Possible Selves: An Exploration with Young Adolescents

by

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ABSTRACT

Possible selves is a future-oriented, personalized, affect-laden form of self-knowledge which provides a link between the self-concept and motivation. This study explored the possible selves of young adolescents through an individual interview format called the Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI). The PSMI, based on Cross and Markus' (1991) adult questionnaire, was developed to determine the extent to which young adolescents, aged 11 to 13, could generate lists of possible selves, reflect on their responses, make estimations of their capability and expected outcomes, and make plans to achieve their goals.

A purposive sample of 42 young adolescents (22 females and 20 males) from grades 5 to 7 was selected from a small town in the interior of British Columbia. During a 30 to 40 minute interview, hoped-for and feared possible selves were generated and written on file cards. Participants ranked their cards in importance, assessed their competency in achieving (or preventing) important possible selves, rated outcome expectancy, and listed steps taken to bring about (or prevent) these selves. Information was transposed onto a map which was used for summarizing the interview.

The participants were able to produce a number of possible selves, generating more hoped-for than feared future selves. Occupational hoped-for selves and safety feared selves were the most prevalent themes reported by this sample of young adolescents. Boys listed more possession hoped-for selves and lifestyle feared selves than girls. Girls expressed more relationship feared selves than boys. Both sexes rated themselves as very capable of achieving (or preventing) possible selves. They believed that hoped-for selves were likely to occur and that feared

selves were less likely to occur. Respondents listed a number of behaviors taken to obtain or prevent these future selves. These results indicate that young adolescents are able to explore possible selves in an interview format.

The PSMI is a format that offers young adolescents an opportunity to self-reflect, appraise levels of competency, and to gather information about hopes and fears for the future; all elements of effective career-life programs. Teachers and counsellors can use the PSMI in a number of ways, including goal setting, exploring gender-role socialization, developing coping strategies, addressing fears, and increasing occupational aspirations.

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The future...now exists in the person in the form of ideals, hopes, duties, tasks, plans, goals, unrealized potentials, mission, fate, destiny, etc. One for whom no future exists is reduced to the concrete, to hopelessness, to emptiness. For him, time must be endlessly "filled." Striving, the usual organizer of most activity, when lost leaves the person unorganized and unintegrated

(Maslow, 1968, p. 214)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Career planning and development is an ongoing process throughout our lives, as manifested in the over three million job changes that take place each year in Canada, as well as by the millions of adults who embark on individual learning programs (Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation [CGCF], 1993). Due to the rapidly changing labour market, individuals must continually re-assess their talents and opportunities in the labour market and the education/training system. With the increased complexity of a global market and the many transitions demanded of workers, it is vital to encourage self-management of career-life roles. People must become proactive in their career development and acquire coping skills in the face of adversity.

To construct workable career paths, Redekopp, Stechynsky, & Garber-Conrad (1995) believe that the following three components of adaptability need to be addressed in educational systems: self-management, meaning, and competence . Educators can be important agents in helping youth become self-regulated, independent, and flexible in exploring the future (Brown, Bransford, Ferrara, & Campione, 1983). Self-regulated learning involves the development of self-management skills and metacognitive judgments and beliefs about competencies, interests, and values. Students gain greater awareness about their mental processes and are encouraged to make better cognitive judgments and choices. Developing self-management skills provides students with internal and external resources. Self-management skills balance personal motivation and cognitive abilities which allow students to make decisions about the tasks they confront and the potential satisfaction to be gained from those tasks. Views of one's self-competence and

expectations for future achievements develop out of metacognitive beliefs, judgments and choices.

> It is widely acknowledged that children begin to formulate career decisions at a relatively young age. At these early ages, they acquire impressions of the work people do, the kinds of people employed, the compensations offered, and the abilities required for acceptable performance. These are the years of curiosity and inquiry, trial and exploration, and relative freedom from prejudice. As such the elementary grades encompass the natural years for developing appropriate career foundations. (Gibson, Mitchell, & Basile, 1993, p. 190)

With the world of constant change in mind, and the recognition of the self-management skills needed to succeed in this world, the new Personal Planning K to 7 curriculum (B. C. Ministry of Education, 1995) was designed. The purpose of the new curriculum is to provide opportunities for elementary students to develop the set of skills, attitudes, and knowledge required to cope with the demands of one's social and cultural environment. Unfortunately, when teachers implemented the new K-7 Personal Planning curriculum they discovered that, apart from the main features detailed in the 1995 Integrated Resource package (B. C. Ministry of Education), few specific suggestions for lesson plans were provided.

Despite the recent interest in young adolescents' career development, it is surprising that so little research has actually been conducted on "develop[ing] personal hopes and expectations for career life roles" (School Programs Branch, 1992, p. 11). Furthermore, there is little research on how young adolescents' metacognitive understanding about agency, instrumentality, control, and purpose shape their orientations to future career-life roles.

Markus and Nurius' (1986) concept of "possible selves" has potential as a means to explore and promote the generation of options, the increase of self-

awareness, and the formulation of plans to achieve goals. Possible selves are the future oriented components of the self-system involved in goal setting and motivation. The construction of possible selves entails the recruitment of imaginative capacity and self-reflection on the part of the individual to create a set of hoped-for, expected, and feared future selves. The concept of possible selves has been explored with adults (Garcia et al., 1995; Hooker, Fiese, Jenkins, Morfei, & Schwagler, 1996; Hooker & Kaus, 1992; Inglehart, Markus, Brown, & Moore, 1987; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992; Ryff, 1991). As shown in these studies, possible selves represent our ideas of what we might become, what we would like to become, and what we are afraid of becoming.

Possible selves are an important part of the motivation process. They can provide us with specific goals to either strive for or avoid, as well as provide us with the drive to persevere in pursuing those goals (Inglehart, Markus, Brown, & Moore, 1987). For example, one might faithfully practice saxophone every afternoon with the expectation of graduating from Julliard, and the hope of becoming a world famous jazz musician--even while struggling with the co-existing fear of being unsuccessful. To date, very few studies have investigated the use of possible selves with young adolescents, especially in the area of career exploration. As well, no consistent procedures for exploration of possible selves have been developed for young adolescents.

The Purpose of the Study

The overall aim of this study was to address this gap in the literature by exploring the concept of possible selves with young adolescents through individual interviews. It was expected that an individual interview format could be developed that would ascertain the extent to which this age group could generate lists of possible selves, self-reflect on their choices, make judgments about their competencies and effectiveness, and make plans to achieve their goals. The results

from this study will provide information that will be useful in career-life development education.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the current focus on wholistic career education and the changing nature of work, the traditional career development theories are not appropriate today. The purpose of this chapter is to outline relevant literature relating to possible selves as a potential tool for providing life-career education for young adolescents.

This chapter opens with a discussion of self-concept formation, in particular, self-concept formation in early adolescence. A brief synopsis of the schema model of self-concept describes how self-concept functions to influence self-cognitions and self-feelings, and how this model acknowledges the temporal nature of information about the self. Next, the explanation of possible selves underlines the interdependence between self-concept and goal formation, motivation and competency. Subsequently, developmental differences in possible selves across the adult life-span are outlined. The literature review concludes with commentary on life career development and the career dreams of young adolescents.

Self-concept Formation in Early Adolescence

Historically, most theories of self considered self-concept to be a "uniform, monolithic structure consistent over time, comprising some number of physical features or psychological structures that abstract the essential traits from the individual's past behavior" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 957). Until recently, other dimensions of self-concept thought to be powerful determinants of behaviour have been largely unexplored --such as one's beliefs about who one is today, and expectations, fears, and wishes about what one will become in the future (Cantor, 1990; Markus & Nurius; Markus & Wurf, 1987).

One key issue in understanding the topic of adolescent self-concept is awareness of the different levels of cognitive development. Piaget (1977) and Vernon (1995) have established that the concrete operational stage occurs between the ages of 7 and 11. At this level of cognitive development, children do not have to see an object to imagine manipulating it, but they must be aware that it exists. Children can think through sequences of actions or events that previously had to be acted out physically. They think about occupations, such as veterinarian, in terms of what a vet does and the equipment that a vet uses (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). In the final period, referred to as formal operations and beginning about the age of 12, adolescents gradually begin to develop the ability to think abstractly and hypothetically, and to view a problem from multiple points of view. As the ability to use logic gradually develops, more sophisticated planning, regulatory, and evaluative processes are practised. There is an increased ability to imagine alternatives, to be introspective, and to think about themselves in a variety of situations. However, according to Elkind (1981), the egocentricism of the concrete operational thinking does not disappear quickly. Adolescent ability to self-reflect and observe the self can result in an unrealistic view of self as unique and invulnerable. Thus, adolescents start a gradual process of developing their ability to conceive of the possible and abstract. These cognitive changes influence the adolescents' thinking about themselves.

There are several developmental trends associated with self-concept formation. One is in the nature of self-descriptions from conceptualizing self in terms of a social exterior (e.g., by physical appearance and/or possessions) to more abstract conceptualizations of self as a psychological interior (e.g., by values, beliefs, and wishes) (Damon & Hart, 1982; Harter, 1990b; Rosenberg, 1986). Children between the ages of 6 and 12 enter a self-reflective phase where they perceive the self as the likely object of others' perspectives and gradually develop a

third person point of view between the ages of 9 and 15 years that enables mutual perspective taking (Selman, 1980). With increases in cognitive and social cognitive abilities, young adolescents are capable of improving decision making by developing ability in generating options, looking at a situation from a variety of perspectives, evaluating the credibility of sources, weighing consequences, and conceptualizing longer term outcomes and life plans (Keating, 1990).

Young adolescents begin to think of the self as a contemplative being, a self-determining being, a relational being who has the ability to compare self to others, and a continuous being who has a past, present, and future (Damon & Hart, 1982; Rosenberg, 1979). Erikson (1964) likened this period of adolescence to a trapeze artist.

> The young person in the middle of vigorous motion must let go of his safe hold on childhood and reach out for a firm grasp on adulthood, depending for a breathless interval on a relatedness between the past and the future, and on the reliability of those he must let go of and those who will "receive him" . (p. 90)

The resolution of the identity versus identity diffusion stage concludes in a stable ego identity or a set of values, beliefs, goals and attitudes that contribute to a sense of coherence and continuity in adult roles. Role confusion, on the other hand, results because of insecurity over skills, sexual identity, or personal value.

As young adolescents develop, there is a shift in their worries and concerns and values. In a survey of youth from grades 5 to 9, participants were presented with a list of issues to rate on a five-point scale (Benson, Williams, & Johnson,1987). Most of the students expressed concerns about school performance, looks, relationships with friends, and victimization. Generally, more fears were expressed by the younger participants. Fifth graders reported the most concerns: sixteen of the identified twenty. Girls were more fearful than boys across the five grades. The

greatest gender differences were in the areas of looks, relationships with others, and fears of sexual abuse. Boys tended to worry more about getting a good job, getting beat up, and nuclear war.

When presented with twenty-four values, these youth ranked family, vocation, friends, and school near the top. Between the fifth and ninth grades, the importance of autonomy and future achievement increased substantially.

Overall, when balance of values and roles was considered, girls had a closer balance between individualistic and relational values than boys. As well, girls more frequently realized a balance between masculine and feminine sex-roles. The authors of the study expressed surprise at the high level of interest in future occupations shown by the young adolescent participants.

Assessment of abilities grows more modest and more accurate from early to late childhood (Frey and Ruple, 1987). Children between the ages of 8 and 12 are quite capable of differentiating five domains of competence: scholastic, athletic, peer social acceptance, behavioral conduct, and physical appearance (Harter, 1985). Higgins and Parsons (1983) argue that both cognitive and social influences work together to promote stable conceptions of ability.

In summary, as children move into and through adolescence, there are interesting and significant changes in how they conceptualize the self. The chief reason children and adolescents think about the self differently is that they *think* differently. There is a shift from concrete to abstract modes of thought, and a process of role-taking emerges that permits the child to view the world from multiple perspectives. According to developmental theorists, open-ended questions that ask young adolescents to reflect on possible or future selves should generate multiple potential life roles.

Schema Model of Self-concept. The schema model of self-concept developed by Markus and colleagues (Markus, 1977; Markus, 1983; Markus & Kunda, 1986; Markus & Sentis, 1982; Markus & Wurf, 1987) is a model that refers to a person's total accumulation of cognitions about the self, including self-schemas. Self-schemas are conceptualized as "knowledge structures developed by individuals to understand and explain their own social experiences" (Markus & Sentis, p.45). They can be understood to represent both the self that is known and the self as knower (James, 1915/1984). That is, they serve as the "known" self because they contain descriptions of personally important competencies, traits, or abilities, while they stand for the self as "knower" in that they behave as a selective processing system, centering attention on relevant information and thereby affecting what is encoded and retained. Rather than being shaped by life events, self-schemas serve as an organizing framework that gives meaning, structure, and direction to an event (Cantor & Zirkel, 1990). For example, if a person has a "self as dancer" schema, then that person will dance more often than those with no self-schema in the domain. As well, more strategies will be employed to promote dancing on a regular basis. Within this framework, self-schemas then integrate and summarize thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the self in a specific behavioral domain.

Markus and Kunda (1986) make the distinction between an individual's entire repertoire of self-schemas and that subset which is activated specifically to allow us to interact with specific situations. These researchers used the term "working self-concept" to convey the idea that only a portion of self-cognitions are active in memory at any point in time. The working self-concept can be seen as a "continually shifting configuration of self-schemas that have been activated by memory" (Brower & Nurius, 1993, p. 56). Thus, configurations of self-schemas comprising the working self-concept at different points in time and under differing

circumstances may be markedly different even if the collective (the global self-concept) from which they are drawn remains relatively constant.

The self-schema framework is important to this research because it has the potential for diverse applications. For instance, self-schemas can be developed about any facet of a person, from social roles to areas of interest and skill that are so important in career exploration. To date, studies have documented availability of self-schemas in a variety of domains, including academic performance (Garcia et al., 1995; Inglehart, Markus, Brown, & Moore, 1987), parenting (Hooker, Fiese, Jenkins, Morfei, & Schwagler, 1996), school persistence (Oyserman, Gant & Ager, 1995), life domains (Curry, Trew, Turner, & Hunter, 1994), life-events such as divorce (Carson, Madison, & Santrock, 1987), and delinquent behavior (Oyserman & Markus, 1990a; 1990b).

Dimensions of Self-schemas. Self-schemas can differ in several ways. They vary both in degrees of complexity and specificity. They integrate and summarize individuals' thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the self in a specific domain. As well, self-schemas serve as active working structures that shape perceptions, and emotional and behavioral responses. Perhaps most importantly, self-schemas differ in their temporal nature.

Self-schemas vary in their degree of affective, cognitive, and behavioral elaboration (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Well-elaborated schemata (for example, "To be a good baseball hitter, I need to watch the ball at all times, know where all the players are, and anticipate their moves when I hit the ball.") tend to be more distinctive, more often initiated, and both more powerful and more consistent in their cognitive and behavioral outcomes than less developed schemas (for instance, "I like to play baseball.").

Self-schemas are domain-specific. Wurf and Markus (as cited in Markus & Nurius, 1987) discovered that individuals endeavour to develop and improve in the

domains of their schemas. When they compared two groups of individuals, one group, called schematics, had self-schemas in the domains of independence, outgoingness and shyness. The other group, called aschematics, did not consider independence, outgoingness, and shyness important self-attributes. As expected, schematics had substantially more selves, both positive and negative, in the domain of these self-schemas and were able to supply more details about possible selves in these domains. Yet, the two groups, schematics and aschematics, did not differ in the number or elaboration of possible selves in domains for which neither group had a schema. These findings support Markus' premise that schematic individuals think about specific aspects of their behavior and are more likely to contemplate self-potential in these areas. Therefore, self-schemas not only reflect past behavior but also embrace goals and plans for future behavior.

Self-schemas are a source of action-oriented processes or self-regulatory strategies that provide the framework needed for an individual to focus, establish, and preserve abilities in the quest for competence in a specific area. Even in the face of negative feedback on a problem solving task, college students who classified themselves as good problem solvers (schematics) continued to think of themselves as logical and analytical (Cross & Markus, 1994). Those students who rated themselves as average in solving problems (aschematics) were quick to incorporate failure feedback into their working self-concepts when told they performed poorly.

According to Markus' self-schema model (Markus, Cross, & Wurf, 1990), the self-schema and accompanying possible selves act as a cognitive basis for the wish to develop and use these problem solving abilities. Schematics confirm this ability whenever they have the opportunity; aschematics depend upon situational factors (like feedback) for encouragement. Representations of what individuals think, feel, or believe about themselves are powerful regulators of many important behaviors, particularly those associated with self-regulation--planning, strategy

selection, goal setting, monitoring, judgment, and self-evaluation (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

An important aspect of self-schemas is their temporal orientation. They provide the structure for moving beyond currently held information to anticipating specific futures in a given domain. People retain self-schemas from childhood, hold a variety of self-schemas relevant to present life, and develop schemas which reflect images of the future. A student who labeled herself as strong in science while at high school and who now is an outstanding biology student at university will be more inclined to dream of being the next David Suzuki than a student who has labeled herself as weak in science since high school. In this way, past and present identities play a part in determining future possibilities. Also, pictures of oneself in a specific future state can also motivate behaviors that effect one's competence and images of present self (Day, Borkowski, Dietmeyer, Howsepian, & Saenz, 1992).

According to Markus and Nurius (1986), visions of oneself in the future are what they term possible selves. These future-oriented representations are "personalized, detailed, and enduring imaginal, semantic, enactive conceptions of the self one is striving to become or hoping to avoid becoming" (Stein, 1995, p.188).

Possible Selves

Possible selves are components of the self-schema. They supply a framework and make sense of the future in those domains of personal interest and concern (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Specifically, possible selves are cognitive portrayals of hopes, fears, and expectations in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Expected possible selves are the selves that one believes one can realistically become. The hoped-for self is an aspired self that one desires to become, but which may or may not be realistic. When hoped-for selves are viewed as reachable, specific scripts, plans and action strategies become attached to them and they

evolve into expected selves (Oyserman & Markus, 1990a). However, when a hoped-for self is seen as unachievable, the plans and motivational controls needed to attain it do not develop. Hoped-for possible selves might include the competent professional, the loving parent or the famous self. The feared self is a possible self that one does not want to become, yet fears becoming. The feared self plays an important role in the self-concept by acting as a motivator so that concrete actions are taken to avoid that future possible self. Dreaded possible selves might include images of the unloved self, the depressed self, or the cancer-ridden self.

Possible selves can have a very concrete impact on how people initiate and structure their actions, both in realizing positive possible selves and in preventing realization of negative possible selves. Since envisioning an action entails previewing a sequence of events that would likely accompany that action, the creation of elaborated possible selves achieving the sought-after goal has a direct impact on the translation of end-states into intentions and instrumental actions (Markus and Kunda, 1986; Nuttin, 1984). For this reason, the concept of possible selves has potential for application to career development and planning.

Goal Formation. Ruvolo and Markus (1992) examined the role possible selves play in goal formation with three groups of adult subjects. The first group was asked to imagine themselves in the future and to assume that everything had gone as well as it possibly could. They were told to assume that they had put effort into their work and that all of their goals and expectations had been fulfilled. A second group was asked to imagine themselves in the future but to believe that everything had gone as badly as it could, that they had worked hard but that none of their goals had been realized. A third group served as a control. The three groups were asked to respond to a series of possible selves, both positive and negative, and to indicate whether these selves were possible or not possible for themselves. Members of both the success and failure imagery groups favored more positive than

negative possibilities and did not differ significantly in which possible selves they selected. Yet, when the response latencies for these endorsements were examined, the success imagery group was significantly faster to subscribe to positive possibility. Those in the failure imagery group were significantly faster to endorse negative possibility.

Ruvolo and Markus (1992) hypothesized that respondents in the success group had active representations of the self as successful in the working self-concept. Those in the failure group took shorter time to decide that, "no it is not possible for me", suggesting that negative representations of the self were active in the working self-concept. As well, the failure group was slower to respond to "yes, it is possible for me". The longer reaction time by this latter group indicates that positive possible selves may have been less available at the time of this task. Negative conceptions of the self take away from the performance at hand and prevent the mobilization and utilization of positive possible selves from becoming engaged and structuring performance.

Carver, Reynolds, & Scheier (1994) encountered similar results with optimists and pessimists. Optimistic subjects generated more positive expected selves than pessimistic subjects. While both groups hoped good things would happen, pessimists were less able to translate these hopes into expectations. Pessimists' hoped-for selves are less likely to develop into expected selves because they lack clear, specific images of themselves in future states.

Possible selves, then, initiate and structure an individual's activities towards achieving a desired end-state. That is, they connect the goal to the self and make it more likely that the possible images will remain, thus keeping the individual on course.

Motivational Characteristics. Possible selves can also act as motivators by providing the energy to persevere in attempts to attain goals (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves are the cognitive/affective elements that incite and direct one's self-relevant actions (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Markus and Ruvolo (1989) have accepted the definition of motivation as dispositions within an individual to strive to approach a particular class of positive incentives or to avoid a particular class of negative incentives. Possible selves represent these motives "by giving specific cognitive form to the end states (goals and threats), to the associated plans or pathways for achieving (or avoiding) them, and to the values and affect associated with them" (Markus & Nurius, p. 961).

Possible selves influence motivation, first by structuring the goal and pathways to achieve the goal, and second, by energizing the individual to persevere in pursuing the goal. In a longitudinal study of students in an integrated bachelor of arts-doctor of medicine program (Inteflex Program), this two-factor model was supported (Inglehart, Markus, Brown, & Moore, 1987). Those students who had focused on becoming doctors before commencing medical school (the structuring component) had increased academic achievement in their fifth year compared to those students who initially considered a career other than medicine. In addition, the more students had focused on a "M.D." possible self as satisfying and attractive before entry into medical school (the energizing component), the greater was their later academic achievement compared with students who viewed medicine as just satisfactory. Similar results were obtained when the attractiveness of medicine as a career was tested. Students who viewed their potential medical careers as most attractive achieved higher academically in their fifth year than those who judged their specialty as merely attractive.

A characteristic of possible selves that improves motivation is the balance between hoped-for and/or expected possible selves and feared selves. Oyserman

and Markus (1990a; 1990b) postulated that becoming involved and staying involved in delinquency reflects a lack of balance among one's possible selves and, therefore, a lack of specific motivational control over one's actions. Youths, aged 13 to 16, from four subsamples (public school, community place programs, group homes, and state training schools for delinquents), were asked to describe their possible selves for the next year. Analyses of covariance among the dependent variables (possible selves measures, global self-esteem, and optimism for the future) and independent variables (age, sex, race, and the degree of delinquency) were used to ascertain the amount that possible selves varied with the different levels of delinquency. There were few significant differences for age, sex, and race. Despite the fact that many similarities existed among hoped-for selves, the four subsamples varied in the nature of expected and feared selves. Most noteworthy was the difference in balance of expected and feared possible selves across the four groups of adolescents. A pair of responses (an expected self and a feared self) was considered in balance if they represented a positive and negative aspect of the same content area (e.g., me "graduating from school" and me "dropping out").

The two most delinquent groups had less balance than the two least delinquent groups. Specifically, 81% of nondelinquents had at least one match between their expected and feared selves; whereas this was true for only 37% of the most delinquent group. Of the most delinquent groups, 33 to 37% feared becoming criminals. Yet these feared selves were not balanced by expectations that focused on avoiding crime and attaining achievement in conventional ways.

When expected selves are not balanced by compelling feared selves in self-defining domains, expected selves do not provide delinquents with sufficient motivation to take action to avoid criminal behavior. Without a specific, relevant feared possible self, delinquents may lack the persistence needed to pursue a desired

possible self and, instead, may drift from ineffectively seeking one hoped-for possible self to another (Oyserman & Markus, 1990a).

Balance may play a role in career planning. Curry, Trew, Turner, & Hunter (1994) found that adolescent males are more likely than adolescent females to have a balance among their possible selves in terms of future careers, with hopes for successful careers balanced by fears of failing or being unemployed. It is likely that female adolescents lack such a straightforward balance; and that their hopes for successful careers are complicated by selves that are imposed by others or "ought" selves (Higgins, 1987), such as future roles as primary caregivers for young children. For boys, the role of "good father" does not unbalance or interfere with the hope for a successful career, instead it is incorporated into the ideal of "good provider."

Another motivational characteristic of possible selves occurs when these future selves are validated. In order for growth and change to occur, these possible selves must be authenticated after they are constructed. Self-validation processes are important since they are the essential link between cognitions about the self to self-relevant, self-regulated actions (Wurf & Markus, 1991). The easiest way to validate possible selves is by taking action to achieve them. Specific actions taken to achieve goals are established by the type of plans or strategies carried out (Pervin, 1989); by the individual's self-efficacy expectations for achieving that possible self (Bandura, 1986); and by taking advantage of opportunities, times or means (Wurf & Markus, 1991).

Thus, possible selves can be described as cognitive structures within the self-concept that contain a person's aspirations, motives, and goals. Since motivation implies potential change from present to future, possible selves represent motivation in the self-concept. Possible selves provide the energy and the means to

reach goals, which allows one to plan, carry out, and supervise one's progress while self-evaluating competencies.

Competency. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy expectations as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (p. 391). In the process of anticipating the future, perceptions of competence are generated by preparing the information-processing system to retrieve knowledge consistent with the self-schemas active in working memory (Markus, Cross, & Wurf, 1990). Images of a positive possible self, combined with images of, or semantic information about, attaining that self make the end state seem more probable, consequently fostering a sense of competence or efficacy.

Students may carry the same self-schemas, but hold diverging beliefs regarding the *likelihood* of attaining (or avoiding) that self; the *importance* of attaining (or avoiding) that self; and in the *efficacy* one feels for attaining or avoiding that self. For example, in a 1995 study by Garcia et al., female and male subjects placed very high importance on possible selves relating to effort and achievement, but females reported lower levels of efficacy than males in avoiding feared possible selves.

Garcia and Pintrich (1995) studied the possible selves of grade 7 students in specific academic domains. Greater self-efficacy in particular subject areas was recorded for hoped-for selves rated highly important (i.e., those high in the likelihood and instrumentality ratings) and for feared selves that were seen as important to avoid. In contrast, feared possible selves discerned as high in likelihood were related to lower levels of self-efficacy across those subject areas. As expected, self-efficacy in a subject area had the greatest association with the use of self-regulatory strategies (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992); however, possible selves accounted for a unique portion of the variance in self-

regulation above and beyond the effects of perceived competence. Thus, possible selves appear to be an additional source of self-efficacy.

There are surprising parallels between the self-schema concept proposed by Markus (1977) and theories of metacognition (Paris & Cross, 1983). The most important link may lie in the area of self-appraisal. Individuals' orientations to tasks and their perceptions of self-efficacy and control are influenced by knowledge about one's thinking, skills, beliefs, abilities, and deficits or metacognitive knowledge. Borkowski, Carr, Rellinger, & Pressley (1990) believe that constructs such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, achievement and motivation within the self-system are directed by attributional beliefs, particularly attributions about the causes of success and failure. Since possible selves are developed from cognitive and social experiences and are built to some extent on an evaluation of one's cognitive attributes and an understanding of what is possible for oneself, possible selves may stimulate higher order metacognitive skills like action planning, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-management (Borkowski, Carr, Rellinger, & Pressley, 1990; Day, Borkowski, Dietmeyer, Howsepian, & Saenz, 1992; Markus, 1983).

In summary, possible selves are more than cognitive representations of goals and motives that are available to working memory. They are also vivid pictures representing the self's potential to actually accomplish hoped-for end states or avoid feared or dreaded ones. They depict not only outcome expectancies, but also personal efficacy expectations, images and feelings.

Developmental Aspects of Possible Selves. Although it seems that the concept of possible selves is workable with children and adolescents, no consistent methodology has emerged to investigate possible selves with this age. While the previously mentioned studies discuss certain aspects of possible selves with adults, there are few studies exploring possible selves with children and adolescents (Anderman, Hicks, & Maehr, 1994; Carson, Madison, & Santrock, 1987; Curry,

Trew, Turner, & Hunter, 1994; Day, Borkowski, Dietmeyer, Howsepian, & Saenz, 1992; Day, Borkowski, Punzo, & Howsepian, 1994; Garcia & Pintrich, 1995; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Oyserman & Markus, 1990a, 1990b; Oyserman & Satz, 1993). In particular, there have been no longitudinal studies of this age group that investigate developmental aspects of possible selves; for example, how possible selves are formed and how they change from childhood through adolescence.

There has been one cross sectional study of possible selves across the adult lifespan conducted by Cross and Markus (1991). Respondents were asked to list all their hoped-for and feared possible selves, and rank how *capable* they thought they were of obtaining or preventing these selves, and how *likely* they thought these selves were to being realized. This information was coded into categories, and then summarized and compared. Cross and Markus describe their methodology as a way to understand people "from the inside out" (p. 251), and aim to comprehend "an individual's own understanding of her [sic] development" (p. 251).

Cross & Markus found that each of four age groups (18-24, 25-39, 40-59, 60-86) revealed different quantities and responses of hoped-for and feared selves. With age, there was a continuous decrease in the number of hoped-for and feared selves produced by the groups (Ms = 7.6, 7.2, 6.1 & 5.7, $p < 0.04$ respectively for hoped-for selves and 5.1, 4.1, 3.6, and 3.1, $p < 0.001$ respectively for feared selves). Markus, Cross and Wurf (1990) suggest that the decrease in the number of hoped-for and feared selves expresses circumscription or specialization in defining the self.

Participants' lists of hoped-for and feared selves were coded into 11 categories: personal, physical, abilities/education, life-style, family, relationships, occupation, material, success, social responsibility, and leisure. This coding was used to compare categories of possible selves across age groups. Each age group exhibited a distinctive set of hoped-for and feared selves reflecting the major transitional periods in adult life. Not surprisingly, the youngest group were

concerned with building an adult identity (cf. Levinson, 1978) and expressed extremely positive hopes for family, occupational and personal selves. More similarity was noted among feared selves than among hoped-for selves across the four age groups. The youngest group produced a greater range of feared selves, while the oldest group worried most about the two major concerns in their lives: health and family well-being. Fears of young adults tended to be nonspecific (e.g., being unsuccessful) or negations of positive selves (e.g., not being satisfied). After physical selves, the most common feared selves were personal, family, and occupational feared selves.

When evaluating hoped-for selves, there were no significant differences among the age groups in estimating how likely hoped-for selves were to occur. When capability was assessed, respondents in the18- to 24- year-old group viewed themselves as much more capable of accomplishing their hoped-for selves than respondents in other age groups. In the case of feared selves, again the youngest age group felt most capable of, and most likely to prevent feared selves. Some of this confidence could be attributed to an unrealistic view of themselves in the world (Weinstein, as cited in Cross & Markus, 1991), or to the optimism of youth.

When comparisons were made of activities executed in the past month to bring about their most important hoped-for selves or to prevent their two most important feared selves, adults in the youngest group recorded significantly fewer actions that those in other groups. Markus, Cross & Wurf (1990) speculate that younger individuals picture many possibilities and are less committed to any one possible self, thereby limiting the amount of behavior engaged in to attain (or prevent) that self.

In summary, this lifespan study indicates that self-evaluations change over a lifetime. Young adults have high hopes, more fears, and unfettered expectations for the future. In comparison, middle-aged adults have a moderate number of hopes

and fears in fewer categories, feel a little less capable of accomplishing (or preventing) possible selves, and make more of an effort to bring about (or prevent) future selves. The oldest respondents have the fewest number of hopes and fears in the least number of domains, feel the least capable of influencing the outcomes of hoped-for and feared selves, and work hard to bring about these selves.

Life-Career Development of Young Adolescents

Emergence of a global marketplace and the implications of this change in the workforce have redefined vocational self-concept and the very meaning of career development. As we continue to witness changes in the economic milieu, there is an increasingly context-based conceptualization of self. These changes are fostering a view of self that shows a far greater dependence on the context of society and culture than earlier constructs of self-concept in career development (Blustein & Noumair, 1996; Super, 1990; Vondracek & Schulenberg, 1986). Consequently, as individuals pursue new avenues to learn about themselves and preserve a measure of inner consistency, they become aware that an exploratory and open attitude to progressively varied experiences is needed if they are to adjust to these changing circumstances (Cushman, 1990; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Just as views of self have changed, career development has been redefined as "self-development." Life career development replaces career to encompass all roles, settings, and events in the life of the individual. Super (1990) understands career as,

> the life course of a person encountering a series of developmental tasks and attempting to handle them in such a way as to become the kind of person he or she wants to become. With a changing self and changing situations, the matching process is never really completed. (pp. 225-226)

Gysbers and Moore (1975) conceptualized career development in a similar fashion, describing career development as a synthesis of roles, settings, and events over one's lifetime. Only a few researchers have studied life career development over the early adolescent years. Yet, Looft (1971), Siegel (1973), Lavine (1982), and Seligman, Weinstock, and Owings (1988) are just some of the researchers who found that children as young as five can express specific occupational dreams. Insights into emerging career orientation in young adolescents is needed to provide a complete picture of the process (Phipps, 1995).

Erikson's psychodynamic theory of human development (1963) relates to career development because it integrates social, environmental, and personality factors. In the industry versus inferiority stage, from 6 through 11 years of age, children develop a sense of achievement by organizing, developing, and applying information, or they have a sense of failure if they do not master these skills. Newman and Newman (1988) extend Erikson's notion of ego development to the area of work. Pre-identity-formation adolescents do not view themselves as having to work; nor do they believe that work needs to be placed before personal enjoyment. Young adolescents have not made a cognitive or emotional commitment to view themselves in a worker role. During the ego identity versus role confusion stage, from about the age of 12 to 20, information and skills acquired in previous stages become consolidated and a personal identity established.

Developmental models have been originated to provide information about the career growth of children. Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrad, and Herma (1951) emphasized that vocational behavior has its roots in early childhood and develops through "fantasy" stages in childhood to "realistic" stages in late adolescence, when particular occupational choices are specified and crystallized. Children in the fantasy stage (aged 6 to 11) make choices without considering the actions needed to accomplish the goal. At about age 11, in the "tentative" stage, children begin to

base their occupational choices on interests, and are aware that these interests may change and that, in the future, their choices could be different.

Gottfredson (1981) based her theory on the importance of self-concept in vocational development and explains that people pursue occupations that are congruent with their images of themselves. Gender is an important determinant of both self-concept and the types of compromises people make.

Super (1990) emphasized the roles of curiosity, exploration, and information gathering in the formation of interests, accurate time perspectives and self-concept. Over time, children's fantasies of occupations are affected by information about the world and they become interests. As children mature, a future orientation develops which allows them to construct a sense of planfulness that has an impact on the educational choices they make in junior high school. Super saw the development of increased awareness, awareness of the value of many kinds of work, feelings of competency, and satisfaction from their own work as critical to children's sound career development.

Emphasizing cognitive concepts more than behavioral ones, career self-efficacy theory focuses on Bandura's social learning theory (1982; 1986; 1989) and the importance of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals as variables in academic and career choices (Hackett & Betz, 1981; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Lent & Hackett, 1987). People who judge themselves competent will consider a wider range of career options and will actively pursue the education needed for specific occupations.

Career Dreams. When children are asked to talk about their hopes, occupational dreams are often identified. A case in point is McGuire & Padawer-Singer's study (1976) which asked students in grade 6 to "tell us about yourself". The third most frequently mentioned category was attitudes about future occupations, including hopes and desires.

In the past, studies have examined a specific aspect of career aspirations such as the influence of socioeconomic status or family dynamics on occupational choice (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996; Kreidberg, Butcher, & White, 1978; Lavine, 1977; Looft, 1971; Post-Kammer & Smith, 1985; Seligman, Weinstock, & Heflin, 1991). Many of the conclusions derived from these studies have conflicted. Recent work on the career aspirations of children and adolescents (Dick & Rallis, 1991; Phipps, 1995; Stockard & McGee, 1990) stress the importance of considering a diversity of dimensions and occupations when examining career awareness and aspirations. "No categorization of jobs based on sex-typing, status, or earnings can easily capture the multidimensional nature of the patterns of relationships found here" (Stockard & McGee, p. 300).

In 1981, Rosenberg and Rosenberg reported the results of a cross-sectional study of desired future selves with almost 2000 children from 25 Baltimore public schools. Little differences were found by gender in the number of times occupations were cited as desired roles. However, there were differences among the age groups. Children, aged 9 and under, referred to occupations 59% of the time, while adolescents, aged 14 and over mentioned occupations only 27% of the time. Older adolescents appeared to have a broader concept of occupation that embraces other important domains such as family, education, recreation, and values (Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1981).

As well, noteworthy differences were found in the specific occupations chosen by the various age groups and genders. Younger boys (aged 8) were more likely to select manual-level occupations whereas older boys (16+) were more likely to select executive jobs or professional occupations. Occupational aspirations among girls showed similar differences. Younger girls (8 years) also preferred manual occupations more than older girls (16+). Younger girls tended to choose professions such as teacher, nurse, or librarian while older girls (16+) were attracted

to administrative occupations, semi-professional occupations, and clerical, sales, and technical employment.

When comparing boys' and girls' future occupational selves, Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1981) recognized several interesting similarities and differences. In the primary grades, girls seek to become teachers and nurses, while boys hope to become manual workers (truck drivers, machinists) or uniformed status equivalents (firemen and policemen). By junior high school, the status aims of the boys and girls begin to move in opposite directions. During junior high, boys aim for technical and administrative occupations moving towards major professions like doctor and lawyer by late high school. On the other hand, girls continue to aspire to professions such as nursing and teaching, but increasingly cite office work and sales as future occupations.

Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1981) noted that occupational stereotyping occurs at an early age. For instance, although the youngest boys and girls are attracted to manual occupations, their choices of specific occupations are different. Few boys choose nurse or librarian; likewise, few girls select construction worker or plumber. Like Gottfredson (1981) and Galejs and King (1983), Rosenberg and Rosenberg attributed this difference to intrinsic differences in gender identity. Stockard and McGee (1990) also found that occupational sex-typing was well entrenched by early elementary grades; but attributed sex differences in occupational preferences to the actual makeup of the labour force. In a more recent study of Toronto youth in grades 11 and 12 (Maxwell, Maxwell, & Krugly-Smolska, 1996), female students did not aspire to or expect to have traditional occupations like teaching, nursing, or secretarial work. Leung & Harmon (1990) also found that although preferences for prestige and sex type were evident in the early years, these changed during adolescence.

An ongoing study by Seligman, Weinstock and Heflin (1991) used a structured questionnaire to examine the career development of 10-year-olds. Unfortunately, the sample involved only 24 children (17 girls and 7 boys) from intact families and a middle-class socioeconomic background. All participants were able to name future occupational goals, generally occupations they were familiar with and ones that were highly visible. Sixteen of the 24 students indicated only one occupational aspiration. Seventy-one percent of the 10-year-olds listed occupations that built on their current interests and hobbies.

In a study by Phipps (1995), difference by gender was apparent when 11 young male students aspired to be professional athletes. No female students listed this as an occupational choice. Phipps attributed these career aspirations to children's emerging sex-role identities, the mirroring of age-appropriate interests (e.g., sports, babies, animals etc.), and a limited range of exposure, rather than a foreclosure on options.

Information gathered by Day, Borkowski, Dietmeyer, Howsepian, & Saenz (1992) in a study of the career aspirations of Mexican-American students in grades 3 to 7, showed that most students hoped for prestigious jobs. Boys hoped to become police officers and athletes and expected that these were their likely occupations. Girls, on the other hand, hoped and expected to become nurses and teachers. Boys feared becoming teachers and garbage collectors, while girls feared becoming police officers and firefighters. Fifty-three percent of these children expected to graduate from college or university while 22% expected to graduate from high school only.

At this point, numerous studies have been carried out to ascertain the career-life aspirations of children and young adolescents and to understand the impact of gender and age on these aspirations. According to the studies by Kreidberg, Butcher, & White (1978); Lavine (1977); and Phipps (1995), females tend to show

interest in a wider range of occupations than boys who often pick stereotyped masculine preferences. Young female students choose teaching and nursing frequently because they see these role models in their lives (Day, Borkowski, Dietmeyer, Howsepian, & Saenz, 1992). However, there are indications that sex-typing decreases as children grow older (Leung & Harmon, 1990). Several studies (Curry, Trew, Turner, & Hunter, 1994; Maxwell, Maxwell, & Krugly-Smolska, 1996) have found that many females do not aspire to traditional jobs, but instead noted that there are two groups of females; careerists who are attracted to nontraditional occupations, and noncareerists, who prefer traditional occupations to fit with their roles as mothers. As discussed earlier, the results have been confusing because the multidimensional aspect of career aspirations has not been fully understood (Stockard and McGee, 1990). To reveal the multiplicity of variables that impact on career choice, these researchers recommend that the use of grouped data should be avoided.

Today, career development is viewed as self-development, encompassing the various roles, settings, and events in the life of an individual. The self-concept of young adolescents evolves as they "make meaning in the context of their own understanding" (Hayes, 1994, p. 7) by synthesizing childhood identities with what they know of their skills, abilities, values, and interests (Cantor, Norem, Niedenthal, Langston, & Brower, 1987; Curry, Trew, Turner, & Hunter, 1994).

Summary and Conclusions

The schema model of self-concept as proposed by Markus and colleagues provides an approach for examining how characteristics of current and future-oriented images of self affect behavior (Markus, 1977; Markus, 1983; Markus & Kunda, 1986; Markus & Sentis, 1982; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Individuals not only have available in memory, knowledge of who they are in the present, but also

pictures of themselves in the past, and conceptions of themselves in the future. These future-oriented images, called possible selves, are conceptions of the self one expects, fears, and wishes in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Possible selves provide a promising avenue for exploring developmental trends in self-concept formation in young adolescents. In Cross and Markus' (1991) lifespan study of possible selves, differences were found among adults' categories of possible selves as well as in evaluations of these selves. These researchers surmised that possible selves are instrumental in motivating and directing the self across the adult life span. Research with a young adolescent population would explain the roles of possible selves in the development of self for this age group.

Possible selves may be particularly relevant for life career development where the focus is on generating options, becoming self-aware, and making plans to achieve goals. For instance, when people have specific hopes for their future, they are motivated to achieve their hopes and avoid their fears (Oyserman & Markus, 1990a, 1990b). In addition, well-developed possible selves encompass the specific actions needed to achieve (or avoid) future selves (Markus, Cross, & Wurf, 1990; Wurf & Markus, 1991). The linking of self-concept to motivation and to goal-oriented action provides an avenue for understanding the career-life aspirations of young adolescents, their fears, and their expectations for the future, as well as their sense of competency in attaining dreams and preventing fears.

At this time, the concept of possible selves has only occasionally been applied to young adolescents. Currently, young adolescents are the focus for new initiatives in the schools, such as Personal Planning and Career and Personal Planning which require students to assess self in relation to the demands of the work world. The concept of possible selves could assist educators in facilitating lifelong career development, especially in the areas of self-awareness, competency, motivation, and goal setting.

> The provision of career guidance in the elementary school is not a new add-on to or a dramatic reversal of typical elementary school emphases. Self-knowledge, knowledge of future educational and occupational alternatives, and development of the rudiments of decision-making by students generally have been considered important in both elementary school philosophy and practice. (Herr & Cramer, 1988, p. 226)

Research Questions

Although Markus and Nurius' (1986) concept of possible selves and their role with the self system appear to have application to young adolescents, especially their understanding of future career life roles, research to date has focused primarily on the role of possible selves in adults. It is the purpose of this study to explore young adolescents' possible selves using a procedure called the Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI). The PSMI will be used to determine the extent to which a sample of young adolescents can generate lists of possible selves, self-reflect on their choices, make judgments about their competencies and effectiveness, and make plans to achieve their goals.

The research questions posed were:

1. What are the hoped-for and feared possible selves generated by young adolescents?
2. What categories and themes of possible selves are most prevalent within this age group?
3. How do young adolescents rate their ability to achieve (or prevent) these possible selves?
4. How do young adolescents rate the likelihood of occurrence of these possible selves?

5. What are the expected selves of young adolescents?

6. What are the number of behaviours that young adolescents engage in to obtain or prevent future selves and how able are they to make plans?

7. What gender differences exist in young adolescents' descriptions of possible selves?

8. How able is this age group to self-reflect on their choices, their learning, and their experience?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, Kvale's (1996) conceptual framework for planning interview research will be discussed first, as it formed the basis for the research methodology. Subsequently, more specific details about the sample, ethical considerations, instrument, data collection, and data analysis will be described.

Interview Research

The choice of data collection strategies was guided by Cicourel's question, "Do our instruments capture the daily life, conditions, opinions, values, attitudes and knowledge base of those we study... ?" (1982, p.15). Educational research has frequently utilized various types of questionnaires, but responses to questionnaires are "often meager and misleading indications of what respondents actually feel and think" (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996, p. 25). An interview was considered to be more appropriate for addressing the research questions. Kvale believes that an interview is actually "an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (1996, p. 14). Kvale's structured, seven-stage course for inquiry was utilized: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, interpreting, verifying and reporting.

As part of the thematizing stage, the content and the reason for the study, or the "what" and "why" of the study, were identified. According to Kvale (1996), a base must be established to which new knowledge can be added and combined. This includes not only reading through the literature, but also experiencing the environment of the participants. Previous experience as an intermediate school teacher, a mother, and my work as a research assistant interviewing grade six and seven students about the Personal Planning program contributed to my understanding of the environment of young adolescents.

During the designing stage, overall procedures were organized and arranged for collection of the desired information. The Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) was developed for this study (Appendix A). It is an adaptation of Cross and Markus' (1991) adult questionnaire (Appendix B). The PSMI was designed to allow participants to ask questions and to freely talk about their responses. A number of open-ended questions were included to increase the likelihood of a variety of responses. During this stage, the interview was pilot-tested, and the number and type of participants were determined.

When interviewing, active listening, paraphrasing, perception checks, and open-ended questions were practiced. All interviews were audio tape recorded. Thoughts and impressions of the interview were recorded in a log book to ensure that details were noted that could be missed in a tape recording .

Since tape recorders give a "decontextualized version of the interview" (Kvale, 1996, p.160), Kvale recommends that data should be transcribed before it is analyzed. To more clearly preserve the interview situation, the interviews were transcribed within the same 24-hour period.

Information from the interviews was interpreted by coding responses into data generated categories and by using descriptive statistics. The coding was based on a content analysis procedure; a method of constant comparison where each new response is compared to previous responses (Woolsey, 1986).

The last stage of Kvale's (1996) framework, is reporting. The writing process is, in part, "an aspect of the social construction of the knowledge gained from the interviews" (p. 253). The report informs others of the importance and accuracy of conclusions reached through an analysis of data collected and the liberal use of the participants' words.

Reliability and Validity Issues

Both Likert-type scales and open-ended questions were used to gather data in this study. Self-anchored scales, such as the Likert-type scales used in the study, have been considered both reliable and valid for measuring subjective experience (Bellack & Hersen as cited in Nurius & Majerus, 1988).

The traditional criteria for reliability and validity were not appropriate for responses to open-ended questions. Instead, the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were applicable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility, which parallels internal validity, refers to the truth as it is known to the research participants (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Credibility was achieved through both in-depth interviews and almost immediate transcription. Credibility is often established by reviewing research interpretations with participants. In the present study, time limitations meant that only one interview was possible. Therefore, several verification checks were made. Participants expanded upon their possible selves and arranged their hoped-for and feared selves into groups to further discuss their meaning. At the conclusion of that interview, participants were asked to explain their Possible Selves Map "as if they were discussing it with someone new." In this way, the most salient details of the PSMI were summarized and reconfirmed by the participant.

Dependability, the qualitative correlative of reliability, was achieved through consistent recording accuracy, data collection, and analysis procedures (Denzin, 1994). In addition, a fellow graduate student confirmed the data categorization by independently sorting students' responses into the established categories. Inter-rater agreement in coding was 96%. Cards that were categorized differently by the graduate student were reconsidered by the researcher through a review of the category definitions and tape transcriptions.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) ask, "Are the data reliable, factual, confirmable, and so forth?"(p.292). Confirmability or the authenticity of the inquiry, was addressed by having participants explain their Possible Selves Map to the researcher and then provide feedback on the researcher's summary of their PSMI. Confirmability was also achieved by maintaining a written log, personal notes, and observations.

One should be heedful of the transferability or generalizability to other populations. The purposive sampling procedure was used to obtain the possible selves of young adolescents under the best circumstances possible. The sample chosen was as large and diverse as possible, given the constraints of the research timeline. The ability to generalize the findings to further settings will be left to other investigators reviewing the data base.

Participants

The site of this study was Salmon Arm, a town of 20,000 located in the southern interior of British Columbia. The residents of Salmon Arm and surrounding area represent a diversity of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, with a preponderance of Euro-Canadians and First Nations. Since Salmon Arm serves as a centre for surrounding areas, students were selected both from within the town limits and from small communities outside.

Young adolescents, from grades 5, 6, and 7, were chosen for the study because, at this age, they are shifting from concrete to formal operational thinking (Vernon, 1995). As the ability to think in increasingly abstract terms develops, adolescents develop the capability to think about future changes and visualize possibilities (Newman & Newman, 1991). In fact, the new Personal Planning K to 7 curriculum (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1995), was designed to provide opportunities for elementary students to develop the set of skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to become "effective and responsible decision makers in a world

of constant challenges and opportunities" (School Programs Branch, 1992, p. 8). As part of this curriculum students are encouraged to think about their futures through activities and career programs such as The Real Game (Barry & Wright, 1995) and Everyday Career Development (Redekopp, Stechynsky, & Garber-Conrad, 1995). The study was limited to elementary students in order to have more consistency of participant context.

Participants ranged in ages from 11 to 13 years, and represented a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The 42 participants formed a male : female ratio of 20 : 22. Forty participants had been considered a sufficient number for independent samples *t* tests, and related samples *t* tests (Gall, Borg, & Gall,1996). Potential respondents were chosen on the basis of their availability and interest in participating, thus forming a purposive sample (Babbie, 1990). The researcher contacted parents of children in the target age group through school and community programs. Chain sampling (snowball sampling) was used to obtain the rest of the sample. In particular, young adolescents who were willing to discuss their hopes, expectations and fears for the future were selected. Since the aim of the study was to determine the degree this age group could produce lists of possible selves, it was essential that participants would be willing to struggle with verbalizing their hopes and fears. The intent of the study was not to generalize the findings to the entire population of young adolescents in British Columbia.

An introductory discussion of the project was used as an opportunity to assess each potential participant's willingness to communicate. Particular attention was paid to whether prospective participants asked questions that showed interest in the research topic. Five children declined to take part when given information about the PSMI.

Ethical Considerations

Before data collection began, approval was obtained from the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Committee. Letters of information and consent (Appendix C) were signed by both the participants and their parents before the Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) was conducted. Participants and their parents were informed that the PSMI would be tape recorded and that the tapes would be erased upon completion of the study. Participants were also told that they were free to discontinue involvement in the study at any time. Confidentiality was ensured by assigning code numbers to each participant, which were used on all reports, interview tapes, transcripts, and journal notes. The list of code numbers which identified the participants was locked in a separate filing cabinet along with the consent forms. On completion of the final research report, any identifying information and raw data was destroyed or erased.

Instrument

Because there was no measure of possible selves for the target age group, the Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI), was developed for this study by the researcher (Appendix A). The PSMI is an adaptation of Cross and Markus' (1991) adult measure of possible selves (Appendix B). The adult questionnaire asked respondents to list their own hoped-for and feared possible selves, and then to indicate the two most important hoped-for selves and the two most important feared selves. Subsequently, respondents rated their capability of accomplishing (or preventing) these possible selves and the likelihood of realization of these possible selves on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The adults were also asked to list things they had done or not done to make each of the selected possible selves come true.

It was thought that Cross and Markus' 1991 questionnaire would be difficult for young adolescents and that it would not elicit the reasoning behind individual answers. As well, the examples provided in the adult measure were not suitable for

this age group and needed revision. As an illustration, "being a grandparent" was changed to "being a car owner".

There were several reasons for choosing an individual interview format for the PSMI. Adams and Schvaneveldt (1985) consider the interview to be an extremely responsive tool for attaining reliable and valid data *if* rapport is developed and the interview questions are well prepared. According to Stewart and Cash (1982), most people are more willing to talk and verbally react than to write responses to questions. Also, interviews are not dependent upon the reading and writing ability of the interviewees, an important point to consider when working with children (Palys, 1992). Interviews that utilize open-ended questions are especially useful because they allow participants to speak in their own words and give in-depth responses. They also allow identification of complex motivational influences and frames of reference (Foddy, 1993).

The questions that were developed by Cross and Markus (1991) in their adult questionnaire of possible selves were retained and put into an interview format. Using McGuire and Padawer-Singer's (1976) open-ended spontaneous self-concept measure as a model, an open-ended interview was developed. More time was spent in the interview "setting the stage" for the participants. The purpose was twofold. Participants would have a clear idea of what the researcher wanted and would also be prepared to relax and let "their thoughts flow into the future". Assuming that participants would have a variety of learning styles, the interview incorporated visual aids (the cards, Likert-type scales, and maps) and kinesthetic activity (manipulating the cards) to accompany the oral questions. These aids were used by participants to assist in explaining the meaning of their responses.

The Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) is divided into three sections: Introduction, Exercise, and Debriefing. The Introduction familiarizes the

participants with the concept of possible selves by using examples of hoped-for and feared selves that are relevant to this age group.

In the Exercise section, participants are asked to respond to the prompts, "think about what you hope to become" and "think about what you fear, dread, or don't want for yourself". Hoped-for selves are written on green cards by the researcher and feared selves on yellow cards. These cards are then used in a series of four activities, carried out for both hoped-for and feared selves. Following each activity, the information is recorded on the Possible Selves Map. A description of the four activities follows. (1) To ascertain the relative importance of hoped-for and feared selves, participants rank their hoped-for (and feared) selves and elaborated on these possible selves by answering a series of questions. The questions are designed to access the meaning of these selves to the participants, who are asked to group the cards in a way that makes sense to them and then to discuss the significance of the grouping with the interviewer. (2) To assess interviewees' perceived self-efficacy, participants are asked, "How able do you think you are of achieving (or preventing) this possible self?" Respondents are then asked to select the possible self they feel most able to achieve, star the card and rate their capability on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1= not at all capable; 7= completely capable). (3) Outcome expectancy is appraised by the question, "How likely do you think it is that this possible self will happen?" Respondents are asked to put a check mark on the card and again rate the likelihood on a Likert-type scale. (4). To secure information about short- and long-term goal setting, participants are asked to reflect on the steps that they had taken this past month to bring about (or prevent) these possible selves.

The third and final section of the PSMI is the Debriefing section. Two versions were developed: one short and one in-depth. Because of the length of time required for the 42 interviews, it was not possible to use the in-depth version with

each participant. However, the type of information gathered from the in-depth version could be used to further develop the PSMI for exploration with students in career development programs.

In the short version, participants are asked to summarize their Possible Selves Map "as if they were talking to someone who knew nothing about them". In return, the researcher summarizes their PSMI and participants are asked to interrupt if they have something to add or if they disagree.

In the present study, the in-depth Debriefing version was administered to eleven participants who showed an ability to self-reflect during the exercise component of the PSMI. Their participation in the short debriefing was followed by in-depth questions which were designed to obtain feedback on the delivery of the PSMI, difficulties experienced, potential benefits of the PSMI, participants' learning, and the process of producing hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves (Appendix D).

Data Collection

Pilot Study. In late May 1997, five Victoria-area young adolescents, all meeting the requirements of the participant group, were selected purposively to pilot test the PSMI. Based on feedback from the pilot study participants, a few changes were made to improve the clarity of the instructions.

The Study. In late May 1997, letters of contact were mailed out to parents of young adolescents in Salmon Arm. Potential participants mailed in their name and phone number to a postal box in Salmon Arm and were contacted by the researcher in early June. During a preliminary meeting with potential participants and parents, questions were answered and the consent forms were read and signed. The 42 participants were reminded that they would be tape recorded, that the tapes would be erased at the end of the study, that only code names would be used, and that confidentiality would be respected. A convenient time and place was arranged

to administer the PSMI, either at the home of the participant or at a local school. Nine of the 42 respondents were interviewed at the school while the remainder were interviewed at their homes.

The PSMI was administered in a quiet place to ensure both privacy and audibility of the tape. The majority of the interviews lasted about 30 minutes. The shortest interview was 25 minutes while the longest interview was 50 minutes. Materials used included the PSMI, blank cassette tapes, tape recorder, and green and yellow file cards.

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. Data were examined from two perspectives: the entire group of respondents and by gender. The computer program SPSS for Windows 6.1 (1994) was used to analyze the quantitative data. Means, standard deviations, ranges and frequencies were calculated, as well as independent and paired samples *t* tests. Each interview was transcribed in order to extract the meaning behind participants' responses. Notes were made on the transcript of various aspects of the interview, including physical setting, facial expressions, and body language of the participants. The transcriptions, Possible Selves Maps, and PSMI index cards were analyzed as described below.

Number of Hoped-for and Feared Selves. The sum total, means, and standard deviations of hoped-for and feared selves were calculated for the entire sample of respondents, as well as for boys and girls separately. A Student's *t* test for paired samples was conducted to assess if there was a significant difference between the means of hoped-for and feared counts. Gender comparisons were tabled and graphed.

Categorization. Participants' hoped-for and feared possible selves were grouped into categories using a content analysis procedure (Woolsey, 1986).

Content analysis is a method whereby each new response is compared to previous responses. Each participant response had been recorded on a "3x5" index card and coded during the administration of the PSMI: green cards for hoped-for selves and yellow cards for feared selves. All responses were studied to obtain an overall impression before categorization commenced. In order to understand the meaning attributed to the hoped-for and feared possible selves, transcripts were referred to and further information was written on the cards that would help in the categorization process. For example, to own a house could have several meanings. For one boy, a house meant "not having to continually pay rent and if I have a place, I can always rent it out, get a loan on it and use it to buy more or I could sell it." Another participant wanted to own a house because " it would have lots of stuff in it. It would be a place where I know it's mine. A place when I am in it, I'd really like to come home to and I'd be away from everything else. No worries. I'd like some space away from people--maybe in the country." The explanation as participants grouped their hoped-for and feared cards was also added to the cards. One respondent grouped "having a family", "having a house", "being loved", and "being happy" in one cluster which she labeled "My Family Hopes". The other grouping, labeled "Part of a Good Job", included "having a good education", "having a good job", and "being a teacher".

The content analysis was conducted over a one week period. The green index cards identifying hoped-for possible selves were sorted into categories and placed on strips of masking tape attached to the wall. If a new response did not fit into an existing category, a new category was created. Then, all previously coded categories were reviewed to determine if any would fit better into the new category. This procedure continued until all hoped-for responses were categorized. There were no cut-off points for either the number of responses in each category or the number of categories.

The same procedure was followed for feared possible selves --using the yellow index cards. After all the yellow cards were categorized, the categories of hoped-for selves and feared selves were compared. When a category of feared selves seemed opposite to a hoped-for category (e.g., hopes for money and status versus fears of being homeless or poor), the two were placed side by side. Categories were compared until all possible matches were exhausted. Tentative category labels were generated for the paired categories, and the remaining unmatched feared and hoped-for categories.

The cards remained on the wall for a week and were reviewed on a daily basis. As the category composition became more complete, a few cards were changed to different categories. For example, the category labeled "family" was re-categorized as "relationships" when feared selves were considered; the "monetary" category was combined with "living situation" to form "lifestyle"; "meaningful work" was developed from the larger category of "occupations"; and "mortality" was pulled out of the "health" category.

After another week, the cards were coded on the reverse side and removed from the tape. As a check to confirm the sorting of the cards into the established categories, a graduate student from the University of Victoria sorted the cards into the content categories, which remained on the wall. Upon completion, the cards were checked for matches to the category. Four percent of the cards which had been placed in a different category, were re-evaluated, by reviewing the category label and by re-examining the transcripts for that particular participant.

The relative frequency of each category was computed by dividing the number of selves in a category (e.g., the number of leisure selves for a respondent) by the total number of hoped-for selves listed by that same respondent. The calculation was repeated for feared selves. Next, the categories of hoped-for and

feared selves were ranked by frequency of mention. Finally, the relative frequencies of each category were calculated by gender and then ranked.

For each category, independent sample t tests were performed to determine if there were significant relationships between individual categories and gender. T tests could be used because there was homogeneity of variance in both groups, that is the standard deviation in the two groups was about equal (Cone & Foster, 1996). T tests were calculated by giving each listed self a weight of one with a possibility of a respondent generating a number between zero and infinity.

Range of Hoped-for and Feared Selves. To determine the degree of similarity between hoped-for and feared selves, the categories of feared selves were compared by frequency and rank to the categories of hoped-for selves. Paired t tests were calculated to determine if there were any significant relationships. The degree of commonality among feared and hoped-for selves across gender was ascertained in the same way.

Evaluations of Possible Selves. Hoped-for and feared capability and likelihood ratings were summated, both for the entire sample and, separately, across and within gender. Descriptive statistics (M, SD, and range) were computed. Independent t tests comparing males and females were calculated, as well as paired samples t tests comparing hoped-for and feared capability and likelihood ratings. To verify that these were meaningful ratings, transcripts were referred to. For instance, one participant believed she was completely able to be an intermediate teacher because "I'm good at tolerating people that I don't like very much, and so if I had some really annoying students I was teaching I wouldn't be having attacks. I also think I'd be good at teaching someone and making it interesting."

The number of behaviors related to achieving hoped-for selves and preventing feared selves was also calculated for the entire sample, along with descriptive statistics. Gender comparisons were made by computing independent t

tests and paired samples t tests. Examples of participants' specific behaviors were supplied from the transcripts.

Categories of Expected Selves. The possible selves that participants designated as having the most chance of happening were categorized. Cards were placed under the appropriate hoped-for or feared category as described previously. The cards in each category were summed and percentages calculated.

Summary of Debriefing. Since the intent of the short Debriefing section was to verify responses and meanings with the participants, only transcripts of the in-depth section of the PSMI were summarized. Responses were discussed under each question that was asked (Appendix D). Participants' words were used extensively in the summaries as it was the intent of this section to provide insight into the reflections of young adolescents on their participation in the Possible Selves Mapping Interview process.

Chapter 4

Results

Examination of the data began with exploring the responses obtained from the PSMI, followed by categorization of the responses. This chapter begins with demographic characteristics of the sample. The results are then presented for each of the research questions as stated earlier. For statistical analyses, levels of significance were set at .05, two-tailed. Results are examined by group and by gender as dictated by the nature of the research question. Also reported are comments in response to the in-depth Debriefing questions.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Sample

VARIABLE	NUMBER	PROPORTION
Gender		
Female	22	0.52
Male	20	0.48
Age		
11 yrs.	13	0.31
12 yrs.	20	0.48
13 yrs.	9	0.21
Grade		
Grade 5	7	0.17
Female	5	0.71
Male	2	0.29
Grade 6	14	0.33
Female	9	0.64
Male	5	0.36
Grade 7	21	0.50
Female	8	0.38
Male	13	0.62

Similar female to male ratios were achieved across the total sample. However, more females than males were interviewed at Grades 5 and 6 (71% and 64%, respectively). More Grade 7 boys were interviewed (62%) than females. With respect to age and grade level, the majority of the respondents were 12-years-old (48%) and in grade 7 (50%).

1.What are the hoped-for and feared possible selves generated by young adolescents?

Hoped-for Possible Selves. When asked to list their hoped-for possible selves, the average number was about five, with all participants able to produce at least two (M = 5.36, SD = 1.81, Figure 1). The most hoped-for selves named was 11. Hoped-for selves differed in the detail that was given. A brief description of a chemist researcher, for example, was "finding out the different things that are in liquids and doing experiments to see what works and what doesn't". A more detailed response to "a meteorologist" was,

> I saw the movie Twister and I thought it was pretty neat, the way they chased tornadoes, and I found that there were people who actually did that. I thought about it and I got books about it and then I heard about this guy in Oklahoma, he's one of the best in the world. He worked at the University of Oklahoma and I'd like to go there after I graduate from university. I'd like to get some scholarships to work under him. Right now I write stories about twisters and stuff. When my mom asks me" What's making you do this?" It's just that I find weather really exciting--like you never know, and there's so much to learn and stuff."

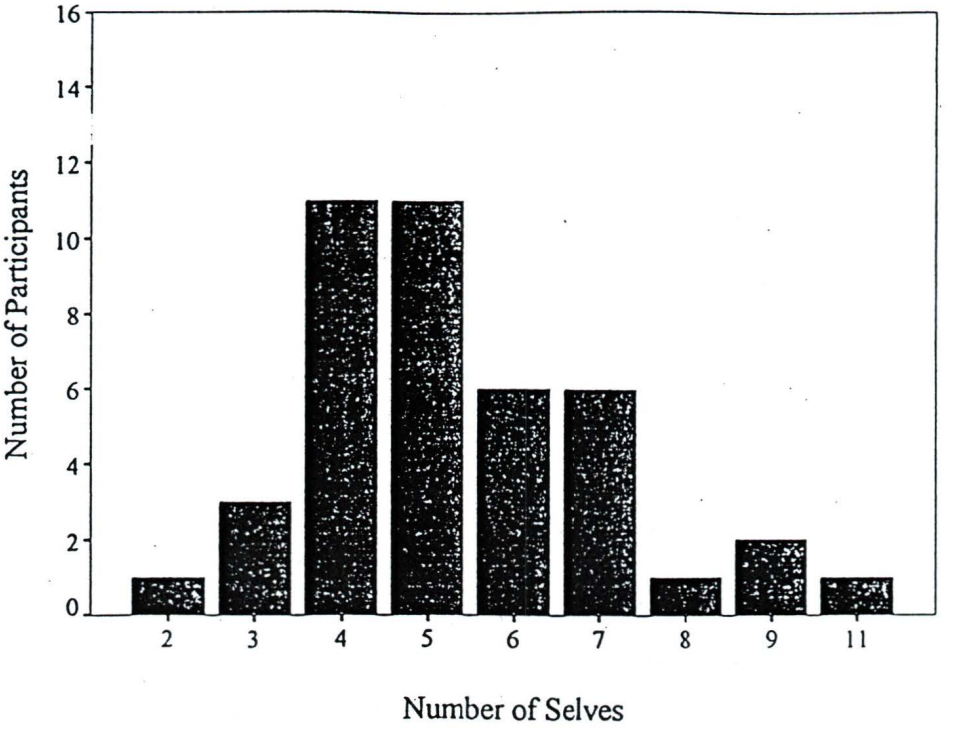

Figure 1 Number of Hoped-for Selves

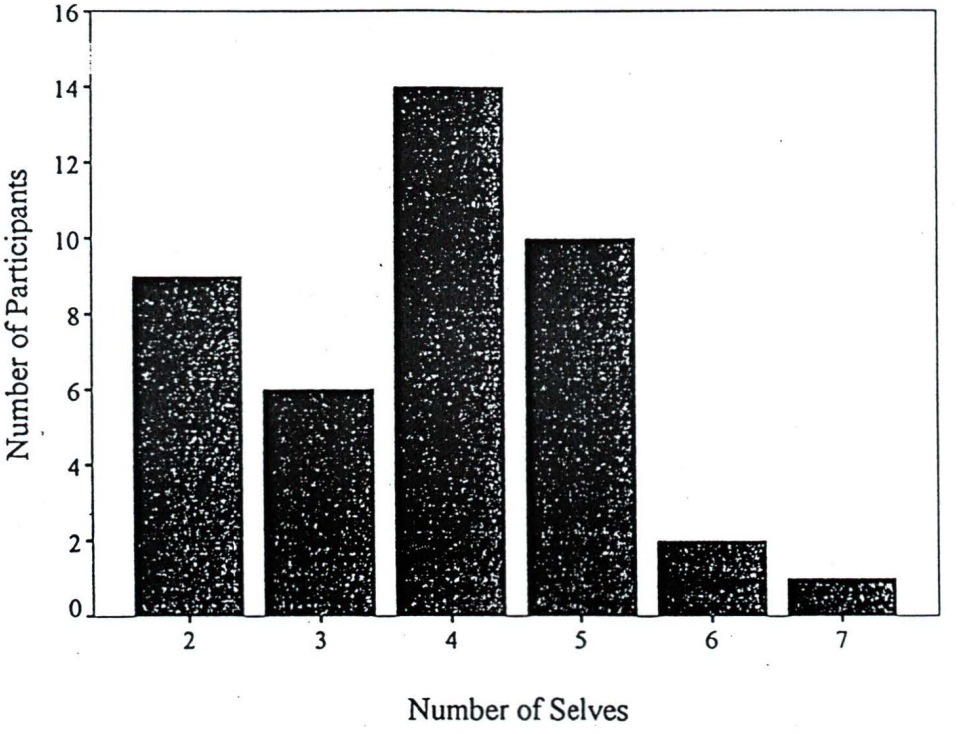

Figure 2 Number of Feared Selves

Feared selves. In comparison to hoped-for selves, fewer feared selves were produced ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.29$, Figure 2). Nine participants listed only two feared selves; the highest number was seven. Like hoped-for selves, feared selves differed in the amount of elaboration. A few participants gave simple responses like, "I don't want to be murdered", but most participants expanded in great detail upon their responses.

> Being homeless, being cold and hungry, and not having anywhere to live, and if you don't have any place to live, you can't get a job and if you don't get a job, you can't have a place to live. It's a catch-22 and I think there would be lots of other people in the same boat in the big cities-- like in the city there wouldn't be much to eat.

A paired samples t test, $t\,(df = 41) = 5.16$, $p < 0.001$, two-tailed, indicated that the average number of hoped-for selves was significantly larger than the number of feared selves.

Gender: An independent samples t test showed no difference between the number of hoped-for and feared selves by gender (Table 2).

Table 2
Number of Hoped-for And Feared Selves

GENDER		HOPED CNT	FEARED CNT
MALE			
	MEAN	5.4	3.85
	N	20	20
	SD	1.5	1.18
FEMALE			
	MEAN	5.32	3.82
	N	22	22
	SD	2.08	1.4
TOTAL			
	MEAN	5.36	3.83
	N	42	42
	SD	1.81	1.29

2. **What categories and themes of possible selves are most prevalent with this age group?**

A total of eleven categories emerged from the content analysis described in the previous chapter: education/training, health, ideals, leisure, lifestyle, meaningful work, mortality, occupation, possessions, relationships, and safety. A description of each follows. Examples from the audiotapes have been provided.

Education/training: Emphasized special skills requiring training that were not acquired just for leisure. Examples of hoped-for selves were to go to college or university and to learn to fly a helicopter. Examples of feared selves were to be uneducated and to fail years at school.

Health: Referred to physical and mental well-being. There were no hoped-for selves in this category. Feared selves included having a disease, getting cancer, getting fat, and getting a knee-replacement operation.

Ideals: Referred to personal growth and self-improvement, also to visionary and romantic activities and states. Hoped-for selves included being a normal, kind-hearted person, having meaning in my life, being someone who doesn't get into trouble, saving the Panda Bears, having a happy life, and playing baseball at the Olympics. Feared selves included being small, getting into drugs, teen pregnancy, being greedy, and having to rely on others for food and shelter.

Leisure: Emphasized time at one's disposal for undertaking activities that were fun, amusing, entertaining and relaxing. Hoped-for responses were visiting Australia, drawing, showing horses, being a wake boarder, and having a job that offers leisure time. There were no feared selves in this category.

Lifestyle: Referred to a particular way of life that could include location, customs, and economics. Examples of hoped-for selves were making lots of money, living up in the bush, living on acreage, and living somewhere nice like near a forest and away from other people. Feared selves included examples such as being homeless,

being a beggar, be in debt really bad [sic], having to live in the city, and still living at home.

Meaningful Work: Referred to the significance of work in their lives. Hoped for selves included getting a rewarding and enjoyable job, and being able to do a variety of jobs (not be bored). Feared selves were having a job I really hate, losing my job and not being able to pay bills, not getting the job I want, and having a dead-end job like McDonalds.

Mortality: The emphasis was on being aware of how temporary life is. There were no hoped-for selves in this category. Feared selves included dying before I'm supposed to, dying when I am still young, and a painful death (not knowing what's ahead, but knowing it's over).

Occupation: Referred to specific jobs, positions, and lines of work. Hoped-for selves included a farmer, a paramedic, a blacksmith, a chemist researcher, and a meteorologist. Examples of feared selves were being a sewage maintenance man, being a doctor, and being a model.

Possessions: Emphasized belongings and assets. Hoped for selves included having a street bike, owning a computer, having a medium-sized house, and having pets. Feared selves mentioned were my house burning down, not having a car, and our house flooding.

Relationships: Referred to an interpersonal orientation including family, friends, and romantic relationships. Hoped-for selves mentioned were having a family, being a mother, and having a good husband. Feared selves included somebody in my family dying, never getting married, not having kids, and marrying a wife-beater.

Safety: Referred to being free from dangers or risks. There were no hoped-for selves mentioned. Feared selves included having a serious accident, being

kidnapped, getting paralyzed, being in a dark, far-away place away from people I know, coming face to face with an alien, and being near spiders.

Category Ranking of Hoped-for Selves. The categories of hoped-for selves were ranked by frequency of mention. Hoped-for categories in rank order and relative frequency are listed below (Table 3). Occupational selves were generated far more often than other categories of hoped-for selves. Hoped-for selves from all categories were mentioned by both females and males. Boys were significantly more likely than girls, $t(40) = 3.66$, $p<.001$, to indicate hoped-for selves in the possession category.

Table 3

Categories of Hoped-for Selves

CATEGORIES	PROPORTION OF RESPONSES		
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
OCCUPATIONAL	0.36	0.50	0.43
*POSSESSIONS	0.21	0.05	0.13
LEISURE	0.12	0.10	0.11
LIFESTYLE	0.08	0.10	0.09
IDEALS	0.08	0.08	0.08
EDUCATION	0.08	0.06	0.07
RELATIONSHIPS	0.03	0.08	0.06
MEANINGFUL WORK	0.04	0.03	0.04
SAFETY	0.00	0.00	0.00
HEALTH	0.00	0.00	0.00
MORTALITY	0.00	0.00	0.00

* Significant difference by gender

Categories of Feared Selves. Categories of feared selves are ranked by frequency of mention in Table 4 below. Safety feared selves were most often mentioned, and the difference between the next 4 categories was minimal. There were no feared selves in the leisure category.

Table 4

Categories of Feared Selves

CATEGORIES	PROPORTION OF RESPONSES		
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
SAFETY	0.28	0.18	0.23
*RELATIONSHIPS	0.05	0.24	0.15
IDEALS	0.09	0.19	0.14
*LIFESTYLE	0.19	0.06	0.12
HEALTH	0.12	0.12	0.12
MEANINGFUL WORK	0.13	0.05	0.09
EDUCATION	0.05	0.05	0.05
MORTALITY	0.03	0.06	0.04
POSSESSIONS	0.05	0.03	0.04
OCCUPATIONS	0.03	0.03	0.03
LEISURE	0.00	0.00	0.00

* Significant difference by gender

Both genders had feared selves in all categories with the exception of leisure. There were some notable differences between categories of feared selves for males and females. Females had significantly more feared selves in the relationship category than males, $t(40)$ -3.79, $p<.001$. In contrast, males had significantly more fears in the lifestyle category than females, $t(40) = 2.58$, $p<.05$.

Comparison of Hoped-for and Feared Categories

During content analysis of the hoped-for and feared selves listed by the participants, ten categories of feared selves emerged compared to eight categories of hoped-for selves. The categories of mortality, health, and safety contained only feared selves. Participants listed "dying before I am supposed to" and "dying young (and still lots to learn and see)" as examples of mortality feared selves; "getting fat" and "getting really sick" as examples of health feared selves; and "being kidnapped",

"getting paralyzed", and "being in a car accident" as examples of safety feared selves. The leisure category contained only hoped-for selves.

Paired samples t tests showed significant differences between several hoped-for and feared categories. Most notable was the difference between hoped-for and feared occupational selves, $t(41) = 9.76$, $p < .001$. Occupational selves were ranked first among hoped-for selves, but were ranked tenth among feared selves.

Hoped-for selves in the category of possessions ranked second overall and were particularly prevalent among boys, but dropped to ninth in the feared category. The difference was significant, $t(41) = 2.90$, $p < .01$.

A significant difference was also found between hoped-for and feared relationships, $t(41) = -2.92$, $p < .01$. Overall, there were more feared relationship selves than there were hoped-for relationships selves.

3. **How do young adolescents rate their ability to achieve (or prevent) these possible selves?**

Participants' average rating of how capable they felt of accomplishing their most important hoped-for self was 5.63 on a scale of 7 ($SD = 1.01$, Table 5). The distribution had a minimum rating of 4 and a maximum rating of 7. Analysis of hoped-for capability by gender found no difference. Both boys and girls felt themselves very capable of achieving an important hoped-for self.

Participants rated their ability to prevent an important feared self similarly, $M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.61$ (Table 5). There was more variation among individuals in rating their ability to prevent an important feared self from occurring; the ratings ranged from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 7. There was no significant difference between boys and girls.

Table 5

Capability Ratings of Hoped-for and Feared Selves

RATINGS	HOPED-FOR SELVES NO. OF RATINGS	FEARED SELVES NO. OF RATINGS
1	0.00	1.00
2	0.00	1.00
3	0.00	6.00
4	7.00	5.00
5	10.00	8.00
6	6.00	10.00
7	9.00	11.00

Note: A rating of 1 means not at all able. A rating of 7, completely able.

4. **How do young adolescents rate the likelihood of occurrence of these possible selves?**

Participants rated how likely they thought their most important hoped-for self was of being accomplished. The mean rating was 5.5 on a scale of 7 (SD=.94, Table 6). Their average feared self likelihood rating was 3.9 (SD = 1.8, Table 6), significantly lower than their hoped-for likelihood rating, $t(41) = 4.69$, $p < .0001$. These young adolescents believed their important hoped-for possible selves were more likely to happen or to come about than their important feared possible selves. That is, feared selves were seen as less likely to materialize in the future.

Table 6

Likelihood Ratings of Hoped-for and Feared Selves

RATINGS	HOPED-FOR SELVES NO. OF RATINGS	FEARED SELVES NO. OF RATINGS
1	0.00	3.00
2	0.00	10.00
3	0.00	4.00
4	7.00	8.00
5	12.00	7.00
6	17.00	6.00
7	6.00	4.00

Note: A rating of 1 means not at all likely. A rating of 7, completely likely.

5. What are the expected selves of young adolescents?

Participants were asked to select the card that they thought had the most chance of happening and to put a check mark on that card. When these expected hoped-for selves were sorted into categories, most respondents selected an occupational self (45%). Relationship selves were the next most common expected self, accounting for 21% of the responses. Occupational expected selves listed by girls were teacher, vet, writer, singer, lawyer, RCMP officer, and chemist. Boys' occupational expected selves included computer programmers and mechanics, vet, teacher, lawyer, police officer, farmer, and military officer.

The most frequently mentioned expected feared selves were in the categories of safety and relationship selves (21% each). "Having a serious accident", "being stalked", "getting shot on the job", or "being murdered" were some of the safety feared selves while "family dying in a car crash", "being a widow", "losing a child", or "being friendless" were examples of relationship feared selves. Health selves (16%), such as "getting cancer" and "being deathly ill", were followed by ideal selves (14%), for example, "being greedy" and "being homeless".

6. What are the number of behaviours that young adolescents engage in to obtain or prevent future selves and how able are they to make plans?

Respondents were asked to describe the types of things they had done in the last month to bring about their two most important hoped-for selves or to prevent their two most important feared selves. Using McGuire and Padawer-Singer's (1976) scoring procedure for counting individual thought elements, the number of actions were scored by unitizing responses into individual action elements that expressed one specific action. For example, "I went to the doctor when I was sick. / I stayed in bed and rested " counted for two actions.

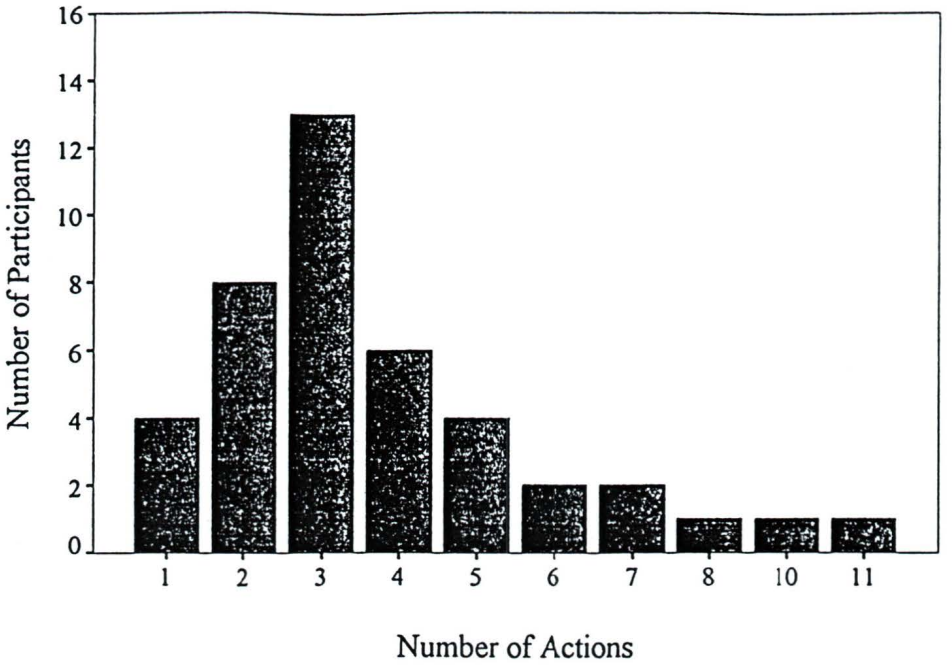

Figure 3 Number of Actions to Obtain Hoped-for Selves

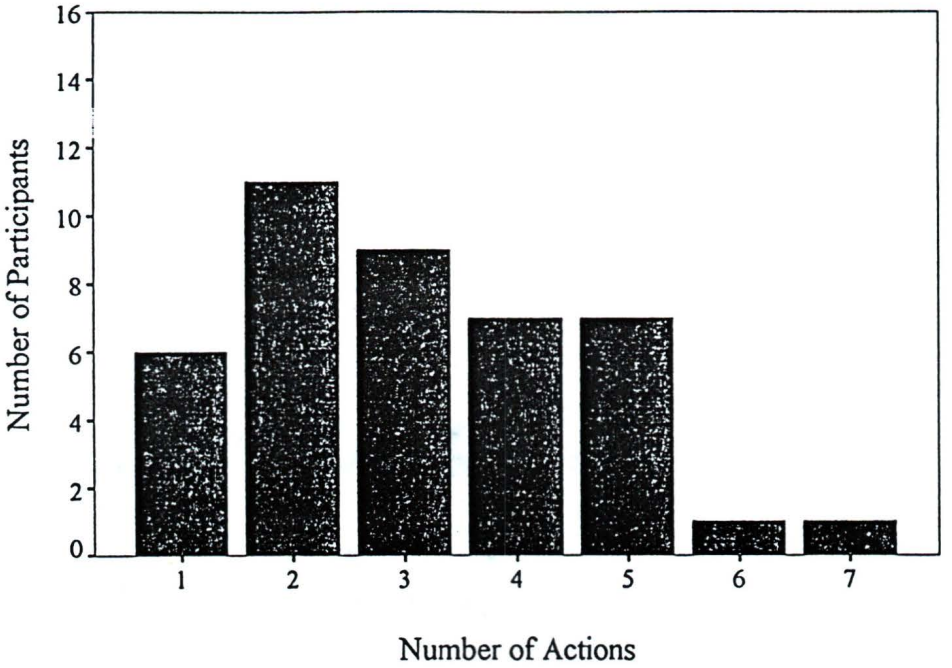

Figure 4 Number of Actions to Avoid Feared Selves

The average number of actions to obtain hoped-for selves was 3.76, (SD = 2.26) and the average number of actions to prevent feared selves was 3.12, (SD = 1.52). The range of hoped-for self actions was 1-11, with the most respondents relating 3 actions (Figure 3). The range of feared self actions was more limited at 1-7 (Figure 4).

There was no difference by gender in the number of actions taken to obtain hoped for selves or to avoid feared selves. Interestingly, there was a significant within gender difference found. For girls, more actions were taken to obtain hoped-for selves (M = 4.09, SD = 2.64) and fewer actions were taken to avoid feared selves (M = 2.95, SD = 1.68), $t(21) = 2.11$ $p < .05$.

Specific Behaviors. Participants were able to list a number of behaviours that they engaged in to obtain their two most important hoped-for selves. Examples are presented in the participants' words.

My first choice is to be a dance teacher. We've been working up to exams--Pre-elementary. It has pointe and it's really hard but my teacher, she's going to take me right through. (Female, Grade 7, 1 action)

My first choice is a chemist researcher. I've been thinking about chemistry, I've been doing experiments at home. (Female, Grade 6, 1 action)

I'd like to be a world famous writer. I've done a writing course with Marguerite, she's a professional writer. I met some other writers in the class that I write with. I did a really nice story that Marguerite kept and I am starting a new one. (Female, Grade 5, 3 actions)

I'd like to be a programmer for video games. I read all the computer magazines and I work on the computer all the time. (Male, Grade 6, 2 actions)

I plan on being a mechanic. Yesterday I was fixing the riding lawn mower, the carburetor, I cleaned it. I know where the spark plugs go and I can take the starter apart and put it together. (Male, Grade 7, 3 actions).

I'd like to have a big log cabin to live in. I'm building a small one right now. I can live in it over the summer. I know how to notch wood really good, how to cut wood, and I can use an axe really good. (Male, Grade 7, 4 actions).

Participants were also able to list actions taken to avoid feared selves.

I don't want to be poor. I found a part-time job baby-sitting, I save my money in a bank account, and I go to school to get educated. (Female, Grade 7, 3 actions)

I think about being without a job. I've written out what I've been doing so I know what I can do. I work at home. I work in the garden, I sew, cooking, schoolwork, taking care of chickens. (Female, Grade 6, 6 actions)

I'd hate to lose a family member so I make sure that I see and talk to all of them even though we don't all live in the same place. I tell them I love them (Female, Grade 6, 2 actions)

I don't want to be unemployed. I try to work on job skills in school, like CAPP, but for some things like getting laid off, you can't do anything about. (Male, Grade 7, 1 action)

Like being a drug addict or someone with no life ahead of them. Some of my friends are turning bad, they are getting into trouble and I stay away from them now. I don't pretend. I don't pretend to smoke and stuff with the pen. (Male, Grade 7, 2 actions)

I don't want to be someone that people fear. Like most people don't like me and I can be a jerk--like I was a real jerk a few years ago. Now I am sharing a lot and actually I am trying to make friends and I am trying to be nice to people and do things. Like today I lent my baseball mitt to someone at school so he could play. I do things like that but then sometimes I keep things to myself. (Male, Grade 5, 3 actions)

7. What gender difference exist in young adolescents' descriptions of possible selves?

Only summary gender differences will be presented here, as gender differences have been addressed in more detail under each of the previous questions. Most of the gender comparisons of the (possible selves) data were not significant. Significant differences were found in the category rankings of hoped-for and feared selves. Males identified significantly more possession hoped-for

selves and lifestyle feared selves than females. Relationship feared selves were identified significantly more often by females.

8. How able is this age group to self-reflect, generate alternatives, and make plans?

The participants were able to respond to all the PSMI questions and give detailed descriptions of their hoped-for and feared selves. In particular, participants were able to list a number of hoped-for and feared selves and list actions necessary to obtain (or prevent) these selves. When asked to explain their capability and likelihood ratings, all participants gave understandable answers. For example, a boy felt most able "to own a VW Beetle" because "they are cheap to buy." A girl rated "having a good education" as somewhat likely "because I have lots of years left so I don't know for sure. I am really determined to get a good job and I need an education, but I don't know what will happen."

The in-depth Debriefing section of the PSMI was used for two purposes. One was to receive feedback on the PSMI as a viable instrument for exploring future selves, and another was to assess a selected number of participants' ability to self-reflect.

Eleven participants contemplated questions asking them to discuss the process of making choices, to assess the difficulty of the questions, to evaluate their learning, and to determine how helpful this exercise would be in contemplating their futures. Their responses are summarized in this section. A full transcript is available in Appendix D.

When discussing the process of making choices, several participants based their choices on their interests," just what I do and I really like" and " I have a car book with a really nice picture of a Porsche." One student reflected on past experiences --"like being killed-like...one time I was climbing on the bales, the board broke and I fell...", and another on known personal qualities, "I like arguing"

to make choices. Interestingly, three respondents referred to looking inside themselves and thinking about their thinking. "I've been thinking about my fears a lot; I looked into my life today and I thought what I hated." Two participants looked outside themselves to the media and to people in their social environment. "I thought of people near here on the same road who had died recently. And a woman up the road; her husband used to beat her up."

The majority of the participants rated the questions as easy when asked to discuss their reactions to the questions on the PSMI, "They were easy" and "it was pretty easy and straightforward". Seven out of the eleven respondents attached personal preferences to their rating. "...I liked to think about the things I'd like to do more than what I'm scared of. " Three students connected their thoughts during the PSMI to whether they had previously reflected on the future. "They were adult-like questions. They were different for me to answer. I've never had to think about this. I liked the green ones--the...hopes more than the fears." Most of the students did not experience any difficulty with the questions in the PSMI; but those that did commented on the feared selves. Their comments indicated that they were uncomfortable, "trying to think of things I didn't want to happen." One student had the opposite reaction. "It was difficult to do the hopes--to have lots of different ones...It was easier to do the fears because you are always afraid of something no matter who you are."

Participants were less reflective when they evaluated their learning. When asked what surprised them about the interview, six participants reported that the interview had gone as expected. Three of the respondents mentioned being surprised in some way about their fears, for example, "When I explained my fears, I actually felt better." Another respondent felt unsure of her answers, " ...I thought it would be easy to think of so many different things. I was thinking about what you wanted, like, maybe she doesn't want that sort of thing."

In addition, the eleven participants were asked to think about any information that was gained from the interview. Two respondents related how the PSMI focused their attention on the world of work and "got them thinking", while another made a decision, "Before I wasn't quite sure if I was going to drink beer ..., but I don't think I want to drink any at all." Surprise at the ease of talking about hopes and fears was expressed by one adolescent, and another youth shared a new insight, "I learned I have confidence in myself."

Participants were asked to think about the helpfulness of the PSMI. Four of the respondents commented on their increased awareness of feared selves. " I could think about these yellow cards more. I never want to be any of those." Others saw the PSMI as helpful in planning and goal setting, "I could probably do more of each thing and work at it. Like think about the future more when I'm younger and getting better as I go. Try to figure out how to do all the things I like." Another participant said that the "Rating really helped me to think about what might happen. I see myself as pretty much able to do things." A Grade 5 student thought that the PSMI would be more helpful to students in grade 5. "An older kid, like in Grade 7, would be thinking about next year, like "Oh no, more homework!" and stuff. I think the Grade 5's might be thinking more off in the future. Older kids think about stuff ... around them--like right now!"

Overall, the participants had little difficulty in responding to the PSMI and were able to generate a number of hoped-for and feared selves and elaborate on those selves to varying degrees. This group of young adolescents was able to list a number of behaviours that they could employ in helping to obtain their goals.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The earlier research by Cross and Markus (1991), on the importance of possible selves to adults was extended to young adolescents in the present study. Participants between the ages of 11 and 13 were able to produce a number of hoped-for and feared selves. The degree of elaboration varied; some participants had well-articulated pictures of their futures while other participants' long-range visions were lacking in detailed information.

Occupational hoped-for selves and safety feared selves were the most prevalent themes reported by this sample of young adolescents. Boys mentioned more possession hoped-for selves and lifestyle feared selves than girls. Girls, on the other hand, expressed more relationship feared selves than boys.

When judging their capability of achieving or preventing possible selves, the sample rated themselves as quite able. In estimations of how likely hoped-for and feared possible selves were to come about, these participants expected that hoped-for selves were more likely to occur than feared selves. As a group, their expected selves were occupational hoped-for selves and safety and relationship feared selves. Participants were able to list a number of actions to obtain or prevent future selves. Girls enumerated more actions to obtain hoped-for selves and fewer actions to avoid feared selves.

The results of the study will be discussed in more detail under the eight research questions. A summary of the findings will conclude this chapter.

1. What are the hoped-for and feared possible selves generated by young adolescents?

The young adolescents in this study were able to generate a number of possible selves. They had no difficulty picturing themselves in the future. The

number of selves produced was substantial enough to conclude that these children do envision both hoped-for and feared future selves.

Participants in this sample produced more hopeful long-term visions of themselves than feared visions. Several respondents commented that they felt uncomfortable thinking about "the bad things." Perhaps, as Elkind (1981) notes, these young adolescents like to believe that negative things only happen to other people and, are therefore, less willing to entertain negative future pictures of themselves. Another possibility could be that this group is less concerned or aware of negative views at this time in their lives.

In Cross and Markus' (1991) lifespan study, young adults (18-to 24-year-olds) stated a greater number of hoped-for ($\underline{M}$=7.6) and feared selves ($\underline{M}$ =5.1) than the 11- to 13-year-old participants in this study. The numerous possible selves of the young adults is likely due to their advanced cognitive abilities, greater proficiency in oral expression, and their greater life experience. At this time, there are no other studies that report the number of hoped-for and feared selves for the present age group that can be used for comparison.

2. <u>What categories and themes are most prevalent in this age group?</u>

In this study, the range of hoped-for selves was slightly narrower than the range of feared selves. Eight categories of hoped-for selves were identified: occupational, possessions, leisure, lifestyle, ideals, education, relationships, and meaningful work. There were ten categories of feared selves: safety, relationships, ideals, lifestyle, health, meaningful work, education, mortality, possessions, and occupations.

There were several significant differences between hoped-for and feared categories of selves. Occupational and possession hoped-for selves were mentioned significantly more often than occupational and possession feared selves.

Relationship feared selves were mentioned significantly more than relationship hoped-for selves. The leisure category only contained hoped-for selves, while the safety, health, and mortality categories contained only feared selves.

The present sample of young adolescents most frequently mentioned occupational hoped-for selves. This is consistent with Rosenberg and Rosenberg's (1981) study, in which young adolescents, aged 10 to 13, tended to choose occupations when selecting future roles. Contrary to Looft's early work (1971), a wide range of occupations was listed by both genders.

For children this age, occupational position may be a developmentally meaningful representation of self in the world. An occupation describes what you do, how much money you make, and where you live. A vocation can be a tangible and material vision of oneself in the future. For example, " A lawyer is my first choice. I've always wanted to be one. You get big cases and lots of money, you can get a house, you know, like a big house...". Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1981) also noticed that young adolescents mentioned occupations more frequently than older adolescents whose broader concept of occupation included domains such as family, education, recreation, and values.

When hoped-for occupational selves were counted and tallied, girls in this study most frequently mentioned occupational self was teacher. Other occupational selves wished for by girls included vet, actress, horse riding teacher, and singer. One fourth of occupations chosen by this group of girls involved some sort of teaching or nursing and one-third of the selected occupations could be considered traditionally female (for example, teacher, nurse, midwife, waitress, secretary, interior designer). Contrary to Rosenberg & Rosenberg's study (1981), science and technology occupations, such as oceanographer, archaeologist, meteorologist, naturalist, and chemist were mentioned by these girls as occupational dreams. Traditionally masculine occupations, which accounted for approximately one-third

of female occupational selves, were construction worker, RCMP officer (twice), farmer, blacksmith, lawyer, vet (5 times), and science and technical occupations listed above. This shift to considering traditionally masculine occupations has also been found by Leung and Harmon (1990). Hobbies and interests appear to be closely connected to the occupational daydreams of the present sample (actress, artist, singer, performer, writer, and photographer) which is similar to Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrad, and Herma's (1951) tentative stage of career development and the research findings of Seligman, Weinstock, and Heflin (1991) .

The boys in this sample listed professional athlete and pilot as their most frequent occupational selves. Only four science and technology occupations (archaeologist, physiotherapist, and two computer programmers) were mentioned by this male sample. As Phipp's research (1995) suggests, boys tend to select typically masculine preferences. Physiotherapist was the only occupation that could possibly be classified as traditionally female. As with the girls, interests played an important role in the selection of occupational selves, especially athletics. The occupations of missionary and third world helper listed by males in the study reflected an interest in serving humanity.

It must be kept in mind that the occupational selves mentioned by this sample are probably indicative of the community they live in. The occupations listed may be highly visible and relevant in their current lives (for instance, farmer and vet).

Safety was ranked as the most frequent category of feared selves. There were no hoped-for selves in this category. Fears in this category included injuries sustained while participating in leisure activities, for example, falling off while dirt biking, being bucked off a horse, or being electrocuted while flying a kite. Other safety fears included kidnapping, sexual abuse, and being attacked by wild animals. Benson, Williams, & Johnson (1987) found that boys in grades 5 to 7 did worry

about safety issues, such as "getting beat up at school" and "killing myself." The safety fears of this particular group could be the consequence of participating in and seeing activities that carry the potential for physical injury. Horseback riding, using chainsaws, operating farm machinery, dirt bike riding, and hiking in wilderness areas were mentioned by several members of the sample. Many of the participants' parents also engaged in occupations that were physically-oriented, for example, as truck drivers, loggers, heavy machine operators, mill workers, and farmers. Perhaps this group of young adolescents feel vulnerable to events they have little control over.

Relationships were cited significantly more often as a feared self than a hoped-for self. On closer inspection, all the hoped-for relationship selves were family-oriented, for example, "be a mother", "have a family", and "be married". On the other hand, feared selves included losses in a number of relationships, such as with brothers and sisters, parents, friends, children, husbands, and humankind. Perhaps this sample of young adolescents viewed families as something that you don't have to hope for; families are something you just have. The fear is that one can lose family members and important others through events like death and divorce.

Gender Differences. Three significant gender differences were found. Male participants listed more hoped-for possession selves than the females in the study. Common possession selves were being car and truck owners, houseowners, pet owners, and recreational vehicle owners. Damon and Hart (1982) cited a study by Montemayor and Eisen that found with age, adolescents use the category of possessions less frequently as self-descriptors (50% at age 9, but only 8% at age 18). A search of the literature did not produce information on gender differences and possessions. The emphasis on possessions by the males in this study could simply mean that these young adolescent males are defining themselves in terms of objects

(Damon & Hart, 1982; Harter, 1990a; Rosenberg, 1986). More research will clarify whether this is true for young adolescent males in general or whether this result is unique to this sample.

Males mentioned significantly more lifestyle feared selves than females. Their feared selves included being homeless and being poor. As discussed previously, boys in this study seem to define themselves in terms of tangible objects and, consequently, they fear losing those objects that self-define them. On the other hand, girls in the study differed from male participants in the number of relationship feared selves. A number of studies have pointed to the value girls put on relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Harter, 1985, 1990a; McGuire & McGuire, 1988; Rosenberg, 1986). Just as boys may define themselves in terms of the concrete (as in the number of hoped-for possessions), girls may define themselves in terms of their connections with others. Loss of these connections then would be their greatest fear.

3. How do young adolescents rate their ability to achieve (or prevent) these possible selves?

Perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectations are two self-regulatory processes that are involved in controlling behavior. People who strongly believe in their capabilities and who think that a desired outcome is attainable have been shown to be more persistent and successful in achieving their goals (Markus, Cross, & Wurf, 1990).

In this study, the average rating of achieving hoped-for and preventing feared selves was 5.63 on a scale of 7. Participants had positive expectations for their futures and felt quite sure that they would be able to carry out their goals. One must take into account that the PSMI did not ask participants to describe what was needed in order to achieve these long-term goals. Their responses could reflect

their enthusiasm and optimism for the future more than a realistic view of their ability to achieve all the necessary steps related to a particular future self. This point would need to be addressed in a more focused way in life-career planning.

Markus, Cross, & Wurf (1990) write that young adults, aged 18 to 24, tend to believe anything is possible and rate themselves very high in competency. Frey and Ruple (1987) disagree. They found that children's assessment of abilities becomes more tempered and more exact as they enter adolescence. However, no other research could be located on young adolescents' ability to rate competency in achieving hopes and preventing fears for comparison. The only comparison that could be made was to Cross and Markus' (1991) group of 18-to 24-year-olds who showed similarly optimistic ratings to these 11 to 13-year olds for both hoped-for and feared selves.

The lack of difference in self-declared capability between girls and boys in the study has been supported by a longitudinal study by Phillips and Zimmerman (1990). In their study, boys and girls in grades 3 and 5 did not differ in perceived competency, but by junior high girls' perceived competence was significantly lower than the same age boys. According to several researchers, girls in junior high have regularly been found to underrate their abilities; while boys at the same grade level tend to overrate themselves (Crandall; Deaux; Eccles; Parsons; et al; as cited in Phillips & Zimmerman, 1990). Perhaps these gender differences do not appear until after entering junior high school or perhaps there has been a change in girls' perceived competency since the above researchers conducted their studies. A more recent study by Maxwell, Maxwell, & Krugly-Smolska (1996) found that high school girls did not consider the "forces of constraint" in the labour market, as previous adolescent females did.

As well, self-efficacy career theorists have concluded that young women lack a strong sense of efficacy that prevents them from entering nontraditional

occupations (Hackett & Betz, 1981). However, more recent work has found that there are two groups of young women; those who are contemplating career and those who are considering other life roles such as "family" selves (Curry, Trew, Turner, & Hunter, 1994). Compared to "noncareerists", "careerists" rated themselves higher in competency in achieving the education needed to enter nontraditional fields. However, there was no difference when both groups rated their ability to obtain the education needed to enter traditional fields. It would be of value to explore the connection between competency and relationship selves as well as with competency and nontraditional occupational selves. It is quite likely that in the present study, female respondents selected and rated important hoped-for selves in areas they felt most efficacious. For instance, one female respondent rated "being a mother" at 6 because "I like kids, and I know how to take care of them. I guess there's always the chance I won't get married, but I think I probably will."

A closer look at the ratings of feared selves by female respondents indicated that these girls felt capable of preventing "teen pregnancies", "drug addiction", and "failure at school"; all things they had control over. They believed themselves to be less capable of preventing "being stalked", " being unemployed", or "dying young"; things they had little control over. Cross & Markus (1991) coded adult respondents' possible selves on a "Locus of Control" measure. The members of the oldest group made realistically low assessments of the amount of control they had over preventing feared selves, like being "forced into a nursing home" and " having Alzheimer's disease". A study of the relationship between perceptions of control and capability ratings of young adolescents would yield more information about this possible connection.

4. How do young adolescents rate the likelihood of occurrence of these possible selves?

The participants' average rating of 5.5 out of 7 suggests that this group expected their hoped-for selves were likely to come true. Just as in rating capability, this group of 11-to 13- year-olds believed in dreams and positive possibilities. Consequently, they believed that their feared selves were less likely to come about. When asked to explain their ratings, several participants said that they had "positive" thoughts about the future and didn't think bad things would happen. One respondent said, " I don't like thinking about the yellow cards [feared selves] as much as the green cards [hoped-for selves]", while another said that, "It paints the picture black".

According to developmental theory, young adolescents are beginning to move into more formal operational thinking. However, Vernon (1995) points out that young adolescents do not consistently apply their ability to think abstractly. As Elkind (1981) has pointed out young adolescents prefer to assume that unpleasant things happen to others, but not to them. This group of young adolescents appear to think introspectively about some aspects of their life (for example, stating reasons for their capability ratings), but prefer not to think about themselves in unpleasant situations.

5. What are the expected selves of young adolescents?

This line of inquiry produced information that was already known through the category frequencies. Since no statistical analysis was conducted on this information, only general statements can be made about expected selves. Expected selves were selected from participants' two most important hoped-for and feared selves and, therefore, closely matched the most frequently mentioned categories of possible selves. Occupational and relationship selves were the most frequently

expected hoped-for selves. Relationships like "being a mother" and "having a family" were selected by many of the girls in the study. Hoped-for expected selves appeared to be based on their "now" selves rather than future selves. Examples of expected selves such as "having a happy life", "living on a farm", "becoming an intermediate teacher", and "learning to fix cars" are closely tied to concrete current experiences.

Safety and relationship selves were the feared expected selves most often chosen. "Losing my child", "being paralyzed", "looking for a job without success", "having a job that I hate", and "failing university" are examples of feared expected selves. The feared expected selves of these participants seem to involve an imaginal capacity to envision a future. Although not evaluated as part of the study, overall the feared selves were more vivid and detailed and seemed less connected to their "now" selves compared to hoped-for selves. For example, a participant feared marrying a wife beater.

> I would *not* like to marry someone who hit me and stuff. A person could be handsome and really polite on the outside, but really bad on the inside, and I might not really get to know this until after I was married for awhile. And my family and friends might really like this person, but I'd begin to see this other part and when I would try to talk about it, no one would want to listen. And then I think I might feel it was my fault--like I wasn't a good person or a good wife or something. I'd hate that because I would doubt myself.

6. <u>What are the number of behaviours that young adolescents engage in to obtain or prevent future selves and how able are they to make plans?</u>

Participants listed an average of 4 actions for achieving hoped-for selves and 3 actions for preventing feared selves. Examples in the previous chapter show that

young adolescents can list practical steps toward achieving their future selves and preventing feared selves. When compared to the adults in Cross and Markus study (1991), the young adolescents in the present study listed more actions, both for obtaining hoped-for selves and preventing feared selves, than were generated by the four Cross and Markus' adult age groups. This is a puzzling result, as one might expect young adolescents to have less facility than adults in planfulness. Unfortunately, Cross and Markus do not indicate how they tallied the number of actions taken to obtain or prevent future selves; nor do they give examples of adults' actions. The few studies on the possible selves of adolescents and children have not focused on goal-directed behaviour.

Markus and Ruvolo (1989) hypothesize that possible selves direct the acquisition of appropriate self-knowledge, the development of plans, and the pursuit of suitable behavioral schemes. If this is the case, then elaborated positive possible selves should organize and energize the individual for goal-oriented behavior; detailed negative possible selves should have the power to stop action. One participant said, "When I think about what I do now in school, and if I have an idea for when I am older...like going to Yale, then I think that will help me to get there." Further research needs to be done that compares the elaboration and detail of possible selves to the types of actions or behaviors to obtain or prevent that future self.

7. <u>What gender differences exist in young adolescents' descriptions of possible selves?</u>

Few differences were found between male and female participants in this study. The main distinctions were the number of possession hoped-for selves and the number of feared lifestyle selves listed by males, and the number of feared relationship selves mentioned by females. These differences are generally

consistent with other studies' (Gilligan, 1982; Harter, 1985, 1990a; McGuire & McGuire, 1988; Rosenberg, 1986) findings on the differential gender emphasis on possessions and relationships.

Girls and boys are more similar than different in relation to possible selves. At this time, no studies have been carried out to compare gender and possible selves except in specific areas such as African American identity (Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995) and the importance of life domains (Curry, Trew, Turner, & Hunter, 1994). The lack of difference could be effects of non-sexist education, and the increase in the number of positive role models in both genders.

More research in this area would indicate whether the lack of difference is true across other populations of young adolescents. As well, additional research might supply information about the onset of any gender differences, if and when they occur.

8. How able is this age group to self-reflect on their choices, their learning, and their experiences in the PSMI?

All subjects were able to respond to the PSMI and were able to generate several hoped-for and feared possible selves. While the amount of elaboration varied, all respondents added at least one descriptor to the possible self. A simple possible self like, "Being famous, like Robin Williams" was unusual. Most descriptions involved at least three phrases. Most impressive was the ability of this sample to describe their Maps at the end of the session.

The selected group of 11 participants were able to respond to all the questions in the Debriefing section. The answers tended to be short, but did indicate participants' ability to "think about their thinking". In particular, when discussing the process of making choices, 3 of the 11 respondents mentioned their thinking processes. Their feedback on the difficulty of the questions was clear and

one response displayed a deep understanding of human nature, "...you are always afraid of something no matter who you are." When asked to evaluate their learning as a result of the PSMI, the participants were less vocal. Possibly, the participants did not see their responses to the PSMI as "learning" in the classroom-based sense of the word. Perhaps if they had been given more time to process this new information or if a small group discussion had been arranged, their responses would have shown more self-reflection. Talking about the usefulness of the PSMI was easier. This group generally found it easier to talk about the questions and how the PSMI could be applied rather than discussing their reactions. Whether this reflects their level of cognitive development or comfort level is difficult to assess. Clearly these students are capable of a degree of self-reflective thought, can make assessments based on usefulness and on their learning, and can think abstractly about the application of a future-oriented conceptual exercise such as the PSMI.

Summary

Across the lifespan people change and grow by building new skills, interests, attitudes, and other assets. The PSMI provides a framework for constructing new perspectives of self in the future. A multitude of hopes for the future which reflects participants' interests, beliefs, and values are encouraged by the PSMI format. Fears are also envisioned and acknowledged and can then be addressed.

In this study, participants spontaneously elaborated on their hopes and fears. These elaborated self-schemas could be used to energize and direct efforts towards valued end-states. Perhaps more importantly, the PSMI offers an opportunity to construct and reconstruct the self in multiple contexts (or domains), a main goal of wholistic career education. Both the PSMI and new career education programs are individual-oriented and are concerned with opening the perception and experience of the individual to new situations and opportunities for growth.

Participants were able to rate themselves on Likert-type scales. This ability to evaluate efficacy and likelihood in achieving (or preventing) possible selves develops from self-assessment of one's potential. This strategy is particularly important because it encourages self-appraisal, an essential component of ongoing life-career development.

These young adolescents engaged in a variety of goal-oriented behavior to bring about hoped-for selves and to prevent feared selves from happening. The PSMI can be used by students to set personal goals for growth and to develop self-management skills, like decision-making.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Possible selves are more than the cognitive representations of goals and motives within the accessible pool of self-knowledge. They are rich representations of the potential of the self to actually accomplish hoped-for end states or avoid feared or dreaded ones. They are portrayals of, not only outcome expectancies (and feelings), but also personal efficacy expectations, images and feelings (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Positive visions of oneself in the future (e.g., "me as a unselfish person") give meaning to social experiences related to that vision ("I will lend this person a pencil so that I can reach my ideal of being unselfish"). Negative visions of oneself in the future also act as motivators so that specific actions are taken to avoid those future possible selves (e.g., I don't want to be "unemployed and have no income to support a family and pay the bills", and therefore, I plan on "going to college to get a good education").

This study has explored young adolescents' ability to generate possible selves, to evaluate their representations, and list actions they are taking to achieve (or prevent) these selves.

Implications of Findings

The PSMI was used very successfully with this group of young adolescents. The participants in this study were able to produce several hoped-for and feared selves, indicating an ability to envision multiple self-concepts in a wide range of domains. Occupational hoped-for selves were most often cited, indicating that this sample of 11- to 13-year-olds is ready and interested in career exploration. This group of youth felt competent of achieving their goals and preventing their dreaded or unwanted selves from occurring. They were optimistic about the future and

implemented actions to obtain their future hoped-for selves and to avoid their feared selves.

The PSMI has direct application to the prescribed learning outcomes of the Personal Planning K-7 curriculum. This new curriculum has been designed to "help students become thoughtful, caring individuals who plan and review, make informed choices, and take responsibility for their personal and career development" (B. C. Ministry of Education, 1995, p. 2).

A teacher or counsellor might utilize the Map in a variety of ways to meet the curriculum objectives. As part of the *Planning Process*, the PSMI can be employed to collect information about interests and values, to develop short- and long-term plans, and to evaluate, monitor, and refine their plans. Teachers can use the PSMI as a framework to assist students in developing skills in self-assessment, goal setting, and self-reflection. For instance, the task of helping students be future oriented can be facilitated by using the PSMI to understand students' goals and then teaching them how to make plans, especially the steps necessary to achieve their goals. The PSMI could be used again over the years, and revised and updated as students progress through high school.

The PSMI also has application to the *Personal Development* component of Personal Planning. By discussing students' possible selves, and elaborating on both cognitive and affective components of those selves, teachers can develop relevant lessons to address healthy living, mental well-being, family life education, child abuse prevention, substance abuse prevention, and safety and injury prevention. In particular, the PSMI can be used to consider balanced lifestyles, self-efficacy and competency, and safety fears such as sexual abuse, drug and alcohol misuse, and injuries. Information gained through expressing possible selves may be helpful in exploring gender-role socialization and relationship concerns such as divorce and death.

As indicated by the number of occupational hoped-for selves, upper elementary school students are thinking about future careers. The PSMI can be used to address the *Career Development* element of Personal Planning K to 7 curriculum. The Map represents an expression of values, wants, and hopes that can be reflected back to students as a way to increase knowledge about themselves and world of work. Teachers can administer the PSMI to access students' dreams for the future, their sense of competence in achieving those dreams, and the behaviours they can direct toward achieving those goals. For instance, information contained on the Map, such as specific vocational roles, could be developed into full descriptions that includes settings, activities performed, the nature of interpersonal relationships in that role, the required education, etc. In addition, the accuracy of the information about vocational and stereotypical knowledge could be ascertained and addressed. The Map and cards used in the PSMI are a concrete representation of students' hopes, expectations, and fears for the future which can be stored in student portfolios to be reviewed throughout the year and revisited throughout high school.

Explicit programs or lessons could be developed to train students to make use of the concept of future selves. Although not part of this research, the PSMI was employed with a group of 10 students during a grade 6/7 career education class. In the group situation, students were less responsive to the open-ended questions and did not spend time self-reflecting, perhaps because they felt inhibited in front of their peers. However, at the end of the class students wanted to share their Possible Selves Maps with each other. This indicates that the PSMI, with some adjustments, has promise as a tool for career development programs in elementary or junior high school classrooms.

The PSMI has implications for developing resiliency in youth. Research on coping reveals that proficiency in five dimensions of self-understanding are

essential to developing resilience (Beardslee,1989). The ability to self-appraise, to realistically evaluate both one's capacity for action and expected outcomes, to actively problem solve, to change perspectives, and to have self-knowledge are resources that the individual can enlist to deal effectively with a stressful world. Markus, Porter, and Nurius (as cited in Markus, Cross, & Wurf, 1990) found that coping individuals are able to formulate positive alternatives to negative self-schemata by stating a variety of positive possible selves which they use as resources for strengthening their lives. The PSMI could be used by school counsellors and teachers to develop better coping strategies with groups of students and to tailor specific skill development in individuals.

Limitations of Study

The limitations of this study should be borne in mind. The sample size of 42 was large enough to yield statistically significant findings, but was a relatively small group from a small town /rural area in the southern interior of British Columbia. The generalization of the findings of this study to children from city backgrounds then, should be done with considerable caution.

The purposive sampling procedure was chosen to ensure a willing and communicative sample. A group of young adolescents who volunteered because they were interested in the topic was needed to ensure that participants were relaxed, open, and willing to share their thoughts. However, the findings are then less generalizable than with random or stratified sampling. The majority of participants were involved in community organizations; participants who were not affiliated with community groups were less likely to take part. In addition, most of the children came from two parent homes, although eleven stated that their parents were remarried, divorced or had died.

The results of this study rest on the type of instrument used. "Permissive measures" (McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1976), like the open-ended PSMI, allow

participants a great deal of freedom in expressing themselves and thus provide a large amount of information. These advantages were particularly desirable for the present study because the PSMI was developed as a tool for self-reflection and exploration. However, a disadvantage of such measures is that content analysis of the responses requires more subjective judgment on the part of the researcher than do instruments that require selection of items from a set of alternatives. Although established procedures for analyzing data were followed, the labeling of the categories and the final decision about unclear responses were the researchers' responsibility.

Future Directions

A necessary extension of this line of research would be to gather longitudinal data on possible selves across childhood and into adolescence. For example, collecting data from students through elementary school and high school would allow researchers to see if specific possible selves motivate participants to engage in related achievement behavior. Future research should investigate the developmental and societal factors that influence the full range of possible selves in elementary school children and high school students.

A second avenue warranting empirical study focuses on using a wider variety of subjects. For example, at-risk children, children with various learning disabilities, children from a variety of cultures and socio-economic backgrounds could be studied, noting in particular what categories of possible selves are salient to them.

In summary, the results of this study indicate that young adolescents are able to explore possible selves in an interview format. The PSMI offers students a rare opportunity to imagine possible futures, and to engage in an open, personally meaningful inquiry. This type of exploration is an occasion to self-reflect, appraise levels of competency, and to gather information about hopes and fears for the

future, all components of successful career-life programs. For teachers and counsellors, the PSMI is a format that is sensitive to students' value systems and can promote discussions about what students' cultural and/or gender identity mean to them. The PSMI has potential to be particularly useful in widening students' occupational horizons and has promise as a useful instrument for use with groups of students. Exploring one's possible selves appears to be an agreeable activity and has the potential for fostering the capacity to vision oneself in a positive way and to develop plans to achieve goals in a purposive manner.

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Appendix A

The Possible Selves Map

Introduction

I am going to ask you to think about your future. It doesn't matter whether you think it might or might not actually happen. Just think about possibilities.

Probably everyone thinks about their future to some extent. Remember when you were younger and you saw perhaps a person on T.V. or read about someone in a book? [Pause.] You imagined yourself being that person on T.V. or in that book, in fact, you might have dressed up and pretended to be them. That's a good way to figure out whether you could be that person. Have you had that type of experience? [Pause.] Well, now that you are older, you still dream of things that might happen to you or who you might become. You can live that experience or role in your imagination.

At times we think about what we hope we will be like. One way of thinking about this is to talk about possible selves- selves we hope to become in the future. Some of these possible selves seem quite likely; for example, being a car owner or being a high school graduate. Others seem quite unlikely, but still possible; for instance, being a world famous athlete or rock singer or winning the lottery.

The Exercise

I am going to ask you to think about your future while I ask you some questions. I will write your responses down on these green and yellow cards.

Take a few minutes and think about all the dreams you have for yourself in the future...all your hopes you have for yourself for the future... As soon as the ideas or pictures pop into your mind just say them aloud. Think about what you hope to become.

Close your eyes again and continue to relax and let your thoughts flow into the future... Besides having dreams that we hope for, we might have pictures of ourselves in the future that we are afraid of or don't want to happen. Some of these feared possible selves may seem quite likely, for instance, being without a job or being very sick. Others seem quite unlikely, like being a homeless person. As soon as ideas or pictures pop into your mind, say them aloud ... Think about what you fear, dread, or don't want for yourself.

Now we will take the information on the cards and create a possible selves map. On the green cards are what you hoped for in your future and on the yellow are the selves that you wanted to avoid in your future.

First, I would like you to spread out all the green cards that are your hoped-for future selves. Think about how important each of these hoped-for possible selves are to you. Which of these would you most like to see happen? Number that card one. Looking at the other cards that are left, which one would you most like to see happen? Number that card two. And the next one you would most like to see happen? Number that card three. Continue to order your cards. Copy your choices onto "My Hopes" cloud on the Possible Selves Map.

Because I want to know what each of these hopes mean to you , I am going to ask you to tell me some more about each of the cards.

Take a moment and think about your first choice. Tell me about being _____. What do you imagine when you think about being ____? Describe the way you imagine your life to be- where might you be, what might you do, how might you feel, who might be with you and anything else that explains what this future self means to you.

[Continue to do this with all the hoped-for selves.]

Is there any way that you might group these cards together? Go ahead and arrange the cards into groups and tell me about those groups.

Looking at your two most important hoped-for selves and knowing the type of person you are and what you can typically do, put a star on the card you think you are most capable of doing some time in the future. Fill in the cloud that says " I think I am most able to be...". How able do you think you are of achieving this possible self? Beside question A on the sheet labeled " Responses" circle a number to show the degree to which you feel capable or able of achieving this possible self. One means not at all capable and 7 means completely capable. What led you to make this rating?

Now looking ahead to the future, which of these two possible selves do you think has the most chance of happening? Put a check mark on that card. Print your response in the cloud that says" I expect that I will...". How likely do you think it is that this hoped-for possible self will come true? By question B, circle a number to show the degree to which you think it is likely that this possible self will happen. What led you to make this rating?

Think about the part these two selves have played in your life this month. We often do things to make a possible self more likely to come true, for instance, taking driving lessons to become the " car driver self". Can you tell me some of the things you have done in the past month to bring about these hoped-for selves?

Let's look at the yellow cards now. On these cards are the selves that you don't want to happen. We will do exactly the same things as we did with the hoped-for cards.

First, I would like you to spread out all the yellow cards you most want to avoid and lay them out in front of you. Which one do you worry about the most and would least like to happen? Number that card one. Looking at the cards that are left, which one would you least like to see happen? Number that card two. And the next one you would least like to see happen? Number that card three. Continue to order your cards. Copy your choices onto "My Fears" cloud. Now I am going to ask you to tell me some more about each of these cards. Tell me about being _____. What do you imagine when you think about being _____? Describe the way you imagined your life would be--where you might be, what you might do, how you might feel, who might be with you and anything else that explains what this future self means to you.

[Continue to do this with all the feared selves.]

Is there any way that you might group these cards together? Go ahead and arrange the cards into groups and tell me about those groups.

Looking at your two most important feared selves and knowing the type of person you are now and what you can typically do, put a star on the card you think you are most capable of preventing some time in the future. Print this choice in the cloud that says " I think I am most able to prevent...". How able do you think you are of preventing this possible self? Again, by question C, circle the number that shows the degree to which you think you are capable of preventing this possible self from happening. What led you to make this rating?

Now look ahead to the future. Which of these two possible selves do you think has the most chance of happening? Put a check mark on that card. Put your response in the cloud that says " I think that _____could happen". How likely do you think it is that this feared possible self will happen? By question D, circle the number that

shows the degree to which you think that this possible self is likely. What led you to make this rating?

Think about the parts these two possible selves have played in your life this month. What things have you done to prevent these two feared possible selves from occurring?

Debriefing Guide

Short:

Could you take a few minutes and explain your Possible Selves Map to me as if I had not seen it before? Thank you for discussing your map with me.

To make sure that I understand what you have discussed with me in this interview, I will sum up what I remember as the most important parts. Please interrupt me if I've got something wrong or if you think of something you want to add.

Thank you for taking part in this interview. Now it's your turn to ask me some questions. Is there anything you'd like to ask me? Are there any comments that you would like to make?

In-depth:

1. Overall what did you think of the questions I asked you? (How easy or hard were the questions to answer? Were there any parts of the interview that you enjoyed more than other parts?)
2. What difficulties did you experience during the interview?
3. What surprised you most about the interview? What new information about yourself did you learn from this interview?

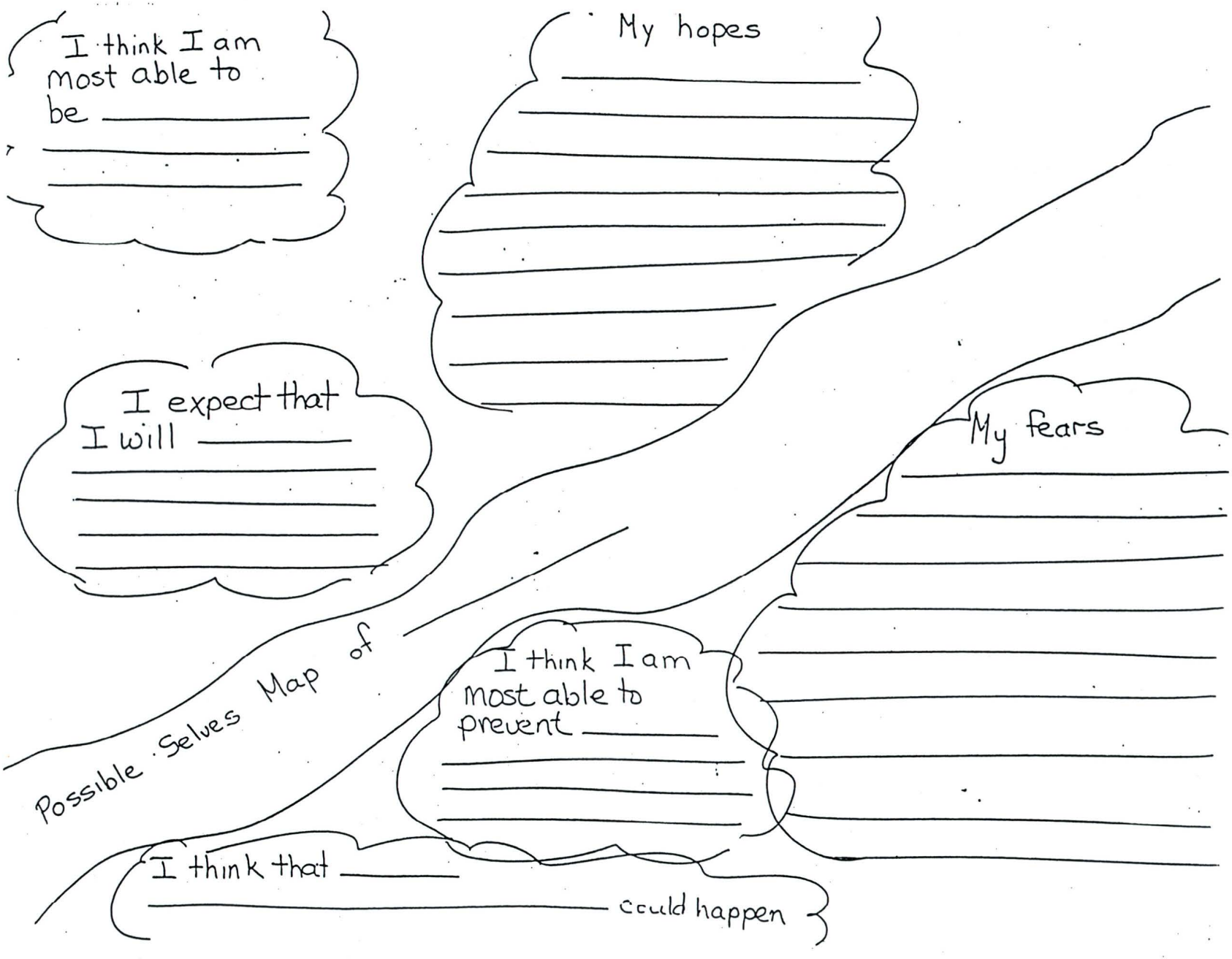
4. When I asked you to think about what you hoped to become (or feared becoming), how did you come up with your answers?

5. What comments would you make about the possible selves map?

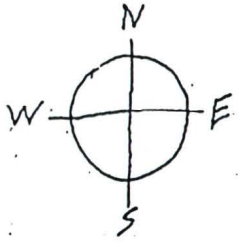
6. Would this information about possible selves be helpful for you to have? (How would it be helpful?) Would you be willing to participate in this interview at a later date? What do you think the possible selves map will look like then?

7. What have you done in school that has prepared you for this interview?

8. Thank you for taking part in this interview. Now its your turn to ask me some questions. Is there anything you'd like to ask me? Anything you didn't understand or were puzzled by?


I think I am most able to be
My hopes
I expect that I will
My fears
Possible Selves Map of
I think I am most able to prevent
I think that
could happen

Map of my Possible Selves



my Hopes

I think I'm most able to be---

I expect that I will

my Fears

I think that---

I think I'm most able to prevent

--could happen

Response Sheet for the Possible Selves Map Activity

Hoped-For Self

A. How able do you think you are of achieving this possible self?

I_____I

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.

Not at Completely

all able able

B. How likely do you think it is that this hoped-for possible self will come true?

I_____I

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.

Not at Completely

likely likely

Feared Self

C. How able do you think you are of preventing this possible self?

I_____I

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.

Not at Completely

all able able

D. How likely do you think it is that this feared self will come true?

I_____I

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.

Not at Completely

all likely likely

Appendix B

Possible Selves Measure Used by Cross and Markus (1991)

Probably everyone thinks about the future to some extent. When doing so, we usually think about the kinds of experiences that are in store for us and the kinds of people we might possibly become. Sometimes we think about what we probably will be like, other times about the ways we are afraid we might turn out to be, and other times about what we hope or wish we could be like.

One way of talking about this is to talk about possible selves--selves we might possible be. Some of these possible selves seem quite likely, for example "being a grandparent" or "vacationing in Florida". Others might be only vague thoughts or dreams about the future, like "travelling in space" or "winning the lottery". In addition, we may have possible selves that are feared or dreaded, such as "having cancer" or "being a bag lady". Some of us may have a large number of possible selves in mind, while others may have only a few.

In the space below please list all the hoped-for possible selves that you currently imagine for yourself.

In addition to having hoped-for possible selves, we may have images of ourselves in the future that we fear or dread. Some of these feared possible selves may seem quite unlikely, like "being a bag lady". Some of us may have a large number of feared possible selves in mind, while others may have only a few.

In the space below, please list the feared possible selves that you currently imagine for yourself.

1. Which are your two most important hoped-for selves?

(a) How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(a) How likely do you think this possible self is to come true?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(b) How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(b) How likely to you think this possible self is to come true?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Which are your two most important feared selves?

(a) How capable do you feel of preventing this possible self?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(a) How likely do you think this possible self is to come true?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(b) How capable do you feel of preventing this possible self?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(b) How likely do you think this possible self is to come true?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Think about the role this possible self has played in your life this month. We often do things (or don't do things) to make a possible self more likely to come true (for example, going on a diet to become the "thin" possible self). Please list anything you have done (or not done) in the last month to make this possible self come true.

Appendix C

Letter of Contact to Participants and Parental Guardians

Date:_____

Dear Participant and Guardian:

My name is Blythe Shepard (832-5572, Salmon Arm) and I am an elementary teacher and a graduate student in the Department of Psychological Foundations at the University of Victoria. I am working on my MA thesis, Possible Selves: An Exploration with Young Adolescents, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Marshall (250-721-7815). This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Victoria.

I am looking for young adolescents, aged 11-13, who have not started junior high school to take part in this study. Participants must be willing to talk about what they imagine for themselves in the future and what it is like for them to think about their future. I will need to tape record answers so that I can keep track of all the things that are said.

I hope that this will be fun for you and will help you to dream about possibilities for the future. According to recent reports in the field of career development, school programs need to provide students with the means to dream, to create options, and to identify their interests, beliefs, and values.

If you have a friend that might be interested could you give them this letter and have them contact me?

If you would like to take part in this study, you and your parent(s) or guardian(s) will need to sign a form and then we will make arrangements to meet at a suitable place. The interview will take about 30-40 minutes. I can be reached at 832-5572.

Thank you very much,

Blythe Shepard

Consent Form for the Possible Selves Mapping Interview:

Parent(s) / Guardian(s)

Dear Parent(s) / Guardian(s):

My name is Blythe Shepard (832-5572, Salmon Arm) and I am an elementary teacher and a graduate student in the Department of Psychological Foundations at the University of Victoria. I am working on my MA thesis, Possible Selves: An Exploration with Young Adolescents, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Marshall (250-721-7815). This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Victoria.

I am looking for young adolescents (11-13) who have not yet started junior high school to take part in my study. Participants must be willing to talk about what they imagine for themselves in the future and what it is like to think about the future. I will need to tape record answers so that I can keep track of all the things that are said.

Thank you very much for responding to my request,

Blythe Shepard

Permission to Participate

I understand that my child will be a participant in the study, Possible Selves: An Exploration with Young Adolescents, conducted by Blythe Shepard under the supervision of Dr. Anne Marshall at the University of Victoria.

I understand that allowing my child to participate in this study is my choice. I understand that this interview will be tape recorded and that the tape will be erased upon completion of the project in October, 1997.

My child can quit at any time during the study without giving a reason. If my child or I have any questions at any time during the study, my child or I will be answered right away. If my child decides to quit, the tape will be erased and any notes will be shredded.

I understand that my child's name will be protected in all reports by replacement with a code name identifiable only to the researcher. All information obtained will be kept confidential and interview results will be kept in a locked cabinet. When the study is complete in October 1997, all records of interviews will be destroyed. If you have any questions feel free to phone me.

I, the undersigned, give my permission for my child to participate in the study described in the above letter. I understand that anonymity (my child's name will not be used on any report) is assured and that the information given is confidential.

Parent/Guardian

Signature_____Date:_____

Consent form for the Possible Selves Mapping Interview: Participants

Dear Participant:

My name is Blythe Shepard (832-5572) and I am an elementary teacher and a graduate student in the Department of Psychological Foundations at the University of Victoria. I am working on my MA thesis, Possible Selves: An Exploration with Young Adolescents, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Marshall (250-721-7815). This project has been approved by the University of Victoria.

I am looking for participants between the ages of 11 to13 who have not yet started junior high school to take part in this study. Participants must be willing to talk about what they imagine for themselves in the future and what is it like to think about future roles. I will need to tape record your answers so that I can keep track of all the things that you said.

Thank you very much for responding to my request,

Blythe Shepard

Permission to Participate

I understand that I will be a participant in the study, Possible Selves: An Exploration with Yooung Adolescents, conducted by Blythe Shepard under the supervision of Dr. Anne Marshall of the University of Victoria.

I understand that taking part in this study is my choice. I understand that this interview will be tape recorded and that the tape will be erased when the study is over in October, 1997.

I understand that I can quit at any time during the study without giving a reason. If I have any questions that I want to talk about at any time during the study, I will be answered right away. If I decide to quit, tapes will be erased, and any notes will be shredded.

I understand that my name will not appear in the study. A code number will be used in place of my name. Only the researcher will know my identity from the code number. All answers to questions will be kept private and will be stored in a locked cabinet. When the study is over in October 1997, all records of the interviews will be destroyed. If you have any questions, please phone the above number.

I, the undersigned, give my permission to take part in the study described above. I understand that my name will not be used on any report and that the information I give will be kept private.

Name:_____ Date:_____

Appendix D

Debriefing Summary

1. Overall what did you think of the questions I asked you?

03: They were adult-like questions. They were different for me to answer. I've never had to think about this. I liked the green - the... hopes more than the fears.

09: Some were easy, some were hard. [Q] It was hard to rate them on the line. I liked to think about things I'd like to do more than what I'm scared of.

11: They were good. They got me thinking about what's going to happen. I liked choosing my numbers on the sheet.

15: They were medium to hard. Some were- like they seemed easy when you asked, but when you actually come to think about them, it was difficult. I liked doing my hopes, it was neat to lump them together.

17: They were fine. They were average. What I was expecting. I liked talking about the things I hoped would happen.

24: They were easy. I liked the green cards the best.

25: They were easy. I liked everything.

26: Some were easy and some were hard. The green ones were difficult. The rating because it was hard to choose which one to pick, like which card to pick. I liked talking about the green cards because they are all good.

27: It was pretty easy and straightforward.

28: Some were easy, like what I wanted to do when I got older. I enjoyed this the most. I hadn't really thought about it too much before. What I didn't want to happen was more difficult because I didn't really know that was going to happen. It paints the picture black.

35: This part [the yellow cards] was hard to think of- choosing the- which ones came first was hard.

2. What difficulties did you experience during the interview?

03: I had trouble thinking of what to say- I felt nervous.

09: Picking between the one that would be most likely was hard, especially being paralyzed and dying.

11: No difficulties. It was pretty easy.

15: It was difficult to do the hopes- to have lots of different ones, but you don't really know, they aren't into groupings so much, like living in a mansion and being a farmer [these are not her choices, just examples]. It was kind of easier to do the fears because you are always afraid of something no matter who you are.

17: No, nothing.

24: None.

25: The feared parts on the yellow cards. I couldn't think of many.

26: None.

27: Thinking of stuff I wouldn't like.

28: Trying to think of things I didn't want to happen.

35: Not really.

3. (a)What surprised you most about the interview?

03: When I explained my fears I actually felt better.

09: Nothing.

11: Nothing.

15: It surprised me how little I could come up with at the time. I thought it would be easy to think of so many different things. I was thinking about what you wanted, like, "Maybe she doesn't want that sort of thing."

17: No.

24: Nothing really.

25: The horse back riding teacher. That was new.

26: Having to write out all the bad things.

27: Can't think of any.

28: Not too many things.

35: I was surprised when you asked me what I feared.

(b) What new information about yourself did you learn from this interview?

03: I've never dreamed of being a cashier, it just came into my head.

09: I basically want a happy life. I think about that a lot.

11: Well, I wasn't thinking about my job very much, but then when you asked I started to think about it.

15: Just what I've said.

17: Well I've never really talked to people about what I've wanted to do. It's not as hard as I thought it would be.

24: I learned I have confidence in myself.

25: Everything else I did think of before.

26: Before I wasn't quite sure if I was going to drink beer here and there or not, but I don't think I want to drink any at all.

27: I knew this already.

28: I kinda knew this stuff, but I hadn't really thought about it.

35: Nothing really new.

4. When I asked you to think about what you hoped to become (or feared becoming), how did you come up with your answers?

03: Well, I have known these could happen- like being killed- like one time I was climbing on the bales, the board broke and I fell about 20 feet and then 10 bales fell on me.

09: I like arguing and I like money so I thought about a lawyer. Being paralyzed or dying - it's awful because I wouldn't be able to do the things I want to do. There are so many things I like doing.

11: I've been thinking about my fears a lot. Like from books I've read.

15: For the fears I thought of people around me and what had happened to them. I thought of people near here on the same road who had died recently. And a woman up the road, her husband used to beat her.

17: I have thought of it before, so I knew what I wanted to say.

24: Because I was watching the show about psychopathic murderers. I just thought of the others.

25: Just what I do and I really like, all came up into my head so it was really easy. On the yellow cards, I've had those thoughts before.

26: Becoming a lawyer was easy because I've always wanted to be one, like since I was really young. And I have a car book with a really nice picture of a Porsche. Being part of a gang popped into my mind.

27: Thinking of what I like to do and knowing what it's like around here not to have things or be able to do things. Some of the answers took a little thinking, especially the yellow cards.

28: By looking at other people. You see them having a good time like doing things and you want to do it too. If you see some panhandler on the street, then it makes you feel like you don't want to be that person.

35: I looked into my life today and I thought what I hated.

5. What comments would you make about the possible selves map?

03: It was okay.

09: It would remind me of what I'd said.

11: It would be helpful to have a photocopy so I could see what happens.

15: It could be used when doing an essay on "What Do You Want To Be?". Could be used by teachers so they know what to teach you, what would be of interest. You can learn a lot about the person.

17: You could refer back to it, if you ever got into anything you couldn't handle. You could always refer back to it. To see what you had said. To connect your thoughts.

24: It was good to see things that you said.

25: It would help me a lot.

26: It could help me to think.

27: It would be useful for kids to try to learn about what they are going to be or what they might be able to do.

28: Things might change alot- seeing the changes, you could see that as helpful.

35: It could- well if somebody saw this they could, nobody knows much about me, so if they saw this they'd know about me.{ Could you use this yourself?] No, no too much.

6. (a) Would this information about possible selves be helpful for you to have?

03: Yes, so when I grow up and I do want to have those goals in my life, but I will have to watch out for myself and be careful where I work and what I do.

09: Yes. I could be more careful of my health, be careful when I am doing things. I could be a lot better rider.

11: Yes. It would help me to think about things ahead of me.

15: Yes.

17: Yes, it probably would be nice to have.

24: Yeah, it could be useful. You could look back on it to see what you thought.

25: I would probably do more of each thing and work at it. Like think of the future more when I'm younger and getting better as I go. Try and figure out how to do all the things I like.

26: I could think about these yellow cards more. I never want to be any of those.

27: Rating helped me to think about what might happen. I see myself as pretty much able to do things.

28: Like the things you fear, you could stay away from them or try to.

35: No not for me. And older kids like in grade 7 would be thinking about next year, like "Oh no, more homework!" and stuff. I think the Grade 5's might be thinking more off in the future. Older kids think about stuff like around them- like right now.

(b) Would you be willing to participate in this interview at a later date?

03: Yes.

09: Yes.

11: Yes.

15: Yes.

17: Yes.

24: Yes.

25: Yes.

26: Yes.

27: Oh yes.

28: I think so.

35: I don't know.

(c) What do you think the possible selves map will look like then?

03: It will be different.

09: I think there would be changes.

11: There might be some different things.

15: No it would be very different.

17: It would be different because I would be in high school and I might have different things that I wanted to do.

24: Probably feel the same, but some things might change.

25: Probably the answers would be the same.

26: I think I'd probably have the same answers.

27: Definitely there would be changes.

28: No, my opinions have changed alot in the last three years. I'm thinking about the future more, it's a closer possibility.

35: It would be different. A big difference.

7. What have you done in school that has prepared you for this interview?

03: Yes. I do think about the future, but not in school. I think about it but I don't talk about it.

09: I've thought about the future. My dad told me that if you get really good grades and go to university or college, there's a variety of different jobs than if you don't.

[Q] We did one day- we talked about different careers.

11: Well, my mom has been talking to me more than school.

15: A month ago we played the Real Game and that helped. I was a politician.

17: A lot of stuff in science I've done, researched about, like the environment and stuff that refers to meteorology.

24: Not really. Well, in science we talked about famous people, like who invented the telescope.

25: No. Well, the field trips.

26: In Grade 4, I went to gifted programs and we did something like this.

27: Career and Personal Planning. We're doing little tests to see what we are interested in and learning about banking. We pay taxes, school bills, we get a pay check and we have to write out resumes to get jobs at the bank.

28: We do Personal Planning, but it's kind of useless. Well, I don't really like the teacher very much and he keeps on and on on one thing for weeks and weeks. Stuff like making decisions and being responsible.

35: I've talked about the future at school, I've been thinking about which colleges. The teacher has talked to us about colleges and universities.

VITA

Surname: Shepard Given Names: Blythe Catherine

Place of Birth: St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1995 to 1997
University of British Columbia	1991 to 1992
University of Waterloo	1982 to 1989
Simon Fraser University (P. D. P.)	1982 to 1983
Okanagan College	1980 to 1982
Open Learning Institute	1980 to 1982

Degrees Awarded:

B.A.	University of Waterloo	1989

Honours and Awards:

University of Victoria Fellowship	1995 to 1997
Excellence in Teaching, Ministry of Education, B. C.	1990
Tuition Fee Replacement Scholarship, S. F. U.	1983
College Entrance Open Scholarship	1982
B. C. Credit Union Foundation Bursary	1981
Federated Co-Operatives Scholarship	1981

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Title of Thesis:

Possible Selves: An Exploration with Young Adolescents

Author [redacted]

Blythe Catherine Shepard
September 5, 1997