Why people tend to make career decisions and What helps them to choose?

Timothy M. Sadwick
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Abstract
Career Development in the workplace has become increasingly important because employees need to be fulfilled, motivated, and satisfied in their work. Usually, many people often seem to use the term "career" and "job" interchangeably. However, these two words are quite different from one another. People often make the mistake that there is only one perfect job for them. Unfortunately, this is not the case and sometimes leads people to make a wrong career choice. Also, people enter into careers because of influences from many different sources, including parents, friends, family members, or individual interests. People make career choices because of many reasons, some of which include a lack of focus and direction, an urgency to gain financial stability, parental pressures, and/or the fear of high expectations from family members and friends to do well and become financially successful. This research paper will focus on different elements of why people make certain career decisions and choices.

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Why people tend to make career decisions and

What helps them to choose?

By Timothy M. Sadwick

St. John Fisher College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for GHRD 590

GHRD 590: APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT

Program Director: Dr. Timothy Franz PhD

April 28, 2008
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page .................................................................................................................. 1
Signature Page ............................................................................................................ 2
Table of Contents ....................................................................................................... 3
Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................... 4
Abstract ...................................................................................................................... 5
Background ................................................................................................................ 6
Research ...................................................................................................................... 7-16
Key Themes of different career theorists ................................................................. 16-18
Method ....................................................................................................................... 18-19
Disclaimers ............................................................................................................... 19-20
Key Messages/Results ............................................................................................. 20-31
Key Themes of Research ......................................................................................... 31-33
Recommendations .................................................................................................... 34-37
Additional References ............................................................................................. 38-39
Appendices ............................................................................................................... 40-54

IRB Proposal ............................................................................................................. 40-41
Informed Consent Form ............................................................................................ 42-43
Letter of Intent .......................................................................................................... 44-45
Qualitative Interview Questionnaire ...................................................................... 46
Participants Information Study ............................................................................... 47
Reflection Paper ....................................................................................................... 48-49
Career Development as an integral function of Human Resource Development ... 50-51
IRB Approval ............................................................................................................
Annotated Bibliography ............................................................................................ 52-54
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ABSTRACT

Career Development in the workplace has become increasingly important because employees need to be fulfilled, motivated, and satisfied in their work. Usually, many people often seem to use the term "career" and "job" interchangeably. However, these two words are quite different from one another. People often make the mistake that there is only one perfect job for them. Unfortunately, this is not the case and sometimes leads people to make a wrong career choice. Also, people enter into careers because of influences from many different sources, including parents, friends, family members, or individual interests. People make career choices because of many reasons, some of which include a lack of focus and direction, an urgency to gain financial stability, parental pressures, and/or the fear of high expectations from family members and friends to do well and become financially successful. This research paper will focus on different elements of why people make certain career decisions and choices.
BACKGROUND

Choosing a career path can be a difficult task for many people because they are unsure if their choice might not lead to success and personal satisfaction.

The purpose of this research is to gain a broad understanding of how and why people made their choice to enter into a particular career field. This research will closely examine 10 individuals (5 men, 5 women) between the ages of 22 and 47 who have at least an Associates Degree or higher. The participants selected were family members, friends, co-workers, or classmates in the Human Resource Development Program at St. John Fisher College.

Some of the factors that will be examined in the research paper are did people explore their career choice in depth or is it they just happened to discover. Also, did people make certain decisions to stay in a particular field they like, or did they enter a career that they did not like because of financial stability and security reasons?
For the average person, work usually consumes about 40 hours each week, with additional time spent either preparing or commuting from work. This amounts to approximately 43,200 hours if a person was to work 40 years during their lifetime. With such a large amount of time dedicated to one area of life, choosing the right career can make a huge difference in a person's quality of life. Many people often are defined by others, either rightly or wrongly by their career profession. What's the difference between a career and a job? A career can be a variety of different occupations during someone's work life which is meaningful and provides people learning, enjoyment, and fulfillment. A job on the other hand, is usually a paid position that requires a specific set of skills that enable a person to perform different tasks in an organization. Therefore, career development is the process of managing life, work, and learning over one's lifespan.

There are many factors that influence a person's decision to enter into a particular career field. Usually family members, friends, and role models play an important part as to why someone chooses a particular career field. People ease into a career because of many reasons which include financial stability, quality of work life, opportunity to help others, variety in the work, and a sense of accomplishment. Human beings are very different, and people have many reasons why they choose their career. However, the constant for most people is that a career is something that they are passionate about, and excites them because they are continuously growing and learning from their work experiences.

Several major career development theorists have recognized that values play an important role in career counseling and in the career decision making process (Dawis, 2001; Holland, 1997; Super, 1980). Work values refer to what a person wants out of work in general, and also which
components of a job are important to their satisfaction (Dawis, 2001; Elizur, 1984). Many people value their work because of time compatibility (work hours versus leisure time), job security in the career, prestige associated with working in this career, mutual respect and trust among those with whom they work, and shared values with co-workers. For most people, choosing a career solely on monetary gratification does not necessarily make them happy about how they feel about their work.

Career choices are more difficult today because of the increasing competitive global environment in which we live. Most men and women entering the workforce today can expect to change careers 5 to 6 times during their worklives. Until most recently, organizations took care of their employees with job security, job promotions, education and training, and quality of work life in which employees were valued as a commodity in the workplace. However, because of the competitive pressures in which most companies face today, employees are usually seen as a cost instead of a commodity. Career ladders are rapidly shrinking or disappearing as organizations lead to flatter structures and the increasing rate of change in technology where people need to keep pace with the knowledge and skills to perform their particular jobs. This is why it is important for individuals to take charge of their own career development in a more proactive way instead of just drifting into their field of study or following someone else’s suggestions.

The Graduating Student & Alumni Survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (1998), found that among the respondents who completed the survey, 65.4 percent chose their major because of the type of work it prepared them for, 12.1 percent admitted to drifting into their field of study, 8 percent chose their major for its earning potential, and less than 5 percent indicated that they were following a family member or a friend’s suggestion.
Why People Make Career Choices

The 1995 National Association of Colleges and Employers Journal of Career Planning suggests "the average American beginning his or her career in the 1990's will probably work in ten or more jobs for five or more employers before retiring". In the mid-1990's, Knowdell said, "Career Planning in the 1950's and 1960's was like riding on a train. The train remained on the track and one could quite possibly stay on that track until retirement day. In the 1970's and 1980's, career planning was like getting on a bus. One could change buses and it was a little closer to driving than on a train. For the 1990's and beyond, career planning is more like an all terrain vehicle. The worker gets to drive, has to read the map, and has to be attuned to the terrain, which could change from moment to moment and affect job satisfaction.

According to CareerBuilder.com's (2008) Job Forecast, while the majority of workers are satisfied with their jobs overall, only 18 percent of workers love their current occupations and 13 percent are generally dissatisfied with their jobs. Twenty-nine percent of those who are unhappy are workers age 25-34. Just 18 percent of workers age 55 or older said they were disgruntled with advancement options, presumably because many of these workers are on the verge of retiring and don't place as much importance on advancing at this stage in their careers. Other important data found in the study reported that Generation Y, or workers age 18-24, are most unhappy with their pay, with 34 percent citing dissatisfaction. Conversely, 47 percent of baby boomers (workers age 44-62) are content with their current salaries.

Shahnasarian (2007) states, "if you are not fulfilled in what you do, you are really compromising a great deal of your life satisfaction" (p. 1). Many times people ask themselves what kind of money can I make in this career, does the career have visibility, and what is the career path? Joe Hodowanes, a career strategy advisor in Tampa Bay, Florida suggests these are all the wrong questions to ask when choosing a career. The first question a person needs to ask is
"what can I get passionate about?" If you don’t get into a career that fits your value system, your personality is not going to be very fulfilling” (p.1).

Shahnasarian describes four areas where people need to focus when trying to determine what career field they should enter. They need to find a suitable career that fits one’s values and interests: (1) work values, or what things are important to the individual in regard to a career earnings, prestige, excitement, travel, independence, and teamwork (2) one’s own interest (3) focuses on the individual’s skills and aptitudes (4) assessing the personal factors that need to be considered in choosing a career such as dual career career issues, children, and physical limitations that could affect a successful career choice. According to Shahnasarian, the decision-making process does not stop once one chooses a career. Throughout an individual’s working life, career decisions are almost made on a daily basis. Work can affect every area of a person’s life, so being happy with one’s work is a prescription for good health.

Holland (1997) simply suggests “birds of the same feather flock together.” This simply means that people like to be around others who have similar personalities, and people usually choose jobs where they can be around other people who are like them. For example, people who are artistic are attracted to making friends and working with artistic people. Also, people with the same personality type working together in a job create a work environment that fits their type. According to Schneider (1987), who shares Holland’s views, “the people that make the place” and the organizational culture, climate, and practices are determined by the people and the organization. Schneider’s Attraction-Selection Model suggests that the attitudes of people are created by the conditions of the workplace, and that organizations will tend to attract, select, and retain a workforce that shares common characteristics and becomes more homogeneous over time. When artistic people work together on a job, they create a work environment that rewards
Why People Make Career Choices

creative thinking and behavior. Most importantly, Holland’s theory suggests that artistic people who are similar in their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied if they choose a job where their creative abilities and expression are highly valued.

The theory of careers proposed by Holland (1997) characterizes persons and environments as a single set of six types. According to Holland, most people in our culture can be classified as one of six dominant types: (1) Realistic—“people who like to work with animals, tools, or machines and generally avoids social activities”. (2) Investigative—“people who are good at understanding and solving science and math problems, and sees themselves as precise, scientific, and intellectual.” (3) Artistic—“has good artistic abilities such as art, drama, and dance, and see themselves as expressive, original, and independent”. (4) Social—“likes to do things to help people such as a nurse or teacher, and sees one’s self as helpful, trustworthy, and friendly”. (5) Enterprising—“likes to lead people and persuade, and usually avoids analytical thinking, and sees oneself as energetic, ambitious, energetic, and sociable”. (6) Conventional—“likes to work with records, numbers, or machines, and sees self as orderly and good at following a set plan”. Holland’s theory stresses the importance that personal values, personality, abilities, and interest can have an enormous impact in a person’s fulfillment in their respective career choice. Holland’s theory places emphasis on the accuracy of self-knowledge and career information necessary for career decision making” (Zunker, 1994, p.49). Although the theory appears to be applicable to both male and female workers, there is some question of gender bias in that most females frequently tend to score predominately in three personality types: artistic, social, and conventional. Holland suggests that in our sexist society, females will display a greater interest in female dominated occupations.

Super, a notable career development theorist recognized that people go through different stages as they grow and mature through their lifespan. The impact of Super’s work and theory of
career guidance has moved away from a “talent-matching” to a developmental model, and in the emergence of the concept of careers education. Super (1957) has identified and generated a vocational theory that has six life and development stages. He focused on vocational choice as a series of events. The six stages can be categorized as the (1) the crystallization stage, ages 14-18, (2) Specification stage, ages 18-21, (3) Implementation stage, ages 21-24, (4) The stabilization stage, ages 24-35, (5) Consolidation stage, ages 35-55, (6) Readiness for retirement, age 55 and older. Super (1957) and other theorists of career development recognized the changes that people go through as they mature. Socioeconomic factors, mental and physical abilities, personal characteristics, and the opportunities to which individuals are exposed determine career patterns. Super states “people seek career satisfaction through work roles in which they can express themselves and implement and develop their self-concepts” (ICDM, 1991, P.4-5). Career maturity, a main concept in Super’s theory, is manifested in the successful accomplishment of age and stage development tasks across the life span.

Parsons and Williamson, who are major proponents of the Trait and Factor Theory, suggest that traits and factors are important for career development and can be assessed through testing. The different traits and factors are aptitudes, achievements, interests, values, and personalities. Aptitudes measure the capacity a person has to do something, thus predicting future performance such as an IQ or SAT. Achievements measure what a person has accomplished such as a final grade for a course. Interests measure the types of jobs, activities, and situations that people would prefer. Values pertain to the general lifestyle values and work-related values. They are more general and consistent over time than interests. Honesty and trust would be great values while working in situations where people trusted you would be an interest. Personality measures personal characteristics that persist over time. The Myers-Briggs
Personality Type Indicator would be a great example where there might be some correlation between personality and career choice, but not enough to make these tests predictive.

The most common tests would be the Strong Vocational Interest Blank. The first formal assessment of interests using a published inventory occurred in 1927 with the appearance of the Strong Vocational Interest Blank. Since that time, it has survived numerous revisions and is now called the Strong Campbell Interest Inventory which continues to be a popular and widely used interest inventory that tests professional and career interests. Some purpose of this career assessment instrument is that it tells you about your interests and their similarity to those in several occupations. The instrument provides information about you, from general interest types to specific occupations. The responses are collected into a theme and activity scales based on content and a score for occupations which are derived by matching your responses to people in various occupations.

The types of people can be represented by using points on a hexagon. The types of people are Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional.

(1) Realistic- Like real tangible things, usually have good physical skills, but sometimes have a hard time expressing themselves. They usually like occupations such as a mechanic or construction worker. They prefer working with real things rather than ideas or people.

(2) Investigative- They enjoy scientific activities. They are very task oriented, and prefer not to work with other people. They enjoy ambiguous challenges, but not highly structured work. They like occupations such as a biologist, meteorologist, or a design engineer.

(3) Artistic- These people like to work in artistic settings, where they can express their creativity. They describe themselves as independent, unconventional, and original. They like occupations such as artist, singer, composer or author.
(4) Social - These people are social, responsible, and concerned for the welfare of others. They enjoy expressing themselves and being around other people. However, they don't like working with machines or being physically asserted. They like occupations such as a teacher, speech therapist, or school superintendent.

(5) Enterprising - These people see themselves as energetic, enthusiastic, and self-confident. They like social tasks where they can take control, but do not enjoy problem solving. They like power, status, and material wealth. They like occupations which includes business executives, politicians, realtor, or hotel manager.

(6) Conventional - These people prefer highly structured activities, both numerical and verbal. They fit well into organizations, but do not seek leadership positions. They dislike ambiguity, and like to know what's expected of them. They value material possessions and status, and like occupations such as an accountant, statistician, financial analyst, or tax expert.

The Strong Vocational Interest Blank remains very popular with many career counselors and students especially at many colleges and universities across the country.

Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, and Herma (1951) a team composed of an economist, a psychiatrist, a sociologist, and a psychologist, respectively, were early leaders in speculating about career development as a process that culminates in an occupational choice in one's early twenties. In particular they asserted: “Occupational choice is a development process: it is not a single decision, but a series of decisions made over a period of years. Each step in the process has a meaningful relation to those which precede and follow it” (p. 185). Ginzberg and his colleagues identified four sets of factors, the interplay of which influences the ultimate vocational choice: individual values, emotional factors, the amount and kind of education, and the effect of reality through environmental pressures. These factors formulate the attitudes, which converge to shape
Why People Make Career Choices 15

the occupational choice. Ginzberg and his associates have given credence to the notion that vocational behavior finds its roots in the early life of the child and develops over time. They have indicated that vocational behavior and career choice have become increasingly reality-oriented and specific as one moves toward the choice itself. Ginzberg’s (1972) theory includes the following elements: (1) Occupational choice is a process that remains open as long as one makes and expects to make decisions about work and career (2) the decisions made during the preparatory period (principally schooling through adolescence) will help shape later careers, but changes occurring in work and life will also influence career choices (3) decisions about jobs and careers are individual attempts to optimize the fit between personality, priority needs, desires, work opportunities, and constraints that occur.

Roe, a clinical psychologist and educator, focused on the career as part of a total life history and the selection and pursuit of educational and vocational goals throughout life. Roe made a beginning contribution to the development of an organizational system for occupations that is simple enough to use with students and clients as a basis for their occupational exploration. Although her theory that early childhood experience was a determinant of vocational choice was not supported by research, her eight category classification of occupations served as a foundation for the later work of Holland (1959) and Prediger (1981). Roe was among the first major career theorists to implicate the role of the family in career decision making by focusing with mixed results, on child-rearing determinants in career choice. Perhaps Roe’s major contribution to date has been to offer a series of hypothesis about family influences in career development, which have been a spur to research. Other theorists developed different theories based on individual personality traits.
Briggs and Briggs-Myers created a personality instrument that is widely used for individual, group, or organizational development. The Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator is based on the theory of psychological types that was developed in 1920 by Carl Jung who believed that by understanding individual behavior patterns one can predict the type of activities a person would enjoy. The Myers Brigg Personality Indicator is an extremely powerful instrument to understand the differences between individuals backed by a wealth of research and statistical data. The instrument has helped millions of people with their working and personal lives. The career assessment assigns people to one of sixteen different type categories based on answering approximately one hundred questions. There are four different subscales of the test, which purport to measure different personality tendencies. The four different subscales are: (1) Introversion vs. Extroversion (How do we channel our energy?) (2) Sensing vs. Intuition (How do we take in information?) (3) Thinking vs. Feeling (How do we make decisions?) (4) Judging vs. Perceiving (Our life style orientation to the external world)

Although many consider the Myer-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) an essential career development and planning instrument, and sorts for preferences, it does not measure trait, ability, or character. The instrument should not be used to pigeonhole others in different categories because of the outcome of the personality test. However, the Myers-Briggs is used by approximately two million people per year and is the most valid and most reliable personality assessment instrument.

KEY THEMES OF DIFFERENT CAREER THEORISTS

After researching several career development theorists, some key themes are evident. Although each theorist has a different perspective of career development, most state that people
usually tend to enjoy a career more that matches their personality and traits with an appropriate position. Many career instruments such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Strong Campbell Interest Inventory, and the Trait Factor Theory are good indicators that can help people identify skills, aptitudes, interests, and traits to a particular career that might be suitable to them.

Another key theme is that people like to be around others who have similar personalities, and people usually choose jobs where they can be around other people who are like them. For example, people who work in a technical field such as engineering seem to enjoy other people that have very similar problem solving, mechanical, and decision making skills. They have more in common with this subset of people than someone working in management or human resources.

The third key theme is that career planning in the 21st century is quite different than it was 20 or 30 years ago. To have a career 30 years ago meant remaining in a particular job throughout ones adult working life, never leaving it despite the degree of dissatisfaction with ones job. However, today globalization has had such an enormous effect on how organizations operate that people are doing more work for less money. Technology is changing at a rapid pace that employees need to keep their skills current. People need to assess and evaluate themselves much more today, than they did in the past to stay competitive in the marketplace. Employees today need to take the initiative to drive their career related goals instead of allowing the employer to make the decision for them.

Another key theme is that a career is something that someone should be passionate about. When you are passionate about what you do for a living, you not only enjoy your job more, but you also get pleasure out of life. For example, a teacher or athlete who enjoys their
career will mostly not only have job satisfaction, but overall a better quality of life. Having passion in one’s career goes hand-in-hand with how people feel about themselves when they leave their job at the end of the day. As previously stated, a suitable career that matches personal interests is a good prescription to good health.

The final theme is that a career evolves because it is a life long process with decisions that people make as the job changes over a period of time. Career planning is a journey that adults make in their working life until they decide to retire. People must be prepared for life long learning, and have the ability to access information, develop knowledge, and enhance new skills on an ongoing basis. Self-reflection and self-assessment are very important and should be undertaken periodically to provide a roadmap of what is required to achieve career goals.

To learn more about career choices, I interviewed ten adults. Gathering large amounts of data from each respondent during the qualitative interview process allowed me to examine and interpret how and why people made certain career related choices. Factors such as education, personal motivation, use of career instruments, and exploration of career choice were closely examined. Understanding each respondent and how they felt about their chosen career provided an in-depth knowledge of each person as well as their background. This small study of participants was very useful because it covered many different vocational interests. Each respondent provided valuable information to the research study about their career choices in which the process will be described below.

METHOD

The information for this study was collected using a qualitative approach in which ten professionals (5 men, 5 women) were interviewed across different industries and occupations.
The participants are between the ages of 22 and 47. The mean was 36.4. All participants have an educational background of an Associates Degree or higher. The respondents who were interviewed were family members, friends, past or current co-workers, and students in the Graduate Human Resource Development Program at St. John Fisher College. At the beginning of the interview, each person signed a two page informed consent form that explained participant’s rights. (See Appendix B) Each participant was interviewed for approximately one hour at his/her respective workplace or home in a quiet environment. It took approximately three weeks to complete the interviews. In the interviews, each participant answered the same seventeen open-ended questions, including follow-up probes. This approach allowed information to be more easily analyzed to compare data between the ten participants. The main task of the interview was to understand the meaning of what the interviewee said, and how they felt about each related question through observation and listening. Each question was short, clear, and concise to ensure the participant understood the questions. The types of questions were based on behavior, opinions/values, feelings, knowledge, and background/demographics. The interviewer explained the relevance of the survey to each participant at the beginning of the interview, and the importance of the informed consent form. The interview concluded by asking participants if they had any questions about the survey, and ensured them that confidentiality would be maintained throughout the research.

DISCLAIMERS

The data were collected in this small qualitative study of ten participants did demonstrate that each person had different reasons as to why they chose their respective career. The main focus of the research project was to understand how and why people make certain career choices.
Why People Make Career Choices

The information that was collected was based on how people felt about their career at the present time, which could significantly change depending on their mood at another time. Because the sample size was 10 people, the research could not prove if there was a significant difference between genders when choosing their career profession. However, the research shows some similarity between younger respondents (20-25 years old) who were more apt to leave their job and pursue other opportunities. Also, several other factors were excluded from the studies questions; quality of work-life, family issues, single or marital status, income, as well as couples with dual careers. These issues could have impacted the research considerably. However, this small sample size did demonstrate that there are a variety of reasons why people choose certain careers. Some important factors were personality traits, values, and being able to work with other people.

RESULTS

I interviewed each participant to learn about their respective career field. Each participant answered the qualitative interview questions to the best of his/her ability based on understanding the question. The average number of careers for participants was approximately 2.7 during their adult working life. A recap of all participants is found in Appendix E, and a detailed account is included below.

Participant 1 is a 36 year old female who is currently pursuing her fourth career. She holds an Associate Degree in Business from a college in the southwest. She has held positions as a manager in a local hotel chain, administrative assistant at a medical center, office manager, and is now an administrative assistant at a local university. The participant entered into her first career as a hotel manager because that is what she originally wanted to do after high school. The demands of the position were so overwhelming; she decided to leave the hotel management field
after eight years. Her current position as an administrative assistant at the university was actually an opportunity because of luck. Her friend's husband told her about the position and the opening at the university. The participant feels that autonomy, a boss that recognizes her work and abilities, and good co-worker relationships are important motivational factors in her current position. The one thing she does not like about this position is the politics in higher education. She feels her work is very meaningful because she works with students from all over the world, and helps them to informally learn about United States social and business culture.

Participant 1 feels status in her position is much more important than upward mobility or compensation because she feels her opinion is highly valued among students, faculty, and staff. She is content with her current skills and education, but is continuously learning on the job as well as with other positions that coincide in her department. She has taken different career assessment tools such as the Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator (MBTI), but it has not helped in her decision to enter her current career profession. The biggest influence in her chosen career field is her boss who encourages her to become more involved in many aspects of the school. Participant 1 believes her current career is a calling or passion because she believes that her position is more suited towards her skills as well as the relationships she has maintained with students, staff, and faculty.

Participant 2 has been a Priest for approximately ten years. He is 42 years old and has extensive training in philosophy and theology to serve his community as a priest. His native land is in Kenya, but he decided to come to the United States to pursue a Master's Degree in Human Resource Development at a local college. He entered into his career profession because his parents were very committed in their faith, which laid the foundation for him at an early age. The person who influenced him the most in his chosen career was a priest he met twenty years ago in
Kenya. This inspirational priest made a strong impression on him and made him realize that he wanted to give back to others, and reach out to people to help them with their spiritual needs.

Participant 2 attended many seminars and workshops to understand and experience the vocation of a priest. He believes the important motivational factors of being a priest are giving his life to others by serving people, being connected with God, and leading a happy life. Another motivational factor is reaching out to the less fortunate and helping them make a difference in their lives. Also, he believes that being a priest has allowed him to become self-accomplished and self-actualized in his own life.

The one thing he does not like about his chosen career is the hierarchical structure in the Catholic Church. Other important drawbacks of this profession are that people are always making personal decisions, growing old with no wife or family support, and the lack of retirement or succession planning. The only regret he has about his profession is the current trends and scandals that are occurring in the Catholic Church especially in the United States. He believes that the very small number of priests who have behaved inappropriately have made it very difficult for other priests everywhere. However, he feels that the priesthood is very meaningful because people appreciate what you do, and also allows him to help the sick, the elderly, the less fortunate, people who are grieving, as well as happier occasions in life such as marriage. He is very content in his current position as a priest in his ministry, and believes that he can add a bigger impact by providing quality work to the people he serves. Continuously upgrading his skills such as achieving his Master's Degree in Human Resource Development, attending retreats and workshops, and learning more than twelve different languages are very important to his growth and development.
When Participant 2 was younger, he took many attitude tests to analyze and predict how successful he would be as a priest. These different attitude tests made a big impact on his decision to become a priest. Currently, he is very content to stay with his diocese, but is open to move to different geographical locations to serve others as a priest. He believes the priesthood is a vocational calling because there are few monetary rewards.

Participant 3 is a 37 year old male who currently works at Monroe Community College in Student Services. His job responsibilities include new student orientation, photo identification, parking, clubs/organizations, and student leadership training. He entered into this career profession right after he received his Master's Degree in Public Administration from the State University of New York at Brockport State College. He found the position by answering an advertisement in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. This opportunity also fits nicely into his career goals in higher education.

He has currently been in the student services field for fourteen years and believes that being part of the student development process motivates him. As an advisor to student government, he works closely with students helping them develop into future leaders throughout their college experience. He also enjoys the staff which he supervises and learns different aspects of various college programs. The one thing he does not like about his career profession is that sometimes he has to micro-manage tasks which limit the effectiveness of employees. Also, it is very challenging to balance the needs of both students and the administration. However, he believes his work is very meaningful and has the opportunity to make an impact on the overall student experience. The reason why he chose this field was that he had coaches, advisors, teachers, and counselors who were very influential during his high school years and now he
hopes to have the same impact on others. Helping individuals develop as human beings has always been his compass for his career aspirations.

Participant 3 believes that having a work culture of connectiveness where people’s opinions are valued make the work experience much more enjoyable than upward mobility and money. He also looks forward to other opportunities to grow and move upward through the college. Continuously upgrading his skills and knowledge is very important to his position so attends several professional development workshops each year. The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and Strength Quest personality instruments have been very important assessment tools that have helped him in his current profession. He is very content in his position and feels that his degrees fit nicely with his personal and professional goals. The biggest influence in his professional career was a high school teacher who previously had worked at Monroe Community College. Participant 3 feels very passionate about his work and likes to affect students in a positive manner to develop their potential as they proceed toward their academic goals.

Participant 4 is a Community Development Director in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts who currently holds a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from Syracuse University. He has been a municipal land use planner for 17 years, but has been in his current position for about 7 years. This has been his third career since leaving college and serving as a Lieutenant in the United States Navy. His father influenced him by telling him stories when he was young about the poor neighborhoods he grew up in. This became an important factor in his decision to help assist people with affordable housing. Another notable interest in why he chose his career was watching the classic movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” where the main character was interested in putting people into affordable housing.
The decision to enter into this career choice was something he discovered through various work experiences. Participant 4 was an intern after college helping his company that rebuilt rehabilitated single homes and provided economic development incentives to poor people, job training and placement, and life skills training.

The three big motivational factors of his career is that he enjoys creating programs, zoning changes, and master plans that set up opportunities for communities to evolve and grow. His profession helps him to be in contact with the decision makers of the community and he enjoys solving problems. The things he does not like about his current position are tight municipal budgets, short-sightedness, and irate residents. The work is very meaningful in that plans for change are created, implemented, and greater opportunities emerge as a result. This is especially the case, when a 365-unit rental project will provide 25% of the units for low-median income housing working families and seniors.

The biggest reasons why he chose this profession was that it made an impact on the community, he enjoys problem solving on a daily basis, and likes seeing tangible results over a reasonable amount of time. Position, upward mobility, and status are not necessarily important to him given his proven record. However, he has been able to continuously expand the scope of oversight in municipal land use in his community. His biggest influence in his current career was the Commissioner of Community Development in Syracuse when he was an intern, who he believed was a great mentor and problem solver, as well as a navigator in local politics. He believes his career is a passion and calling, and enjoys it tremendously as well as the income.

Participant 5 is a lifeguard and an assistant aquatics director at a local country club. She is currently pursuing a Master’s Program at a local college in the Human Resource Development Program. Her family and friends had an influence on her morals/values in regards to whatever
jobs she has undertaken; however her career choices relates back to her own preferences and values. While her position is not directly related to Human Resources, this position grants her the opportunity of interviewing and hiring, training, and helping co-workers with any problems that may arise. Participant 5 originally wanted to become a marriage and family therapist, but decided that Human Resource Development was more of a fit according to her values.

The things that motivate her to come to work are the fantastic co-workers and a great personal working relationship with the staff. Also, she has great flexibility with her schedule, and has made great networking contacts from both her co-workers as well as some of the club members. She believes that she should be paid more for her position; the staff is often overlooked when it comes to financing the budget and her department is often blamed for things that are sometimes out of their control. Participant 5 believes her work is meaningful because she likes the responsibility of being in charge. Also, as a lifeguard, people’s safety is a big concern which is extremely important to her.

Participant 5 believes that upward mobility, pay, and status are all important; however she believes establishing trusting relationships and being recognized by other employees is more important. She maintains that completing her Master’s Degree and attending various workshops and seminars have been very beneficial to continuously upgrade her skills and knowledge. Career assessments have not been all that useful for her; however, she believes they can be useful for other people. In her opinion, assessment tools should be used cautiously because the results can be turned into a self-fulfilling prophesy leading one to think in another direction that may not always be correct. Her education in psychology and human resource development is completely relevant to her career path. The biggest influence regarding her career choices or decisions has been a psychology professor she had in her undergraduate program.
Participant 6 is a 22 year old female who is currently working at Wegman’s Food Market and is enrolled in the Master’s in Human Resource Development Program at a local college in Rochester. She has had no influence from her family or friends in regards to her career choice. As an undergraduate in her History Education program, she was certified as a high school history teacher. Unfortunately, her student teaching, she learned that adolescent children were not a good fit for her. During this experience she was also working at Wegman’s Food Market where she was given an opportunity to work in human resources. Participant 6 has been in her current position in Human Resources for 18 months, and has worked for the company for approximately 7 years.

The three things that motivate her about her chosen career profession are; her ability to help other people, the ability to participate at the executive table to drive organizational planning, and see the beneficial results first hand. Sometimes her job can be stressful, and she gets frustrated playing “bad cop” to some employees. Overall, she believes her work is very meaningful because she is mentoring students who then were promoted to various positions within the company.

At this time in her life, pay, upward mobility, and status are not important. The value of her work is more meaningful as well as being appreciated by other people. She is continuously upgrading her skills, and always looking for additional learning opportunities that will help her in her career. Although, she is content to stay with one employer, she is always looking at other opportunities from other companies. Her undergraduate degree in communication does not match her current position, but her master’s degree in human resource development is more aligned with her strategic goals in Human Resources. Currently, she believes her job is something that pays the bills, but is looking forward to the day where she can believe it is a passion or calling.
Participant 7 is a 47 year old female lawyer. Her first career was as a chemical engineer, in a position she held for 5 years. She was heavily influenced by her parents because she had a strong aptitude in math and science. In the late 1970's there were not many women in this profession which made it easier to land a position with a law firm. Her second career is as an environmental lawyer, where she enables manufacturers to comply with the Clean Water Act and other statutes governing water pollution. She has been a lawyer for 19 years, and likes the combination of science/law in her current position.

She prefers being in a position as a transactional attorney, and not a trial attorney. Her goal is to help clients accomplish their business goals by buying real estate, securing a loan, and navigating the maze of environmental law. She likes helping people to cooperate to achieve common goals. Also, she enjoys the problem solving aspect of law and how clients achieve their goals and are protected within the law. Finally, it is satisfying for her to see a project progress from concept to reality. The things she dislikes about her current profession are the “incredible egos” and “pompousness of other attorneys”, and the “posturing” and “contentiousness” that sometimes arise in negotiations. She believes her work is most meaningful when she can help clients make prudent decisions easier. Also, she finds meaning in doing pro-bono work in which she helped a neighbor establish a non-profit corporation in memory of her son. However, sometimes she feels as though she is merely helping the rich get richer.

Participant 7 feels that good fortune, being in the right place at the right time, and the desire to earn a substantial amount of money are the reason she chose a career in law. She believes pay is most important followed by status and upward mobility. Upgrading skills and knowledge are usually requirements in her profession because things change rapidly. Sometimes,
she wishes she had entered a vocation that impacts others more on a personal level such as health care, teaching, or social work.

Career Assessments were not very useful to her when making a career choice. She believes her employer is very supportive of her, but feels if she were ever taken advantage of, that she would leave her employment. All her educational experiences have built on one another, and she uses things learned at every stage of her education in her daily work.

Participant 8 is a 41 year old male who is currently in his fourth career as a Sales Manager. He has been in this career for approximately 6 months. In his other careers, he was Vice President of Operations for two small digital printing companies, and was also a naval officer in the United States Navy. He believes his family did influence him especially when he made a decision to enter ROTC during his undergraduate work at St. John Fisher College. In his current position, he did some minor research, but also feels it was something he discovered through networking.

The three biggest motivators for career enjoyment are: the freedom of not being tied to the rigidity of an operations schedule, meeting new people outside his plant, and being in control of his own destiny. The thing he does not enjoy about his career is its high visibility. When sales are low, he is held accountable. He feels somewhat intimidated in sales because his other careers had a bigger comfort zone because they were directly related to manufacturing/operations. Also, he has to travel occasionally in his sales position which takes him away from his family and recreational activities. However, he believes his work is meaningful because his company relies on customer sales to make a profit. This position also allows him to provide input into the strategy and direction of the company.
He believes upward mobility is the key to future career success. Updating professional skills and additional education is extremely important and he just completed his Master’s in Business Administration at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Career assessments have not been very useful to him when making a career related decision. Participant 8 is content to stay with one employer, if advancement opportunities exist within the organization. He believes that many different factors such as money, upward mobility, status, and relationships with co-workers and bosses can have an enormous impact if someone considers his career a passion.

Participant 9 is a 46 year old female who is a business consultant and works part-time as a librarian at a local Rochester college. She entered her career by default when her friend told her about the business consulting position. Research and writing are very important to her position and she enjoys helping companies write business plans. The reason why she enjoys her career is that she can work independently, the work is flexible, and she has a great boss and co-workers. Although, she stated her career can sometimes be overwhelming, stressful, and customers can be irate.

She feels her work is meaningful when she puts together a good business plan, and hears success stories about her clients as a result of her actions. Upward mobility is not really that important to her, and she feels very content in her career. Development opportunities are important to her such as taking classes and attending business conferences to keep her skills current. Career assessments have not been useful to her career profession, but she is open to learn more about them.

Participant 9 enjoys her career and boss, and does not see herself moving to another job unless she receives a better job offer with more benefits such as sick time and vacation pay. Her undergraduate degree was in anthropology, and she never thought her future career would be in
the business world. However, she now believes her career is a natural fit, and in many ways has found her niche.

Participant 10 is a 25 year old male who currently left his job after 3 years, and is pursuing a career in Human Resources. His family has not influenced him about entering any career profession; however they encouraged him to pursue his passions. He believes Human Resources fits his values because he wants to work with people and help organizations grow through emphasizing human capital and resources.

The things that motivate him to succeed in the Human Resources profession are the ability to make a difference in people’s lives and the opportunity to work with people to make fundamental changes. However, currently, he believes there are a lack of job opportunities in the Rochester community, and it will be difficult to initiate a career in human resources.

Participant 10 believes that a career in Human Resources is very meaningful because human resource managers have the responsibility to help organizations further their mission by hiring the best employees possible. Furthermore, he believes the human resource field is very intriguing, and he has the ability to learn, grow, and make a difference in any organization. He believes upward mobility is more important in a career than money or status.

Upgrading skills, knowledge, and education is so consequential; he is pursuing a Master’s Degree in Human Resource Development. Recently, he passed the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Certification. He believes a career should be something that someone is passionate about, but money is also just as important.

**KEY THEMES OF RESEARCH**

There are several key themes in the research. It became evident that the younger respondents i.e., 5, 6, and 10; (Appendix E) are still searching for a career that is meaningful for
them. These Generation Y workers are more likely to leave their jobs than older workers because they are compensated less and do not have family or other commitments to keep them in their career. Their personality and interests are still developing and they may have a lack of information about their future occupations. Also, they have other barriers to making a decision which might include financial and personal biases. Most older respondents felt more content with their career. These respondents seem to have a more significant commitment to personal and family issues. People usually change their attitudes and perceptions during their adult working lives. A career they started in their mid-twenties may appear different to them by the time they are in their forties.

On the other hand, older respondents, i.e. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 in the survey felt that upward mobility is not that important to them compared to some of the younger respondents i.e. 5, 6, 10. Most respondents who are in their late thirties and forties were more content to stay in their careers compared to younger respondents and felt upward mobility was not as important. Whereas younger respondents were more driven to succeed as fast as they could and would do anything to get there. Super's Theory of Vocational Choice (1954) provides an excellent model of different career stages that people go through during their adult life.

The third key theme was that most respondents felt they are in a career that makes a difference in people's lives. From a priest who serves his community and makes valuable contributions to society without any compensation to other career related fields such as the community town planner or the environmental lawyer. People feel more self-satisfied when they know their work is meaningful to society which then makes their career more pleasurable.

A fourth key theme is that people usually look at their own value system, and then consider other people's careers who have similar values. For example, people who like to help
other people tend to stay in those types of professions. Also, people with similar types of personalities and interests are usually happier in their careers. People’s values that fit into an organizational culture that are similar to their own will most likely be happier with their work than someone who is in a career with a different set of values.

A fifth and final theme is that respondents felt that continuous learning, training, and education are vital to their career development. Although, some respondents feel another degree will not help them in their current career, they do believe that continuous learning is important to their professional growth and development. Respondents felt that workshops and training events that were closely related to their career field are very important to employee job satisfaction and motivation.

In summary, each respondent agreed that a career should be something you are passionate about that brings great joy. Sometimes people get carried away and just consider the money aspect they receive from doing certain jobs. People’s values and perceptions change over time and sometimes more money does not necessarily mean more happiness. Those people who believe they provide meaningful work to their organization or community are usually self-fulfilled and satisfied in their work and career choices.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Career planning should become an annual event**

   - People should assess their careers annually, of where they are, and where they would like to be. Career planning should be like a roadmap that will enable people to get to their final destination. Also, people who plan ahead usually are better prepared for the uncertainties of life such as corporate downsizings and layoffs.

2. **Establish career and job goals**

   - People should determine what their short and long term goals are, the roadblocks that might prevent them from reaching that goal and review and adjust goals on a periodic basis. Once goals have been obtained, people should establish new goals to keep them on a path towards future growth and development.

3. **Continuous education, training, and learning opportunities**

   - Career planning is a life long process. People should continuously look at growth development opportunities in either furthering their education or on-going training and learning experiences that will enhance and further their career. Most successful people in their careers take this approach that continuous learning never ends and it allows employee motivation and job satisfaction.

4. **Use assessment tools that will help you decide what career is right for you.**

   - People who use career assessment tools will be able to determine their strengths and weaknesses and it can also determine their interests and values pertaining to their respective career choices. Career Assessments are and can be a useful tool; however, people should not use these tools to pigeonhole and limit themselves to certain careers.
5. **Review Job and Career Trends**

- The global economy has a huge impact as to what professions are increasing and which ones are diminishing. Expanding knowledge and having information about future trends is very important to the overall career planning process. Having this advance knowledge will enable employees to effectively market their skills and education, and differentiate them from other candidates who are pursuing similar careers.

6. **Networking and Professional Associations**

- Establishing and building relationships through networking such as friends, co-workers, classmates, or professional organizations might help increase job opportunities. These opportunities usually arise when people have established and maintained important contacts throughout their adult working life. Also, by joining professional organizations, this will allow networking with those who have similar career interests and give them future possible opportunities to enter that career.

7. **Informational Interviews**

- Attending informational interviews can give someone the perspective about a certain career field. This strategy provides first hand knowledge from someone currently in that field, and can also provide an opportunity to discuss their particular experiences as well as potential jobs that one might expect if just entering the field.

8. **Internships and Job Shadowing**

- Experiences through internships and job shadowing are a great way to learn and to gain knowledge about what a typical work day and to see up close the kind of work environment and job responsibilities of someone working in that particular career field.
9. Make a SWOT Analysis of your (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

   - Every person should prepare a SWOT Analysis of him/herself annually about their
   particular strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of entering into a particular career
   field. This SWOT Analysis can become a great roadmap for people to either learn new skills and
   can provide opportunities to network with others. The SWOT Analysis can provide them a great
   visual of who they are in their current job and also provide a roadmap of where and who they
   want to be in the future.

10. Seek help from career professionals in the field

    - Reach out to career professionals for help when seeking career planning. Especially for
    younger adults who are in college and have not entered the workforce. This can be a great time
    to seek advice from career counselors who can help students with career mapping and self
    assessment tools.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

Career Development is a process or journey that people experience through continuous
learning, and the enjoyment people have when they take pride in their work. People who are
proactive and seek help through networking, career professionals, or take advantages of certain
work experiences such as internships and job shadowing seem to enjoy their careers more than
those who do not. It is very important that people know their strengths, values, competencies,
and abilities at an early age so they do not become pigeonholed into a job that is not fulfilling or
satisfying.
The global economy has had an enormous impact as to which jobs will be available to future college graduates seeking a professional career. This is why it is important for people to evaluate themselves on at least a yearly basis to determine what kinds of skills and abilities they need to obtain so they are not a victim of a corporate restructuring. Individuals who are proactive towards their career development seem to be far better off within their job and beyond than those who wait until an opportunity arises. I have experienced this at a large manufacturing company in Rochester, New York in which employees were downsized and had little time to find another job.

It is not uncommon these days, to find people pursuing another career direction to fulfill and satisfy their needs. People who are educated, who seek knowledge, and are willing to perform extensive research of new career opportunities are usually successful when they need to make a career change in their life. Change should be something that is positive and embraced instead of something that is feared because one is adequately prepared to make this change.
REFERENCES


Why People Make Career Choices

IRB PROPOSAL

Researcher: Timothy M. Sadwick
Project Advisor: Dr. Timothy Franz
Program: Human Resource Development
Topic: Why people tend to make career decisions? What helps them to choose?

Introduction:

Many times people enter into careers because of influences from many different sources, including parents, friends, family members, or individual interests. This project intends to more closely examine why people tend to make decisions to enter into different career professions. Readers of the final paper will gain a broader and better understanding of why career development is an important and a necessary component of the human resource development field.

Purpose:

As many career development professionals know, people often make the mistake that there is only one perfect job for them. Unfortunately, this is not the case and sometimes leads people to a wrong career choice. People make these wrong choices because of many reasons, some of which include a lack of focus and direction, an urgency to gain financial stability, parental pressures, and/or the fear of high expectations from family members and friends to do well and become financially successful.

My research will interview 10 individuals who are either friends, family members, colleagues, or classmates in the St. John Fisher Human Resource Development Program. The purpose of this project is to see why people made certain choices to enter into a particular career field. The reason why I have chosen either friends, family members, and colleagues is that with limited time to prepare my Thesis, I believe that I would still be able to have sufficient information as to why people go into certain career fields.

Factors that need to be considered to answer the question:

- Did people explore their career choice in depth or is it something they just stumbled on to?
- Why do people make certain decisions to stay in a particular field that they like? Why do people make certain decisions to stay in a particular field that they don’t like?
- Are people who make career choices because of the certain influences or pressures that surrounded them (parents, friends, financial stability) more likely to regret their choices?
- Are people continuously upgrading their skills, knowledge, and education to stay current with their career?

Methodology:

For this project, I will utilize a qualitative analysis in which I will interview 10 people in different career professions after asking for their consent to participate in the study (see Appendix B). I would like to further examine why people tended to lean to their career profession or was it something of circumstance. I will ask approximately 17 questions during these interviews (see Appendix D). The main task of using this approach will be to understand the meaning of what the interviewee said, and
How they felt about each related question through observation and listening. Each question will be short, clear, and precise, to ensure that each participant understands the question without much confusion. Each interview will take approximately one hour at each persons work location. The types of questions will be based on behavior, opinions/values, feelings, knowledge, and background/demographics. The purpose of each question will be to test the validity of my thesis statement and research in the paper.

Sample/Procedure:

Each person sampled in the qualitative analysis will be given equal weight in the research paper. They will be people from different careers that will give the reader a better perspective of why people enter into certain careers. Because of time, I feel that questioning and studying 10 individuals will give me a broad perspective of why people choose certain careers. The participants will be chosen from different industries to give a broad perspective as to why they have entered their perspective career field. The sample size will include five men and five women. Each participant will be asked the same 17 questions. Each participant will be interviewed once for approximately one hour. Some responses may take longer than others depending on the complexity of the question given to the participant. There will be a tape recorder for each section; however the subject has the right to refuse to be tape recorded.

Dissemination:

This research project does not have to report to any agency for its facts and findings. The sole purpose of this project is to fulfill the requirements of the St. John Fisher College and the Human Resource Development Program to graduate in May 2008. The sole owner of the research paper will be myself, and St. John Fisher College.

Disposition of Data:

The extensive research that I will have accumulated will be in the sole possession of the Human Resource Development Program at St. John Fisher College. The paper may be used at the Lavery Library at the college for the sole purpose as a resource for future graduate students who wish to examine this topic. The records from this study will be kept confidential and will be maintained in a locked office at my home for three years following completion of the project. No individual will be used in any reports on publication resulting in this study.

Informed Consent Form:

The Informed Consent Form for this research will ensue the proper rights that each respondent or individual has when participating in the survey. The Informed Consent Form will be (Appendix B) in the Research Paper.

Copies of Data Collection Tools:

The qualitative interview questions will be used as (Appendix D) in the research paper. The questions used will be to understand how people entered into their respective career profession, as well as outside influences from family members, friends, or their interest in that particular career field. Extra copies of the data collection will be maintained by the researcher and will be kept confidential.
ST. JOHN FISHER COLLEGE

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Appendix B

Title of study: Why people tend to make career decisions? What helps them to choose?

Name of Researcher: Timothy M. Sadwick  Phone# 723-0494

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Timothy M. Franz  Phone# 385-8170

Purpose of Study: To provide extensive research on why people make certain career choices.

Place of Study: St. John Fisher College  Length of Participation: 1 Hour

Procedures: Each participant will be asked the same 17 questions. The qualitative research interviews will include 10 participants that are family members, friends, co-workers, and cohort members of the GHRD program at St. John Fisher College. Each respondent will be given approximately one hour to answer questions either at their home, school, or workplace. The main task of using this approach will be to understand the meaning of what the interviewee said, and how they felt about each related question through observation and listening. Each question will be short, clear, and precise, to ensure that each participant understands the question without much confusion. The types of questions will be based on behavior, opinions/values, feelings, knowledge, and background/demographics. The purpose of each question will be to probe and understand each participant’s reason as to why they chose their particular career field.

Financial Consideration: There is no financial compensation for each respondent’s participation in the research.

Risks or Discomfort: At this time, there is no more risk than people who would ordinarily experience in their daily lives. Each participant has the absolute right not to complete the questionnaire if they feel uncomfortable with the questions. Also, if a respondent can not answer a question due to unfamiliarity or can not answer the question, they have the right to not answer the question.

Possible Benefits: The study is going to analyze and examine How Do People Make Career Choices, and What Helps Them To Choose. This research will give the reader and researcher a better understanding of why people make certain career choices. This is purely an academic study that will help the researcher complete his course work in (GHRD 590) at St. John Fisher College, as well as the capstone project in the Master of Science Program at the end of the program.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: The records from this study will be kept confidential. No individual information will be used in any reports on publication resulting from this study.

Your Rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you in a cover letter. The cover letter will explain the purpose, instructions, and confidentiality.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.

4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures of courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.

5. Be informed of the results of the study.

AUTHORIZATION

I have read the rights above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

Print Name (Participant)  Signature  Date

Print Name (Investigator)  Signature  Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact Timothy M. Sadwick at (585) 723-0494. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, and have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the St. John Fisher College Wellness Center at (585) 385-8280.
October 25, 2007

Timothy M. Franz Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
Program Director of Human Resource Development
St. John Fisher College
3690 East Avenue
Rochester, N.Y. 14618

Research Topic: Why people tend to make career decisions? What helps them to choose?

Dear Dr. Franz:

This letter is in regards to my project on “Why people tend to make career decisions? What helps them to choose?”

Many times people enter into careers because of influences from many different sources, including parents, friends, family members, or individual interests. Therefore, this project intends to more closely examine why people tend to make decisions to enter into different career professions. Readers of the final paper will gain a broader and better understanding of why career development is an important and a necessary component of the human resource development field.

Background:

As many career development professionals know, people often make the mistake that there is only one perfect job for them. Unfortunately, this is not the case and sometimes leads people to a wrong career choice. People make these wrong choices because of many reasons, some of which include a lack of focus and direction, an urgency to gain financial stability, parental pressures, and/or the fear of high expectations from family members and friends to do well and become financially successful. However, it is each person’s responsibility to set tangible career goals throughout their adult working life which will allow them to be more competitive in the marketplace.

Factors that need to be considered to answer the question:

• Did people explore their career choice in depth or is it something they just stumbled on to?
• Why do people make certain decisions to stay in a particular field that they like? Why do people make certain decisions to stay in a particular field that they don’t like?
• Are people who make career choices because of the certain influences or pressures that surrounded them (parents, friends, financial stability) more likely to regret their choices?
• Are people continuously upgrading their skills, knowledge, and education to stay current with their career?
• Are younger people more apt to leave their current job than older workers in the pursuit of better job satisfaction, financial stability, and better quality of work life?

These are just some of the issues I will be exploring in my applied research project to give a better understanding of why people make certain decisions to stay in a particular field.
Methodology:
For this project, I will utilize a qualitative analysis in which I will interview 10 people in different career professions. I will ask approximately 15-20 questions in these interviews. The main task of using this approach will be to understand the meaning of what the interviewee said, and how they felt about each related question through observation and listening. Each question will be short, clear, and precise, to ensure that each participant understands the question without much confusion. Each interview will take approximately one hour at each person's work location. The types of questions will be based on behavior, opinions/values, feelings, knowledge, and background/demographics. The purpose of each question will be to test the validity of my thesis statement and research in the paper.

In order to successfully complete this project, I am requesting your approval of the concepts and methodology discussed above. In addition, I may need your continued support, and help with possible contacts as I move forward.

I am looking forward to starting my research project. If you have any questions or suggestions in my proposed Draft Project Proposal/Letter of Intent, please feel free to call me at (585) 723-0494 or email me at timsadwick@aol.com.

Sincerely,
Timothy M. Sadwick
WHY PEOPLE DECIDE TO ENTER INTO CERTAIN CAREERS

Qualitative Interview Questions  Appendix D

1. Did you receive any influence from your parents, family members, or friends that helped you decide what career you wanted to enter into?

2. Why did you decide to enter into this career profession?

3. What is your career profession, and how long have you been in your current job?

4. Did you explore your career choice in depth or is it something that you just stumbled on to?

5. What are 3 things that motivate you or that you like about your chosen career profession?

6. What are 3 things you don’t like about your current career profession?

7. Do you think your work is meaningful, and can you describe in what ways?

8. Have you stayed in the same career profession since high school or college?

9. What are your three biggest indicators why you choose your career profession?

10. Is position, upward mobility, or status important to you in your chosen career?

11. Are you a person who continuously upgrades their skills, knowledge, and education, or someone who is content in where they are?

12. Do you have any regrets about your current career profession?

13. Did you take any career assessment instruments that helped you make a decision about your career profession?

14. Are you content to stay with one employer, or are you flexible seek other employment for advancement opportunities?

15. The education you received in high school or college, does it currently match your current career profession?

16. Can you tell me who your biggest influence was when entering into your desired career profession?

17. Would you consider your career a passion or calling, or something you do to earn money?
### PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION STUDY

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REFLECTION  Appendix F

Career development has always been an integral part of who I am as a person. I enjoy learning new things, and being able to contribute to different work experiences that have enhanced my professional growth and development. Especially in today’s competitive business climate, it is extremely important that I continue to learn and keep my skills current. I have recognized most recently that I must be the driver of my own career development if I want to be motivated, satisfied, and take pride in my work.

I believe I have taken the necessary steps to continue my journey to enhance my own career development in the past ten years. I have taken various personality assessments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory and the Strong Campbell Interest Inventory. These instruments helped to identify my personal strengths, personality, values, interests, and skills to determine what might be a suitable vocational fit. I learned a lot from these instruments which actually helped me to make a career change into the educational field last year.

I believe I am an adult learner who likes to continue to learn and likes to set personal goals for myself. I recently obtained my Master’s Degree in Management at Nazareth College in 2001, and now I will be completing my second Master’s Degree in Human Resource Development at St. John Fisher College in May 2008. Both degree programs have provided me with valuable skills, competencies, and knowledge that I will need to be a valuable contributor to either the Management or Human Resource Field. The Human Resource Development Program has provided great networking contacts that have allowed me to find employment in the education field at Medaille College in Rochester, New York.
As Knowdell stated, career planning is more like an all terrain vehicle. The worker gets
to drive, has to read the map, and has to be attuned to the terrain, which could change from
moment to moment. I believe as I am getting older, I am aligning my skills, interests, values, and
competencies to work experiences that I seem to enjoy. I think this is why I have enjoyed
working in education. I interact with students, faculty, and instructors and learn something new
every day. As I mentioned earlier, a career is a variety of different occupations during someone's
work life which is meaningful and provides people learning, enjoyment, and fulfillment.
Therefore, career development is the process of managing life, work, and learning over one's
lifespan. I think by understanding the term “career” and “job” this research project has given me
a different perspective of what kinds of work experiences I want out of life.
Career Development as an Integral Part of Human Resource Development

Appendix G

As mentioned in the Research, Career Development is an important component in the Human Resource Development Field. Having an effective career development program in an organization can fulfill a variety of functions, but most importantly it can improve the performance of the organization. However, there are many benefits to an individual and an organization of having an effective career development strategy.

The benefit to an individual who takes the initiative to provide their own career development roadmap:

1. Develop new skills and competencies.
2. Increase job satisfaction. (more challenging work, greater variety)
3. Aligning work with personal values and motivations.
4. Provides a map for employees to see how they might be able to move laterally or vertically within an organization.
5. Provides individuals with a degree of influence and control over the direction of their careers and ability to identify and plan their development.

The benefits of a career development strategy for an organization could include:

1. Improved ability of managers to plan ahead for key staffing positions. (succession planning)
2. Better identification of the organizations workforce and planning needs.
3. Increased staff morale through a sense of development and feeling valued.
4. Lower staff turnover levels and a more stable workforce.
5. Retention of a more experienced and skilled staff.

I believe in any organization whether small or big, many companies will look at the Human Resource Development department as a valuable resource to implement, design, assess, and measure career development programs. They will become an integral part of the organization because they will be the experts when it comes to career planning. Designing and implementing a career system will have to tie into the organization’s overall business strategy. They will have to stay abreast to the current trends, assessments, information systems, training/development, and other competencies to ensure the organization has the right tools for professional development and career management for employees.

HRD professionals can also play a vital role to foster a positive learning environment within the organization. They can implement employee development plans for the organization that can be effective to help employee’s professional growth and development. They can also be instrumental in putting systems in place to recognize employee talent, and establishing career succession plans for the organization. HRD can also determine what the mission and values are for the company. They can shape the culture of the company by leading by example, and are extremely important when the environment changes to ensure employees have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their jobs.
Ginzberg, Eli


Ginzberg recognized that vocational choice is influenced by four facts. The reality factor, the influence of the educational process, the emotional factor, and individual values. His theory of occupational choice proposes it is the development path that leads to career choice. Individuals pass through three stages fantasy, tentative, and realistic. In the fantasy stage the child is free to pursue on occupational choice. In the pre-teen years continuing through high school the young person further defines their interests in, capacity for and values of an occupational choice. In the realistic stage the person begins the career choice process, and recognizes the consequences and responsibilities of that choice. This book examines the different stages from when people are young until they are an adult when they need to make a realistic decision on what kind of career they want to pursue.

Holland, John


Dr. Holland is the creator of the best known and widely researched theory of career choice. It includes six personality types that are often abbreviated as (RIASEC) Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional which is widely used by career counseling professionals. Holland mapped these types into a hexagon, which he then broke down into the RAISEC environments. The book is a valuable for people who want to learn what kinds of career choices that might fit their personality type. He argues 2-3 types dominate each person. He believes vocational interests to be “an expression of personality”.

Hodowanes, Joe

Myers-Briggs, Isabel, Briggs, Katharine


In this well written book by Isabel Briggs-Myers, it describes the insights into the psychological type model originally developed by Carl Jung as adapted and embodied in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality test. The book also suggests how different combinations of these characteristics tend to influence the ways people perceive the world. Type tables show how type preferences tend to correlate with occupational interests. Profiles of the sixteen types also suggest how people of each type tend to act and relate to people with other type dynamics. Every year over 2.5 million people take the MBTI assessment and it has become the most widely used personality questionnaire in history across the world.

Parsons Frank


Mr. Parsons is known as the Father of Vocational Guidance. He wrote the book, Choosing a Vocation, which offered a method to match a person’s personal characteristics with an occupation. According to Parsons, ideal career choices are based on matching personal traits (aptitude, abilities, resources, personality), with job factors (wages, environment), to produce the best conditions of vocational success. Parsons’ framework later became the basis of contemporary trait/factor theory of career development.

Ann Roe


In Ann Roe’s book, the psychology of occupations, was intended for upper-class college students in programs in vocational guidance, counseling, and clinical psychology. The book structures the broad field of a possible relationship between occupational behavior and personality. Two of her key propositions were that, first, occupation is potentially the most powerful source of individual satisfaction at all levels of need; and second, that social and economic status depend more on the occupation of an individual than upon anything else. (Roe’s theory of occupational selection)

Schneider Ben


In Schneider’s book, he asserts that people make the place where they work, and that organizational culture, climate, and practices are determined by the people in the organization.
People who remain in an organization will come to find themselves working with colleagues much like themselves because the "fit" is better. Schneider suggests that interactions among people with similar attitudes, values, and personalities define the nature of the organization.

**Shahnasarian, Michael (2007)**


Dr. Shahnasarian is the Founder and President of Career Consultants Inc. in Tampa Bay, Florida. In his article he states people need a suitable career that fits one’s values and interests. (1) work values, or what things are important to the individual in regard to a career earnings, prestige, excitement, travel, independence, and teamwork (2) one’s own interest (3) focuses on the individual’s skills and aptitudes (4) assessing the personal factors that need to be considered in choosing a career such as dual career issues, children, and physical limitations that could affect a successful career choice.

**Super, Donald**


In Super’s book, The psychology of careers, he developed a Career self-concept theory in which vocational interests and identities change throughout a person’s adult life. He identified and generated a vocational theory that has six life and development stages. He focused on vocational choice as a series of events. The six stages can be categorized as the (1) the crystallization phase, ages 14-18, (2) Specification stage, ages 18-21,(3)Implementation stage, ages 21-24, (4) The stabilization stage, ages 24-35,(5) Consolidation, ages 35-55, (6) Readiness for retirement, age 55 and older. Donald Super recognized the changes that people go through different stages as they mature. Socioeconomic factors, mental and physical abilities, personal characteristics, and the opportunities to which persons are exposed determine career patterns. Career maturity, a main concept in Super’s theory, is manifested in the successful accomplishment of age and stage development tasks across the life span of an adult worker.

**Zunker, Vernon**


Zunker asserts that the recent trend in career counseling places greater emphasis on a humanistic approach designed to expand one's awareness of life, bringing greater meaning to all aspects of life-style. "In essence, the more an individual is aware of his or her potential and experience, the greater the likelihood of self-assertion and direction."