kind of stuff, but to this day he swears up and down that I would never do anything because my nose was always stuck in a book. Now that wasn't true. My nose was often stuck in a book, but it was not always stuck in a book. We went out and did a lot of things.

[We] went to the local school there. It was just at the end of our road. It was really great, rode the bus and everything like that. It was a very nice school. When I started at that school [I had] my first real memory of peer relations at school; I was in the second grade, about to start the third grade. You know girls and how snippy they can be. I can remember a lot of angst in those years because I didn't have just the right clothes, and wasn't with the cool clique, and I was in the smart, gifted program. I can remember several girls that just were never very nice, and I never noticed before then, but that kind of stuff, it stays with you for years and years. I wonder about it with my own kids coming along, when they're going to start facing that kind of junk, teasing and what I'm going to do about it. Because my parents said, "Well, you know who you are, don't worry about it," and I thought, "Great." [Laughter]

I really just mostly did school and church until I was in high school. Then a good friend of mine did a play, and I thought that was really neat, and so I started doing plays, and I really

got very into that. We had a great director that was there the four years I was there. We really accomplished a lot with our theater troupe in the time that he was there. We had governor's honors in theater. As a result of four years of working with theater, my director asked me to be our school's representative for oral interpretation for One-Act Competition. I went all the way to state and won state. That accomplishment meant a lot to me, because that was mine. It wasn't done as a group. Our theater troupe had won state One-Act Competitions, but this one I did all on my own. I remember thinking, "Wow. I can hold onto this," I worked hard on it, and it was great to have that accomplishment from the hard work that I'd put into it. I really loved it [acting], but I thought, this is my time in it, and I can't do it for a living, I'll never make a living at it, I'll just starve. [Laughter] I've done some community theater since I graduated from high school, but I never really thought of it as anything serious.

College. Great four years. [Laughter] I really thought I was smart until I got to college, and then I really realized I was dumb. Everybody in there's smart. Everybody did well in high school. I really thought I would blow it away, and I was really very average. I thought I would have no trouble making straight A's—and no. I worked hard and really only had like a 3.2 GPA. French got me. I had to take four quarters of French for a business major. I made C's every single quarter. I just couldn't get it, couldn't get it. I walked in the first day of class, and she was talking French, and I thought, "What is this? Beginning French, I can't even understand the homework." It was evil. But the rest, other than those C's, the rest of my grades were pretty good.

I was a political science major. I was going to be a lawyer because, you know, everybody when they start college is going to be a lawyer or a doctor. About my sophomore year I realized I didn't want to be a lawyer. I didn't really like the law that much. It was very abstract and it's



really not about justice or right or wrong at all, it's about what judge you get. I really didn't want to do that, so I looked around and I thought, "Gosh, I'm going to have to get a good job in a couple of years. What's a good thing to get in when you graduate? I want to get a job with a good salary, where should I go?" I chose MIS in the business school. That's when I moved to the business school, and did the information science thing, and that was a lot of fun. I could do that. I was good at that, the technical stuff. I was good at databases, and I really enjoyed that.

Anyway, college was great. I did a lot of extracurricular stuff. I didn't do any theater at all because I didn't have a car for a couple of years and I couldn't get to any of the off-campus theaters in Athens. I kind of thought, that's behind me. If I had to do it again, I'd probably go and audition for some shows. My parents encouraged me, they were like, "Hey, when are you going to do a show? Do it. You're good at it, you like it," and I said, "No, no; I'm doing other things now."

I joined a student judiciary my freshman year and did that all four years in college. I joined the Phi Kappa Debate Society. I joined the MIS Society when I got into that major. The other big thing in college was ballroom. I took that ballroom class over at physical education, and we started a ballroom program. We actually went several places in Atlanta and performed, and we had a really good time with that.

Graduated, and I landed a job with BellSouth, doing troubleshooting, information system troubleshooting, essentially. First real job, first real paycheck, I was so excited, and it was really a lot of fun. I was downtown Atlanta at the BellSouth building behind the Fox, 22 years old, and making way more than I was worth. I think I made \$32,000, which was just so much money [Laughter] back then, and got an apartment, moved to Atlanta, and it was fine, it was fun, making friends. After a year or two I got a roommate because I was lonely, and it would just help

with the rent and stuff. She always wanted to go live somewhere new in Atlanta. The last place we lived was in a town home on Roswell Road, and I got involved in community theater up there. That was the time I started dating my husband, who worked with me. We worked there for a year before we started dating, and we dated for two years before we got married.

I started doing community theater there even before and while I was dating him. It was just so much fun because I didn't have any other responsibilities. I worked all day, and then I went and did shows. It was the only thing I've ever done that I never didn't want to go. Your job, even class sometimes, I think, "I'm really not up for this today." [Laughter] I never, ever wanted a day off from rehearsal or performance, never. I was excited to go and do it. It's the only thing I ever could do without having to work real hard at it. It's where I feel the most comfortable. Looking back on it, I think I should have probably become an actress, but I would never have made it, and I really wanted the stable life. I just need that kind of structure with a paycheck, retirement, things like that. If I could earn a living doing community theater the rest of my life, that's what I'd do, but I don't see how I could do that.

That was my single years until I was about 26, and then David and I decided to get married. He lived in Lawrenceville at the time, had a little house near Gwinnett Place Mall, and we got married and lived there for about a year, but we wanted to leave the area. It was really crowded, and the house was small, and we knew we wanted to have kids and everything, and he wanted to move down here. We sold the house in Lawrenceville and moved down here and we lived here for a couple of years and had a child.

By that time in my job, BellSouth had outsourced their IT department to Electronic Data Systems, and so I went to EDS, and that was a totally different company. I was 27, I'd been married a year, and my boss came to me and said, "I'm retiring, and I want you to take my job."

I mean, I'm 27. I'd been doing that job for 5 years, and I was looking for something different, but I was nervous about managing people in my own work group. I finally said, "I'll do it. I'll take that job," and it was just a great decision. Management was right up my field. Working with the individuals to increase their performance, working with my team for great results. It was something different all the time. It wasn't the same ole, same ole work. It was just so much fun, and I started to realize that I'm not really the kind of person that can stay in the same rote job for a long time. I'm real project oriented. I always want a new, cool project. I get through with the old project, and I want a new project and just move on, and that was why that job was just so much fun. It was always something new going on, new technology, new thing, new group members, hiring more people.

Anyway, it was great, it was a lot of fun, and I did that for a couple of years, and then I had a baby. I loved my job, but it was like 60 plus hours a week, some evenings, on call, and David and I didn't want to put the kids in daycare, so I quit. I just quit. [Laughter] Just like that. It was a stunning change to go from that fast, high pace to home with one little baby, [Laughter] but it was great, it was great. I'm so glad I've had this time with the kids, home with them. I don't know that it's made them better behaved, or smarter. The thing about parenting is you work, work, work, work, work, but you don't see the end result for like 30, 40, 50 years. I mean, way long after you've put in the work, you actually get to see some results. We'll see if it made any difference at all that I've stayed home. I have enjoyed it, but I've learned that I don't want to stay home forever. I want to go back to work. I need a career beyond being a mom. I think I have more to offer than just being a mom. I probably wouldn't be doing this program if I wasn't a mother. I'd probably go back to corporate, or I would never have left the corporate environment I was in. I really enjoyed that. I was good at it. But it isn't just that I want to have the same hours

as my kids. It's also that I want to be involved in education, and that's going to help me get them a better education.

I've been struggling with what I was going to do for a long time. I knew I wanted to go back to work, and I knew I would need to go back to work. I just didn't know what to do. Nothing clicked. My husband also didn't really care for me to go back to the 60, 70 hour a week thing I was doing. He kept saying, "You're just going to have to teach." And I said, "Well, I'll do that, you know, if I need to that, I'll do that." I come from a long line of teachers. My mother, my grandmother on her side, my aunt on her side, all teachers. My grandmother on my dad's side, a teacher. All of her sisters were teachers except for one who was a nurse. A couple of her brothers were teachers. One was actually a principal at one time. Just long lines of teachers on both sides of our family. Education's always been a huge deal.

Well, I didn't want to teach. [Laughter] My mother taught. She stayed home with us until I was about in the fourth grade, faced about the same decision that I'm facing now. My grandfather got her a job teaching. She taught for 27 years and just retired this past spring. Never really wanted to do it, never really thought of it as her ultimate career choice, but it's good pay and good hours and stuff for a small town, and she could work in our schools, and she wasn't gone. We had our summers and things like that, but she would stay up until midnight doing homework, and the kids that just didn't care, and the parents that didn't care more, and I thought, "Oh, I just don't want to do that, I don't want to teach."

Then I was talking to my cousin about it, and she had taught for several years, and then decided to become a media specialist. She's at the high school level in North Carolina. She said, "You should do this, with your technical background and management skills, you should do this." So I looked into it, and my mom said, "You should do that!" She's like, "I can't believe I

never thought about telling you about that before, but that would be a great thing for you to do.” So that’s how I kind of wound up in this career choice.

But I still wasn’t sure whether or not I really made the right decision, because it’s a real career commitment. I’m a born-again Christian, and really rely on that a lot, believe in it even though I know it’s not something that I can really talk about in my job. When I was 13 I really made a decision that, “Okay, I’m going to give my life to Christ, this is the road I’m going to walk down.” Over the years I’ve had occasion to kind of recommit that. We always went to church and I’ve always been involved with the Lord. Even to this day I pray about decisions that I make, and I look for signs that I’m on the right track and doing the right things.

When I went to take the GRE I remember I laid hands on the PC and I said, “Okay Lord, if this is the choice for me, have me do real well on this test. And if it’s not, flunk me bad.” And I did really well. I did better than I ever expected to do, and so I thought, “Okay, that’s a sign that I made a good choice, and this is going to be okay. And there’s going to be a job for me.” It was a hard choice. I mean, it’s a career-long directional change.

I really wanted a career. I really wanted something where I could really make a difference in some lives, and also where there was opportunity for me to do better and better, and work harder and harder. I’m a project person, I like new stuff. I like this new thing that we’re going to do here, and this new thing that we’re going to do there.

I love change, most of the time. Honestly, it’s important that people think I do a good job. I’m just that way, you know. And I like when people tell me that too. I want them to say, “You’re doing a good job.” I like that to be recognized. My mother said this, and she’s right, but it attracts me having my own little kingdom, you know, that I’m in charge of. I can run my program the way that I want, within reason. That attracts me. That’s a leadership thing.

I love the library. It smells so good. It's like a stage, you know? I could just lay on a stage floor and smell it. When I was a child Mom loved to go to the library. Back then in Newton County the library had three stories and the bottom floor was the children's section. She would stay upstairs and do stuff for I don't know how long, look at books, and my brother and I would go down to the children's section and just get lost. I would find books and sit on the floor and read one and then pick out all the ones I wanted and all that stuff. Interestingly enough, I never really did the reading programs. I mean, they just didn't push that, my parents. But I read a lot and always just felt so comfortable. I just loved to go there. I loved to be there. Even when I was an undergraduate that's where I would go to study. I never really could study in my dorm very well, but I would go to the library and study. It's quiet and the sound sounds good. That quiet sound is comforting. And it smells good and there's so much great stuff to read there. You just stand there and think, "Wow." I don't know. I can't understand why I never thought about a library as a career before. It never occurred to me to go into a library. I mean, it just never did. And once it did, it seemed just an obvious thing for me to do.

I think long-term being a media specialist is going to be something I really enjoy. I like what they do. Just so many things about it. The love of reading, the love of literature that I've always had. Getting that down to the kids, you know, helping them learn. Of course, I'm all pie in the sky now because I'm still in the program. But helping them learn how to love reading, and how to see a book, like my high school teacher taught me, how to look for the little things in the book that make it just that much deeper than maybe what they first read through. The technology attracts me, though it's starting to scare me more than attract me. Because I'm not sure I know how to hook up projectors and all that kind of stuff. I'm sure I'll learn. Those are the things that attract me about it.

I want to get the most information into the heads of the kids that I work with in the most fun way so that it stays with them. I want them 20 years from now to remember, they don't even have to remember me, but they can remember that this thing means that thing, and I can go and find it here. I want them to learn to love to read. My philosophy is to make everything in the center as available as possible for them to learn to love to read, and learn to love to find out information.

I'm now 35 and have two kids, a husband and a dog. I still have to have all my extracurricular stuff that I do. I can't just do one thing; I have to do a lot of other things, too. I had worked at my son's preschool at our church for several years. Last year I was the assistant director, which is like a two-morning a week job. This year I'm teaching Kindermusik one morning a week because I have the internship to do. Back in 2004, I took a polling precinct near here in this area, and that's a lot of fun. That's just something different that pops up every couple of years. It's really neat because everyone that works in the polling precinct is much older than me. I'm the youngest by like 30 years, but it's a lot of fun. It's real neat, and it's just a diversion, something different every year, and I feel like I'm doing my civic duty. I intend that even when I do work, to explain to my employer, I'm going to have to take a day off here and there to run this polling precinct. I think it's important to the community, and everyone should vote, though no one does. I mean, it's stunning. I guess that's where I am. That's my life.

#### *Commentary*

Susan's career story relates the events that preceded her decision to become a school library media specialist. That choice was influenced by her vocational personality and life theme and accomplished by the process of career adaptation (Savickas, 2005). In the following three

parts of the commentary I discuss those three components of career construction theory as they are manifested in Susan's life stories.

### *Vocational Personality*

The vocational personality indicates the types of occupations in which a person will find job satisfaction. It is represented by a resemblance to Holland's personality types.

#### *Artistic.*

Susan has an extremely strong resemblance to the Artistic type in Holland's RIASEC hexagon. This is evidenced in her stories by her enthusiasm for acting in community theaters. She also teaches Kindermusik, directs the children's choir, and enjoys scrapbooking as a hobby.

#### *Social.*

Susan moderately resembles the Social type. She likes interaction with co-workers, working on teams and in committees.

#### *Investigative.*

To a much lesser degree Susan resembles the Investigative type. She is project-oriented, a problem solver, and likes to read.

### *Life Theme*

Susan's life theme is one of balance. On the one side are her own wants and needs as an individual. On the other side are her family's traditions and values. Conflict arises only when those things are incompatible.

Susan relates a story from her childhood that illustrates her life theme.

When I was 6 or 7 my dad had arranged to take my brother on some special thing.... I was jealous and mad, and I convinced my brother – I didn't tell my parents about it, that I was mad or jealous, because, boy, I didn't do that, but I



convinced my brother he didn't want to go. I convinced him that he would rather stay home and play with me, and so he pitched a fit and wouldn't go, but my dad knew— my dad's always been a very wise man—and he knew what I'd done... We were out in front of the house on the sidewalk, and they were about to leave, and he stood there with his finger in my face and said, 'Your brother is not going to go and have fun on this thing today because of you, and I want you to know that. You don't need,' I can't remember exactly what he said, but he impressed upon me that I had ruined a great day for my brother only because I was being jealous about it, and I still remember it. I still feel guilty about it; because it never occurred to me that I was ruining something for him. I was only thinking about the fact that I was mad that he wasn't doing anything special with me... What it taught me is that I don't need to force decisions down people's throats that they don't necessarily want to make. You can influence people, especially people that look up to you or love you, you can really influence them and you have to be really careful with how you do that. You need to think more about what they need and what they want and what makes them happy than about what's going to make you happy. I still remember it. Isn't that awful?

Susan's life choices reflect how important her family is in her life. Susan identifies very strongly with their values. Her feeling of family solidarity may have developed because of her family's geographical and social isolation when she was young. She says, "I hate to say we were isolated, but we didn't really have an awful lot of friends that we played with outside of the two of us" and "my parents aren't real social people, so we didn't have lots of extra friends." Susan relates two childhood experiences from school in which she describes feeling like she did not fit

in with the other girls. The first of these experiences was in the second grade and another was in high school. Additionally, she states, “I always struggled in middle and high with really feeling like I belonged with a group. I wasn’t really popular. I was smart, but even the smart kids were cool in their own right and did their own things, and I just never felt like I had the right clothes, had the right look, said the right things, all that kind of stuff.” Until she went away to college, it was only in her own family that Susan felt like she belonged. She describes her family of origin as “very close” and “close knit.” Even to this day she lives geographically close to her parents and her brother.

Many of the things that matter in Susan’s life arise from her family’s values of high expectations for achievement, which calls for a strong work ethic and duty. Educational achievement is a top priority in the family. Susan had the example of her paternal grandmother delaying her marriage until she could help her younger siblings have money to go to college. The emphasis on achievement and education was intensified by the “military attitude” that was big in her family. Susan’s paternal grandfather had a highly distinguished career in the Marine Corps, her father attended the Naval Academy, and her uncle was a Marine Corps captain. The Marine Corps values of honor, courage, and commitment strongly influenced her family’s traditions, values, and beliefs and subsequently Susan’s.

Susan’s life story reveals the presence of a strong work ethic and the importance of teamwork. Susan related how there was always work to be done on the farm. Her work was essential to the family’s well-being. She said, “My grandmother and grandfather were always real involved with us, and we would spend lots of time over at their house. We’d spend the night. We’d work over there.” Her grandmother was a role model to her. Susan said, “She taught me how to do so many things. She’s always so tenacious in everything she did. She always worked

really hard and could accomplish so much that I just always wanted to be like her and I am like her.” Susan concludes, “It’s really no fun to waste time. It’s better to work. It’s better. It’s more fun, you feel like you’ve accomplished something at the end of the day, and you learning something when you’re doing it.”

Justice and civic duty are very important to Susan as manifested by her involvement throughout college on the student judiciary and by her current activities as a polling precinct manager, as committee chair for her children’s school, and as a mentor for undergraduates. When she entered college she initially planned to be a lawyer. There were several lawyers in her family, including her uncle. As a sophomore she switched her major from law because she discovered that law is “very abstract” and “really not about justice or right or wrong at all.”

Susan’s choice to quit her management job when she had a child also reflects family tradition. The model for this decision may have been Susan’s mother who was a stay-at-home mom until Susan was in the fourth grade and her brother was in second. Susan’s decision to become a school library media specialist also demonstrates her willingness to prioritize her family’s needs. Again, her mother may have set the precedent for this decision. Her mother took a teaching job, even though as Susan said, “She never really wanted to do it, and never really thought of it as her ultimate career choice.” Susan herself acknowledges that she would not have made this choice if she were not a mother.

A primary example of how Susan has circumscribed her own needs and desires is her premature decision not to pursue an acting career, even though her passion for acting is evident. Instead she chose a stable life with structure. Even though she loves theater she says it is “just not something I can do right now in my life. I don’t have the time for the rehearsals and the performances to take away from the kids.” She does have dreams for the future. “The great thing

about theater is that you can do it at any age. There are parts for older people, younger people, middle-aged. I'm going to go back to it one day I'm sure. When I retire, or even maybe after the kids are grown, I want to get back into some community theater. I want to really work hard at that. Maybe really develop a real program out here. I'd really love to be central to that."

### *Career Adaptability*

For Susan the decision to become a media specialist involved balancing her own vocational interests with the demands of being a wife and mother.

#### *Orientation.*

Susan has been a stay-at-home mother for several years, and even though she has enjoyed it, she says, "I've learned that I don't want to stay home forever. I want to go back to work. I need a career beyond being a mom." Her *career concern* for her future led her to consider various occupations that would suit her needs.

#### *Exploration.*

Susan and her husband discussed her options for several years. He told her she would just have to teach. Although Susan did consider teaching, she said that it "didn't really sound exactly right. Fit exactly right." She displayed *career control* by rejecting that option. She knew that she wanted a job "where you could really make a difference" and there would be opportunities for her "to do better and better, and work harder and harder." She also wanted "a steady paycheck, health benefits, and retirement." Susan's *career curiosity* led her to investigate many different occupations. She even did volunteer work to see if she would like to be a physical therapist; she discovered that she did not like "human suffering." Then at a family event, one of her cousins suggested school library media as an occupation. She researched to find out "about the requirements, routines, and rewards" (Savickas, 2007, p. 92) of school library media. She

discovered that she “liked what they do,” but still did not have *career confidence*. She said, “I still wasn’t sure whether or not I really made the right decision, because it’s a real commitment.”

### *Implementation.*

Susan prayed before she took the GRE; when she passed the test with an excellent score she took it as a sign that she had made the right choice and her *career confidence* was restored. In fall 2006, she began the school library media program at a local university. At the time of the study she was beginning her 100-hour internship in the media center of an elementary school.

### Charles Houston

I met Charles when he first began the School Library Media Program in which I was a graduate assistant. At the time he was still working in the children’s department at the public library. He jokingly introduced himself to the class as “the Hokey-Pokey Man.” My first impression was that he was a bit quirky. I soon discovered that he was also very intelligent and very likeable. He described himself this way: “I’m happy and when I’m happy...I can be a little daffy. That’s why I like hanging around with kids; because I like that alternate perspective of things. I grew up being weird. You’re weird, Charles. Why? Because I saw something different than the norm. I have a fresh outlook. I think that helps me listen better to children.”

Charles decided to become a school library media specialist after he discovered that “It’s not just generally helping people that I like doing but it’s teaching them, having them learn, having them know something from what I say or do.”

### *Charles’ Career Story*

I was born a third child. I have a brother who’s seven years older and a sister who’s four years older, so my brother and sister were a little bit closer together than I was. They actually got to be in school at the same time, and I never was at school with my brother and sister, ever.

Both my parents are from Houston. I grew up with having the aunts, and uncles, and the cousins all bouncing around, and having little gatherings all the time with 20 kids, and that kind of thing. I really like that; that's what I miss, being one of these global couples, away from my family.

When I was young, Dad was a physician and practiced with his father-in-law, my mother's father. When I was about ten or eleven Dad went into being an educator of doctors with the medical school. That was a kind of change in the family life, because it was a change in his income. You've got to be proud of your dad, because then he actually became dean of the medical school in Houston. He was only dean for less than a year. Some of his friends, but one doctor in particular, blames himself for killing my dad because of the stress of the job, fielding and balancing the demands and gripes of all the departments. That's why they chose him to do that job, because he got along with everybody.

My father died when I went to college, when I was still 18. I was in my sophomore year in college, and that was cool, because I was at peace with my dad. I had gone through the teenage thing with the parents, but about two months before my dad died, he'd come up to see me in college and spent the day just to visit. Seemed like he had a lot of fun. My mother got remarried and my stepdad Bob has a daughter who is my age, and that stepsister of mine now has two children similar in ages to what we have. So she's part of our family too, even though we met as adults.

I don't think my father or my mother were into pushing, or having an ambition for us. We all knew we were going to go to college. I mean both my parents went to college, and my grandparents went to college, so that wasn't ever a question. But my dad never said, I want you to be doctors. As a matter of fact, it kind of turned me off wanting to be a doctor, him being an

educator of doctors. We had a little beach house, and I remember him having parties down there for his residents. At 11-12 years old I knew that these people were students and here they were older, with families. In other words, there would be kids half my age running around at these parties that were children of my father's students. And I had an idea; that I didn't want to [still] be a student until [the time] I was already a daddy.

My elementary school was just awesome. I went to a private elementary school, an Episcopal day school. I started probably at three. So Moms [sic] took me to that little half-day program. I think the fact that it was a small, private school definitely made the most important impact on my life. I think that the whole school as an institution, because of teaching work ethic, for one thing, and teaching me to feel guilt and shame. I'm motivated to do work because I don't want to not have it done. In other words I'm not wanting to do the work so I can show it to you. I'm wanting to do the work because if I don't show it to you, then I'll feel guilty. They gave me that attitude. I know that's one of the things that motivates me. Anyway, so I know that in elementary school I think I learned the basics about how to learn, learn better, probably because of the small group environment and really high quality teachers and the work ethic. I'll blame my elementary school for that, and because it was an Episcopal school, we had chapel, and so then you get the ethical and moral lessons all the time, and I think that affected me with that part of my personality. Three years old from half-day, all the way up to sixth grade.

[Then] my parents forced me to go to public school, and there was a whole new world. Public school, junior high and high school, was just a big, culturally diverse experience, more so than a private school. This was in the mid '70s, just after we left Vietnam, and many Vietnamese came with us back home. Houston was a big receiver of Vietnamese, so my school, my junior high was about 25% Vietnamese. It was also a special needs school, so it was also about 30%

deaf, or deaf and mute. The rest of us were pretty equally divided among Black, Hispanic, and just regular White, normal kids. So that was what was real interesting about first going to junior high. High school was a little bit different, but it was still culturally diverse. Then I go to private college out of state, leaving home, first one in the family to go *away* to college.

College was a whole new experience, because there I really met Yankees. I learned what is a bagel and things like that, so it was another kind of a set of discoveries, and different experiences. My first major, when they ask you and you had to throw one out, was English. I *hate* – I hate to use that word – people say, “You would like it if you understand it,” and I say I understand it and sometimes it’s funny, but I do not like Shakespeare and I do not want to read *Beowulf* in Middle English. I did not have an occupation in mind, at least no single one. Because of that, I didn’t want to study to become...blah blah. I knew I wanted to learn how to learn and get exposure to a lot of things. I don’t know why, but I already knew I had diverse interests and liked learning about many things.

I was looking through the little white bulletins, and it’s got all of the department and degree requirements. I looked at English and it would allow me so many electives and I looked at anthropology and it would allow me almost twice as many electives, and I was like I want that because I want to take the poli-sci; I want to take economics; I want to take psychology; I want to take more history; I want to take geology; and I want to take some other sciences. So I chose a B.A. in physical anthropology with heavy weighting to the fact that this would allow me to get that broad liberal arts education that I came for.

I like changing my experiences. Right after college, I had a series of small jobs, little careers, like working for the university, and then working in a little restaurant just to make money so I could live out in the country. I had started inquiring with the Japan teaching



companies and was waiting to hear back from one for a long time. A friend from college, who was working and studying to become a certified Montessori teacher, suggested I would be great teacher and [should] come work at that school. I never went to Japan because I did get the job at Montessori.

When I was finished doing that, I actually just knew this grad student at Duke who knew a man from her hometown in West Virginia who contacted her looking for references to hire someone to restart their [non-profits'] Durham office. So, she thought of me for some reason, hooked me up with the contact. I interviewed via letter and phone, and then went to D.C. to interview with the director and got the job. I had no idea what I would be doing, but that I could do it. I guess the girl recommended me because she knew I had worked in the soup kitchen and helped raise money for the homeless and this was an antipoverty effort. It actually sounded like, and was, a great job. I drove to rural counties and set up meetings and attended them! And I got a free place to live and \$20,000 a year with health insurance [which] sounds great to an early 20's something used to \$5 an hour.

[As a] grassroots organizer [doing] nonprofit work I was in an organization whose goal is to eradicate poverty. I did that for a long time, working in the rural south, and what the Black Belt is. These are a belt of counties that kind of make a crescent shape across the southeast where there typically had been a majority or close to a majority of the population were Black people, and typically these counties were very rural and very poor. So that [job] sent me around to meet all kinds of people in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. I ended up moving to Georgia with that organization. My wife and I both moved to Atlanta; we got married in 1993.

[I was] having paycheck problems because of funding problems with the nonprofit I was working with. I worked for expenses only for a year, and then they told me basically we were

furloughed, so I think they still owe me about \$14,000 to \$17,000 or so if they were to pay me, so I was doing all that for free. That happened at the same time my wife left her job and we moved to Athens so she could go to law school. We had no money coming in from me. Then I had the experience of trying to find a job in Athens, a professional job. That led to all different kinds of things, and then finally I decided I should just have my own business, so I became a financial planner. That was taking all my time, and hurting the marriage a little bit. My wife told me that she would not go off the birth control pill and try for a baby unless I quit that business.

So that's why I left financial planning and actually set around again trying to find a professional job, and using my skills for a while. A job opened up at the library, and we were library users. [I had] never thought about even working in the library, but I had stayed in touch with people I knew in different libraries, and they told me about a storyteller children's job, and thought I should do that. So I applied for that job, and got it, and loved it, and then I fell in love with library stuff. So that is why I am doing what I am now.

Before working in the library, to me the public library [was] just like any other service, like a park or something like that. I didn't even realize until I worked there how much goes on in there. It wasn't even until I worked in the public library that I really learned what a media specialist was. When I worked at the public library I had to work with the schools so then I was like, "Oh, a media specialist is the school librarian." I still don't like that word so much. When people that don't know ask me I'll say teacher librarian. What am I doing right now? Teacher school librarian I will say. I don't know why; because I love all the technology stuff and I hate to knock that out.

One of the things that brought me to the SLM [school library media] program was I wasn't making very much of a living at the library as an assistant. I got to do the fun stuff which

was the story times; you're not going to make a living doing that. We were sliding backwards all those years, especially having children with me making that kind of money and my wife also being a public servant. She's still not up to the state standard because she's a juvenile prosecutor. Juvenile prosecutors are less respected and underpaid, less paid than others. It's true in the public library world. The children's librarians are the lowest paid. And why did the SLM program accept me? People always said, "You should be a teacher." [But] I couldn't see myself being in a classroom seven hours a day or with a variety of kids in upper grades and just teaching a subject.

My work history has been a lot on my own. I do like being kind of on my own, but I've also worked a lot for big places, too, so I've enjoyed working with other people. I do like to be able to have direction over what I'm doing and how and when it's going to get done and that kind of thing. I mean jobs that I've hated would be things that I did just to make money, like working in the dairy, pulling milk cartons off of a conveyor belt and putting them in crates and stacking the crates and wheeling them out to a truck. The fact that it doesn't use the brain so much doesn't bother me, it's just the same thing over and over and over again. Because I did like landscaping and did that on the side in college, just muscle work, no real thinking; I mean literally let's put grass in here, here's the bushes you need to plant, let's put them here. It's not that it's menial or not, it's whether it involves multiple tasks and I don't mean multi-tasking, I mean multi-faceted type work. This goes with my thing about being probably a little ADHD, ADD, whatever; I kind of like to change every 30 minutes, 45, hour and do something different. So that's what makes me happy: a variety of tasks. Then I've discovered, of course, children make me happy, so being with children, so those two things. I like to have lots of space where I would work. I wouldn't want to work in a dark room. Even when I was a businessman, working in a little office, we moved around a lot. I moved to my partner's office, my conference room

and we went out and visited people. So space, variety of tasks, and having children; those are ideal things.

When I was getting out of college I did not go to the campus event where all the people had tables and you throw your resume at Proctor & Gamble and at IBM and at the Army and at somebody. I didn't do that and my uncle had said that is fine. He kind of took on the role – my dad had died while I was in college, so when I saw my uncle he always wanted to talk to me. “About your life, young man,” that kind of thing. He was cool. He's an orthopedic surgeon and he was starting to show signs of burnout at that time. A few more years after that he asked me if I thought he could make a living building boxes and selling them at craft fairs. I said they aren't going to pay you \$300,000 for that. By the time he was 40, I think he was already burnt out of being a knee and ankle surgeon. And he has said that every year since then. He said “I'm just going to keep doing it until I retire; they just pay me too much.” He's doing that thing what I said I don't want to do. He's doing something he's really not interested in. It's not really making him happy, for the reward of lifestyle.

When I was working at the public library, I still had my mind all in financial stuff, particularly benefits, employee benefits and retirement planning. But I wasn't successful getting a job in that specific field, especially not around here, even though after I got hired at the library then a particular industry here called me and said they wanted me to come and be their assistant in the benefits department to take over for a person that's going to be 65 soon. I was like, “too bad” because then I was thinking, “Well, I'm going to do nursing.” I wanted to do nursing or physician assistance or practical nurse because it began to feel like I wanted to help people. But then the more I worked at the library they were real encouraging, “You should go and get your master's degree and be a librarian. You'd be great.” The library will actually give you a day

every month and will give you an hour every week or something like that when you're a student to do that kind of thing, officially.

I started looking at it more and more. I really liked what I was doing, going to conferences and meeting librarians and going to different libraries, too, and seeing a whole bunch of different things going on. I thought seriously about MLIS and talk[ed] to library schools and [thought] maybe I should be a medical librarian, because it mixes up a lot of my interest in my science background. An old family friend of ours had just retired from being a medical librarian in Salt Lake City and had achieved noted status in her position and field; she was the first to mention that area to me. In 2004 I started applying and took the GRE; and fumbled over a year contemplating it. I don't know why; I was just reluctant about making the decision to go ahead and start that program. I was talking to my librarian boss about it and she's the one that put the idea in my head; she said, "Why don't you just go get your media specialist degree and go be a school librarian?" I was like "Oh, I don't know." I'd met media specialists and I kind of knew some of the things they did and I knew they were an important person in the school, but it wasn't until my librarian (she knew I was waffling) said, "When are you going to start your classes? Did you decide to go to Alabama, Columbia or Florida State?" I was like—ahh—and she said, "Go spend a day with Marsha or Jerry or Glen or Nancy." So I did and reflecting on it in a different way afterwards thinking could I stand to work in this school? Can I stand to be in this room that has no exterior window and nothing but fluorescent lamps all day? Because I was used to working in a huge children's area with big, plate-glass windows as well as a variety of mixed lighting, fluorescent light, incandescent lighting. So that was a very fun environment to work in because it was big and open. So anyway, I think about all those kind of things and I thought, "Yeah, I think I can do this." Having me go look at the media specialists

was really great. I got to see this really does incorporate everything I like doing. Especially in elementary, I can still do a little storytelling and I can still help kids find books and still be with kids.

There was some reason that I didn't want to go and do MLIS and do public librarian stuff and I think it's more than just the fact that school systems typically have a nice break in the summer and pay more than public librarians get. I think it's the educational environment. In the public library I liked working with the college students who would come in who were in early childhood education and needed to use books in the library. I just liked teaching somebody something, like using the OPAC. If they didn't come and ask for help I wasn't going to go out and ask, "May I help you" to everybody unless they looked lost. You leave people alone to some degree if they looked like they know what they're doing. So I watched people and I realized after working there long enough I knew that "Oh, they're working on Dr. Walden's assignment and they have to get storybooks that have activities and dance and movement in them." I really liked when they would come and say could you help me find these books. Then I'd be, "Sure" and show them the catalog. I had developed a way to show people in three to four minutes this is how you can get exactly what you want. Then I would see them every week after that for a whole semester and wouldn't need to talk to them. Even at story times we were teaching toddlers and young pre-school kids; we were doing movement and pre-literacy skills. It was kind of cool also educating parents in these story times, like the reason why I read the book this way or did this story and this movement. That was fun. I liked that teaching part of it. I think that's part of what makes the media center attractive to me.

I think these two words, librarians and freedom, just go together. I think it [the library] has to do with providing access and that's where that word freedom comes in my mind. Coming

from the public library to the school library is a transition, but the public library totally provides access to books [and other] materials. My philosophy is providing the access in guiding people to what it is they're seeking in terms of information or even other things; "Where can I find a clown to come to my birthday party?" and that kind of thing. It's still information. Of course there's the whole archivist part of the job and that's kind of fun for me too; keeping things, checking in and checking out. So it's also the keeper of things. There's an ethical part to doing that kind of stuff too which I guess goes back to access. Then the service thing; librarians need to be in the public eye, need to be out there. I think outreach is part of it, too.

So I see myself really as finishing out the rest of "my must-work" career doing that. If I need 15 years of doing that, that will actually be the longest I've done anything because I've kind of changed careers every six or seven years. I see myself kind of doing that still, so maybe after seven or eight years I may not be in the media center or I may change levels, or types. I would like to do a six or seven year at least stint as an elementary school media specialist, at least maybe my youngest kid's career in elementary school. But as long as I'm happy doing my job and I think I know at this point in my life the things that really do charge me up and make me happy, and I know how to deal with the things that you have to do that aren't the enjoyment part of a job.

#### *Commentary*

Charles's career story relates the events that preceded his decision to become a school library media specialist. That choice was influenced by his vocational personality and life theme and accomplished by the process of career adaptation (Savickas, 2005). In the following three parts of the commentary I discuss those three components of career construction theory as they are manifested in Charles' life stories.

### *Vocational Personality*

The vocational personality indicates the types of occupations in which a person will find job satisfaction. It is represented by a resemblance to Holland's personality types.

#### *Investigative.*

Charles' strongest resemblance is with the Investigative type. He has been fascinated with science since elementary school. He said, "In high school we had a wonderful professor of oceanography. Talk about fun, a lab full of aquariums and we would go to the beach and to the marsh. One year we brought in these beautiful coral reef type fishes." In college he majored in physical anthropology. Charles is also very analytical and math oriented as epitomized in his venture as a financial planner.

#### *Realistic.*

Charles's strong resemblance to the Realistic type is primarily manifested in his hobbies. He enjoys working with his hands and tools to make things. He said, "I do like fiddling, and I should say being a handyman. I like building things, everything from a model airplane, the doghouse, and little boxes and stuff like that with just the basic tools that I have."

#### *Artistic.*

Charles has a moderate resemblance to the Artistic type. He enjoys singing karaoke and says that singing in public actually helped him improve his storytelling abilities.

#### *Social.*

Charles has a moderate resemblance to the Social type. He seriously considered going into nursing or some other type of health care occupation because he wanted to help people. More importantly he likes teaching people. He said, "I like pleasing people and I like to make them happy and I don't like letting people down."



### *Life Theme*

Charles' life theme is battling injustice in the world. He identifies himself with the character of Myles Falworth from his favorite childhood book, *Men of Iron* by Howard Pyle (1919). Myles Falworth was a chivalrous knight in medieval times who had to confront his enemy in order to restore his family's honor. Charles said, "That book affected me, increased my enjoyment of reading, and it also kind of helped me understand those moral themes and those chivalry, value, honor, courage, justice themes and the underdog. I just identify with that character."

The first clues to Charles' life theme lie in the two childhood memories he told. When he was two years old he was riding his little toy boat down the sidewalk. His friend rear-ended him and the motor of the boat fell off. He said, "I was terribly upset because it was not whole anymore." The next memory occurred in the second grade during music class. His friend pulled the chair out from under him as he was about to sit down and he fell on the floor. When Charles retaliated by doing the same thing, he got caught by the teacher who rebuked him. Charles told the teacher that his friend did it first, and then he pinched her on the bottom. He said, "I was trying to make the point-- 'Well, then I'll do something to you first and we'll see how you feel,' and so of course she truded me right down to the principal's office. I think I was learning about injustices in the world."

During his career Charles has been on a quest to fight injustice. As a grassroots organizer he helped people learn to overcome poverty; as a financial planner he helped people on a personal level to improve their own finances; and even in the public library he provided people with the information they needed to improve their lives. As a school library media specialist

Charles believes one of the most important things that he will do is provide access to information.

### *Career Adaptability*

Charles has held a variety of jobs and as a consequence had cycled through the stages of orientation, exploration, implementation, and stabilization several times. His recent decision to become a media specialist was complicated by his desire to balance his vocational interests with the needs of his family, both financially and emotionally.

#### *Orientation.*

During the time when Charles was working in the public library, he became *concerned* about his family's future because he was not making much money. He knew that he needed to change to an occupation that would bring in more money, but that also would accommodate his desire to "have a happy family life...with a calmer style of living."

#### *Exploration.*

Charles demonstrated *career curiosity* through examining his own "work values, occupational abilities, and vocational interests" (Savickas, 2007, p. 88) and comparing them to various occupations. Nursing had "always been in mind," but he also considered returning to financial planning, pursuing human resources benefits, and medical librarianship. In 2005 after a year working in the public library as a nonprofessional, he seriously investigated entering an MLS program so that he could advance his career. His *career indecision* caused him to hesitate pursuing that option. He said he "was really happy going to work and seeing kids and the thought of doing corporate or medical or any librarian other than children's services just depressed" him. In the spring of 2006, he reasserted *career control* by conducting an "in-depth exploration" (Savickas, 2007, p. 89) of the school library media occupation. He visited several school libraries

and spoke with media specialists in an effort to determine if that was an environment that he could be happy working in.

*Implementation.*

The school library media center visits increased Charles' *career confidence* that he would be successful and happy in the school library. In the fall of 2006, he applied to the school library program and began the next January. In the summer of 2007, he quit working in the public library to become a full-time student.

### Chapter Summary

The career stories of the participants as presented in this chapter showed the unique path that each person took leading up to their decision to become a school library media specialist. The life theme revealed the underlying motivation that guided each of the choices they made, both personally and professionally. The vocational personality showed each person's abilities, needs, values, and interests and their resemblance to a specific occupational type. Finally, the career adaptability revealed how each person dealt with the various occupational transitions in their life. In the next chapter, I present an analysis of the commonalities in the participants' life stories.

## CHAPTER 5

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In Chapter 4 I presented the individual career stories of each of the five participants. Each story was followed by a discussion that examined those stories in relation to the three components of career construction theory. In this chapter I extend that analysis by looking for commonalities that exist across all the participants' life stories.

I begin by reviewing some of the characteristics that the participants have in common. In keeping with the pattern set in Chapter 4 in which each individual's career story is followed by a commentary, the next section of this chapter is a comparative discussion of the data in light of the three components of career construction theory: vocational personality, life theme, and career adaptation. The discussion of each component begins with a review of the theory as it pertains to the analysis.

The final section of the chapter focuses on the relevant themes gleaned from the data that are common to more than one individual. Polkinghorne (1995) cautions that the stories created during narrative analysis are not appropriate for paradigmatic analysis since they are constructed by the researcher. Therefore, during the paradigmatic analysis to identify general themes, the original interview transcripts were used rather than the first person profiles. During the narrative analysis I "zoomed in" on the details of the participant's stories in order to discover when, how and why this particular person chose to become a media specialist. Subsequently, during comparative analysis it was necessary for me to "zoom out" in order to comprehend the bigger picture that showed the commonalities between the participants. I did not have any a priori categories before I began data analysis, but after I developed some tentative categories I thought it would be useful to compare my

evolving categories against the previous research outlined in my literature review. With this new “start list” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58) in mind I returned to the data. During this analysis if I determined that some of the tentative categories had similar meanings as the “prior research-driven codes” (Ruona, 2005, p. 242), the category names were revised to match those found in the literature. For example “make a difference” became “altruism – service.” My final analysis identified these prior research-driven codes as relevant to my study: parental expectations, good experiences in school, reading, library experiences, altruism–service, desire to work with children, financial stability and security, and flexibility of work schedule. The one new category that I identified through inductive analysis was emotional distance. The chapter concludes with a summary of the comparative analysis.

### The Participants

The three women and two men who participated in this study ranged in age from 28 to 41. The men were the oldest participants. All of the participants grew up in White, middle class, intact nuclear families and have at least one sibling. Lynn, Tom, and Susan are natives of Georgia. Virginia moved to Georgia when she was in high school and Charles moved to Georgia as an adult. All of the participants went to college immediately after high school. Only Lynn majored in education as an undergraduate. Tom and Susan both majored in computer science; Charles majored in anthropology; Virginia majored in health sciences and later obtained her master’s degree in teaching. Lynn, Virginia, and Tom were all working as teachers during this study and Susan and Charles were full-time students. Charles, Susan, and Virginia are each married with two children apiece.

### Career Construction Theory Commonalities

#### *Vocational Personality*

The vocational personality component of career construction theory explains what types of work people prefer to do. Vocational personality is defined as an “individual’s career-related

abilities, needs, values, and interests” (Savickas, 2005, p. 47). As people grow up in their family of origin they begin to develop an idea of the kind of people they are and eventually of the type of work they would like to do. Although these vocational self-concepts are unique to each individual, vocational psychologists have found it useful to organize them into broad categories. In developing career construction theory Savickas recognized Holland’s RIASEC taxonomy as a useful tool for describing the range of vocational personality types.

According to Holland’s theory there are six basic personality types and six corresponding work environments. The personality types and their corresponding work environments are labeled Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. (See Appendix G for definitions of the types.) These types are commonly referred to by the acronym RIASEC. Holland’s concept of congruency, also known as “person-environment fit,” suggests that people are most comfortable, happy, and successful when they work in an environment that matches their type (Holland, 1997; Scherdin, 1994). For example, Artistic people will be happiest working in an environment in which most of the workers are also Artistic types. The Holland types represent ideals or models. The majority of people and work environments include characteristics of all six types to some degree.

A person’s personality type can be assessed by both qualitative and quantitative methods (Holland, 1997; Savickas, 2005). In recent years the use of narrative has become a popular qualitative method (Bujold, 2004; Cochran, 1997). Savickas uses the Career Style Interview to elicit career narratives or stories which can be examined through the “lens of Holland’s RIASEC hexagon” (Savickas, 2005, p. 64) to appraise a person’s vocational personality type. Quantitative assessments such as the Strong Interest Inventory, the Self-Directed Search, and the Vocational Preference Inventory (Holland, 1997) can be used to estimate a person’s profile or personality as

represented by a three letter Holland code. The code lists “in descending order, the three types that the individual most resembles” (Savickas, 2007, p. 84). This code can then be used to help the individual find a suitable work environment. There are approximately “720 different personality patterns” possible (Holland, 1997, p. 3). There are over 12,860 occupations organized by the 3-letter Holland occupational codes in the latest edition of the *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996).

It must be recognized that these types are not discrete or immutable categories, but that there are overlaps between them. For this reason people using the *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* to locate possible occupations are urged to “explore several permutations of their three-letter codes” (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996, p. 12). Consequently, a person who has a code of SAI should search all occupations listed under SAI, as well as SIA, IAS, ISA, AIS, and ASI. The *Dictionary’s* index referencing the Holland Codes to the Dictionary of Occupational Titles Occupations lists only five occupations for SAI – speech pathologist, librarian, acquisitions librarian, dental hygienist, and dental assistant (p. 210). In contrast the same index lists more than 150 occupations for ESA.

Table 5.1 shows the Holland codes for the five participants. These codes were extrapolated from the interview data by examining each person’s vocational self-concepts, work history, and leisure activities. As described in Chapter 4, the codes for Lynn, Virginia, Tom, and Susan show that they resemble some combination of the Social, Investigative, and Artistic types. Charles resembles the Artistic and Investigative types as well as the Realistic type.

Table 5.1 Participants' Holland Codes

Participant	Holland Code
Lynn Parker	ISA
Virginia Clark	SIA
Tom Daniel	AIS
Susan Davis	ASI
Charles Houston	IRA

In the Holland occupational typology “librarians have been placed in the Artistic category since the mid-seventies” (Scherdin, 1994, p. 108). Scherdin’s (1994) landmark study of librarian personality types also found that librarians are dominant on the Artistic type. The most recent edition of the *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* gives a Holland code of SAI for librarian (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996, p. 210) indicating that the Social type is most prominent, followed secondly by the Artistic type, and thirdly, by Investigative.

The Holland code for school library media specialist is ESA or Enterprising – Social – Artistic (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996, p. 243). This is similar to that for elementary and secondary regular education teachers who are primarily classified as SAE or Social – Artistic - Enterprising. Art, music, and secondary English teachers are given the designation ASE. None of the participants have a significant resemblance to the Enterprising type. Four of the five participants have a close resemblance to the Holland code for librarian.

It is important to remember that in career construction theory Holland codes are not intended to be a prescription for choosing an occupation (Savickas, 2005). Instead the codes are useful for suggesting possible occupations. Other factors such as work values, gender, family



situation, social-economic status, and an individual's vocational self-concept are equally important.

### *Life Theme*

The life theme component in career construction theory explains why people do what they do. The life theme reveals the meaning and purpose of a person's career. Each life theme is unique because it emerges from events that occur in one's childhood (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979). No two people live exactly the same life; therefore, no two life themes are exactly alike. In a large population it would be possible to find commonalities across lives. In fact our culture does have such prototypical themes as "the sickly child who becomes a champion bodybuilder" (Savickas, 2005, p. 59). However, comparisons of the life themes of these five participants did not reveal any useful commonalities. Accordingly, I will conclude the discussion of the life theme by simply restating the life themes of each of the participants.

- Lynn's theme is helping others overcoming difficulties in learning.
- Virginia's life theme is taking control of her life and successfully coping with unexpected change and loss.
- Tom's life theme was the expectation that he would not have a long life.
- Susan's life theme is finding a balance between affiliation with her family's values and her own need for individual achievement.
- Charles' life theme is battling injustice in the world.

### *Career Adaptability*

The career adaptability component of career construction theory explains how individuals make occupational choices. The occupational decision-making process consists of four phases. During the first phase, called orientation, the individual becomes aware of the "need to make an

occupational choice in the imminent or intermediate future” (Savickas, 2007, p. 88). The following phase of exploration “enables the individual to make fitting occupational choices based on self-knowledge and occupational information” (p. 88). Exploration ends when the individual specifies an occupation. The implementation phase (or establishment phase) requires the individual to commit to that choice by pursuing the necessary training or “by obtaining a trial position” (p. 89). The final phase of stabilization (or management) involves the individual obtaining work in their chosen occupation. Each time an individual faces “new occupational opportunities or employment threats” (p. 89) this cycle of orientation, exploration, implementation and stabilization is repeated.

The participants in this study had already passed through the first two phases of this cycle and were in the third phase of implementation at the time of the interviews. Their career stories reveal that none of the participants had considered becoming a media specialist prior to the orientation phase.

### *Orientation*

Each participant was prompted to consider their vocational future by a unique set of circumstances. For Susan it was the need to reenter the working world after being a stay-at-home mom for several years. For Charles it was the need to earn more money to support his growing family. For Tom it was the urgency inspired by the impending expiration of his provisional teacher’s certificate. For Virginia it was the awareness that she might not be able to cope emotionally with her students’ family troubles year after year. For Lynn it was her consideration of which master’s degree to pursue during the same school year when she had a particularly challenging group of students. These circumstances instilled in the participants a desire to explore other occupations.

### *Exploration*

At a time when the participants were open to the possibilities of change, they had an encounter with a media specialist that sparked their interest in exploring the occupation of the school library media specialist. That encounter served as the catalyst for the participants to learn more about the work of the school library media specialist and envision themselves in that occupation. During this exploration period the participants compared and contrasted their vocational self-concepts with the work environment to determine if they were compatible.

Sometimes it was the media specialist who identified the fit between the participant's interests and abilities and the occupation of the school library media specialist. In Tom's case a recent graduate of a school library media program told him that the job was perfect for him because of his love for books, computers and audio-visual equipment. That conversation reawakened in Tom memories of how much he had loved working in the library in college. After he took into consideration the additional financial benefits of being a media specialist with a master's degree, he quickly applied to a school library media program. In a similar situation, Susan's media specialist cousin recognized that her "technical background and management skills" were well-suited to the occupation and told her she should apply. After speaking with her teacher mother who supported the choice, Susan made the decision to submit her application to a nearby graduate school. Susan declared, "It never occurred to me to go into a library. I mean, it just never did. Once it did, it seemed just an obvious thing for me to do." For Tom and Susan it was the intervention of a media specialist that directed them toward the occupation of a library media specialist. In other cases the participants themselves made the connection.

Both Virginia and Lynn came to the realization that the work of a library media specialist would suit them, after they had spent a lot of time working with and observing their own school

library media specialists. For Virginia the realization came after her media specialist forwarded her an email advertising a library media graduate program at a nearby university. Virginia affirmed, “The pieces just kind of seemed to fit, although it kind of came together really quickly. It wasn’t something I’d thought about really up until the week before the e-mail came out.” Lynn had been working with her school media specialist for several years, but had not considered going into the library field until she began weighing her options for a master’s degree. One day she was talking to the media specialist when the realization suddenly “hit” her that being a media specialist would be “a doable thing.” She decided she would rather be a media specialist than a counselor.

Charles was prompted by his superior at the public library to obtain his media specialist degree. She encouraged him to visit several school media centers. During those visits he tried to envision himself working in that environment. Because Charles enjoys working in places that have “lots of space,” the physical environment of the media center was very important to him. He asked himself “Can I stand to be in this room that has no exterior window and nothing but fluorescent lamps all day?” Charles discovered that the media center provided attractions that ideally complemented his working style such as working with kids, a variety of tasks, and space. He applied to a school library media graduate program and eventually quit his public library job to devote himself full-time to his studies.

A unique constellation of life events prompted each of the participants to become concerned about the future of their career. This orientation to the future that each experienced made them open to exploring their vocational options. In each case an encounter with a library media specialist led to their discovery of the field of school librarianship. That discovery then led to further exploration of the occupation and eventually to their decision to pursue becoming

school library media specialists. They then implemented that choice by entering a graduate program to obtain their certification.

### Common Themes

This section of the chapter focuses on the following themes that were found to be applicable to more than one participant:

- Parental expectations
- Good experiences in school
- Reading
- Library experiences
- Altruism–service
- Desire to work with children
- Emotional distance
- Financial stability and security
- Flexibility of work Schedule

### *Parental Expectations*

All of the participants' parents had high expectations for their children, particularly with regard to education. Of her parents Virginia said, "They expected us to respect adults...It was expected of you that you were going to try your hardest at school and it wasn't necessarily that you're going to make all A's. Although I was expected to make all A's because I was capable." Lynn's parents actively participated in her studies. She said "If we had school work we sat down with mom and she always went over it with us. There was never just a 'you do it on your own and then you're done.' No it was just like 'let's make sure you've done this right' kind of situation." Lynn related how her mother worked with her to help her learn to read and later how both of her "parents struggled to teach me algebra and geometry and trig."

Susan's parents were interested in making sure she and her brother got a good education. Susan said, "The best school I've ever been to was a primary school. About the second grade they figured out that we were in the district incorrectly.... and they forced my parents into a

Social Circle city school. So my parents decided to move... to Newton County which they thought had a better school system.”

Table 5.2 Educational Levels and Occupations of the Participants’ Parents

Participant	Mother		Father	
	Occupation	Education	Occupation	Education
Lynn Parker	Social Worker	College Graduate	Scientist	College Graduate
Virginia Clark	Stay-At-Home Hospital Lab Technician	Technical School	AT&T Community Relations Manager	College Graduate
Tom Daniel	Stay At Home	High School Graduate	Industrial Plumber	High School Graduate
Susan Davis	Teacher	College Graduate	Small Business Owner	College Graduate
Charles Houston	Stay-At-Home	College Graduate	Doctor; College Dean	College Graduate

As shown in Table 5.2, most of the parents were themselves college graduates and fully expected their children to attend college. Charles said, “Oh, well, we all knew we were going to go to college. I mean both my parents went to college, and my grandparents went to college, so that wasn’t ever a question.” Charles was the first one of his family to go to an out-of-state college. Susan’s parents also expected her to attend college, “but to a good college. I couldn’t just go to any old college.” Tom’s parents were the only ones that did not extend their education beyond high school. Even so, Tom said, “They were determined that we were all three going to go to college,” although to his chagrin “It wasn’t to get a music degree. ... When I said music, they said there’s no way we’re giving you the money for that; or my mother did. My dad didn’t really care.” Like Tom’s father, most of the parents did not recommend a specific occupation or

field of study. Susan said, “That was about the only ambition they had for me. They never once said, ‘You should be this thing or that thing.’” In fact Lynn told her parents what her own goal was. “I knew by the time I was in high school that I wanted to be teacher. I pretty much think I had beaten that into them that I was going to be a teacher no matter what.” On the other hand Virginia laughed as she recalled how her father suggested that she “should just stay those extra couple semesters and get certified to teach. And then years later ‘I go back to school, again, and get certified to teach.’”

### *Good Experiences in School*

All of the participants were excellent students with a good work ethic that helped them achieve. Charles and Tom both attended private, religious elementary schools. They credit the education they received with having a positive impact on their lives. Charles attended an Episcopal Day School from the age of three until junior high school. He emphasized that “the whole school as an institution” was the greatest positive influence on his life. He explained that the school affected him by “teaching work ethic for one thing, and teaching me to feel guilt and shame. I’m motivated to do work because I don’t want to not have it done. In other words, I’m not wanting to do the work so I can show it to you. I’m wanting to do the work because if I don’t show it to you, then I’ll feel guilty.” He transferred that work ethic to the public schools that he attended. “I made straight A’s in everything, until I got to college and went to Duke and the professor had the bell curve and everybody else was number one in their class.” Tom’s Catholic school also had a positive effect on his life. He stated, “I always tell people it was the greatest educational experience of my life, much better than college, way better than high school. It was eight wonderful years of educational experience with the same kids the whole time.” He says that at Catholic School he “had to memorize portions of the Catholic Bible. I’ve got a very good

memory. I can still sit down today and play songs I learned when I was in high school. There's 300 kids in the school. I can tell you what their story is, who they're dating, what music they like. I attribute it to all that memorization we had to do in Catholic school."

Lynn's memories of the public schools that she attended are dominated by her struggles in learning to read and of the third grade teacher who finally helped her succeed. She spoke with admiration about the teacher who served as her role model. "Mrs. Naylor was my teacher at the time. She had a compassionate heart. She really cared. She didn't ever make me feel stupid.... I always knew that I wanted to teach early childhood education, but I think that I did choose to go into third grade because of her." Lynn said that after she became a reader, she had difficulty learning math. Even though she did graduate with honors from high school, she felt like it was "the bare minimum extent" and believed she could have done better. She made a vow to her mother on that day that she would graduate from college with honors. Lynn achieved that goal by graduating magna cum laude four years later. Lynn confessed "At times I think I am my own worst enemy. If I get negative and think that I can't do something, but when I put my mind to it I can do anything. I think that is what that taught me. It can happen and I can do it."

Virginia does not remember much about her school years. She explained, "It came easy to me. I pretty much made mostly A's all the time in high school. I didn't really have to struggle in school. So maybe that's why. I don't know." What Virginia does remember are the life lessons that she learned as a swimmer. "I think through swimming not only did I meet a lot of people that I wouldn't have otherwise known, but it also gave me a good work ethic. I didn't give up on things quickly." Virginia believes that "you shouldn't expect things to be given to you. I think that you need to work hard for what you want and what you need. I think it makes you a better person for it as well." She has demonstrated that philosophy in her life by returning to graduate



school even though it means “coordinating our schedules between my school and my husband’s drill and the after school program and our daughter. [We’re] trying to work that all together because it is the right thing for me to do.”

Susan said, “I was in gifted classes, and they were a lot of fun.... I made really good grades in high school and the University of Georgia.” Susan believes that “it’s really no fun to waste time. It’s better to work. It’s better. It’s more fun. You feel like you’ve accomplished something at the end of the day, and you learn something when you’re doing it.”

### *Reading*

Although all of the participants enjoy reading as adults, not all of them were avid readers as children. Tom did not become an avid reader until he got to college. He explained, “I don’t recall there being a whole lot of books which is why I didn’t read that much growing up.” In college he worked in the library with another student who began recommending books to him. Tom said, “That’s when I started reading. Then I would just read all the time. Ever since then, it’s just constant.”

I love those books like the *Imponderables* where they ask questions like why do clocks run clockwise and why can’t penguins fly. I’ll get those and keep them in the car. If I’m going to an appointment where I’m going to have to sit and wait, I bring those because they’re two or three page stories on something interesting. You’re not having to get deep into some narrative and then put the book back down. I can just keep it under the seat of the truck and pull it out. You cannot waste your time.

Virginia remembers having her parents read *The Night Before Christmas* to her “over and over and over again.” She does not remember learning to read, but says, “I know I always had

books and my parents say that I was just like my daughter constantly wanting to be read to.” She enjoys reading now, but does not feel like she gets “to do a whole lot of just personal reading” because she is “trying to read books for school so I can keep ahead of my kids.” She really enjoys reading books to her students that the media specialist recommends. She also said that when she attended the Children’s Literature Conference and got to hear from children’s book authors she “just kind of got sucked into the literature.”

Lynn had difficulties learning to read, but once she did she said books became “sort of an escape” and she could “not be found without a book in my hand.” Her favorite childhood book was *The Berenstain Bears' Christmas Tree*. She remembers the book fondly because of warm memories of everybody in her family reading it to her. Lynn loves to read all the time. Like Tom, Lynn said, “I carry a book with me everywhere just in case. If I ever had to wait on someone, like going to the airport or even when I go to the doctor's office I just make sure I have a book with me. There's a book in my car at all times.” Lynn combines her love of reading with another hobby. She stated, “I'm a people watcher too.” She likes to go somewhere and just look at people. She has found that “if you have a book you can get away with more” because people are “not as threatened by people with books, because they're like, ‘Oh, they're reading.’”

Susan was an avid childhood reader. She said “My brother swears up and down that I would never do anything because my nose was always stuck in a book. Now that wasn't true. My nose was often stuck in a book, but it was not always stuck in a book.” As an adult she loves to read and like Tom and Lynn, she said, “I'm one of these people that have a book in the car. If I'm ever caught for ten minutes somewhere I can read. I consider it a waste of time if I'm just sitting there staring off into space and not reading something. I'd love to tell you that I'm such an

intellectual that I read nonfiction a lot, but I really don't. I mostly read fiction, and I often read the same things over and over and over and over again.”

Charles recalls that his mother read to him daily, and that he became an avid reader himself in the summer after the fourth grade. “I remember *Time Cat* by Lloyd Alexander got me going. It was the first novel I remember ‘being in and going through;’ I didn't want it to end. *Men of Iron* got me interested in the medieval historical fiction and even fantasy later with Walter Dean Myers.” In high school Charles says that he along with a couple of friends began reading authors like O'Conner, Kerouac, Vonnegut, Raymond Carver, and Dahl “for fun.” He says that recently he has lamented not being able to read for enjoyment “because of time and eye fatigue at night.” He is feeling “out-of-touch” with children’s literature and is looking forward to reading the new award winners when he is through with classes.

#### *Library Experiences*

It is not surprising that the majority of the participants who were readers as children were also enthusiastic library users. After Lynn became an avid reader, she became an avid library user too. She said, “I think that wherever in my life I have been since about fourth grade I've known where the library is. I have felt comfortable being in one. I've had a membership to a library since I was in fifth grade. I would go to the media center in middle school all the time and check out scary stories and Nancy Drew.”

Virginia does not have many memories of going to the public library when she was younger, but she does remember that in elementary school she “went through a special training to be a library helper.” She admitted, “I actually still have the certificate. I can remember going there and helping put books back and enjoying flipping through the books.” When Virginia

became a teacher and began working closely with the media specialist she said “it just kind of opened up a whole new world” for her.

Susan has vivid memories of visiting the Newton County public library with her mother and brother. She said, “I would find books and sit on the floor and read one and then pick out all the ones I wanted. I read a lot and always just felt so comfortable. I just loved to go there.”

Although she does not have explicit memories of visiting the public library in Monroe, she tells this story.

They did a little article to promote funds for the library and it said, “Susan needs more books.” There’s a picture of me reading a book with a little cat that I drew that went along with the book. You read the article and it’s so bragging; I’m like, “I read more books than most kids in my class.” It’s a little embarrassing. I still have the article though.

Susan also recalls going to the library at her elementary school “and checking out a lot of books.” In college she “would go to the library and study.” She said, “It’s quiet. That quiet sound is comforting. And it smells good and there’s so much great stuff to read there.” Susan concludes, “I love the library. I can’t understand why I never thought about a library as a career before.”

Charles does not remember using his high school library, but in high school he did “go to the public library. I would study before going home at the end of the day.” The libraries at college were also important places for him to study. Charles said, “I’ve always used public libraries...but not until working at a public library did it really impact my life a lot more. I didn't even realize until I worked there how much goes on in there.”

When he was growing up Tom did not have much exposure to libraries. Tom said that his primary contact with the library in his high school was through helping the librarians with audio-visual projects. He added, “I don’t think I ever checked a book out of the high school library.” Things changed when he went to college and got a job in the library.

I worked in a college library for three years and I fell in love with it. It was awesome, and I would have done it for the rest of my life, but there was no money in it. I would have done it then because I loved working and I loved the books. I loved, believe it or not, the quiet, the orderliness of it. I like order and that everything’s in place in the library. Every book’s got one place for it to be. I like to read and I love audiovisual equipment, and it just seemed like it was made for me.

Even though the college librarians encouraged Tom to pursue a library career and offered to help him secure a scholarship, he decided against it. The issues that prevented Tom from initially pursuing a library occupation are no longer relevant and he is looking forward now to integrating his love of books, kids, and technology into the job of a media specialist.

#### *Altruism – Service*

Most of the participants give altruistic, service-oriented reasons for choosing to become school library media specialists. Susan, who is coming into the profession from the business world, said “I really wanted something where I could make a difference in some lives.” Charles gave this explanation behind his decision to become a library media specialist rather than a nurse. “It basically had to do with me figuring out that it's not just generally helping people that I like doing, but it's teaching them, having them learn, having them know something from what I say or do.” Lynn’s desire to help students stemmed from her own struggles in learning to read.

Of her learning difficulties she asserted, “That has played a huge role in who I have become and of what guides me in life. If I could take that away from another child, I would.” Virginia echoed these sentiments. “I like to feel like I’m making a difference. I want to be able to see, not necessarily a change, but just know that what I’m doing is worthwhile.”

Tom’s actions demonstrate his altruistic attitude. He enjoys helping both the students and the staff at the charter school where he teaches. He declared, “I am the student activities guy. I’m the one that usually runs all the programs. We do nine homework dances a year and the field day and the talent show and the perfect paycheck parties.” Almost every weekend he goes to yard sales where he buys books and belts. He donates the books to the library and to the teachers. The belts he keeps in a drawer to give to the students “because they have to have a belt.” Tom related that “one day I had to take my belt off and give it to a kid because I was out of them.” Tom also enjoys fixing computers for other people or “finding some obscure song that somebody wanted.” Now that he is in graduate school he has less time for things like that. He admitted, “I always feel bad when I have to say no when somebody asks me can you do this, or have you got that.” Tom thinks that he is suited to being a media specialist due to his “interest in helping others, working with other people, ....combined with the books and the technology that...is so much a part” of his life.

#### *Desire to Work with Children*

One of the reasons the participants gave for choosing to become library media specialists is that they like working with children. Perhaps no one was more surprised by this than Tom. When he began teaching six years ago he thought, “Well maybe I won’t like it and I’ll figure out something else I want to do with my life.” Instead he discovered that he did like it. He said, “It’s fun. I like working with the kids that age. I can relate to them. There are a lot of them that are

like, 'Oh, you're the one here that'll listen to us.' Because I'll pay attention to who they're going out with or what the popular fad of the moment is."

Lynn likes what she calls "the kid ethic." She said that children are a puzzle to her and she thinks "listening to them and hearing their thinking" and "trying to figure them out" is "just really cool." Lynn also expressed that being a media specialist will be "cool" because "you get to deal with every kid in the school." She is excited at the idea of being "surrounded by books all day and to be able to share that" with the students and "transfer your love to them."

Charles is looking forward to working as a media specialist in an elementary school because "the kind of kids who are making me happy and charging me up with enthusiasm" are "the little kids" in "kindergarten, first, and second grades." He also acknowledged, "I can be a little daffy" and "that's why I like hanging around with kids because I like that alternate perspective of things."

### *Emotional Distance*

Both Lynn and Virginia decided to leave the regular classroom for the media center in order to distance themselves emotionally from the students. Lynn disclosed how the previous school year 14 of her 23 students were EIP students. That meant that each of the children had an Educational Improvement Plan specifically addressing their individual needs. Lynn did not feel that she had "enough time to give them the individual attention that every single one of those 14 needed." When she did spend a lot of time with the EIP students, she felt like she was neglecting the other nine students. She also says that "as a classroom teacher I stress reading and stress reading and stress reading and I feel like I am just bullying these children." Instead she wanted to show her students the pleasure that she has found through reading. During this same period Lynn was trying to decide whether to pursue a master's degree either in counseling or library media.

She had been spending time with the media specialist at her school, helping out and observing the media specialist interact with the students. Lynn liked what she saw and thought “how wonderful it would be to not have the stress of making sure that the kids could read” but to actually help them enjoy reading. Lynn’s decision to pursue a master’s degree for library media rather than that for a counselor was supported by her mother who reminded her that she gets “too involved with peoples’ lives” and that being a media specialist is a “better fit” for her. Lynn concluded, “I guess I want to make a difference, but I want to do it in a way that I actually feel like I’m making a difference. I think I would be happier moving in another direction besides teaching in the classroom.”

Virginia’s story is similar to Lynn’s. She wants to make a difference in the students’ lives but stated, “Sometimes it’s hard. At our school especially we work so hard on the academics, but there’s so much more that we deal with like the single parent households and the DFACS referrals and things like that that weigh heavily on your heart. My last year was just so hard. I don’t know that my heart can take any more of this.” Like Lynn, Virginia had been involved in media center activities with her students. During conversations with the media specialist she asked about the occupation. Based on those discussions, Virginia believes that as a media specialist she will still be able to “get to know all of the kids...and be involved and help them learn,” but not be so close to them. She hopes that she can make a difference and yet not “get sucked in with the emotions” like she did in the classroom.

#### *Financial Stability and Security*

The participants were also attracted by the steady paycheck, benefits, and a retirement plan that working in a school offered. One reason Susan gave for not pursuing her dream of being an actor was “I really wanted the stable life.... I’m one of these people that really needs a



steady paycheck, health benefits, retirement, that kind of stuff. That's security for me." Charles was also motivated by financial security. He gave this reason for choosing to become a full-time student in pursuit of the library media specialist degree. "Stopping being an assistant at the public library had to happen. [As] a family person who had a wife who is a public servant who is not making all the money in the world, I needed to contribute income. [With] what I was making at the public library...we were never going to get ahead – ever. We would not be able to buy a new car." Tom was attracted by the "pay boost" that he would receive once he earned his degree, as well as by the retirement plan. He said "the retirement's also much better because nobody has a retirement plan anymore." Virginia was also looking forward to the pay raise. She said "I will at least get a pay raise out of it once I get my degree even if I don't have the media specialist position. That's good if it takes me a while to find where I'd want to be. I made sure of that before I even applied." "We would like to be out of debt...which we've been working hard on. Part of the motivation in doing it and saving for retirement is so we can have that lake house to go to once we're retired." Only Lynn, who at 28 is the youngest of the participants, did not indicate that finances played any role in her decision to become a library media specialist.

#### *Flexibility of Work Schedule*

For the three participants with children, flexibility in the work schedule was a factor in their decision to become library media specialists. Even though as a teacher Virginia already had a similar schedule to that of her children, she was attracted by the possibility of a more flexible schedule as a media specialist. The media specialist at her school told her that some media specialists can work "part time or two people will share a full time job." Virginia stated that having a more flexible work schedule would be better "with having young children. If we could

work that into our lives...where I got off earlier in the day I could make sure I was home when they got off the bus.”

The school schedule was also attractive to Charles who has two children. He said that half of his wife’s family live “in a foreign country and we need to visit them.” Having a job with “at least 30 days in the summer that I can have as my own” would allow them the opportunity for extended travel overseas. Charles also said that although it was “not a causative factor” in his occupational choice, “but kind of an afterthought,” he was pleased that his work schedule would be compatible with that of his daughter who would “be entering kindergarten” at the same time that he “should be entering the job.” He said, “My real dream is to be in the same school that she would likely go to anyway.”

Susan said that being a mother influenced her decision to become a media specialist. She said that the school schedule was one factor. “My husband didn’t really care for me to go back to the 60, 70 hour-a-week thing I was doing” in the business world. She also hoped to work in an elementary school while her children are young. She said, “I know it’s a fallacy to say it’s the same schedule, but it kind of is when you compare it to a corporate job, because of the balanced scheduling in a lot of counties. I’d like for them to have their summers and me not have to spend a lot of time figuring, ‘okay, where are they going to go this week and who is going to keep them that week.’” A bigger factor in her decision is that she wants to be involved in the field of education so that she can help her children get a “better education.” She added, “Plus it’s nice to know while my kids are young what the pertinent literature and information things are in elementary school.”

## Chapter Summary

The findings show that school library media as an occupation was not an obvious choice to most of the participants. It usually took someone pointing out that school librarianship was a possible occupation before they even considered it. The five participants have closely related vocational personalities that resemble that of librarians in general rather than that of a school library media specialist.

The life themes show that each of the participants in the study had their individual reasons for deciding to become school library media specialists, but several commonalities did emerge from the data. During their childhood, four of the five participants were avid readers and all three women were enthusiastic library patrons. Education was important to the participants and to their parents. They were all high achieving students with a strong work ethic. The participants chose to become school librarians because they like children and want to make a difference in their education. The two women teachers desired to leave the classroom in order to put emotional distance between them and the traumas of their students. The participants also gave pragmatic reasons for choosing the school library field. For the three parents the attraction was a work schedule that was compatible with having a family. Financial security in the form of a steady paycheck, benefits, and a retirement plan were important factors in the decision for all the participants. The majority of these common factors are also found in the prior research studies on people's motivations for becoming librarians. The implications of the findings from Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 are discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this narrative research study was to identify and explore the reasons that five graduate students in a school library media program had for selecting the occupation of school library media specialist. Career construction theory (Savickas, 2005) served as the framework for understanding the vocational behavior of the participants in the study. The primary data collection method was through life story interviews. Narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) was used to create first-person career stories for each of the individual participants. The data was also examined in relation to the three major components of career construction theory. The findings from the study were presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. This chapter includes a discussion of the findings, recommendations for future research, implications for practice, and a conclusion.

The following research questions guided the study:

- How have the participants reached this decision point in their lives, both personally and professionally?
- What themes are revealed in the life stories of the participants?
- How do the life stories reveal the influence of the participants' social context (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, family, etc.) on their careers?
- What commonalities occur across the participants' stories?

## Discussion of Findings

In this section I discuss the four research questions and relate them to the research literature. The first two research questions pertain to the career adaptation and life theme components of career construction theory, respectively. The third question is considered under a category called social context. This is followed by the third component of career construction theory, vocational personality. The last question is answered with a discussion of common themes. See Appendix H for a summary chart including brief answers to the research questions and narrative references.

### *Career Adaptation*

Cohen and Mallon (2001) describe a career narrative as “the complex, baggy, sometimes contradictory, often circuitous accounts of their careers that people construct in the course of research conversations or qualitative interviews” (p. 50). This is true of the career stories of the five participants in this study. These stories show that none of the participants took a direct path to the occupation of school librarian. Prior to their decision to become school librarians all of the participants worked in other occupations. None of them had long-range plans to enter this field. This finding that most individuals enter the profession later in their careers is corroborated in the research literature (Ard et al., 2006; Chapman et al., 1999; Deeming & Chelin, 2001; Julian, 1979; Luzius, 2005). In fact, the average library science student is 35 years old (Matarazzo & Mika, 2006) and less than 10% of librarians are under the age of 30 (Whelan, 2003). In this study the participants ranged in age from 28 to 41 with 2 participants exactly 35 years old. These figures demonstrate that librarianship is typically not a first career. For most people the choice to become a librarian occurs after they have had at least one previous job.

During the course of their work lives each of the participants faced the need to make occupational choices due to job loss. Whether the decision was voluntary as it was for Susan and Tom, or involuntary, as it was for Virginia and Charles, the loss of the job prompted the participants to adapt to the changing circumstances. As described in career construction theory, during these transitional periods the participants cycled through the stages of orientation, exploration, implementation, and stabilization as they made new occupational choices (Savickas, 2007).

For all the participants the current transition from their previous occupation to the occupation of school library media specialists was a voluntary change. This change was precipitated by specific circumstances in their lives which caused them to exhibit career concern. As the participants explored a variety of directions which their work might follow, contact with a library media specialist directed their focus toward librarianship. The library research literature has repeatedly shown that individuals are influenced by librarians to enter the library profession (Buttler & Caynon, 1992; Dewey, 1985; Heim & Moen, 1989; Hussey, 2006; McCreedy, 1963). In fact, one of the standard recruitment strategies calls for every librarian to recruit at least one new person into the profession (American Library Association Office for Library Personnel Resources, 1989). In this study that strategy was effective in helping the participants to see that their vocational personalities made them good candidates for this particular occupation.

Two of the five participants had previous experience working in a library, a common motivation for people entering the library profession (Ard et al., 2006; Chapman et al., 1999; Heim & Moen, 1989; McClenney, 1989). Charles' reasons were typical of those in this category; he wanted to advance his career in order to earn a better salary than he was making as a paraprofessional. Tom's decision to choose school library media was partially based on his

remembrances of how much he had enjoyed working in the library in college. Research has shown that the enjoyment of the nature of library work is another common reason that people are drawn to the profession (Buttler & Caynon, 1992; Chapman et al., 1999; Deeming & Chelin, 2001). Working in a library as a nonprofessional allows people to “try on” (Savickas, 2002, p. 177) the occupation for fit. Library staff members are often ideal candidates for recruitment.

### *Life Theme*

An individual’s life theme has its roots in the situations a person faces growing up. According to career construction theory, “the theme matters to individuals in that it gives meaning and purpose to their work” and “what they do and contribute to society matters to other people” (Savickas, 2006a, p. 86). When people choose an occupation it may represent a solution to the problems of their youth. Lynn’s life theme is illustrative of this process.

Lynn had great difficulties in learning to read, and as a consequence she felt “stupid.” Her occupational solution to this problem was to become a teacher. This occupation addressed her feelings that she was not intelligent because teachers are viewed as bearers of knowledge. Helping children learn to read gave purpose to her work and allowed her to serve others in the same way her third grade teacher had helped her. Lynn’s life theme continued to be relevant as she made her decision to become a school library media specialist. Lynn’s new occupation will allow her to contribute to society.

In like manner all the participants’ life themes reveal what matters to them. Reading the career stories of each participant shows how these themes have been manifested in their lives. These life themes are specific to the individual person and as such are not subject to generalization. The life theme explains why work matters to people; the particular occupation that is chosen as a solution to their life theme is explained by the vocational personality.

### *Social Context*

The life stories of the participants show the influence of family, schooling, and role models on the participants' vocational lives, whereas ethnicity and gender were not seen as significant influences in this study. The findings show that the participants' parents greatly influenced their educational aspirations and the development of a strong work ethic. According to career construction theory, parents serve as their children's first role models as they begin to learn about themselves and the world around them (Savickas, 2002). The participants were from White, middle class families that strongly valued education. The parents instilled in their children traditional family values such as hard work, respect for others, and academic achievement. Virginia spoke often of her parents' high expectations for her to achieve in school, as well as for respecting her elders. Her parents sacrificed financially to provide her with extracurricular activities that taught her the values of cooperation, persistence, and setting goals. All of the participants' parents expected them to succeed academically.

Most of the parents were proactive in ensuring their children's education. For example, Susan's parents moved so that she could go to a better school. Lynn's mother made sure that she did her homework "right" and both her parents helped her with reading and arithmetic. Tom and Charles both went to private, religious schools which they credited with having the greatest positive influence on their lives. The high academic expectations and supportiveness of the families were important factors in helping the participants to achieve.

The work lives of the parents were also an important influence on the participants' vocational development. This seems especially true of the mothers' work role. Tom, Charles and Virginia had mothers who did not work outside the home. Lynn and Susan had mothers who chose occupations that would enable them to balance the demands of work and family. Several



of the participants told stories of their mothers who were always there when they “got off the bus,” and who would help them with homework and take them to their activities. This model of the traditional family, with the father the breadwinner and the mother the primary caretaker of the children, influenced the participants’ future working lives. The participants who were parents chose occupations that would permit them to emulate the type of family in which they grew up. This is quite evident in Susan’s choices. By selecting to be a school library media specialist she was following in the footsteps of previous generations of women in her family who were educators. Susan prioritized the needs of her family, perhaps even above her own needs. Charles also thought it was important to choose an occupation that would accommodate his family’s needs. He believed that the long hours he had to work as a financial planner had hurt his marriage. As a consequence he explored other opportunities and eventually chose school library media. He also hoped to work in the same school that his children would attend. The stories of these participants show that, for this study, parental status was a more important factor than gender in making an occupational choice.

Another significant influence of the social context on the participants’ careers was in the development of their vocational identity. A person’s vocational self-concept develops during their formative years growing up in their family of origin (Holland, 1997; Savickas, 2002). “When children engage in play, hobbies, chores, and schoolwork, they form self-perceptions and make social comparisons that build the attributes and characteristics that will constitute their vocational self-concepts, as well as conceptions of the work role” (Savickas, 2002, p. 162). These interactions in combination with a child’s “inherited aptitudes” and “physical make-up” (Savickas, 2005, p. 46) lead to the formation of a person’s vocational personality.

Experiences that occur during children's early stages of career growth, "defined as ages four to thirteen" (Savickas, 2002, p. 167), allow them to explore and develop their interests, skills, and abilities. Middle class families have an advantage over lower income families because they have the financial resources to provide their children with a variety of experiences (Bryant, Zvonkovic, Reynolds, 2006). The families of the participants in this study were financially able to provide opportunities for them to explore the world outside their family and school. Charles spoke glowingly of childhood trips to his family's beach cottage where he could indulge his scientific passion by collecting fish. Virginia's experiences as part of a swim team nurtured her ability to work with a variety of people; those skills manifested themselves in her concept of herself as someone who gets along with others and who "doesn't give up on things quickly." Lynn's mother took her to the library after she learned to love reading. Susan's mother also introduced her to the library. Additionally, she was able to discover her love of acting by participating in her school's theater group. Tom's grandmother ensured that he had music lessons as well as a computer. Childhood activities such as these helped the participants develop their conception of the kind of people they are and what they might like to do, in essence, their vocational personality.

### *Vocational Personality*

The vocational personality describes an individual's "abilities, needs, values, and interests" (Savickas, 2006, p. 86). In career construction theory the vocational personality is portrayed as resemblances to socially constructed categories, specifically Holland RIASEC codes. The Holland RIASEC taxonomy is useful in suggesting occupations which will allow people "to exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles" (Holland, 1997, p. 4) thereby fostering job satisfaction. Typically,

people who resemble a certain type are most comfortable, happy, and successful when they work in a congruent occupation. However, it is important to note that “a variety of people are found successfully working within any single occupation” (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996, p. 13). This may be especially true of occupations such as librarian because of the wide variety of tasks inherent in the job.

As described in Chapter 4, the codes for Lynn, Virginia, Tom, and Susan show that they resemble some combination of the Social, Investigative, and Artistic types, whereas Charles resembles the Artistic, Investigative and Realistic types. The Holland code for the occupation of librarian is SAI (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996, p. 210) and the code for school library media specialist is ESA (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996, p. 243). According to this rubric, four of the five participants would be best suited to the occupation of librarian in general, but not to that of school library media specialist. Charles’ Investigative-Realistic-Artistic combination matches two of the three codes for librarian and only one for media specialist. Interestingly enough, all five participants have the Artistic type in common.

Frankly, I was surprised to discover that the code for librarians included the Artistic type. Even though I have been in the library profession since 1986, it was still difficult to picture librarians as Artistic types who “prefer free, unstructured situations with maximum opportunity for self-expression.” (David & Scherdin, 1994, p. 123). Scherdin (1994) provided one explanation (p. 108):

The SII User’s Guide reports that some people who score high in the Artistic category may be involved in the arts as spectators or observers rather than as direct participants. Their potential competencies include creativity, imagination and verbal-linguistic skills ... Typical hobbies include reading, writing poetry or

stories, collecting art work, and going to theaters, museums, and galleries. Artistic occupations include art museum director, artist, author-reporter, entertainer-musician, librarian, lawyer, advertising executive, and photographer.

Many librarians would identify themselves as *appreciators* of the arts and certainly as readers. The Artistic type is also described as someone who “values self-expression and equality for all” (Holland, 1997, p. 24), an apt description for a profession that promotes intellectual freedom. The participants in this study exhibited some of the creative abilities that librarians might use on the job. For example, Charles described his storytelling performances and Lynn spoke of the dramatic readalouds she enjoys doing. Taken together this evidence convinced me that the Artistic type does indeed describe librarians.

The fact that librarians are categorized as Artistic may also provide an explanation for why this occupation is one that people select later in their lives. Eikleberry describes the dilemma the Artistic type faces in finding work (1999, p. 15).

There are many more Realistic and Enterprising jobs than there are Investigative, Artistic, and Social jobs. Artistic jobs are especially scarce: Only about 1.5 percent of the U.S. civilian labor force was employed in Artistic occupations in 1990. At the same time, about 9 percent of American men and 13 percent of American women were classified as Artistic. This means that there were about **seven times as many Artistic types as there were Artistic jobs** in 1990 (emphasis in original).

The implication of this is that it is harder for Artistic types than for any of the other types to find suitable occupations. Additionally, there are more women than men who resemble the Artistic type (Eikleberry, 1999), thus making it more difficult for women to find compatible occupations.

Recall that career construction is a “series of attempts to implement a self-concept” (Savickas, 2005, p. 45). As people progress from job to job their goal is to achieve a better and better fit between their vocational personality and their work environment. For economic reasons, people who resemble the Artistic type may work in occupations in which they are not able to express their Artistic side. When these people transition to other jobs they will attempt to find a better match. Individuals who eventually become librarians may go through “a sequence of matching decisions” (Savickas, 2005, p. 45) as they attempt to find an occupation where they can feel comfortable and find fulfillment. Given that the occupation of a librarian does not seem to be an obvious choice for many people, the process may take years. This provides one explanation for people to choose librarianship later in their careers. Additionally, the fact that more women than men are classified as Artistic may explain why the profession is female intensive.

Even though the participants in this study have Holland codes that do not ideally match that of the school library media specialist, this certainly does not mean that they will not achieve success in this occupation. Every occupation has room for a wide range of personalities (Holland, 1997), and school library media is no exception.

#### Common Themes

Many of the findings from this study reflect concepts presented in the research literature on occupational choice for librarianship. The love of books and reading is in all likelihood the most common reason given by people for becoming a librarian (Carmichael, 1992; Esser, 1999; Gordon & Nesbeitt, 1999; Hussey, 2006; Julian, 1979; Lee, 1964; McCreedy, 1963; Watson-Boone, 2007; Weihs, 1999). In a recent study, 431 library practitioners, who graduated from eight liberal arts colleges from 1962 through 2000, were asked to indicate which of 13 factors

made librarianship an attractive career for them (Watson-Boone, 2007). The top-ranking answer the “*Love of books/reading* held true over the 39 years represented” (p. 93) by the alumni in the study. Likewise, the participants in the present study indicated they are avid readers. Tom, Susan, and Lynn were adamant about having a book with them at all times because they did not want to waste time. Except for Tom, all the participants were readers as children and loved books. One way that the participants’ parents encouraged their children’s passion for reading was by taking them to the library.

The majority of the participants were library users from a young age, which is a common characteristic of librarians (Gordon & Nesbeitt, 1999; Van House, 1988). Those participants who were not library users as children later realized the benefits of the library after working in one as adults. Being a library user and working in a library are typical motivations for choosing a library occupation.

The library itself evoked vivid memories from some of the participants. Both Lynn and Susan spoke in almost reverential tones of the library as a special place. Lynn viewed the library as a safe place. Susan, who wistfully said she should have been an actress, compared the library with a theater stage; she loved the quiet and the smell. Charles spoke enthusiastically about the libraries in college, “I loved the libraries at Duke. They've changed since then, but, yeah, I lived in two of the big libraries.” The implication of this finding is that individuals who enjoy spending time in libraries might also envision themselves working in one.

There are many people who enjoy reading books and visiting libraries, but obviously they do not all choose to become librarians. What is the difference between those library users and the people who do enter the library profession? I posited that question to all my participants and every one of them gave me the same answer. Invariably they said, “I want to make a difference; I

want to help people.” The library research literature confirms that being part of a service-oriented profession is a major reason that people become librarians (Gordon & Nesbeitt, 1999; Houdyshell, Robles, & Yi, 1999; Julian, 1979). The participants in this study want to help children develop information literacy skills, but perhaps even more importantly, they want children to learn to love books and reading as much as they do.

A desire to work with people is a frequently cited reason people choose the library profession (Gordon & Nesbeitt, 1999; McCreedy, 1963; Van House, 1988; Watson-Boone, 2007). Most librarians are *people who like people* (Scherdin, 1994). The participants in this study are no exception; they genuinely like children and look forward to working with all the teachers in the school. Additionally, the participants who are teachers were eagerly anticipating working with a greater number and variety of children than they had in the classroom.

So far, the findings in this study have been consistent with those found in the library research literature. This suggests that the reasons that these five participants have given for becoming school library media specialists are not significantly different than those applicable to other library specialties. This study did find other reasons though, that are not so prevalent in the library literature.

The majority of the participants were motivated by the financial stability and security provided by working in a K12 school system. Of special import were the retirement benefits they would have as media specialists. This is in contrast to previous research studies that found that financial rewards were of less significance than other motives. In a study by Heim & Moen (1989) only 25% of the participants were motivated by salary. The study by Chapman et al. (1999) found only 12% of the participants were motivated by financial reasons. Only 2% of the participants in Watson-Boone’s (2007) study indicated they were motivated by salary or other

financial considerations. One explanation for the present study's finding may be that librarians who want to work with children are usually limited to working in either a public or a school library. Of those two choices, school library media specialists typically have higher salaries than youth librarians in public libraries (Maata, 2007). The addition of financial security and a flexible work schedule provided an attractive combination for the participants in this study.

The three participants in this study who are parents were particularly motivated by the nine-month schedule typical of K12 schools. They saw the possibility of working a similar schedule to that of their school age children as a great benefit. Virginia, who was transitioning from a classroom teacher to a media specialist, hoped that would provide even more flexibility in her schedule, with perhaps even the possibility of part-time work. The research literature has not been specific in identifying this as a motivation, although it may be subsumed under categories such as "working conditions" (Watson-Boone, 2007, p. 93) or possibly even "enjoyment of the working environment" (Houdyshell, Robles, & Yi, 1999, p. 22). Alternatively, this may be a factor applicable primarily to school librarians since their working hours are substantively different from those of many library specialties.

This study found one motivation not mentioned in the library research literature: emotional distance. For both Lynn and Virginia the position of school library media specialist would provide them some emotional distance from the tribulations of the students they dealt with intimately on a daily basis as classroom teachers. They doubted their ability to cope with the social problems of the students year after year. They still wanted to work with children, and hoped that as a school librarian they could continue to make a difference. This finding has implications for further research.



## Recommendations for Future Research

This study was one small step toward addressing the dearth of research on the occupational choice of school library media specialists. The qualitative nature of the study provided an in-depth look into the complex reasons that five people chose to become media specialists. Further exploration should expand the participants to include both working school librarians and library students attending other institutions. Research targeting specific populations such as men, non-educators, and first career school librarians may give further insight into the occupational choice of media specialists. More research is also needed to understand the reasons that teachers choose to leave the classroom to become media specialists. Does the finding of emotional distance as a motivation hold true for other teachers? Future research may benefit from the use of quantitative measures that incorporate the findings of this study to see if they are applicable to a larger number of participants.

## Implications for Practice

One of the goals for this study was to suggest possible strategies for recruiting people to the school library profession. The results of the study show that the influence of a librarian was instrumental in bringing these five individuals into the profession. Library associations and organizations should continue to encourage their members to serve as ambassadors for the profession (Myers, 1994). Public libraries, because they serve a diverse population, may have the greatest potential to recruit people of all ages, ethnicities and abilities into the school library profession.

Although most of the participants in this study were library users in their youth, none of them considered librarianship as a future occupation. School librarians are in a unique position to promote the profession to young people. One way to show students that school librarianship is an

exciting profession would be to involve them in a wide array of exciting activities such as producing the daily news shows or creating websites, podcasts, or wikis. Allowing students to help with traditional library tasks such as shelving, weeding, and making bulletin boards, as well as those that are more innovative, may inspire some of them to dream of librarianship as a future profession.

As most school library media specialists are former teachers, teacher education programs provide a natural focus for recruitment efforts. Those school library programs that are situated in Colleges of Education can take advantage of that relationship by promoting the profession to pre-service teachers. One strategy might be to develop collaborative teaching opportunities between the pre-service teachers and alumni working in local school library media centers. Alternatively, pre-service teachers could job shadow a school librarian in order to gain an understanding of a typical day working in the media center.

Library educators should not neglect tried-and-true recruitment approaches such as brochures, posters, bookmarks, and mass mailings (Myers, 1994). Library educators can increase visibility of their programs through participation in local high school and community college career fairs. Likewise, they can place recruitment materials with guidance counselors and career centers in high schools and colleges.

Library educators should continue to take advantage of the great potential of the Internet for recruitment. Two of the teachers in this study elected to apply to graduate school after reading the marketing letter the school library media program coordinator sent via email to practicing media specialists. Other participants applied to the same program after searching the university's website. Consequently, these websites should be attractive, usable, and contain current information. University school library media programs could also increase their visibility

by purchasing a sponsored link on a popular search engine such as Google. Additional recruitment methods should be developed that take advantage of emerging social networking tools such as blogs or streaming video.

Given that librarians resemble Artistic types (Scherdin, 1994), thought should be given to strategies for reaching this portion of the general public. Obvious targets would be any art, music, and theater groups and associations in communities, schools, and universities. Library educators could collaborate with the art, drama, and music departments in their universities to present school librarianship as an attractive occupational option to undergraduate students in those fields.

Finally, I would like to add my voice to those of Matarazzo and Mika (2004) and call upon the profession to gather accurate data on the labor market conditions for librarianship. This study would have benefitted from having reliable workforce data on the annual number of new school library media specialists, the type of institutions they attended, as well as their demographics and work history. Also of use would have been information on the number of school librarians who leave the profession each year, whether through retirement or to change occupations. Information such as this is necessary in order for the library profession to develop strategies that can effectively address the issue of supply and demand.

### Conclusion

The motivation to conduct this research was based on two initial thoughts. First, there was a lack of recent studies regarding occupational choice for school library media specialists. Second, most of the studies of occupational choice relied heavily on a survey methodology. To compensate for both, I elected to conduct a qualitative study using a narrative methodology to focus on a few individuals who had chosen this profession.

Career construction theory served as an elegant framework for examining the vocational development of the five participants. Looking at the career stories of the participants through the three perspectives of vocational personality, career adaptation, and life theme provided a comprehensive picture of the complex network of elements that accompany any occupational choice. In contrast to the traditional surveys of occupational choice that limit the decision to a concise list of motivational factors, the design of this study allowed for the possibility of unexpected findings. Although most of the findings reflected those already present in the occupational choice literature, this study did point to some motivations that may be specific to the school library field. Additionally, this study highlighted the importance of vocational personality in occupational choice. This factor has been neglected in traditional survey research into occupational choice for librarianship. As suggested by Scherdin's research (1994), knowledge of librarians' vocational personality types could be beneficial in developing effective recruitment strategies. This study also reiterated the library profession's persistent problem of the public not even being aware of librarianship as a possible occupation. As Susan affirmed, "I can't understand why I never thought about a library as a career before." Through the years our profession has been trying to resolve this dilemma with campaigns to increase public awareness of our job, but the results have been less than spectacular. Furthermore, while one-on-one intervention by librarians was successful in recruiting these five people into the library field, the library profession cannot always rely on happenstance to attract bright people. In order to improve recruitment results, we must apply all of our knowledge of the reasons that individuals choose this occupation to insure that potential librarians do not pass us by. This study endeavored to provide information to support that goal.

## REFERENCES

- American Association of School Librarians & Association for Educational Communications and Technology. (1998). *Information power: Building partnerships for learning*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- American Library Association. (2006a). *School library media specialist*. Document ID: 202402. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from <http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslproftools/toolkits/schoollibrary.cfm>
- American Library Association (2006b). *Learning about the job*. Document ID: 202286. Retrieved July 10, 2007, from <http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aasleducation/recruitmentlib/learningabout/learningabout.cfm>
- American Library Association. Office for Library Personnel Resources. (1989). *Each one reach one: Recruiting for the profession; action handbook*. Chicago: The Office.
- Ard, A., Clemmons, S., Morgan, N., Sessions, P., Spencer, B., Tidwell, T., West, P. (2006). Why library and information science? *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 45(3), 236-248.
- Atkinson, R. (1998). *The life story interview*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Atkinson, R. (2002). The life story interview. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context & method* (pp. 121-140). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Atkinson, R. (2004). Life story interview. In M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. F. Liao (Eds.), *The Sage encyclopedia of social science research methods* (pp. 566-569). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Baumeister, R. F., & Newman, L. S. (1994). How stories make sense of personal experiences: Motives that shape autobiographical narratives. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 20(6), 676-690.
- Bello, M. A. (1996). Choosing a career: Librarian? *Librarian Career Development*, 4(4).
- Blustein, D. L., Kenna, A. C., Murphy, K. A., DeVoy, J. E., & DeWine, D. B. (2005). Qualitative research in career development: Exploring the center and margins of discourse about careers and working. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 13(4), 351-370.
- Brookhart, S. M., & Freeman, D. J. (1992). Characteristics of entering teacher candidates. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(1), 37-60.
- Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Bryant, B. K., Zvonkovic, A. M., & Reynolds, P. (2006). Parenting in relation to child and adolescent vocational development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 69(1), 149-175.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bujold, C. (2004). Constructing career through narrative. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 64(3), 470-484.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2006). *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition*, Librarians, Retrieved October 21, 2006, from <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos068.htm>
- Buttler, L., & Caynon, W. (1992). Recruitment of librarians into the profession: The minority perspective. *Library and Information Science Research*, 14(3), 259-280.

- Carmichael, J. V., Jr. (1992). The male librarian and the feminine image: a survey of stereotype, status, and gender perceptions. *Library and Information Science Research*, 14(4), 411-446.
- Casey, K. (1995/1996). The new narrative research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 21, 211-253.
- Chapman, A., Feis, N., Joiner, S., Reid, L., & Wells, L. (1999). The GSLIS future of the profession survey: report. 1-23. Retrieved September 21, 2006, from <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~wyllys/IRLISMaterials/survey9/FutureOfProfession01.pdf>
- Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 651-679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2007). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Cochran, L. R. (1990). Narrative as a paradigm for career research. In R. A. Young & W. A. Borgen (Eds.) *Methodological approaches to the study of career* (pp. 71-86). New York: Praeger.
- Cohen, L., & Mallon, M. (2001). My brilliant career? Using stories as a methodological tool in careers research. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 31(3), 48-68.
- Collin, A. (1998). New challenges in the study of career. *Personnel Review*, 27(5), 412.

- Collin, A. (2001). An interview with Mark Savickas: themes in an eminent career. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 29(1), 121-136.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Beattie, O. V. (1979). Life themes: A theoretical and empirical exploration of their origins and effects. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 19(1), 45-63.
- David, I. & Scherdin, M. L. (1994). Librarians in transition: Profiles on the Strong Interest Inventory. In M. J. Scherdin (Ed.) *Discovering Librarians: Profiles of a Profession*, pp.102-124. Chicago: ACRL.
- Deeming, C., & Chelin, J. (2001). Make your own luck: A study of people changing career into librarianship. *New Library World*, 102(1/2), 13-26.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO. (2006) Library workers facts and figures. Retrieved October 15, 2006, from [http://www.dpeaflcio.org/programs/factsheets/fs\\_2006\\_library\\_workers.htm](http://www.dpeaflcio.org/programs/factsheets/fs_2006_library_workers.htm)
- Dewey, B. I. (1985). Selection of librarianship as a career: Implications for recruitment. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 26(1), 16-24.



- Ebberwein, C. A., Krieshok, T. S., Ulven, J. C., & Prosser, E. C. (2004). Voices in transition: Lessons on career adaptability. *Career Development Quarterly*, 52(4), 292-308.
- Eikleberry, C. (1999). *The career guide for creative and unconventional people* (Rev. ed.). Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.
- Everhart, N. (1998). "The prognosis, doctor?" *School Library Journal*, 44(8), 32-35.
- Everhart, N. (2000). Looking for a few good librarians. *School Library Journal*, 46(9), 58.
- Everhart, N. (2002). Filling the void. *School Library Journal*, 48(6), 44-49.
- Ezzy, D. (1998). Theorizing narrative identity: Symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 39(2), 239-252.
- Ezzy, D. (2002). *Qualitative analysis: Practice and innovation*. London: Routledge.
- Fikar, C. R., & Corral, O. L. (2001). Non-librarian health professionals becoming librarians and information specialists: Results of an internet survey. *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 89, 59-67.
- Fitzgerald, M. A. (1998). *The cognitive process of information evaluation: A collective case study*. Unpublished Thesis Ph D --University of Georgia 1998.
- Flick, U. (2006). *An introduction to qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Georgia Professional Standards Commission, Division for Educator Workforce Recruitment, Research and Development (2006). *The Georgia educator workforce: status report 2006*. Retrieved June 11, 2007, from [http://www.gapsc.com/Workforce/Data\\_Research.asp](http://www.gapsc.com/Workforce/Data_Research.asp)
- Gordon, R. S., & Nesbeitt, S. (1999). Who we are, where we're going: a report from the front. *Library Journal*, 124(9), 36.
- Gottfredson, G. D., & Holland, J. L. (1996). *Dictionary of Holland occupational codes* (3rd ed.). Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

- Harada, V. (1996). School library media preparation programs in ALA-accredited schools. *Journal of Education for Library & Information Science*, 37(3), 210.
- Hecker, D. E. (2005). Occupational employment projections to 2014. *Monthly Labor Review*, 128(11), 70-101. Retrieved October 15, 2006 from <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2005/11/contents.htm>
- Heim, K. M., & Moen, W. E. (1989). *Occupational entry: library and information science students' attitudes, demographics and aspirations survey*. Chicago: American Library Association Office for Library Personnel Resources.
- Herman, D., Jahn, M., & Ryan, M-L. (Eds.). (2005). *Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory*. London: Routledge.
- Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Houdyshell, M., Robles, P. A., & Yi, H. (1999). What were you thinking? If you could choose librarianship again, would you? *Information Outlook*, 3(7), 19-23.
- Hussey, L. K. (2006). Why librarianship? An exploration of the motivations of ethnic minorities to choose library and information science as a career. Unpublished PhD, University of Missouri-Columbia.
- Inkson, K. (2007). *Understanding careers: the metaphors of working lives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Julian, C.A. (1979). *An analysis of factors influencing the career choice of librarianship*. Unpublished master's thesis, George Peabody College for Teachers' School of Library Science. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 191 448)

- Kelsey, M. E. (2006). Education reform in Minnesota: Profile of learning and the instructional role of the school library media specialist [Electronic Version]. *School Library Media Research*, 9, 1-22 MURL: E-Journal Link. Retrieved June 13, 2008 from <http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb/slmrcontents/volume9/minnesota.cfm>.
- Labov, W. (2006). Narrative pre-construction. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 37-45.
- Lefton, L. A. (2000). *Psychology* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon.
- Lenzini, R. T., & Lipscomb, C. (2002). The graying of the library profession: a survey of our professional association and their responses. *Searcher*, 10(7), 88.
- Lipscomb, C. E. (2003). Librarian supply and demand. *Journal Medical Library Association*, 91(1), 7-10.
- Lord, M. (2000). Where have all the librarians gone? *U.S. News & World Report*, 128(23), 53.
- Luzius, J. R. (2005). The career choice of academic librarians: A study of motivational factors and demographics. Unpublished Ed.D., Auburn University.
- Lynch, M. J. (2002). Reaching 65: lots of librarians will be there soon. *American Libraries*, 33(3), 55.
- Maatta, S. (2007). What's an MLIS worth? *Library Journal*, 132(17), 30-38.
- Matarazzo, J. M., & Mika, J. J. (2004). Workforce planning for library and information science. *Library & Information Science Research*, pp. 115-120.
- Matarazzo, J. M., & Mika, J. J. (2006). How to be popular. *American Libraries*, 37(8), 38-40.
- McAdams, D. P. (1995). *The life story interview*. Retrieved May 29, 2007, from Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy, Foley Center: <http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/instruments/interview/>

- McAdams, D. P. (1996). Personality, Modernity, and the Storied Self: A Contemporary Framework for Studying Persons. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7(4), 295.
- McCance, T. V., McKenna, H. P., & Boore, J. R. P. (2001). Exploring caring using narrative methodology: An analysis of the approach. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 33(3), 350-356.
- McClenney, E. G. (1989). Why students chose careers in information and library science: factors that affect the decision-making process. Unpublished master's paper, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- McCormack, C. (2000). From interview transcript to interpretive story: Part 1-viewing the transcript through multiple lenses. *Field Methods*, 12(4), 282-297.
- McCormack, C. (2004). Storying stories: A narrative approach to in-depth interview conversations. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 7(3), 219-236.
- McCreedy, M. L. (1963). *The selection of school librarianship as a career*. Unpublished D.L.S., Columbia University.
- Merriam, S. B., & Associates. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: examples for discussion and analysis* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Murray, M. (2003) Narrative psychology. In J. A. Smith (Ed.). *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods* (pp. 111-131). London: SAGE Publications.
- Myers, M. (1994). Recruitment implications, issues, and future actions. In M. J. Scherdin (Ed.) *Discovering librarians: Profiles of a profession* (pp. 197-204). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

- New Hampshire Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau. (2005). *Library Media Specialist*. Retrieved June 30, 2007, from <http://www.nhes.state.nh.us/elmi/licertoccs/libmedsp.htm>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(1), 5-23.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 137-145.
- Pyle, H. (1919). *Men of iron*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Rhodes, H. M. (2000). *Mid-life career change to home-based self-employment in a group of women*. Unpublished M.A., Simon Fraser University (Canada), Canada.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Riessman, C. K. (2002). Analysis of personal narratives. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: context & method* (pp. 695-710). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rosenthal, G. (1993). Reconstruction of life stories: Principles of selection in generating stories for narrative biographical interviews. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *The narrative study of lives* (Vol. 1, pp. 59-91). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

- Roys, N. K. (2004). The ideal candidate for school library media specialist: Views from school administrators, library school faculty, and MLS students *School Library Media Research*, 7, 1.
- Savickas, M. L. (1997). Career adaptability: An integrative construct for life-span, life-space theory. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 45, 247-259.
- Savickas, M. L. (1998). Career style assessment and counseling. In T. J. Sweeney (Ed.), *Adlerian counseling: A practitioner's approach* (4th ed., pp. 329-359). Philadelphia, PA: Accelerated Development.
- Savickas, M. L. (2002). Career construction: A developmental theory of vocational development. In D. Brown (Ed.), *Career choice and development* (4<sup>th</sup> ed. pp. 149-205). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Savickas, M. L. (2005). The theory and practice of career construction. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent. (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (pp. 42-70). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Savickas, M. L. (2006a). Career construction theory. In *Encyclopedia of Career Development* (Vol. 1, pp. 84-88). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Savickas, M. L. (2006b). Vocational psychology. In *Encyclopedia of Career Development* (Vol. 2, pp. 851-852). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Savickas, M. L. (2007). Occupational choice. In H. Gunz & M. Peiperl (Eds.), *Handbook of career studies* (pp. 79-96). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Scherdin, M. J., & Association of College and Research Libraries. (1994). *Discovering librarians: Profiles of a profession*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

- School Libraries Work! Research Foundation Paper. Updated 2006 Edition.* (2006). Danbury, CT: Scholastic Library Publishing. Retrieved January 8, 2007, from [www.scholastic.com/librarians/printables/downloads/slw\\_2006.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/librarians/printables/downloads/slw_2006.pdf)
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Seidman, I. E. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shahnasarian, M., (2006). Holland's theory of vocational choice. In *Encyclopedia of Career Development* (Vol. 1, pp. 352-355). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Shannon, D. (2004) Preparation of school library media specialists in the United States. *School Library Media Research*. Retrieved January 15, 2005, from <http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb/slmrcontents/volume72004/shannon.htm>
- Shannon, D. M. (2002). The education and competencies of school library media specialists: A review of the literature. *School Library Media Research*. Retrieved September 21, 2004, from <http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb/slmrcontents/volume52002/shannon.htm>
- Shoffner, M. F. (2006). Career counseling: theoretical perspectives. In D. Capuzzi, & M. D. Stauffer (Eds.), *Career counseling: Foundations, perspectives, and applications* (pp.40-68). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

- Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A resource book for students*. London: Routledge.
- Steffen, N., Lance, K. C., Russell, B., & Lietzau, Z. (2004). *Retirement, retention, and recruitment: The future of librarianship in Colorado*. Retrieved November 30, 2006, from Colorado State Library, Library Research Service website:  
[http://www.lrs.org/documents/closer\\_look/RRR\\_web.pdf](http://www.lrs.org/documents/closer_look/RRR_web.pdf)
- Strizek, G.A., Pittsonberger, J.L., Riordan, K.E., Lyter, D.M., and Orlofsky, G.F. (2006). *Characteristics of Schools, Districts, Teachers, Principals, and School Libraries in the United States: 2003-04 Schools and Staffing Survey* (NCES 2006-313 Revised). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Super, D. E., Savickas, M. L. & Super, C. M. (1996). The life-span, life-space approach to careers. In D. Brown, L. Brooks. (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. pp. 121-178). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Šverko, B. (2006) Super's career development theory. In *Encyclopedia of Career Development* (Vol. 2, pp. 789-792). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Thomas, M., & Snyder, A. (2006). State of the Nation. *School Library Journal*, 52(6), 56-62.
- Underwood, L. (2007). Alphabet soup: School library media education in the United States. *School Library Media Activities Monthly*, 23(6), 28-30.
- Van House, N. A. (1988). MLS students' choice of a library career. *Library and Information Science Research*, 10(2), 157-176.
- Watson-Boone, R. (2007). *A good match: Library career opportunities for graduates of liberal arts colleges*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Weihs, J. (1999). Interfaces: The birth of a librarian. *Technicalities*, 19(9), 7-10.



- Whelan, D. L. (2003). CA district may lose 40 librarians. *School Library Journal*, 49(3), 18.
- White, H. S. (1988). Basic competencies and the pursuit of equal opportunity, part 2. *Library Journal*, 113(15), 62.
- Whitten, P. A., & Nozero, V. A. (1997). The impact of first careers on 'second career' academic reference librarians: A pilot study. *Reference Librarian* (59), 189-201.
- Winston, M. D. (2001). Recruitment theory: Identification of those who are likely to be successful as leaders. *Journal of Library Administration*, 32 (3-4), 19-33.
- Zunker, V. G. (2002). *Career counseling: Applied concepts of life planning* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole-Thomson Learning.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Participant Recruitment Email

Dear School Library Media Student:

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology [EPIT] at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled *The Occupational Choice of School Library Media Specialists*, which is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Mary Ann Fitzgerald, EPIT, UGA. The purpose of this study is to identify and explore the reasons that individuals have for becoming school library media specialists.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are a new graduate student in the School Library Media Program at the University of Georgia and are seeking initial school library media certification. Participants may not be working as professional school library media specialists.

Your participation will involve participating in three personal interviews that will be conducted at a time and location that is mutually convenient. The interview questions will cover a range of topics, including significant life events and decisions, what you find meaningful in life, and influences on your life choices. Each interview will last approximately 1½ hours and will be audiotaped. The three interviews will occur over a time period of not more than three months. You also may be asked to participate in follow-up visits, phone conversations, and/or email exchanges as needed. The total time for these follow-up communications will be no more than 60 minutes. Additionally, you will be asked to provide your graduate admission's goal statement and graduate e-portfolio to be used for analysis.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. All the research data including any of your personal information will be kept confidential and will be held in a secure location. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

The findings from this project may provide information that will aid efforts to recruit future school library media specialists and improve library education programs. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you would like to participate in this study, or if you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (706) 543-4793 or send an e-mail to [sjones53@uga.edu](mailto:sjones53@uga.edu).

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Stephanie A. Jones  
Doctoral Student - School Library Media Program  
Educational Psychology & Instructional Technology  
604 Aderhold Hall, University of Georgia  
Athens, GA 30602  
[sjones53@uga.edu](mailto:sjones53@uga.edu)

Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 612 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).

APPENDIX B

Participant Informed Consent Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to take part in a research study titled “The Occupational Choice of School Library Media Specialists,” which is being conducted by Stephanie A. Jones (706-543-4793) from the Department of Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology Department at the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Mary Ann Fitzgerald of the Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology Department, University of Georgia (706-542-4030). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all information related to me removed from the research records or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to identify and explore the reasons that individuals have for becoming school library media specialists. This study will provide valuable information that will aid recruitment of future school library media specialists.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to the following things:

1. Participate in three face-to-face interviews that will take 90 minutes each. The interviews will be audio recorded. The interviews will be conducted at a time and location that is mutually convenient. The three interviews will take place over a time period of no more than three months.
2. Participate in follow-up visits, phone conversations, and/or email exchanges as needed. The total time for these follow-up communications will be no more than 60 minutes.
3. Provide my graduate admission’s goal statement and my graduate e-portfolio to be used for analysis.

Additionally, as a participant of this research study, I am aware of and acknowledge the following:

- All activities will be related to research.
- No identifying information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, unless required by law. I will select a pseudonym and this pseudonym will be used in all of the researcher’s data collection resulting from my participation in this study.
- There will be no reasonably foreseeable risks and/or discomfort during this research. I may skip questions that I feel uncomfortable answering.
- All audiotapes and digital files will be kept indefinitely with the participants’ approval. Tapes will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Digital copies of the interviews will be kept on CDs and stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher.

The researchers will answer any further questions about the research now or during the course of the project and can be reached by telephone or via email.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

<u>Stephanie A. Jones</u>	_____	_____
<b>Name of Researcher</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Telephone: 706-543-4793</b>		
<b>Email: <u><a href="mailto:sjones53@uga.edu">sjones53@uga.edu</a></u></b>		

_____	_____	_____
<b>Name of Participant</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

**Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.**

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

## APPENDIX C

### Career Construction Theory Propositions

These 16 propositions form the foundation of career construction theory (Savickas, 2005 pp.45-46).

1. A society and its institutions structure an individual's life course through social roles. The life structure of an individual, shaped by social processes such as gendering, consists of core and peripheral roles. Balance among core roles such as work and family promotes stability whereas imbalances produce strain.
2. Occupations provide a core role and a focus for personality organization for most men and women, although for some individuals this focus is peripheral, incidental, or even nonexistent. Then other like roles such as student, parent, homemaker, leisurite, and citizen may be at the core. Personal preferences for life roles are deeply grounded in the social practices that engage individuals and locate them in unequal social positions.
3. An individual's career pattern-that is, the occupational level attained and the sequence, frequency, and duration of jobs-is determined by the parents' socioeconomic level and the person's education, abilities, personality traits, self-concepts, and career adaptability in transaction with the opportunities presented by society.
4. People differ in vocational characteristics such as ability, personality traits, and self-concepts.
5. Each occupation requires a different pattern of vocational characteristics, with tolerances wide enough to allow some variety of individuals in each occupation.
6. People are qualified for a variety of occupations because of their vocational characteristics and occupational requirements.

7. Occupational success depends on the extent to which individuals find in their work roles adequate outlets for their prominent vocational characteristics.
8. The degree of satisfaction people attain from work is proportional to the degree to which they are able to implement their vocational self-concepts. Job satisfaction depends on establishment in a type of occupation, a work situation, and a way of life in which people can play the types of roles that growth and exploratory experiences have led them to consider congenial and appropriate.
9. The process of career construction is essentially that of developing and implementing vocational self-concepts in work roles. Self-concepts develop through the interaction of inherited aptitudes, physical make-up, opportunities to observe and play various roles, and evaluations of the extent to which the results of role playing meet with the approval of peers and supervisors. Implementation of vocational self-concepts in work roles involves a synthesis and compromise between individual and social factors. It evolves from role playing and learning from feedback, whether the role is played in fantasy, in the counseling interview, or in real-life activities such as hobbies, classes, clubs, part-time work, and entry jobs.
10. Although vocational self-concepts become increasingly stable from late adolescence forward, providing some continuity in choice and adjustment, self-concepts and vocational preferences do change with time and experience as situations in which people live and work change.
11. The process of vocational change may be characterized by a maxicycle of career stages as progressing through periods of growth, exploration, establishment, management and disengagement. The five stages are subdivided into periods marked by vocational development tasks that individuals experience as social expectations.

12. A minicycle of growth, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement occurs during transitions from one career stage to the next as well as each time an individual's career is destabilized by socioeconomic and personal events such as illness and injury, plant closings and company layoffs, and job redesign and automation.
13. Vocational maturity is a psychological construct that denotes an individual's development along a continuum of career stages from growth through disengagement. From a societal perspective, an individual's vocational maturity can be operationally defined by comparing the developmental tasks being encountered to those expected based on chronological age.
14. Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks of vocational development. The adaptive fitness of attitudes, beliefs, and competencies-the ABCs of career construction-increase along the developmental lines of concern, control, conception and confidence.
15. Career construction is prompted by vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas and then produced by responses to these life changes.
16. Career construction, at any given stage, can be fostered by conversations that explain vocational development tasks and occupational transitions, exercises that strengthen adaptive fitness, and activities that clarify and validate vocational self-concepts.

## APPENDIX D

### The Life Story Interview

Dan P. McAdams, Northwestern University

Revised 1995

#### **Introductory Comments**

This is an interview about the story of your life. We are asking you to play the role of storyteller about your own life -- to construct for us the story of your own past, present, and what you see as your own future. People's lives vary tremendously, and people make sense of their own lives in a tremendous variety of ways. As social scientists, our goal is to collect as many different life stories as we can in order to begin the process of making sense of how people make sense of their own lives. Therefore, we are collecting and analyzing life stories of "normal" adults from all walks of life, and we are looking for significant commonalities and significant differences in those life stories that people tell us.

In telling us a story about your own life, you do not need to tell us everything that has ever happened to you. A story is selective. It may focus on a few key events, a few key relationships, a few key themes which recur in the narrative. In telling your own life story, you should concentrate on material in your own life that you believe to be important in some fundamental way -- information about yourself and your life which says something significant about you and how you have come to be who you are. Your story should tell how you are similar to other people as well as how you are unique. Our purpose in these interviews is to catalogue people's life stories so that we may eventually arrive at some fundamental principles of life-storytelling as well as ways of categorizing and making sense of life stories constructed by healthy adults living at this time in history and in this place. We are not interested, therefore, in pathology, abnormal psychology, neurosis and psychosis. We are not trying to figure out what is wrong with you. Nor are we trying to help you figure out what is wrong with you. The interview should not be seen as a "therapy session." This interview is for research purposes only, and its sole purpose is the collection of data concerning people's life stories.

The interview is divided into a number of sections. In order to complete the interview within, say, an hour and a half or so, it is important that we not get bogged down in the early sections, especially the first one in which I



will ask you to provide an overall outline of your story. The interview starts with general things and moves to the particular. Therefore, do not feel compelled to provide a lot of detail in the first section in which I ask for this outline. The detail will come later. I will guide you through the interview so that we can finish it in good time. I think that you will enjoy the interview. Most people do.

Questions?

## **I. Life Chapters**

We would like you to begin by thinking about your life as a story. All stories have characters, scenes, plots, and so forth. There are high points and low points in the story, good times and bad times, heroes and villains, and so on. A long story may even have chapters. Think about your life story as having at least a few different chapters. What might those chapters be? I would like you to describe for me each of the main chapters of your life story. You may have as many or as few chapters as you like, but I would suggest dividing your story into at least 2 or 3 chapters and at most about 7. If you can, give each chapter a name and describe briefly the overall contents in each chapter. As a storyteller here, think of yourself as giving a plot summary for each chapter. This first part of the interview can expand forever, so I would like you to keep it relatively brief, say, within 20-25 minutes. Therefore, you don't want to tell me "the whole story" now. Just give me a sense of the story's outline -- the major chapters in your life.

[The interviewer may wish to ask for clarifications and elaborations at any point in this section, though there is a significant danger of interrupting too much. If the subject finishes in under 10 minutes, then he/she has not said enough, and the interviewer should probe for more detail. If the subject looks as if he/she is going to continue beyond half an hour, then the interviewer should try (gently) to speed things along somewhat. Yet, you don't want the subject to feel "rushed." (It is inevitable, therefore, that some subjects will run on too long.) This is the most open-ended part of the interview. It has the most projective potential. Thus, we are quite interested in how the subject organizes the response on his or her own. Be careful not to organize it for the subject.]

## II. Critical Events

Now that you have given us an outline of the chapters in your story, we would like you to concentrate on a few key events that may stand out in bold print in the story. A key event should be a specific happening, a critical incident, a significant episode in your past set in a particular time and place. It is helpful to think of such an event as constituting a specific moment in your life story which stands out for some reason. Thus, a particular conversation you may have had with your mother when you were 12-years-old or a particular decision you made one afternoon last summer might qualify as a key event in your life story. These are particular moments set in a particular time and place, complete with particular characters, actions, thoughts, and feelings. An entire summer vacation -- be it very happy or very sad or very important in some way -- or a very difficult year in high school, on the other hand, would not qualify as key events because these take place over an extended period of time. (They are more like life chapters.)

I am going to ask you about **8** specific life events. For each event, describe in detail what happened, where you were, who was involved, what you did, and what you were thinking and feeling in the event. Also, try to convey what impact this key event has had in your life story and what this event says about who you are or were as a person. Please be very specific here.

Questions?

### **Event #1: Peak Experience**

A peak experience would be a high point in your life story -- perhaps the high point. It would be a moment or episode in the story in which you experienced extremely positive emotions, like joy, excitement, great happiness, uplifting, or even deep inner peace. Today, the episode would stand out in your memory as one of the best, highest, most wonderful scenes or moments in your life story. Please describe in some detail a peak experience, or something like it, that you have experienced some time in your past. Tell me exactly what happened, where it happened, who was involved, what you did, what you were thinking and feeling, what impact this experience may have had upon you, and what this experience says about who you were or who you are. [Interviewer should make sure that the subject addresses all of these questions, especially ones about impact and what the experience says about the person. Do not

interrupt the description of the event. Rather ask for extra detail, if necessary, after the subject has finished initial description of the event.]

### **Event #2: Nadir Experience**

A "nadir" is a low point. A nadir experience, therefore, is the opposite of a peak experience. It is a low point in your life story. Thinking back over your life, try to remember a specific experience in which you felt extremely negative emotions, such as despair, disillusionment, terror, guilt, etc. You should consider this experience to represent one of the "low points" in your life story. Even though this memory is unpleasant, I would still appreciate an attempt on your part to be as honest and detailed as you can be. Please remember to be specific. What happened? When? Who was involved? What did you do? What were you thinking and feeling? What impact has the event had on you? What does the event say about who you are or who you were?

### **Event #3: Turning Point**

In looking back on one's life, it is often possible to identify certain key "turning points" -- episodes through which a person undergoes substantial change. Turning points can occur in many different spheres of a person's life

-in relationships with other people, in work and school, in outside interests, etc. I am especially interested in a turning point in your understanding of yourself. Please identify a particular episode in your life story that you now see as a turning point. If you feel that your life story contains no turning points, then

describe a particular episode in your life that comes closer than any other to qualifying as a turning point.

[Note: If subject repeats an earlier event (e.g., peak experience, nadir) ask him or her to choose another one. Each of the 8 critical events in this section should be independent. We want 8 separate events. If the subject already mentioned an event under the section of "Life Chapters," it may be necessary to go over it again here. This kind of redundancy is inevitable.]

### **Event #4: Earliest Memory**

Think back now to your childhood, as far back as you can go. Please choose a relatively clear

memory from your earliest years and describe it in some detail. The memory need not seem especially significant in your life today. Rather what makes it significant is that it is the first or one of the first memories you have, one of the first scenes in your life story. The memory should be detailed enough to qualify as an "event." This is to say that you should choose the earliest (childhood) memory for which you are able to identify what happened, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling. Give us the best guess of your age at the time of the event.

**Event #5: Important Childhood Scene**

Now describe another memory from childhood, from later childhood, that stands out in your mind as especially important or significant. It may be a positive or negative memory. What happened? Who was involved? What did you do? What were you thinking and feeling? What impact has the event had on you? What does it say about who you are or who you were? Why is it important?

**Event #6: Important Adolescent Scene**

Describe a specific event from your teen-aged years that stands out as being especially important or significant.

**Event #7: Important Adult Scene**

Describe a specific event from your adult years (age 21 and beyond) that stands out as being especially important or significant.

**Event #8: One Other Important Scene**

Describe one more event, from any point in your life, that stands out in your memory as being especially important or significant.

**III. Life Challenge**

Looking back over the various chapters and scenes in your life story, please describe the single greatest challenge that you have faced in your life. How have you faced, handled, or dealt with this

challenge? Have other people assisted you in dealing with this challenge? How has this challenge had an impact on your life story?

#### **IV. Influences on the Life Story: Positive and Negative**

##### **Positive**

Looking back over your life story, please identify the single person, group of persons, or organization/institution that has or have had the greatest positive influence on your story. Please describe this person, group, or organization and the way in which he, she, it, or they have had a positive impact on your story.

##### **Negative**

Looking back over your life story, please identify the single person, group of persons, or organization/institution that has or have had the greatest negative influence on your story. Please describe this person, group, or organization and the way in which he, she, it, or they have had a negative impact on your story.

#### **V. Stories and the Life Story**

You have been telling me about the story of your life. In so doing, you have been trying to make your life into a story for me. I would like you now to think a little bit more about stories and how some particular stories might have influenced your own life story. From an early age, we all hear and watch stories. Our parents may read us stories when we are little; we hear people tell stories about everyday events; we watch stories on television and hear them on the radio; we see movies or plays; we learn about stories in schools, churches, synagogs, on the playground, in the neighborhood, with friends, family; we tell stories to each other in everyday life; some of us even write stories. I am interested in knowing what some of your favorite stories are and how they may have influenced how you think about your own life and your life story. I am going to ask you about three kinds of stories. In each case, try to identify a story you have

heard in your life that fits the description, describe the story very briefly, and tell me if and how that story has had an effect on you.

### **Television, Movie, Performance: Stories Watched**

Think back on TV shows you have seen, movies, or other forms of entertainment or stories from the media that you have experienced. Please identify one of your favorite stories from this domain -- for example, a favorite TV show or series, a favorite movie, play, etc. In a couple of sentences, tell me what the story is about. Tell me why you like the story so much. And tell me if and how the story has had an impact on your life.

### **Books, Magazines: Stories Read**

Now think back over things you have read -- stories in books, magazines, newspapers, and so on. Please identify one of your favorite stories from this domain. Again, tell me a little bit about the story, why you like it, and what impact, if any, it has had on your life.

### **Family Stories, Friends: Stories Heard**

Growing up, many of us hear stories in our families or from our friends that stick with us, stories that we remember. Family stories include things parents tell their children about "the old days," their family heritage, family legends, and so on. Children tell each other stories on the playground, in school, on the phone, and so on. Part of what makes life fun, even in adulthood, involves friends and family telling stories about themselves and about others. Try to identify one story like this that you remember, one that has stayed with you. Again, tell me a little bit about the story, why you like it or why you remember it, and what impact, if any, it has had on your life.

## **VI. Alternative Futures for the Life Story**

Now that you have told me a little bit about your past, I would like you to consider the future. I would like you to imagine two different futures for your life story.

### **Positive Future**

First, please describe a positive future. That is, please describe what you would like to happen in the future for your life story, including what goals and dreams you might accomplish or realize in the future. Please try to be realistic in doing this. In other words, I would like you to give me a picture of what you would realistically like to see happen in the future chapters and scenes of your life story.

### **Negative Future**

Now, please describe a negative future. That is, please describe a highly undesirable future for yourself, one that you fear could happen to you but that you hope does not happen. Again, try to be pretty realistic. In other words, I would like you to give me a picture of a negative future for your life story that could possibly happen but that you hope will not happen.

[Note to interviewers: Try to get as much concrete detail as possible.]

## **VII. Personal Ideology**

Now I would like to ask a few questions about your fundamental beliefs and values and about questions of meaning and spirituality in your life. Please give some thought to each of these questions.

- .1. Consider for a moment the religious or spiritual dimensions of your life. Please describe in a nutshell your religious beliefs or the ways in which you approach life in a spiritual sense.
  - .2. Please describe how your religious or spiritual life, values, or beliefs have changed over time.
  - .3. How do you approach political and social issues? Do you have a particular political point of view? Are there particular issues or causes about which you feel strongly? Describe them.
  - .4. What is the most important value in human living? Explain.
2. 5. What else can you tell me that would help me understand your most fundamental beliefs and values about life and the world, the spiritual dimensions of your life, or your philosophy of life?

### **VIII. Life Theme**

Looking back over your entire life story as a story with chapters and scenes, extending into the past as well as the imagined future, can you discern a central theme, message, or idea that runs throughout the story? What is the major theme of your life story? Explain.

### **IX. Other**

What else should I know to understand your life story?

Note: From *The life story interview*, by D. P. McAdams, 1995, Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy, Foley Center:

<http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/instruments/interview/>



## APPENDIX E

### Career Style Interview

1. Whom did you admire when you were growing up? Whom did you respect?
  - a. For each model – what did you admire about this person?
  - b. Tell me about this person. What were they like?
  - c. How are you like this person and how are you different from this person?
2. Describe your favorite book.
3. Describe your favorite magazine (list 2 or 3). What do you enjoy reading in each magazine?
4. What do you like to do in your free time? What hobbies do you enjoy?
  - a. What do you enjoy about these hobbies?
  - b. Role that you play in these activities: partner, listener, performer, host, tourist, and member.
5. What are your three favorite subjects in junior high and high school? What subject do you hate?
  - a. Why did you love \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_?
  - b. Why did you hate \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_?
  - c. What grades did you earn?
6. What are your favorite sayings or mottos?

Note. Derived from “Career Style Assessment and Counseling,” by M. L. Savickas, 1998. In T. J. Sweeney (Ed.), *Adlerian counseling: A practitioner's approach* (4th ed., pp. 329-359). Philadelphia, PA: Accelerated Development.

APPENDIX F

Example of Narrative Analysis of Susan Davis' Transcripts

ID	Line no.	Interview Data	Career Story Excerpt
SD1	46.	I want to go back to work. I need a career beyond being a mom. I think I have more to offer than just – than being a mom, which is a great job, no – nothing bad, but I also came to – we talked about it for several years, what was I going to do that wasn't the 60-hour a week job downtown, which I'm sure I could go back and get if I wanted right now, and David said, "Well, you're just going to have to teach."	I want to go back to work. I need a career beyond being a mom. I think I have more to offer than just being a mom. <b>(SD1 – 46)</b> I probably wouldn't be doing this [program] if I wasn't a mother. I'd probably go back to
SD1	47.	Well, I didn't want to teach. <i>(Laughter)</i> My mother taught. She stayed home with us until she was about in the 4 <sup>th</sup> grade, faced about the same decision that I'm facing now. My grandfather knew of a job at Henry County Middle, and got her a job teaching. She didn't have a certificate or anything. She spent a year getting all of the stuff in place, taking the – gosh, it wasn't even the PRAXIS back then, it was with TCT, and getting all that done, and then she taught. She just taught for 27 years and just retired this past spring. Never really wanted to do it, never really thought of it as her ultimate career choice, but it's good pay and good hours and stuff for a small town, and she could work in our schools, and she wasn't gone. We had our summers and things like that, but she would stay up 'til midnight doing homework, and the kids that just didn't care, and the parents that didn't care more, and	corporate, or I would never have left the corporate environment I was in. I really enjoyed that. I was good at it. <b>(SD2 – 248)</b> But it isn't just that I want to have the same hours as my kids. It's also that I want to be involved in education, and that's going to help me get them a better education. <b>(SD2 – 250)</b>  I've been struggling with what I was going to do for a long time. I knew I wanted to go back to work, and I knew I would need to go back to work. I just didn't know
SD1	48.	I thought, "Oh, I just don't want to do that, I don't want to teach," and then I was talking to my cousin about it,	

ID	Line no.	Interview Data	Career Story Excerpt
		and she had taught for several years, and then decided to become a media specialist. She's at the high school level in North Carolina. She said, you should do this, with your technical background and management skills, you should do this.	what to do. Nothing clicked. <b>(SD2 – 154)</b> My husband also didn't really care for me to go back to the 60, 70 hour a week thing I was doing. He kept saying, "You're just
SD1	49.	So I looked into it, and my mom said, "You should do that!" She's like, "I can't – we never even thought about telling you about that before, but that would be a great thing for you to do," and so that's how I kind of wound up in this career choice. I looked around – and now that I'm in the program, I think, "Gosh, I wouldn't mind teaching a few years." <i>(Laughter)</i> I mean, teaching might be kind of fun for a little while, but anyway, I guess that's my life story.	going to have to teach." And I said, "Well, I'll do that, you know, if I need to that, I'll do that." I come from a long line of teachers. My mother, my grandmother on her side, my aunt on her side, all teachers. My grandmother
Int1	95.	<i>The next is an important adolescence scene. Describe a specific event from your teenage years that stands out as being especially important or significant.</i>	on my dad's side, a teacher. All of her sisters were teachers except for one who was a nurse. A couple of her
SD1	96.	Well, I've told you about a couple of 'em. Heck, let me think about that, let me think about it for a second. When I – and this is going to sound so quaint – I don't where your religious preferences are, but I'm a Christian, and I'm born-again Christian, and really rely on that a lot, believe in it even though I know it's not something that I can really talk about in my job, and I never did talk about it in my job when I worked downtown much, but when I was 13 I really made a decision that, "Okay, I'm going to give my life to Christ, I'm going to be – this is the road I'm going to walk down," and I was young to make that decision, and over the years I've had occasion to kind of recommit that, even though – I mean, we always went to	brothers were teachers. One was actually a principal at one time. Just long lines of teachers on both sides of our family. Education's always been a huge deal. <b>(SD2 – 251)</b>  Well, I didn't want to teach. [Laughter] My mother taught. She stayed home with us until I was about in the fourth grade, faced about the same decision that

ID	Line no.	Interview Data	Career Story Excerpt
		church and I've always been involved in church, and I've always been involved with the Lord and everything like that.	I'm facing now. My grandfather got her a job teaching. She taught for 27 years and just retired this past spring.
SD1	97.	When you get older, you reevaluate, I'm sorry; when you get older, you reevaluate, you say, "Okay, now that I'm in this part of my life, what do I need to do?"	Never really wanted to do it, never really thought of it as
SD1	98.	If I ever – if something ever happens to me, you're going to have to take that dog. My husband doesn't care for him at all, so sad, he didn't want an inside pet, but anyway, that was a significant memory. I remember doing it and where I was, at our church and everything like that. I remember who I was talking with, and I remember that it was very hard to talk to my parents about, even though they were Christians and went to church, and I'm sure – but I just – I kind of felt shy about talking to them about having made such a big life choice, but that, I think, really – and that has carried – that relationship has carried with me even to this day. Even to this day I pray about decisions that I make, and I look for signs that I'm on the right track and doing the right things. I teach the boys that – that sort of thing. I've heard people say religion is the opiate of the masses, and I'm like, "Right on!" ( <i>Laughter</i> ) That was it. Let me take him –	her ultimate career choice, but it's good pay and good hours and stuff for a small town, and she could work in our schools, and she wasn't gone. We had our summers and things like that, but she would stay up until midnight doing homework, and the kids that just didn't care, and the parents that didn't care more, and (SD1 – 47) I thought, "Oh, I just don't want to do that, I don't want to teach."  Then I was talking to my cousin about it, and she
Int2	153.	<i>Uh-huh. Sure. Describe an important choice for me and how you made it.</i>	had taught for several years, and then decided to become a media specialist. She's at the high school level in North
SD2	154.	Oh gosh, I've got several of those. I mean, chose to get married, chose to have kids, chose to quit my job. That was a big choice. Well, I mean, to me one of the biggest choices, and I mean, you know, this sounds like a ringer	Carolina. She said, "You should do this, with your

ID	Line no.	Interview Data	Career Story Excerpt
		for what you're doing, but was to do this for a living. I've been struggling with it for a long time, what I was going to do. I knew I wanted to go back to work, and I knew I would need to go back to work. I just didn't know what to do. I just didn't know, you know, look at all these work at home things, and nothing clicked, you know.	technical background and management skills, you should do this." <b>(SD1 – 48)</b> So I looked into it, and my mom said, "You should do that!" She's like, "I can't believe I
SD2	155.	And when I looked into this program, and I still – I mean, I liked it, not the program but being a media specialist I liked it, I liked what they do, you know, every job there are negatives to it, of course. I'm sure I'm going to pull my hair out, especially the first year. But I think long-term it's going to be something I really enjoy.	never thought about telling you about that before, but that would be a great thing for you to do." So that's how I kind of wound up in this career choice. <b>(SD1 – 49)</b>
SD2	156.	But I still, even I still wasn't sure about – I know you're going to laugh about this, but I still wasn't sure whether or not I really made the right decision, 'cause it's a real commitment. It's not just a two-year commitment in the Master's but then it's a career commitment. You know, you hate to get into the career and decide, "Oh Lord, I hate this." But I did.	But I still wasn't sure whether or not I really made the right decision, because it's a real career commitment. <b>(SD2 – 156)</b> I'm a born-again Christian, and really rely on that a lot, believe in it even though I know it's not
SD2	157.	When I went to take that GRE, which boy that was a – I hadn't taken a standardized test in like ten, 15 years. I didn't know how to – I mean, I was calling my 21 year old cousin who's still at Georgia Tech and saying, "Okay, tell me how it is that you factor things. How do you find the square root of a three-digit number?" I just – I used to know how to do this, but you have children and you deliver IQ points, at least one of them.	something that I can really talk about in my job. When I was 13 I really made a decision that, "Okay, I'm going to give my life to Christ, this is the road I'm going to walk down." Over the years I've had occasion to kind of
SD2	158.	And so when I went to take the GRE I remember I put – I kind of laid hands on the PC and I said, "Okay Lord, if this is the choice for me, have me do real well on this test. And if it's not, flunk me bad." And I did really well. I did	recommit that. We always went to church and I've always

ID	Line no.	Interview Data	Career Story Excerpt
		better than I ever expected to do, and so I thought, “Okay, that’s a sign that I made a good choice, and I’m going to – and this is going to be okay. And there’s going to be a job for me.”	been involved with the Lord. <b>(SD1 – 96)</b> Even to this day
SD2	159.	Now I’m starting to worry about the, “Will there be a job,” kind of thing. There’s going to be a job and it’s going to work out fine. So, I’m not at the end of that choice yet; I don’t know how that worked out, but I think it – it was a hard choice. I mean, it’s a career-long directional change.	I pray about decisions that I make, and I look for signs that I’m on the right track and doing the right things. <b>(SD1 – 98)</b>  When I went to take the GRE I remember I laid
			hands on the PC and I said, “Okay Lord, if this is the
Int2	247.	<i>So, tell me how your relationships, your family, has affected this choice?</i>	choice for me, have me do real well on this test. And if
SD2	248.	Well, I mean, I’m one of those that wants to do – I probably wouldn’t be doing this if I didn’t – if I wasn’t a mother. I’d probably go back to the corporate, or I would never have left the corporate environment I was in. I really enjoyed that. I was good at it.	it’s not, flunk me bad.” And I did really well. I did better than I ever expected to do, and so I thought, “Okay, that’s
SD2	249.	Oh. Go ahead.	a sign that I made a good choice, and this is going to be
SD2	250.	It’s all right. I enjoyed that, I was good at it. But it isn’t just that I want to have the same hours as my kids. That is a factor. I’d like for them to have their summers and me not have to spend a lot of time figuring, you know, “Okay, where are they going to go this week and who’s going to keep them that week,” and all that kind of stuff. It’s also that I want to be involved in education, and that’s going to help me get them a better education. So, you know, that’s a big factor.	okay. And there’s going to be a job for me.” <b>(SD2 – 158)</b>  It was a hard choice. I mean, it’s a career-long directional change. <b>(SD2 – 159)</b>
SD2	251.	My husband also didn’t really care for me to go back to the 60, 70 hour a week thing I was doing. He kept saying, “You’re just going to have to teach.” And I said, “Well,	

ID	Line no.	Interview Data	Career Story Excerpt
		<p>I'll do that, you know, if I need to that, I'll do that." But that's – and, you know, I come from a long line of teachers. My mother, my grandmother on her side, my aunt on her side, all teachers. My grandmother on my dad's side, a teacher. All of her sisters were teachers except for one who was a nurse. A couple of her brothers were teachers. One was actually a principal at one time. I mean, I just – because back then a woman with an education could be a teacher or a nurse, you know. So, there really just weren't – I mean, just long lines of teachers on both sides of our family. Education's always been a huge deal. So, anyway, that's.</p>	

## APPENDIX G

### Holland's RIASEC Typology

The descriptions of the six types in Holland's typology are taken from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Making Vocational Choices* (Holland, 1997, p. 21-28).

#### **The Realistic Type**

The development of a Realistic pattern of activities, competencies, and interests creates a person who is predisposed to exhibit the following characteristics:

1. *Vocational and Avocational Preferences*: Prefers Realistic occupations or situations (e.g., electrician or mechanic) in which one can engage in preferred activities and avoid the activities demanded by Social occupations or situations.
2. *Life Goals and Values*: Possesses traditional values. Prefers to work within institutional restraints. Believes in freedom (independence or free choice). Ranks being ambitious and self-controlled as important values and deprecates being forgiving. In general, values concrete things or tangible personal characteristics.
3. *Self-Beliefs*: Perceives self as having mechanical, technical, and athletic abilities. Enjoys working with hands, tools, machines, and electronic equipment. Perceives self as lacking ability in human relations, and believes some social tasks would be frustrating.
4. *Problem-Solving Style*: Uses Realistic beliefs, competencies, and values to solve problems at work and in other settings. Prefers concrete, practical, and structured solutions or strategies as apposed to clerical, scholarly, or imaginative activities.

Because the Realistic person possesses these preference, beliefs competencies, self perceptions, and values he or she is apt to be:

Conforming	Materialistic	Realistic
Dogmatic	Natural	Reserved
Genuine	Normal	Robust
Hardheaded	Persistent	Self-effacing
Inflexible	Practical	Un-insightful

#### **The Investigative Type**

The development of an Investigative pattern of activities, competencies, and interests creates a person who is predisposed to exhibit the following characteristics.



1. *Vocational and Avocational Preferences*: Prefers Investigative occupations or situations (e.g., biologist or medical technologist) in which one can engage in preferred activities and competencies and avoid the activities demanded by Enterprising occupations or situations.
2. *Life Goals and Values*: Values scientific or scholarly activities and achievements. Values self-determination (independence) as well as personal traits such as being intellectual, logical, and ambitious, but holds other life goals or values as less important: family security, being cheerful, having true friendships, Possesses an open system of beliefs.
3. *Self-Beliefs*: Perceives self as having scientific or research ability as well as mathematical talent. Sees self as analytical, curious, scholarly, and having broad interests. Enjoys reading or thinking about solutions to problems. Believes that persuading others about a course of action would be frustrating. Sees self as broadminded and having a wide range of interests. Has moderate to high self-esteem.
4. *Problem Solving*: Uses Investigative beliefs, competencies, and values to solve problems at work and in other settings. Seeks challenging problems.

Because the Investigative person possesses these beliefs, preferences, competencies, self-perceptions, and values, he or she is apt to be:

Analytical	Independent	Radical
Cautious	Intellectual	Rational
Complex	Introspective	Reserved
Critical	Pessimistic	Retiring
Curious	Precise	Unassuming

### **The Artistic Type**

The development of an Artistic pattern of activities, competencies, and interests creates a person who is predisposed to exhibit the following characteristics:

1. *Vocational and Avocational: Preferences*: Prefers Artistic occupations or situations (e.g., writer or interior decorator) in which one can engage in preferred activities and competencies and avoid the activities demanded by Conventional occupations or situations.
2. *Life Goals and Values*: Values aesthetic experience and achievement. Values self-expression and equality for all as well as personal characteristics such as being imaginative and courageous but not being obedient, logical, or responsible.
3. *Self-Beliefs*: Perceives self as expressive, open, original, intuitive, liberal, nonconforming, introspective, independent, disorderly, having artistic and musical ability, and ability in acting, writing, and speaking

4. *Problem-Solving Style*: Uses Artistic beliefs, competencies, and values to solve problems at work or in other setting. Perceives problems in artistic context, so artistic talents and personal traits (e.g., institution, expressiveness, originality) dominate the problem-solving process.

Because the artistic person possesses these beliefs, preferences, competencies, self-perceptions, and values, he or she is apt to be:

Complicated	Imaginative	Intuitive
Disorderly	Impractical	Nonconforming
Emotional	Impulsive	Open
Expressive	Independent	Original
Idealistic	Introspective	Sensitive

### The Social Type

The development of a Social pattern of activities, competencies, and interests creates a person who is predisposed to exhibit the following characteristics:

1. *Vocational and Avocational Preferences*: Prefers Social occupations and situations (e.g., teacher or counselor) in which one can engage in preferred activities and avoid the activities demanded by Realistic occupations and situations. Can also associate with people having similar beliefs and values.
2. *Life Goals and Values*: Values social and ethical activities and problems. Wants to serve others in the context of medical support, institutional service, or reciprocal interactions. Believes in equality for all and the desirability of being helpful and forgiving but deprecates being logical and intellectual or having an exciting life. Values religion.
3. *Self-Beliefs*: Perceives self as liking to help others, understanding of others, and having teaching ability, social skills, and lacking mechanical and scientific ability. Most gratified by helping or teaching others.
4. *Problem-Solving Style*: Uses social beliefs, competencies, and values to problems at work or in other settings. Perceives problems in a social context so problems are viewed more often in human relations terms; social competencies traits (e.g., seeking mutual interactions and help from others, etc.) can dominate the problem-solving process.

Because the Social person possesses these beliefs, preferences, competencies, self-perceptions, and values, he or she is apt to be:

Agreeable	Helpful	Responsible
Cooperative	Idealistic	Sociable

Empathic  
Friendly  
Generous

Kind  
Patient  
Persuasive

Tactful  
Understanding  
Warm

### **The Enterprising Type**

The development of an Enterprising pattern of activities, competencies, and interests creates a person who is predisposed to exhibit the following characteristics:

1. *Vocational and Avocational Preferences*: Prefers Enterprising occupation or situations (e.g., sales person or manager) in which one can engage in preferred activities and avoid the activities demanded by Investigative occupations and situations.
2. *Life Goals and Values*: Has traditional values (e.g., economic and political achievement). Values controlling others, the opportunity to be free of control, and being ambitious.
3. *Self-Beliefs*: Perceives self as aggressive, popular, self-confident, sociable, possessing leadership and speaking abilities, and lacking scientific ability. Has high self-esteem. Holds traditional values.
4. *Problem-Solving*: Uses Enterprising beliefs, competencies, and values to solve problems at work or in other situations. Perceives problems in an enterprising context so problems are often viewed in social influence terms.

Because the Enterprising person possesses these beliefs, preferences, competencies, self-perceptions, values, he or she is apt to be:

Acquisitive  
Adventurous  
Ambitious  
Assertive  
Domineering

Energetic  
Enthusiastic  
Excitement-seeking  
Exhibitionistic  
Extroverted

Forceful  
Optimistic  
Resourceful  
Self-confident  
Sociable

### **The Conventional Type**

The development of a Conventional pattern of activities, competencies, and interest creates a person who is predisposed to exhibit the following characteristics:

1. *Vocational and Avocational Preferences*: Prefers Conventional occupations or situations (e.g., bookkeeper or banker) in which one can engage in preferred activities and avoid the activities demanded by the Artistic occupations or situations.

2. *Life Goals and Values*: Values business and economic achievement. Believes becoming an expert in finance or commerce, leading a comfortable life, and doing a lot of work are important goals. Values are characterized by traditional virtues. Has a very closed belief system.
  
3. *Self-Beliefs*: Perceives self as conforming and orderly, and as having clerical and numerical ability. Sees greatest competencies in business and weakest in the arts.
  
4. *Problem-Solving Style*: Uses conventional beliefs, competencies, and values to solve problems at work and in other situations. Follows established rules, practices, and procedures: looks to authorities for advice and counsel.

Because the Conventional person possesses these beliefs, preferences, competencies, self-perceptions, and values, he or she is apt to be:

Careful	Inflexible	Persistent
Conforming	Inhibited	Practical
Conscientious	Methodical	Thorough
Dogmatic	Obedient	Thrifty
Efficient	Orderly	Unimaginative

## APPENDIX H

### Brief Answers to Research Questions

Research Question	Brief Answer	Narrative Reference
How have the participants reached this decision point in their lives, both personally and professionally?	<p>The vocational behavior of the participants shows these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not a direct path</li> <li>• a voluntary occupational change</li> <li>• influenced by others</li> <li>• previous library work experience</li> </ul>	<p>See sections on Career Adaptability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 4 See individual participant commentaries</li> <li>• Ch. 5 pp. 152-156</li> <li>• Ch. 6 p. 172-174</li> </ul>
What themes are revealed in the life stories of the participants?	<p>The life themes of the participants reveal what motivates their vocational behavior. The themes are individualistic and not generalizable.</p>	<p>See sections on Life Theme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 4 See individual participant commentaries</li> <li>• Ch. 5 p. 152</li> <li>• Ch. 6 p. 174</li> </ul>
How do the life stories reveal the influence of the participants' social context (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, family, etc.) on their careers?	<p>Parents' high expectations led to strong work ethic, academic achievement, and traditional family values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 4 See participant career stories and commentaries</li> <li>• Ch. 5 pp. 156-169</li> <li>• Ch. 6 p. 175-176</li> </ul>
What commonalities occur across the participants' stories?	<p>The participants all resembled the Artistic personality type.</p> <p>They were motivated to choose librarianship for these reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• love of books and reading</li> <li>• library experiences</li> <li>• altruism–service</li> <li>• desire to work with children</li> <li>• financial stability and security</li> <li>• flexibility of work schedule</li> <li>• emotional distance</li> </ul>	<p>See sections on Vocational Personality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 5 pp. 148-152</li> <li>• Ch. 6 pp. 177-180</li> </ul> <p>See topics under Common Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 5 pp. 156-169</li> <li>• Ch. 6 pp. 180-183</li> </ul>