Person, Place, and Perception in Paths to the Future: Adolescent Self-Concept, Sense of Community, and Possible Selves in a Rural Context

By

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ABSTRACT

A sample of 96 rural adolescents recruited from four rural communities in the Kootenay Boundary region of British Columbia completed a cross-sectional survey tapping self concept, possible selves, sense of community, and the connections among these constructs. The consideration of both present and future selves were viewed through a contextual lens where rural characteristics were considered. There were mixed sentiments regarding living in the rural communities. Youth were typically able to find support and generally liking living in their communities although many indicated ambivalence about staying in their community after leaving high school. An important connection was found between a high estimation of capability for obtaining a future hoped-for self and a high rating of self-concept. This result suggests important implications for rural and possible selves research, and implications for rural youth including building self-esteem though fostering perceptions of capability, increasing community engagement, and strengthening community connections.

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This thesis is dedicated to Raman, Rishi, and Rohan who supported the many stages and struggles of this project with patience, support, and above all humour.

And to my grandfather Ted Coombes who, in his great wisdom, summed up this research with the following quote:

"Up to a point a man's life is shaped by environment, heredity, and movements and changes in the world about him; then there comes a time when it lies within his grasp to shape the clay of his life into the sort of thing he wishes to be ... Everyone has it within his power to say, this I am today, that I shall be tomorrow".

Louis L'Amour, from The Walking Drum
(as cited in L'Amour, A. (1988))

Chapter One

Introduction

The transition from high school is considered one of the most difficult challenges facing over 300,000 students graduating from high school across Canada each year (Lapan, Tucker, Kim, & Koscuilek, 2003; Statistics Canada, 2008). Each individual undertaking the process is influenced by many factors, including the context in which they live (Chen, 1997), their sense of self (Harter & Whitesell, 2003), and what they believe they are capable of achieving (Lapan et al., 2003). In rural communities, characterised as sparsely populated lands lying outside urban areas or in places with population densities of 400 or fewer people per square kilometer (Statistics Canada, 2002), a context of uncertainty combined with geographic isolation and lack of resources often prevails making the transition out of high school particularly challenging for this group of adolescents (Lapan et al., 2003). In the interest of better supporting rural adolescents as they navigate the transition from high school, this research looks at sense of self, hopes and fears for the future, community connection and the relationships among these concepts as these young people contend with a range of daunting challenges particular to a rural area (Lapan et al., 2003).

The self does not exist in a vacuum (Strahan & Wilson, 2006), rather it is influenced by numerous contextual factors (Demo, 1992; Lips, 2004). For the rural participants of this study, community connections, self-concept and possible selves that are the focus of this research develop within a particular rural context. Generally, rural areas currently face educational and economic challenges that contribute to a climate where perceptions of possibility regarding both present and future may appear limited (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2006; Dehan & Deal, 2001; Shepard, 2003; Shepard & Marshall, 2000). Despite these challenges, the majority of rural youth

in the Kootenay region of British Columbia, where participants were recruited from for this research, are similar to youth from around the province with respect to physical and mental health (McCreary Centre, 2004). A majority of Kootenay youth also indicated there was something they were really good at which suggests a certain amount of self confidence (McCreary Centre, 2004).

Regarding education, rural adolescents face significant challenges when considering valuable post-secondary education and rural British Columbia youth name education as a significant concern in terms of their future (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2006). Rural youth have a lower probability of pursuing university degrees in part due to the fact that they are disadvantaged by the distance required to travel to access post-secondary institutions (Frenette, 2002). Rural schools also lack funding for support services such as counselling and tend to offer fewer high school course options due to a smaller tax base, which presents challenges for rural youth who wish to obtain the prerequisites required for certain post secondary programs (Looker, 2001). In the Kootenay region, a majority of youth indicate they like school and 68 % plan to continue with post secondary education which is lower than the 75 % who indicate post secondary educational intentions on a provincial level (McCreary Centre, 2004). However, despite these many challenges, rural schools tend to be well integrated within the community and teachers know students and families and provide important social supports (Looker, 2001). Many rural residents experience strong connections to their place of residence which may have the dual effect of close connections to the people and the land as well as hesitancy to leave to pursue further education or career opportunities (Shepard, 2005). This can result in mixed feelings for older adolescents as they consider the life and career choices that accompany the transition from high school (Shepard, 2005).

In addition to these educational challenges, rural youth face economic and occupational challenges. Rural communities can be distinguished from urban centres by their economic reliance on natural resources, which limits occupational opportunities (Cahill & Martland, 1996). Rural dwellers experience a disproportionate number of socioeconomic problems and lower education levels (Looker, 2001; Murray & Keller, 1991). Rural areas are also characterized by lower levels of skilled workers (Magnusson, 2005) and lower average income (Looker, 2001; Singh, 2004) than urban counterparts and face the stress and uncertainty of a volatile commodity markets (Centre for Community Enterprise, 2000). Typically, rural adolescents perceive their employment options as limited and view urban centres as possessing more jobs, opportunities, and options (Looker, 2001). In fact, youth in rural British Columbia speak of the lack of available employment opportunities and rank employment as a top priority that needs to be addressed in their communities (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2006).

It can be tempting to romanticize rural life as agricultural, pastoral, neighbourly, and free from crime and pollution. While there is certainly some truth in this romantic vision in some places, it obscures the fact that historically and in the present, rural life has often been filled with a sense of isolation, hardship, danger, and even despair from inherent instability connected with dependence on natural resources (Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, 2008). A recent report titled "Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty" (Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, 2008) noted that "with every new census, rural Canada's place in the national fabric seems to unravel a little more" (p. ix). This report addresses how the economic, social and natural environment contributes to the continuing trend of rural decline and poverty. This report also identifies rural poverty as connected to recent challenges within agriculture, forestry, tourism, aging national infrastructure, communication deficits such

as poor access to digital technology, transportation, income, education, housing, legal services, and health care. However, against some of these unfavourable odds, rural communities have adapted to these new circumstances and taken steps to survive crisis and become healthy and resilient communities for their citizens (Centre for Community Enterprise, 2000). These factors all have the potential to impact the opportunities available for rural youth in the present and in the future as they consider life beyond high school.

Career development is an important piece of the transition from high school for rural adolescents. In particular, career development has been long recognized as central in adolescence as well as closely related to self-concept (Erikson, 1963; Super, 1957; Wallace-Broscious, Serafica, & Osipow, 1994). There are now many pathways from school to work for urban based youth compared to options available in previous decades (Shepard, 2004). However, in small rural communities there may be fewer economic and educational opportunities available, which highlights the importance of approaching career research with context in mind.

To illustrate this point, in a study of rural young women, Shepard (2004) noted that facilitating and constraining factors in the rural environment including education, training, and work opportunities impacted the career path of these individuals. Further focus on rural career development, with young women in particular, is important in order to understand the unique challenges and influences of a rural environment. The rural young women in Shepard's (2004) study were faced with the challenge of living in communities which are resource dependent and vulnerable to economic fluctuations, which is likely true for young men as well although they were not sampled. Rural young women have limited access to a wide variety of role models combining work and family, and they may find balancing multiple life roles challenging. One youth also described how young people in her rural area are excluded from employment and

other activities as a result of preconceptions such as "people that haven't had a chance to create themselves because everybody else has created them with their negative attitude" (Shepard, 2004, p. 83). In addition, rural youth face reduced access to higher education, limited school curricula, and fewer programs and services (Shepard & Marshall, 2000). In general, "the rural situation presents unique challenges to the career decision-making process of young people" (Jeffery, Lehr, Hache, & Campbell, 1992, p. 240).

In summary, rural communtites are generally characterized by strong community connections (Harrision, 2005; Looker, 2001; Malatest & Associates, 2002; Marshall, 2002; Shepard, 2005). In addition, rural adolescents are currently faced with a uncertainty regarding occupational and educational opportunities (Dupuy, 2000; Looker, 2001; Malatest & Associates, 2002). This socioeconomic context that defines the current rural situation cannot be ignored when considering the transition to high school for rural adolescents; it is an essential piece of the puzzle.

Person, Place, and Perception Project

The present study focused on three concepts identified in the literature as important for adolescents, especially as they approach the life-career transition following high school: (a) self-concept, (b) possible selves, and (c) sense of community. However, information on these three important concepts is lacking in the literature on rural adolescents. Self-concept, possible selves, and sense of community will be introduced and defined below, with particular attention to rural context.

Self-concept is the collection of self-knowledge characterized as a generalized perspective of the self (Markus & Nurius, 1987) and the product of self-reflexive activity (Gecas, 1982). The self-concept is often measured by self-esteem, the evaluative component of the self-

concept that encompasses an individual's perceived sense of value, competence, or worth either globally or according to specific domains (Harter, 1999; Nurius, 1989). These self-evaluations are based on the ratio between perceived competence and the individual's aspirations in a specific area of life (Harter, 1989).

For rural adolescents, their environment may play a significant role in self-concept development through shaping the opportunities available to then (Nurmi, Poole, & Kalakoski, 1996). In particular, the rural environment may be distinct with regards to the educational opportunities and career prospects available. Occupational challenges typical of rural areas have been associated with low self-esteem and marginalization in adolescents (Prause & Dooley, 1997). Within this rural context, adolescent self-concept develops in a climate of economic and educational uncertainty.

Possible selves are individual conceptualizations of personal future potential, and are considered to be a link between self-concept, motivation, and behaviour as well as an evaluative context for the current self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves, or one's hopes, fears and expectations for the future, are informed by a person's social context including past and anticipated experiences (Wai-Ling Packard & Conway, 2006) and can be considered a "roadmap connecting the present to the future" (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004, p. 132). An individual's social and physical world influences both self-concept and possible selves including connection to his or her community (Nurius, 1989). Thus, as the personal self is thought to be embedded within multiple social contexts (Harter, 1997), then it is relevant to look to an individual's connection to their community when considering rural adolescent self-concept and possible selves.

Sense of Community has been defined as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members needs will be met by the commitment to be together" (McMillan and Chavis, 1986, p. 9). Sense of Community has been correlated with adolescent evaluations of well-being and is therefore an important factor in facilitating adolescent development (Chipuer, 2001; Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler, & Williams, 1996). Research suggests that young people's sense of belonging within the place where they grow up plays an important role in the development of a healthy adjusted self (Chipuer, 2001; Chipuer, Bramston, & Pretty, 2003). Such community connections can also be valuable supports for rural youth as they consider the transition from high school. For example, students who feel connected to their school typically have better academic performance and are healthier than those who don't (McCreary Centre, 2004). In addition, community-based relationships are considered effective supports that empower students to overcome obstacles associated with rural living such as geographic isolation and socioeconomic status (Lapan et al., 2003).

In summary, the successful development of the self-concept, the complex and dynamic collection of self knowledge garnered over a lifetime, is relevant for youth as they navigate adolescence and the life-career transition following high school. Often characterized by increased responsibility and autonomy, this transition is a time where hopes and fears for the future, or possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), are particularly salient. The road to adulthood can also be shaped by opportunities in the youth's community and their connection to this same community (Shepard, 2005). In addition, there are many external contextual influences that may impact both this transition as well as self-concept development. The environment where the adolescent is living, such as a rural environment, is one such contextual factor. Considering

the relevance and importance of self-concept, community connection, and possible selves for adolescents, the focus of this research was to examine each of these concepts and the connections among them for adolescents living in a rural setting.

Paths to the Future Research Project

The current research is situated within a larger research project, Paths to the Future: Life-Career Development for Rural and First Nations Youth. The initial phase of the Paths to the Future project, under the direction of Dr. Blythe Shepard, employed ethnographic-narrative methodology including focus groups and individual in-depth interviews with rural youth and key informants (Shepard, 2005). This project emphasized the importance of understanding life-career development as a subjective experience. The erosion of the infrastructure of rural communities due to government downsizing, cut-backs, and the decreasing size of local tax bases (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2000) was a research consideration. Specifically, the Paths to the Future research addressed the following factors: present and future self-perceptions, possible selves, perceived efficacy regarding future goals, actions taken to achieve future selves and goals, connections to the community, and impact of rural living on current and future self-perceptions. The narrative case studies in this research provided an in depth exploration of rural youth. While this research produced valuable information about current and future self-perceptions of rural youth, questions remained about the relationships among self-concept, possible selves, and community. For example: (a) do youth with high self-esteem or healthy self-concepts perceive more possibilities for the future? (b) are these youth demonstrating agency by taking steps and being more planful about their future goals? (c) are these youth who feel good about themselves more connected to and supported by their community? These questions were the impetus for the current research project.

Researcher Motivation

I grew up in a rural environment and it is my perception that this context was an important influence on my own transition from high school. I valued many aspects of the rural environment including the close connections with neighbours, the community spirit, and the more relaxed life pace. However, as I approached graduation from high school, I felt the conflict between my appreciation for my rural upbringing and the lack of educational and employment opportunities that I perceived as limiting my future. This conflict may have been augmented by travel opportunities to Europe and Africa that inspired a desire to see more of the world than my small community could offer. I believe these travel experiences encouraged an exploratory attitude and helped me to take advantage of chance opportunities, or planned happenstance (Mitchell, Levin & Krumboltz, 1999), that I encountered. This conflict was a unique and integral challenge in the rural context of my adolescence and played a role in my transition from high school. This experience sparked my curiosity regarding the experiences of other rural adolescents. It is this curiosity that in large part drives this research project.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify rural adolescent perceptions of self-concept, possible selves, and sense of community. Relationships among the three constructs and gender differences were also examined.

Overview of Thesis

This initial chapter situated this study within the larger Paths to the Future project, introduced the foundation for the research, familiarized the reader to the population being studied, defined terminology, established the research purpose and questions, and acknowledged the researcher's motivation for carrying out the study. Chapter Two provides a critical

exploration of the principle components of this study including adolescent self-concept, possible selves, and sense of community. The third chapter of this thesis addresses research methodology. Chapter Three includes a profile of the participants, a description of the communities where they live, a description of the survey instrument, and introduces the research questions. Chapter Four presents the results of the survey in the following sections: (a) Phase One Analysis: descriptive statistics for Demographics, Community Context, Sense of Community, and Self-Concept; (b) Phase Two Analysis: an analysis of quantitative and qualitative Possible Selves data, and; (c) Phase Three Analysis: a comprehensive analysis of the relationships among Self-concept, Sense of Community, and Possible Selves. The fifth chapter includes an in-depth discussion of the results from the survey and connects these to the current literature. Chapter Six, Conclusion, includes the implications of the findings of this research, the limitations of the study, future directions and some concluding remarks. Finally, the references and appendices complete the thesis.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to identify rural adolescent perceptions of self-concept, possible selves, and sense of community as well as the connections among these constructs and any notable gender differences. Many of the rural youth in the present study will soon navigate the transition from high school. This life-career transition is considered one of the most difficult challenges facing older adolescents (Lapan et al., 2003). Rural adolescents face additional educational and economic pressures as they consider life beyond high school (Lapan et al., 2003). Important aspects of this transition are: (a) the self-concept, a central component in social and personal functioning (Nurius, 1989); (b) possible selves, (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the future representation of self-concept that has emerged as an important consideration for linking present behaviour to future goals as well as present self-concept and self-esteem (Knox, 2006; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006); and (c) sense of community, *or* the perception of connection to place (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). It has also been noted that the self-concept and possible selves are both shaped largely by an individual's social world (Markus, 2006; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Marshall, Young, & Domene, 2006; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Thus, the characteristics of a rural context are also important considerations in this exploration of self-concept, possible selves, and sense of community for rural adolescents.

Developmental Background

As many adolescents proceed towards their eventual transition out of high school, they pass through different developmental stages as well as navigate a time of substantial change when self-beliefs become refined and a sense of self continues to develop (Adams, 1992). Adolescence is considered a dramatic transition with physical, cognitive-developmental

advances, and changing social expectations (Harter, 1999). In terms of cognitive advances, adolescents acquire the ability to think abstractly (Harter, 1999). This ability to create abstractions emerges from within the Formal Operations in early adolescence as described by Piaget (1960). Piaget suggests this new ability should provide the adolescent with the deductive skills to build a formal theory which is important for self-development, assuming the self is a cognitive construction similar to a formal theory (Harter, 1999).

During adolescence, youth also explore and test alternative ideas, beliefs, and behaviours through a process of self-analysis and self-evaluation that ultimately culminates in the establishment of a cohesive and integrative sense of self (Erikson, 1968). Another widely recognized framework for conceptualizing the transformation of the self during adolescence has been provided by Erik Erikson (1968). Erikson (1968) outlined his eight stages of man [sic] and it is through the fifth stage, identity and role confusion, that he addressed adolescence and the development of the self. In this stage Erikson (1968) drew a connection between puberty and adolescence and explained that this transitional period is spurred on by rapid body growth. Youth are bombarded with physiological changes within. They face the tangible demands of adulthood that lie ahead and a commitment to goals as another developmental milestone (Erikson, 1968). Successfully navigating this stage in order to achieve inner continuity and purpose rests on the resolution of previous developmental stages.

Erikson (1968) viewed identity and the development of the self as occurring within a social context where societal expectations require a selection from available choices, with the individual seeking acceptance and confirmation of choices from community. Erikson conceptualized identity in psychosocial terms, and noted the importance of historical, cultural, and social factors in conjunction with biological capacities and idiosyncratic individual needs

(Kroger & Green, 1996). Erikson's approach to adolescent development highlights the importance of considering individuals within their particular context. In terms of the present research, the salient context is the rural environment and the particular characteristics of that context.

Self-Concept

An important demand of adolescence is the development and weaving together of changing multiple selves, the formation of selves toward which to aspire, and the need to resolve the discontinuity that is experienced as identity continues to evolve (Harter, 1990a). These tasks associated with adolescent development provide much ground for a reflective preoccupation with the self (Harter, 1990a). As older adolescents approach the transition from high school, they are also faced with choices about life and career. For these young people, these choices are informed by their current self-perceptions. After all, through the course of a person's life, an individual develops an extensive understanding of themself. This collection of self knowledge known as the self-concept (Markus & Nurius, 1987) is semantic, as well as being an affective and visual representation of who we were, who we are, and who we can become (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). The self-concept organizes and interprets self-relevant experiences and is considered to be an important component in maintaining psychosocial well-being (Stein, 1995).

The self-concept is increasingly viewed as dynamic and active in the literature and a mediator of important intrapersonal processes including affect and motivation, and interpersonal processes such as social perception (Cross & Markus, 1991; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Nurius, 1989). Links have also been drawn from self-concept to motivation and behaviour and social context (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Nurius, 1989). Furthermore, the self-concept is considered

situationally variable and actively engaged in constructing the individual's understanding of reality and in mediating ongoing behaviour (Nurius, 1989).

Self-Schema

The self-concept is multifaceted (Harter, 1990b; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Nurius, 1989), consisting of a system of self-schemas or generalizations about the self that are formed from previous social experiences (Markus, 1977; Markus & Wurf, 1987). This interlocking system of affective-cognitive knowledge structures regarding the self forms the foundation of how information is stored and retrieved from memory (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Nurius, 1989). Self-schemas, like other schemas, are organizations of knowledge, but are unique as they integrate and summarize an individual's thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding the self in a particular domain (Stein, 1995).

These knowledge structures are thought to be comprised of emotions and evaluations along with beliefs and descriptions. According to Nurius (1989), schemata are active and important in information processing. These structures guide an individual as to what to attend to, how much importance to apply to a specific stimuli, and provide perceptual biases and expectations that reduce the perceived need for careful attention to all the information in the environment. Self-schemas are also constructed from an individual's past experiences in a particular domain (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Much more than a passive storage unit, the self-schemata are thought to serve as a layout of information as well as plans for action (Nurius, 1989; Stein, 1995) and have been linked to several behavioural domains including competent performance (Cross & Markus, 1994).

Working Self-Concept

The multidimensionality of the self has led to the use of the term working self-concept (Markus & Kunda, 1986; Markus & Nurius, 1986). "The working self-concept, or the self-concept of the moment, is best viewed as a continually active, shifting array of accessible self-knowledge" (Markus & Wurf, 1987, p. 306). Representations of the self can be cognitive, affective, verbal, images, neural, or sensorimotor; they may represent the self in the present, past, or future and may be the actual or the possible self (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). The self-concept is perceived to be a collection of self-representations while the working self-concept is the subset of representations which is accessible at a particular time (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992).

This way of viewing the self-concept suggests that individuals are influenced by their currently accessible thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs and that the self-concept can be both stable and malleable (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Nurius, 1989). Core aspects of the self, or self-schemas, may be fairly unresponsive to changes in social circumstances whereas other self-conceptions will be more malleable relative to motivational state or social conditions (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Thus, while the entire collection of an individual's self-schemata accrued over their lifetime may resist change, the working self-concept is variable, easily influenced, and is salient in the moment (Nurius, 1989).

Self-Concept and Adolescence

In terms of self-concept, adolescence is an interesting transitional period (Harter, 1990a). Emerging cognitive abilities and changing societal expectations combine to modify and shape the self-concept during this developmental period. Adolescents slowly begin to develop the capacity for conceptualizing the possible and the abstract (Piaget, 1977). Along with this

development, adolescents also begin to perceive the self as relational, contemplative, self-determined and situated in multiple social contexts (Harter 1997, 1999).

Through the exploration of multiple domains of self-concept across childhood and adolescence, it has been demonstrated that the mind becomes more flexible as each developmental milestone is crossed (Harter, 1999). For example, while children will demonstrate dichotomous views regarding their ability in a particular domain, adolescents will rate themselves along a continuum (Shapka & Keating, 2005). Harter (1999) has shown that by middle childhood, children can conceptualize a global sense of themselves as well as domain-specific evaluations in five areas; (a) physical competence, (b) physical appearance, (c) peer acceptance, (d) cognitive competence, and (e) behavioural conduct. It should be noted that global self-worth is not an additive domain or an across-domain average but an independent area of evaluation with additional domains beneath (Byrne & Shavelson, 1996; Harter, 1999; Shapka & Keating, 2005). Adolescents, with increased cognitive capacity, demonstrate additional differentiation in these five areas. For example, cognitive competence is further categorized as scholastic competence, intellectual ability, and creativity, while job competence, close friendships, and romantic relationships become separate domains within social competence (Harter, 1999).

In terms of gender, the differences in adolescent self-concept occur not with global self-worth but rather in specific domains (Harter, 1999). Harter (1999) notes that boys tend to have a higher physical self-conception while girls typically have higher self-conceptions in social domains. However, little literature is available that examines gender differences in the development of self-concept and what does exist is ambiguous (Shapka & Keating, 2005). For both genders, adolescence is characterized by an emergence of emotion and beliefs that are

absent in early childhood (Harter, 1990a). In this way essential qualitative changes in the nature of the self-concept occur as an individual proceeds through adolescence (Harter, 1990a).

In general, adolescent self-concept is a multifaceted structure that can be considered both a process and a structure as well as both stable and situationally variable (Demo, 1992). Within the self-concept, thoughts, attitudes, images, schemas, and theories regard the self as an object (Demo, 1992). As such, the self-concept itself cannot be measured but rather described. The actual measurement or evaluation of the self-concept is captured through self-esteem. Thus, this study views self-esteem as a measure of self-concept although the terms self-concept and self-esteem will be used interchangeably in the remainder of the document.

Measuring the Self-Concept

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem, an important aspect of adolescent development, can be perceived as an evaluative aspect of the self-system (Gecas, 1982; Harter, 1999; Nurius, 1989). Rather than a stable overarching estimation of an individual's self-worth, self esteem is viewed as a "variable value that is a function of the valences of the self-conceptions comprising the working self-concept at a given time" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 958). An assessment of self esteem can also be considered a quantitative evaluation of a person's positive or negative self-regard (Knox, Funk, Elliot, Bush, 2000). This evaluation is related to the image of an ideal self. High self-esteem results when there is little discrepancy between the ideal and the real self while low self-esteem occurs when such a discrepancy occurs (Muris, Meesters, & Fijen, 2003).

The notion of self-esteem as an evaluation of the self is not novel. For instance, William James (1890/1950) noted that self-evaluations depend on the degree to which actual successes coincide with one's goals and aspirations. Thus James (1890/1950) defined self-esteem as

"success divided by pretensions" (p. 310) and as a measure of actual to ideal self-congruence. As such, self-esteem is considered an index of good mental health (Muris et al., 2003). For example, high self-esteem has been correlated with happiness while low self-esteem has been associated with depression (Harter, 1993). For James, perceived competence was also connected to self-esteem. The high self-esteem individual can discount the importance of domains where he or she does not perceive competence whereas the low self-esteem individual does not appear as able to devalue success in domains of inadequacy (Harter & Whitesell, 2003). Thus, for James, a person's perception of adequacy in domains that are judged to be important to that person is the determining factor for the individual's level of global self-worth (Harter & Whitesell, 2003).

Another important historical scholar, Cooley (1964), viewed the self as a social construction shaped from linguistic exchanges with significant others (symbolic interactions). This view of the self is referred to as the "looking-glass-self." From this perspective, other people are viewed as social mirrors into which a child or adolescent looks in order to assess the opinions of others toward the self. These opinions are then incorporated into an individual's self evaluation, or self-esteem (Harter & Whitesell, 2003).

Since the time of James and Cooley, there has been much discussion regarding the stability or malleability of this construct over time with the pendulum of opinion going from stable to malleable and back (Harter & Whitesell, 2003). In general, a range from stable to fluctuating self-esteem has been noted in adolescents with "looking-glass" adolescents who base their self-esteem on approval from others reporting a more malleable self-esteem (Harter & Whitesell, 2003). Also, self-esteem has been reported as both stable and changeable across different contexts for adolescents (Harter & Whitesell, 2003). The level of self-esteem reported across contexts is correlated with the particular level of approval in that context. It appears that

changes or stability in adolescent's sense of success (James) and in the level of approval they are receiving from significant others (Cooley) are directly linked to global self-worth (Harter & Whitesell, 2003). Stability in the cause of self-esteem will lead an individual to maintain self-esteem while changes, either an increase or decrease, will be associated to corresponding changes in self-esteem (Harter & Whitesell, 2003).

Components of Self-Esteem. Like the overarching self-concept, self-esteem is also comprised of sub-categories in addition to being considered as an individual's overall self-evaluation. According to Cast & Burke (2002), self-esteem is composed of two distinct dimensions, competence and worth. "The competence dimension (efficacy based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which people see themselves as capable and efficacious. The worth dimension (worth-based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which individuals feel they are persons of value" (Cast & Burke, 2002, p.1042). These two components of self-esteem, competence and worth, may be conceptually important to differentiate but the differences fade in terms of a person's experience. In practice, these two concepts are closely interconnected (Gecas, 1982).

Competence based self-esteem is closely linked with performance outcomes, human agency, and motivation and may also be termed self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Gecas, 1982). Self-efficacy is mainly a cognitive judgment of one's capability for performance that weighs different sources of information when formulating such a perception (Bong & Clark, 1999; Cervone, 2000). For example, the importance of self-efficacy as a motivator is evident in the work of Seligman (1975) who has linked his concept of "learned helplessness" to depression. Learned helplessness is fuelled by an extensive sense of inefficacy that results from learning that one cannot adequately influence the environment. Seligman's work underlines that self-efficacy,

a component of self-esteem, is important for psychological well-being. In addition, self-efficacy is primarily concerned with cognitive judgments of a person's capabilities and is multifaceted and hierarchical like self-concept (Bong & Clark, 1999).

Self esteem based on virtue, or self-worth, is embedded in norms and values related to personal or interpersonal conduct (i.e., justice, reciprocity, honour) (Gecas, 1982). Like self-efficacy, self-worth may also serve as a motivator and there is a belief that the motivation to develop a positive view of oneself is universal (Gecas, 1982).

Self-Esteem and Gender. Gender is also an important consideration in terms of self-esteem. Gender differences appear to exist not just in global self-esteem but also along different dimensions of self-esteem. Research has shown that self-esteem for females is linked to characteristics of interpersonal relationships like humour, sympathy, generosity, and overall social competence (Block & Robbins, 1993; Knox, 2006). In addition, females typically are more concerned with their emotional connectedness to others, and social competence is considered important (Block & Robbins, 1993; Knox, 2006). Male self-esteem appears to be related more closely to possessing unique abilities that distinguishes a person as superior (Knox, 2006). For example, self-esteem domains such as perceptions of attractive physical appearance, self-assessed scholastic competence, and athletic competence have been found to favour adolescent males (Friedrichsen, 1997). Examples of self-esteem domains that favour female adolescents include interpersonal strengths such as social acceptance and close friendship (Friedrichsen, 1997).

Global and Specific Self-Esteem. Self-esteem can be assessed with both a specific and a global focus. Global self-esteem and specific self-esteem have very different implications and consequences. Global self-esteem informs psychological well-being and specific self-esteem is

more relevant to behaviour (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995). Self-esteem is basically an attitude toward the self. People may have different attitudes toward the object (self) as a whole and toward specific aspects of that object (the self), thus both global and specific measures of self-esteem are relevant.

Global self-esteem is defined by a single score averaging across items that captures overall satisfaction with oneself as a person. "Global self-esteem represents the overarching construct in a hierarchical model in which particular domains and subdomains are nested underneath" (Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1998, p. 756). Perceived level of approval or validation from significant others is a strong predictor of global self-worth, and global self-esteem is a powerful experiential actuality in the lives of adolescents. However, global measures of self-esteem may conceal or minimize variations in specific aspects of self-concept (Knox et al., 2000). Recent research indicates there are limitations to global measures of self-esteem because self-perceptions are more complex and varied; thus, Harter (1999) suggests that the self concept be viewed from a more domain-specific perspective.

Harter (1990a) presents a model of self-esteem that integrates both global and multidimensional self-esteem. Global self-worth in this model is perceived as its own construct and not just as a combination of domain-specific judgements. Harter (1988) developed her theory of self-worth based on the work of both James (1892/2001) and Cooley (1964) who believe that one possesses a global concept of self, over and above more specific self-judgements.

Based on this assumption that an individual's global sense of self-worth can be assessed separately from other self-concept domains, Harter (1988) developed a Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA) that examines self-esteem in the following nine domains; (a) scholastic competence, (b) athletic competence, (c) job competence, (d) behavioural conduct, (e) social

acceptance, (f) physical appearance, (g) romantic appeal, (h) close friendship, and (i) global self-worth. These self-concept domains have been empirically supported in the literature (Harter, 1988; Worrell, 1997). Specifically, research has shown that four of the adolescent self-concept domains (scholastic competence, athletic competence, job competence, and behavioural conduct) are robust while four other domains (social acceptance, close friendship, physical appearance, and romantic appeal) may be accessing two broader domains of general attractiveness and peer support (Worrell, 1997). One of the most salient aspects of positive self-esteem for adolescents is the perception of physical appearance, with this domain being the most closely associated with global self-esteem (Friedrichsen, 1997; Harter, 1990; Shapka & Keating, 1995). Harter (1988) has also identified the importance of social acceptance and perceived adequacy in the social domain to an adolescent's self-esteem. Academic self-concept has also been found to be relevant, especially in the life of students. In general, Harter's (1988) scale allows for a comparison between global self-esteem and perceived competence in a variety of domains and supports a conceptualization of self-esteem that includes both global self-worth in addition to relevant domain specific evaluations of self-esteem.

The term "relational context" is used to denote how self esteem varies as a function of social context (Harter, 1999). Thus, the current view is that multidimensional or specific models of assessing self-esteem are more accurate (Harter, 1999). Unidimensional or global models are considered inadequate as they mask individual distinctions about domain specific tasks (Thomson & Zand, 2002). The importance of specific domains will vary among individuals, making it unlikely that global self-worth would systematically emerge as a distinct factor. Domain specific evaluation reflects the individual's sense of competence across particular domains, like social or school competence, and is thought to be impacted more readily by

contextual factors (Alves-Martins, Peixoto, Gouveia-Periera, Amaral, & Pedro, 2002). Differences in self-esteem across contexts can be expected to develop in adolescence (Harter et al., 1998a); thus specific measures of self-esteem become particularly relevant with this population.

As an evaluation of the multidimensional self-concept, self-esteem is influenced by experiences and memories of the past in addition to visions of the self in the future (Strahan & Wilson, 2006). In this way, the self is influenced by both temporal directions; in other words, the self is influenced by where one comes from and where one is going. For the participants of this study, the context or where these individuals come from has been considered by looking at the characteristics of a rural setting. Thus, where these participants are going, or their imagined future selves, is the next important construct to consider.

Possible Selves

Rural adolescent self-concept is impacted by multiple contextual influences and mediating factors including a rural setting, gender, socioeconomic climate and educational or occupational opportunities. Within this climate, more specific hopes and fears regarding the future emerge. Using a construct developed by Markus and Nurius (1986), these future hopes and fears are termed *possible selves* and refer to individual conceptualizations of personal future potential. Possible selves are aspects of the self-concept regarding what individuals could become, would like to become, and are afraid of becoming and are important for older adolescents as they consider life and career beyond high school (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). For example, possible selves could be the ideal selves we could become or the selves one is afraid of becoming. These possible selves can be vivid possibilities of what one hopes and fears and are

seen as part of the system of self-schemas that make up the self-concept (Honess & Yardley, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Nurius, 1989).

As personalized future self-conceptions that function as psychological resources, possible selves have at least two main functions (Cross & Markus, 1991; Knox, 2006; Markus & Nurius, 1986). First, possible selves are motivators through functioning as incentives for future behaviour (Oyserman et al., 2004). The selves are to be either approached or avoided and function as a sort of blueprint or template for change and growth through adolescent and adult development. Possible selves provide a structure for organizing and compiling information and provides a link between the self-concept and motivation (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman & Markus, 1990). The shaping of possible selves thus helps to connect the current self with the imagined future self.

Possible selves are considered to have the most impact on behaviour when they are associated with an existing self-schema (Markus, Cross, & Wurf, 1990; Stein, 1995). Self-schemas include procedural knowledge such as rules, strategies and routines as well as depictions of past and present social roles, relationships, personality, and behaviour (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Stein, 1995). When the possible self is linked to a particular domain, the individual then has access to a collection of skills and strategies that may assist in achieving a desired future-oriented state (Stein, 1995). For example, consider a rural male adolescent who was surrounded by family members who were employed by the local mine and have not pursued post-secondary education. In addition, the youth was told consistently that he would also work in the mine after high school. This individual's behaviour would more likely be impacted by a possible self as mine worker (e.g., taking the training and steps needed to secure a job at the

mine) as opposed to a possible self as cardiac surgeon (e.g., this would require attending university away from home for many years and at great expense).

Second, possible selves also defend the current self through providing an evaluative and interpretive context (Cross & Markus, 1991; Knox, 2006; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves set up expectations for change and provide a framework to interpret and evaluate events and behaviour consistent with these expectations (Nurius, 1989). In this way, possible selves shape self-esteem though developing a context by which the real self is evaluated (Knox, 2006). It has also been suggested that the affective evaluation of an individual's current self and the accompanying satisfaction depends on the "surrounding context of possibility" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 955). For example, if a rural youth dreamed of becoming a cardiac surgeon but her school did not offer the prerequisite courses and her family lacked the financial resources to send her elsewhere, this possible self may seem less attainable. Discrepancy between the current self and the future hoped for self, if prolonged and chronic, may impact self-esteem and life satisfaction and potentially cause depression and anxiety (Cross & Markus, 1991).

Possible selves, again, like self-concept and self-esteem, are domain specific and are therefore context dependent (Shepard, 2003). In an investigation of the prevalent hopes and fears of rural female adolescents (Shepard, 2003), uncovered an apparent "bounding process" (Dehan & Deal, 2001), or restriction in the options available for youth, that was specific to the rural context. In particular, rural young women were presented with scarce female occupational and educational role models, which may have limited hopes for the future. Thus, both gender and the rural environment shaped the possible selves of the young women in that study and may have impacted future goals and behaviour.

Possible selves provide a framework for understanding the influence of future orientation on behaviour and function as standards against which to measure current behaviour, because they act as motivators in the pursuit of future goals and movement away from future fears (Shepard, 2003). The procedural knowledge of possible selves influences behaviour through providing incentives and facilitating meaning making. In this way, possible selves are an important consideration for rural adolescents as they consider who they are now and who they might become in the future.

Development of Possible Selves

In theory, individuals have any number of possible selves available to them. However, different experiences and contexts in an individual's life mediate the type of possible selves each person constructs (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Socio-cultural and historical contexts play a constraining role (Vernon, 2004). It is assumed that as cultures and society evolve, so do the types of possible selves available for a particular group (Vernon, 2004).

For possible selves, the particular socio-cultural and historical context of an individual has the potential to shape the perception of possibility or the range of options people believe are available to them. However, while possible selves might be subject to contextual influence, they are not always well anchored in social experience and therefore are not always constrained by concerns over what is realistic (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Furthermore, within the self-system, possible selves are the most vulnerable aspect, the most representative of changes in the environment, and can most easily assume a new form (Cross & Markus, 1991; Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Markus & Nurius, 1986). This malleability of possible selves is believed to be due to the private nature of possible selves. The fact that they are often not shared with others and are mostly defined and evaluated by the individual increases the potential for possible

selves to change (Cross & Markus, 1991). Thus, although a person's context can significantly influence the development of possible selves, possible selves can be especially sensitive to new information about the self and may change more easily than other aspects of the self because they are often kept private (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

On an individual level, an individual's life experience impacts the types of possible selves developed through moderating self-schemas which include an individual's generalized identity and beliefs regarding a his or her own competence (Markus, Cross, & Wurf, 1990). An individual develops beliefs that result from his or her experience about his or her core identity which includes interests, values, personality, and characteristics (Vernon, 2004). Experiences that inform a person's beliefs in his or her abilities and competence in a certain domain contribute to the development of possible selves. Markus, Cross, and Wurf (1990) postulate that individuals are more likely to construct possible selves in domains in which they feel competent and believe they are capable of succeeding. For example, if a student is skilled at hockey and poor at math, he or she would be more likely to construct a hoped for possible self as a professional hockey player than as a math teacher. Thus, possible selves develop "as a function of life experiences which may contribute to individuals' self-schemas (identity and competence beliefs), and in turn contribute to the types of possible selves individuals construct for themselves" (Vernon, 2004, p. 6).

Differences in possible selves have also been noted across the lifespan (Cross & Markus, 1991). For example, older adolescents and young adults mention extremely positive possible selves like 'being perfectly happy' and seem to reflect the many transitions, such as the transition from high school, faced by this age group in addition to the abundance of options available in terms of social roles and relationships (Cross & Markus, 1991).

Possible Selves and Adolescence

Possible selves are often viewed as psychological resources that play a role both in motivating and defending the self through the course of adult development (Cross & Markus, 1991). By older adolescence, individuals are able to generate more complex and consistent ideas about who they hope to become in the future as compared to earlier periods of adolescence (Harter, 1990b). Possible selves are relevant and salient in adolescence because of the ability of adolescents to think about the hypothetical and the emerging ability to envision positive and negative versions of who one might become (Harter, 1990b). In an effort to define the self and develop the self-concept, the adolescent ponders these hypothetical representations of the self and evaluates how probable and advantageous they are for him or her (Knox, Funk, Elliott, & Bush, 1998). Furthermore, "a focus on the future is intrinsic to the social role of adolescence (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004, p. 132)."

As adolescents near the completion of their secondary education, they approach an important transition period in their lives where academic and achievement performance is critically important. Moving towards adulthood, adolescence is also a transition from school to work for many. Supporting youth to explore and articulate possible selves, specifically academic and occupational selves, and connect these to the current self has positive effects on the individual's self-concept and for their behaviour (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002).

There is also evidence of some changes to the categories of possible selves at different periods of adolescence. For a sample of young adolescents between the ages of 11 and 13, occupational hoped-for selves selves were generated the most often, followed by hoped-for selves in the domains of possessions, leisure, and lifestyle (Shepard, 1997; Shepard & Marshall, 1999). In terms of feared selves for this same sample, feared selves related to safety were

generated the most often, followed feared selves related to by relationships, ideals, and lifestyle. For young people this age, occupation is considered to be a meaningful and developmentally appropriate representation; young adolescents mention occupations more frequently than older adolescents because older adolescents include additional domains such as family, education, and recreation under the umbrella of occupation (Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1981).

In comparison, Cross and Markus' (1991) lifespan study sampled young adults between 18 and 24. This group generated a greater number of hoped-for and feared selves than the 11 to 13 year olds, perhaps due to the advanced cognitive ability, greater oral proficiency, and more extensive life experience (Shepard, 1997). For this older sample, Family was cited as the most predominant category, followed by Occupation, Personal, then Abilities/Education for hoped-for selves. In terms of feared selves, Physical feared selves were mentioned the most often, then Personal, Family, and Occupation.

Possible Selves and Gender

Gender may be an important variable to consider in understanding the type of possible selves of adolescents (Anthis, Dunkel, & Anderson, 2004; Knox, 2006; Knox et al., 1998, 2000; Leonardi, Syngollitou, & Kiosseoglou, 1998; Shepard, 1997; Shepard & Marshall, 1999). There also appears to be some differences between genders in the types of feared possible selves generated. Research indicates that girls are more likely to generate feared possible selves in the relationship domain while the occupation domain was associated with more feared possible selves for boys (Knox et al., 2000; Shepard, 1997; Shepard & Marshall, 1999). In addition, girls report that they believe the feared possible selves they generate for themselves are more likely to come true (Anthis, Dunkel, & Anderson, 2004; Knox et al., 2006).

For males and females, the development and maintenance of possible selves may be fundamentally different (Knox, 2006). For men, possible selves seem to function in part to define them as unique and separate them from others, whereas females may be more likely to integrate views of others or representations of others in the development of possible selves and the determination of self-worth (Knox, 2006). When conceptualizing the future, females are more likely to consider interpersonal issues and qualities as well as the hopes and fears others have for them while men are more focussed on goal attainment (Knox, 2006).

Measurement of Possible Selves

In the majority of possible selves research, including the present study, the self is viewed as a collection of schemas in terms of self-knowledge and possible selves are assessed with a questionnaire (Wai-Ling Packard & Conway, 2006). This perspective allows for the collection of information from a large sample but may not elicit the same amount of information as oral, face-to-face administration (Wai-Ling Packard & Conway, 2006).

As possible selves are individualized cognitive representations, measures of possible selves typically ask respondents to list their own hoped-for and feared possible selves (Cross & Markus, 1991; Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Shepard, 1997). These self-generated responses can then be examined and coded in different ways. For example, in a study of achievement possible selves, Vernon (2004) outlined four ways of operationalizing possible selves for study: (a) counts of hoped-for and feared possible selves, (b) proportion of hoped-for and fear possible selves with each proportion score formed by dividing the number of hoped-for or feared possible selves by the total number of hoped-for or feared possible selves, (c) balance in possible selves, and (d) specificity of the single most important hoped-for or feared self.

Firstly, by counting the number of hoped-for and feared possible selves in certain domains, researchers are able to link the counts to outcomes (Vernon, 2004). This manner of coding is advantageous because it could be expected that if a particular domain is salient for an individual with respect to a connection with their self-concept, that individual may have more possible selves in that domain (Vernon, 2004). It is possible that having more possible selves, in an achievement domain for example, could indicate that an individual is motivated to achieve in that domain (Markus et al., 1990; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Vernon, 2004). A disadvantage of using counts is that the total number of responses may be limited by verbal ability and the time and effort it takes to write down the responses. This concern is particularly relevant for survey research. In this research, counts were used to determine the total hoped-for and feared selves

Secondly, a proportion score can be created by using a measure that captures possible selves in all domains, then generating the sum of possible selves in a particular domain and dividing this by the total number of possible selves. This was the approach used in this research. Similar to counts, this approach faces some challenges because a list in excess of 10-15 selves is optimal in order to achieve a reliable measure of where an individual is located on a proportion score spectrum (Vernon, 2004). However, a proportion or relative frequency score is able to rank the categories of hoped-for and feared selves by frequency of mention, similar to counts, but unlike counts is also able to control for differences in the number of hoped-for or feared selves a participant indicates (Cross & Markus, 1991). In this way a proportion score accounts for individual trends such as verbal or writing ability in terms of the number of possible selves listed. In this research, proportion or relative frequency scores were used to determine the number and rank order of responses in each category of hoped-for and feared selves.

Third, balance involves matching what some researchers refer to as positive and negative possible selves (Oyserman & Markus, 1990) and others as hoped-for and feared selves. The implication is that through content matches between hoped-for and feared possible selves, more motivational control is afforded as the individual can balance the emotional effects of both hoped-for and feared possible selves (Vernon, 2004). Questions have also been raised, however, about the relevance of balance, how balance is computed for some domains (i.e., occupational), and whether balance is indeed more motivating (Robinson, Davis, & Meara, 2003).

Finally, specificity is another way to code possible selves as a more specific possible self may indicate more elaborate structure and goal directed behaviours (Vernon, 2004). Markus and Ruvolo (1989) suggest that a more elaborate possible self will be more effective in terms of motivation since practicing strategies and outcomes should help mobilize an individual to attain that goal (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). A face to face interview is the best way to obtain elaborated possible selves (Wai-Ling Packard & Conway, 2006) and is not appropriate for a survey approach.

Possible Selves and Social Context

Possible selves develop from past personal successes and failures that are often social in nature and are evaluated relative to the attainments of others (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Social contexts can provide feedback to adolescents about whether a particular possible self is valued in a positive or negative way. Thus, social feedback regarding possible selves can be restrictive, reinforcing, or undermining (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). The rural youth in this study may experience a restriction of possibilities because they are lacking a range of role models for academic and occupational outcomes and because social identities may be restricted (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Shepard, 2003). Thus, social feedback and information from the

environment contribute to shaping present possible selves and to considering alternative possible selves (Kerpelman & Pittman, 2001). In this way, the social world of an individual can be both the source of the components that comprise an individual's possible selves and can play a role in what is done with them (Markus, 2006). "Peering into the private and personal imaginary revealed the clear imprint of society and history . . . as with all aspects of self and identity, possible selves are co-owned; they are socially contingent and conditioned" (Markus, 2006, p. xii).

Sense of Community

The social world has a strong influence in the shaping of self-concept and possible selves, therefore, it is important to consider the perceived connection of rural youth to their community. Sense of community has been correlated with adolescent evaluations of well-being and is therefore an important factor in facilitating adolescent development (Pretty et al., 1996). A relationship has also been drawn between sense of community and adolescent mental health, in particular, loneliness has been linked with a low sense of community (Pretty et al., 1996). Increasing evidence suggests that young people's sense of belonging within the place where they grow up plays an important role in the development of a healthy adjusted self (Chipuer, 2001; Chipuer et al., 2003). Validation and the stress of the challenge to acquire adequate resources to fulfill their needs for intimacy and peer relations increases as adolescents transition from high school and navigate the developing self-concept associated with this period (Erikson, 1968). In addition, Pretty et al. (1996) note that if adolescents do not feel they are accepted members of a community, they are less likely to access resources and opportunities in the community that may support them.

The Sense of Community Model (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) describes a feeling of emotional safety as well as a sense of membership and identification, where the individual can exert some influence over the community while adhering to the demands of the community. The model consists of four dimensions: (a) membership, which creates feelings of emotional safety with a sense of belonging to, and identification with, the larger collective; (b) influence, which characterizes the reciprocal relationship of the individual and the community in terms of their ability to affect change in each other; (c) fulfillment of needs, which enables individuals to get their needs met through cooperative behaviour within the community; and (d) emotional connection, which is the emotional support stemming from the struggles and successes of community living. McMillan later renamed the four elements of his model Spirit, Trust, Trade, and Art and he came to view sense of community as a "*spirit* of belonging together, a feeling that there is an authority structure that can be *trusted,* an awareness that *trade,* and mutual benefit come from being together, and a spirit that comes from shared experiences that are preserved as *art*" (McMillan, 1996, p. 315). This model also accounts for community conceptualized as a both geographical territory, like a rural neighbourhood, and as a relational network, such as work, family, political, or recreational groupings.

Three dimensions of the McMillan and Chavis (1986) model - membership, fulfillment of needs, and emotional connection - can be recognized as integral in adolescent development. For example, Erikson (1968) discusses the importance of attachment to one's peers as a critical part of identity development for adolescents, which fits with this model. A high sense of community connection was positively correlated with the length of time adolescents (age 12 to 18) lived in their neighbourhoods. Adolescents who rated themselves with a high sense of community connection had higher self-perceptions of happiness, enjoyment of life, and coping ability,

greater academic competence, social acceptance, global self-esteem, and sociability, and less loneliness and worry.

Sense of community is a psychological construct that relies considerably on context for its description (Hill, 1996). In a rural setting, an individual's sense of community may uniquely influence self-concept and possible selves. Despite the many challenges facing rural areas, rural youth often report a close connection to their community (Looker, 2001; Malatest & Associates, 2002; Shepard, 2004). This connection may buffer the negative impact of the challenges and uncertainty facing rural youth (Chipuer et al., 2003). In addition, there is a pervasive belief that raising self-esteem, the evaluative measure of self-concept, is beneficial for individual and society both (Cast & Burke, 2002). For adolescents living in rural communities, a person who is less connected to the community may be less likely to receive validation of their self and thus their self-esteem may be lower.

The research conducted by the Search Institute (2008) demonstrates the positive benefits of community connections for adolescents. The Search Institute has surveyed over two million youth in the United States and Canada since 1989, using 40 developmental assets. These assets are the positive life experiences and personal qualities that youth will need to develop into healthy, caring, and responsible adults. The Search Institute (2008) has linked the number of assets possessed by youth with the promotion of attitudes and choice and protection of youth from risky, problem behaviour. Additionally, action strategies are outlined to encourage communities to better support youth (Benson, 2002). Thus, this research underlines the importance of linking community connections with adolescent development, of which self-concept and possible selves are crucial elements, and emphasizing the positive role communities can play in supporting healthy adolescent development.

On a provincial level, the Adolescent Health Survey (McCreary Centre Society, 2004) has linked community and adolescent development. The survey includes a range of questions about factors believed to foster healthy development in young people and a "strong sense of community has been shown to promote health and reduce risk-taking" (McCreary Centre Society, 2004, p. 33). For example, in the Kootenay Boundary Region from which participants of this survey were recruited, youth with a high level of family connectedness were less likely to engage in risky behaviours. Adolescent students who feel connected to their school are healthier and achieve better academic performance than those who do not feel connected. The Adolescent Health Survey results also recognized the importance of developing a sense of competence and high self-esteem during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Boys' belief that they are good at something remained constant as they aged, while for girls it declined. Also, those that reported being good at something, in effect demonstrating competence based self-esteem, had better emotional health. Once again this research highlights the importance of the role of community and various networks within the community, in this case the family and the school, in supporting youth in the transition to adulthood. It has been shown that the availability, accessibility, affordability, and quality of community resources can impact adolescent outcomes (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Thus, in studying rural adolescents it becomes relevant to consider the rural context, including the economy and quality of education for example, and other related community factors.

Summary

The rural adolescents who are the focus of this study must contend with a range of challenges and supports particular to a rural area as they approach the transition from high school. With this life-career transition in mind, the present research explored the self-concept,

possible selves, and sense of community of rural adolescents through the use of a cross-sectional survey. The connections among these three constructs were also of interest as well as any gender differences. The self-concept has long been considered an integral component of healthy psychological functioning; it is a component of the self system that develops from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood, and is evaluated by self-esteem. The more recent possible selves research connecting the self with motivation, behaviour, and future goals has helped cement the importance of this area of study, especially for older adolescents contemplating their transition from high school. Possible selves and self-concept are both self referent and embedded in multiple contextual factors, such as the unique characteristics of a rural context.

The next chapter incorporates this study's purpose, as explored through the literature review, into an outline of the study's research methodology. An overview of survey methodology is provided, the survey instrument employed in this study is described, the participants are introduced and the process of data collection and analysis is explained.

Chapter Three

Methodology

An overall aim of this study was to address a gap in the literature by exploring the self-concept, possible selves and sense of community of a sample of rural adolescents through the implementation of a cross-sectional survey. Survey methodology best reflected this study's research purpose and questions. As the rural context is integral to the study, community profiles are presented and the sample is described. The pre-existing instruments and the researcher generated section of the survey are described and the procedures outlined.

Rural Communities

Central Kootenay Regional District

Figure 1. Map of British Columbia Regional Districts, Central Kootenay Regional District is highlighted (Wikipedia, 2008).

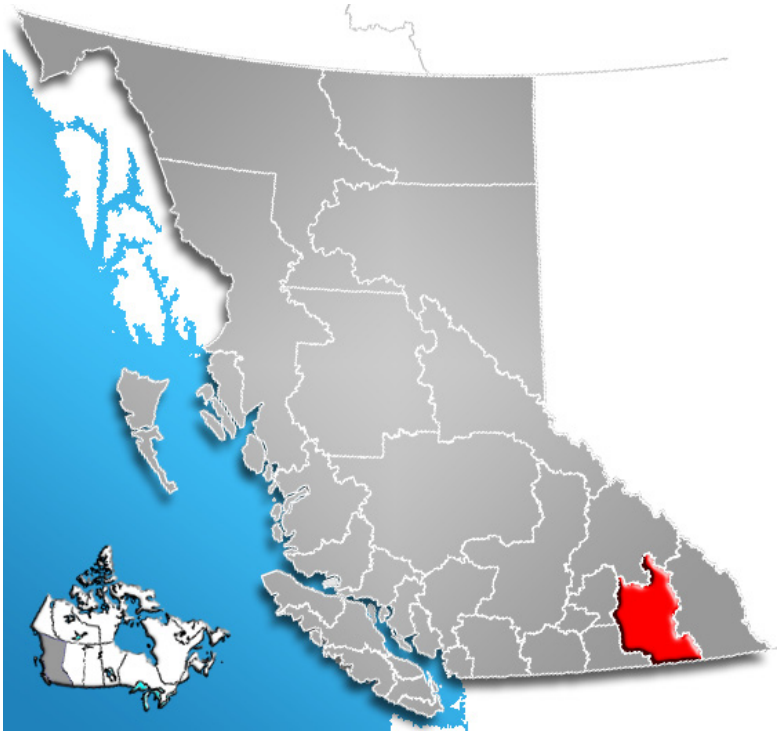
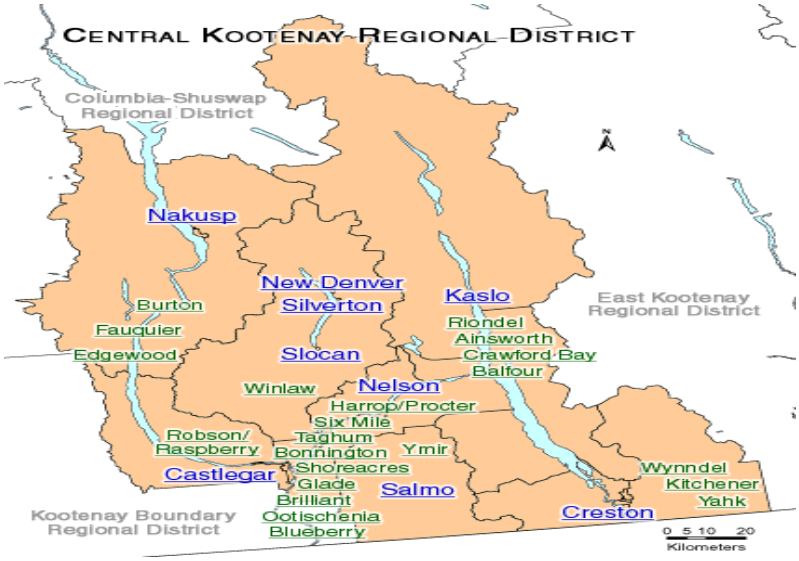


Figure 2. Map of Central Kootenay Regional District



Participants for this survey were recruited from four communities in the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), a regional district in the Canadian province of British Columbia, Canada. The population of the RDCK dropped by almost 3.5% between 2001 and 2006 below the 5.3% population growth recorded for the province during this time (BC Stats, 2008). According to the British Columbia Regional Index (2006) the general economy is dependent on the logging industry despite some mill closures in recent years. Recent reductions in forest products manufacturing have minimized the importance of this economic sector and limited the area's growth. Small mining projects and hydro power resources on the Kootenay River provide some economic and employment benefits for the region. Agriculture and tourism also are economic contributors in some areas. Within this region, participants were recruited from the communities of Kaslo, Crawford Bay, Slocan, and Salmo.

Kaslo. Originally designated as a sawmill site in 1889, Kaslo developed from the silver boom of the 19th century. Currently, the town of 1,072 relies principally on the industries of forestry and tourism (Statistics Canada, 2006). Kaslo, located on the shores of Kootenay Lake, is

located 70 kilometres north of Nelson. The 2006 Census notes that 40 males and 55 females between the ages of 15 and 19 live in Kaslo.

Crawford Bay. Crawford Bay, located in the Creston Valley near the eastern shore of Kootenay Lake, has a population of 332, (Statistics Canada, 2006). Manufacturing includes primary metal manufacturing and miscellaneous manufacturing (British Columbia Regional Index, 2006). The area also boasts several golf courses, a nearby ferry, and scenic hiking trails. The 2006 Census notes that 10 males and 10 females between the ages of 15 and 19 live in Crawford Bay (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Salmo. Salmo, incorporated in 1946, is nestled high in the Selkirk mountains and has a population of 1,007 (Statistics Canada, 2006). The labour force participate in forestry, education and health, mining, construction, transportation, business and accommodation industries, and manufacturing of wood products, non-metallic mineral products and furniture (British Columbia Regional Index, 2006). The 2006 Census notes that 25 males and 35 females between the ages of 15 and 19 live in Salmo (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Slocan. The community of Slocan, incorporated in 1901, began as a tent town in the 1890's for people who traveled the Slocan River trail in search of silver-lead deposits. Slocan, with a population of 314 (Statistics Canada, 2006), is near the pristine wilderness of Valhalla Provincial Park, well known for challenging hiking trails. The main industries are forestry, recreation and tourism as well as the manufacturing of textiles, wood products, and furniture (British Columbia Regional Index, 2006). The 2006 Census notes that 10 males and 10 females between the ages of 15 and 19 live in Slocan (Statistics Canada, 2006).

School District #8 – Kootenay Lake

Kootenay Lake School District covers approximately 15,000 square kilometres of territory. Close to 7.3 % of the population is between the ages of 15 and 19, equally distributed between males and females (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2006). The overall population growth rate has declined by –0.5% from 1996 to 2001. Of the population who are aged 20 or over in 2001, 42.8 % have a trade certificate or other non-university education while only 12.1% hold a university degree. Statistics indicate that 26.8 % have not obtained a high school diploma. In 2001, the total unemployment rate was 10.7 % for the region. However, for those aged 15 to 24 the rate of unemployment was 18.4 %. The vast majority of the population (99.38 %) spoke English compared to a provincial figure of 89.76%, with 4.5% of students identified as Aboriginal. Data shows that 28.5% of families in the area earned below $30,000 in annual income. The number of students has declined to 2,873 in 2005/6 from 3,248 in 2000/01, which is a drop of 3.11% from the forecast enrolment.

Participants

Convenience sampling was used to target a group of rural adolescents who were available. This strategy, while convenient and economical, is vulnerable to selection biases and does not guarantee that all eligible members of the population have an equal chance of being included in a sample (Fink, 2003). In this case, schools in one region were sampled including Crawford Bay Elementary-Secondary in Crawford Bay (grades K-12), J.V. Humphries Elementary-Secondary in Kaslo (grades K-12), Mount Sentinel Elementary-Secondary in Slocan (grades 7-12), and Salmo Secondary in Salmo (grades 7-12). Participation was voluntary for teachers and students.

At the time of the study there were approximately 428 adolescent students within School District # 8 who were enrolled in grades 10 through 12. In grades 10, 11, & 12 Crawford Bay Elementary-Secondary had 31 students enrolled (45% of total school population was female and 55% were male), J.V. Humphries Elementary-Secondary had 103 students enrolled (49% female; 51% male), Mount Sentinel Elementary-Secondary had 220 students enrolled (48% female; 52% male), and Salmo Secondary had 85 students enrolled (58% female; 42% male) as reported by the British Columbia Ministry of Education (2005/2006). With 96 participant, this survey had a e sample response rate of 22.4 %.

In the section of the survey Tell Us About Yourself which will be described in greater detail in the next section, participants in the four rural communities identified personal characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, grade, school, community of residence, current living situation, parent or guardian's employment status, and more. The results from this demographic section of the survey are included in this chapter to paint a more complete picture of the participants.

With respect to gender, of the 96 participants 53.1% were male and 46.9% were female. The majority of youth who completed the survey were between the ages of 15 and 17 (98%) with 16 being the most common age (59.4%). Participants were also asked to identify one of seven ethnic origins. Eighty-three point three percent of participants indicated they were white, 7.3% Aboriginal, 2.1% Asian or Asian Canadian, 1% Hispanic or Latino and 6.2% indicated another ethnicity. Of the six participants who indicated other as their ethnicity, two described themselves as Caucasian, one German, one European, one Canadian, and one Métis. Thus, five of the six who indicated other can be classified as white, bringing the percentage of white participants to

88 %. This is higher than the 80 % of youth in the larger Kootenay region who self identify as European (White) (McCreary Centre, 2004).

The majority of participants resided in Salmo (64.6%) and attended Salmo Secondary (64.6%), followed by Slocan (15.6%) and Mt. Sentinel Secondary School (28.1%), Crawford Bay (4.2%) and Crawford Bay Elementary-Secondary School (4.2%), and Kaslo (1%) and J.V. Humphries Elementary-Secondary School (1%). About 14.6% of participants indicated living in another community. Youth in the four schools listed previously were also asked to indicate their current grade level. The percentages of participants in grade 10, 11, and 12 are 66.7%, 29.2%, and 2.1% respectively. The two participants who indicated "other" were both in grade 9 and were included in the analysis.

Rural youth were also asked about their current living situation or "who do you live with?" The majority of participants lived with both parents (55%), 11.5% moved back and forth between mother and father, 7.3% lived with their mother only, 6.2% with their father only, 5.2 % with mother and a friend/partner/step-parent, 4.2 % with a father and friend/partner/step-parent, 4.2% with a guardian or foster parent and 4.2% with other. Examples of "other" include; with a boyfriend, with a friend, and with a host-family.

Participants were asked to identify, if known, both their father/male parent/guardian and mother/female parent/guardian's education as well as whether these individuals were employed. Survey participants indicated that more fathers than mothers were working in paid jobs, 82.3% of fathers compared to 75 % of mothers. With regards to education, fathers were less likely to "finish high school", 19 % compared to 30.2% of mothers. More mothers than fathers continued with post-secondary education and finished college or university (27.1% and 22.9% respectively) and more fathers (13.5%) pursued vocational training than mothers (6.2%).

Rural youth were also asked how many years they had lived in their current home. Responses ranged from .05 to 18 years. The mean score was 7.1 years and the mode or most frequent number of years was 2 years. Rural youth were also asked how many times they remembered moving to a different home in their lives. Responses ranged from 0 to 13 (with 56 as an outlier). The mean was 3.75 times and the standard deviation was 3.27.

Participants were asked whether or not they had a health condition or disability that kept them from doing things other young people their age do such as school sports and getting together with friends. Respondents were asked to select from the options of no, yes – a physical disability, yes – a long term illness, or yes – a mental, emotional or learning condition. The results showed: (a) 87.5% of the respondents stated no; (b) none indicated having a physical disability; (c) 6.2% indicated having a long term illness, and (d) 6.2% indicated having a mental, emotional or learning condition. The rural youth were also asked if they were currently dating. The majority of respondents (66.7%) indicated they were not dating while only 33.3% indicated that they were.

Instrument

A cross-sectional design was utilized with data collected at one point in time. This cross-sectional survey approach had the advantage of measuring the current attitudes and perceptions of rural youth in a short amount of time (Creswell, 2005) and drawing inferences about rural adolescents as a general group, although this study targeted a small sample.

The survey (Appendix A) incorporated three pre-existing instruments: The Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988); the Sense of Community Index (SCI) (McMillan, 1996); and the Possible Selves Questionnaire (Cross & Markus, 1991). The survey includes five sections: (a) Sections A: *Tell Us About Yourself* (Centre for Youth and Society,

2006; Harrison, 1998) formed the demographic section; (b) Section B: *Sense of Community* (McMillan, 1996); (c) Section C: *Community Context* was developed by the researcher; (d) Section D: *What Am I Like* (Harter, 1988); and (e) Section E: *Possible Selves* (Cross & Markus, 1991).

Section A: Tell Us About Yourself

In this first section, demographic items were used to identify factors such as the age, gender, grade level, and family structure of participants through fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice items. The items are from Harrison (2005) who adapted them from the Healthy Youth Survey (Centre for Youth and Society, 2006).

Section B: Sense of Community

The Sense of Community Index (SCI) was originally developed to measure adults' sense of community in a residential setting but it has been shown to be relevant for adolescent populations as well (Pretty et al., 1996). The scale measures the psychological sense of community and recognizes cultural and geographical influences on how people construct their perception of community (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999). The SCI is considered by Chipuer and Pretty (1999) to be one of the few scales that is based on a developmental model of sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) and has items derived from dimensions of the model as well as demonstrating sensitivity to detecting differences in various populations and contexts.

The current SCI scale consists of twelve True/False items derived from a longer scale. The measure consists of four subscales: (a) Reinforcement of Needs (items 1, 2, 3); (b) Membership (items 4, 5, 6); (c) Influence (7, 8, 9); and (d) Emotional Connection (10, 11, 12). The total scale has an internal reliability coefficient of .80 but no information is available on subscale internal reliabilities and the existence of four subscales has not been empirically

demonstrated (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999). As a result, the SCI scale is often scored as a single unit (Chipuer, & Pretty, 1999) and in this study was also scored as a single unit. Construct validity has been established in several studies (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999). The internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of this sample was .78.

Section C: Community Context

This section was composed of questions generated by the researcher based on a review of literature on rural youth. A total of eight questions were included. Participants were asked to choose from the following response options; (a) yes, (b) sometimes, and (c) no. These questions were designed to target issues that emerged as important from a review of the literature on rural areas such as educational and employment challenges, outmigration, support, and community connection.

Section D: What am I Like?

As self-concept itself cannot be measured but rather described, the actual measurement or evaluation of the self-concept is captured through self-esteem. This study used a particular measure of self-esteem, The Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA) (Harter, 1988), as a quantitative measure of self-concept. The SPPA was developed specifically to assess the multidimensional adolescent self-concept and to address the growing consensus that self-esteem is multidimensional (Aasland & Diseth, 1999). The SPPA is also based on the assumption that an individual's global sense of self-worth can be assessed separately from other self-concept domains to allow for a comparison between global self-esteem and perceived competence across domains (Friedrichsen, 1997). SPPA assesses feelings of self-worth in specific domains (Renick Thomson & Zand, 2002). The SPPA also assesses a person's overall sense of worth, constructed

on the basis of competencies in the areas one considers important (Aasland & Diseth, 1999; Wichstrøm, 1995).

The SPPA (Harter, 1988) is a 45-item questionnaire, in which each item is comprised of two contrasting descriptions (one more positively worded than the other). For each description, there are two choices (*sort of true for me* and *really true for me*), and the respondent is asked to choose one. It is suggested that the unique question format of the SPPA prevents individuals from being influenced socially in their responses as half of the reference group view themselves in one way and half the other way, which legitimizes either choice (Wichstrøm, 1995). Positively and negatively worded descriptions are randomly distributed, and scoring is on a 4-point scale. Items are recorded so that higher numbers represent positive opinions. The 45 items constitute nine subscales of five items each. Harter (1988) indicated that construct validity evidence has been reported and that all the subscales report Cronbach's Alpha coefficients or reliability scores that range from .74 to .92 with the exception of Global Self-Worth which was not included in the factor analysis (Harter, 1988). The nine subscales are; (a) Scholastic Competence, (b) Athletic Competence, (c) Job Competence, (d) Behavioural Conduct, (e) Social Acceptance, (f) Physical Appearance, (g) Romantic Appeal, (h) Close Friendship, and (i) Global Self-Worth and are defined as follows according to Harter (1988, p. 3):

(a) Scholastic Competence: This subscale taps the adolescent's perception of his/her competence or ability within the realm of scholastic performance e.g. how well he/she is doing at classwork, and how smart or intelligent one feels one is.

(b) Social Acceptance: This subscale taps the degree to which the adolescent is accepted by peers, feels popular, has friends, and feels that he/she is easy to like.

(c) Athletic Competence: This subscale taps the adolescent's perceptions of his/her athletic ability and competence at sports.

(d) Physical Appearance: This subscale taps the degree to which the adolescent is happy with the way he/she looks, likes one's body, and feels that he/she is good looking.

(e) Job Competence: This subscale taps the extent to which the adolescent feels that he/she has job skills, is ready to do well at part-time jobs, and feels that he/she is doing well at any current jobs.

(f) Romantic Appeal: This subscale taps teenager's perceptions that they are romantically attractive to those in whom they are interested, are dating the people they would like to be dating, and feel that they are fun and interesting on a date.

(g) Behavioural Conduct: This subscale taps the degree to which one likes the way one behaves, does the right thing, acts the way one is supposed to, and avoids getting into trouble.

(h) Close Friendship: This subscale taps one's ability to make close friends, that is, a friend they can share personal thoughts and secrets with.

(i) Global Self-worth: The items taps the extent to which the adolescent likes oneself as a person, is happy the way one is leading one's life, and is generally happy with the way one is. It constitutes a global judgement of one's worth as a person, rather than domain-specific competence or adequacy.

Factor analysis has established the presence of eight distinct subscales, with the Global Self-Worth subscale differing from the eight other domains but overlapping with each (Hagborg, 1993a). The subscales in this study reported Cronbach's Alpha coefficients or reliability scores

that range from .52 to .85. In general, the SPPA attempts to measure an adolescent's sense of a competent self in a number of domains (Worrell, 1997).

Section E: Possible Selves

This instrument, developed by Cross and Markus (1991), encourages participants to list as many hoped-for selves as come to mind, to rate how capable they feel of accomplishing their two most important hoped-for selves (on a 7-point scale with one meaning not at all capable and seven meaning completely capable), and to rate how likely it is that their two most important hoped-for selves will come to fruition (using a seven point scale). They are also asked to list their feared selves or what they want to avoid, rate how capable they feel of preventing their two most important feared selves, and to rate how likely it is for the two most important feared possible selves to come true. In addition, participants were asked to consider what current actions were being taken to accomplish their hopes and to prevent their fears.

The responses were coded according to the categories outlined by Cross & Markus (1991) and Shepard (1997). Content analysis is a procedure in which the responses are compared to each other and categorized according to overarching themes. The categories included (a) personal, (b) physical, (c) abilities/education, (d) life-style, (e) family, (f) relationships, (g) occupation, (h) material, (i) success, (j) social responsibility, and (k) leisure. Cross & Markus (1991) reported inter-rater agreement between categories at between 95.3 and 99.3 %. In the current study, the coding category was checked independently by two other researchers, with one of the researchers having previously used this measure and coding categories. In the case of a discrepancy, of which there were only a few, the item was discussed and the definition was clarified to eliminate ambiguity. This process was repeated three times until no discrepancies remained among the three researchers reviewing the coding. Changes were made to the

definitions of lifestyle, success, relationships, and family to ensure categories were mutually exclusive. Some examples of category changes made were: to move items from 'lifestyle' to 'success' and from 'relationship' to 'family.' The definitions for the categories are provided below:

Personal. References to personal characteristics, ideals, and attributes. Hoped for selves included "being happy","outgoing," and "content". Feared selves included "being rejected by society," "forgotten," and "disliked."

Physical. Referred to physical and mental well-being, states, characteristics, activities, abilities, and attributes. Hoped for selves included "more athletic," "great shape," and "playing in competitive sports." Feared selves included "deadly sickness" and "big and fat."

Abilities/Education. References to particular skills and abilities or educational requirements and activities. Hoped for selves included "graduate from high school" and "finish university." Feared selves included "not graduating" and "dropping out of university."

Lifestyle. Referred to a particular way of life that could include location, customs or practices, and economics. Hoped for selves included" move to a big city," and" live in Alberta." Feared selves included "living at home until I'm 50," "living on the street," and "homeless."

Family. References to family members and an individual's own family of origin. Hoped for selves included "being a grandmother" and "having a baby." Feared selves included "not having a family" and "parents disown me."

Relationships. Referred to an interpersonal orientation and relationships with others including friends and romantic relationships. Hoped for selves included "get married," and "being with someone I love." Feared selves included "no friends" and "losing my boyfriend."

Occupation. Referred to specific jobs, positions, lines of work, or employment status. Hoped for selves included "trades worker," "vet assistant," and "doctor." Feared selves included "waitress," and "a teacher."

Material. Emphasized belongings and assets. Hoped for selves included "rich and wealthy," " nice car and house," and "win the lottery." Feared selves included "not having enough money" and "being in debt."

Success. References to achieving goals and this may include recognition or fame. An example of a hoped for self was "successful." Feared selves included "bankrupt" and "an ugly fat loser."

Social Responsibility. References to volunteer work, community involvement, and activity related to social issues. Hoped for selves included "a good citizen of society" and "someone who does something for the world." Feared selves included "not being able to help people."

Leisure. Emphasized time at one's disposal for undertaking activities that were fun, amusing, entertaining, relaxing, included hobbies. Hoped for selves included "travel around the world" and "raft the Kicking Horse River." There were no feared selves in this category.

Procedures

The survey instrument was pilot tested with four sample participants known by the researcher to identify errors in the survey and to predict problems with the use of the instrument including clarity of format and length of time to complete. Three sample participants were between the ages of 15 and 18 and one was 29. It took the sample participants between 15 and 20 minutes to complete a paper copy of the survey. Three other sample participants also completed the survey once it was posted online to check for any technological difficulties. These sample

participants also completed the survey in 15 to 20 minutes. Pre-testing was also helpful in ensuring the survey items were culturally sensitive, clear, understandable, and age appropriate (Litwin, 2003). After this process, the response options from the Community Context questions (Section C) were changed from a 5-point Likert scale to the current format to better fit the questions. Also, one sample participant indicated finding Section D awkward. The section was retained due to support for its effectiveness as a self-concept measure (Worrell, 1997).

Permission was granted by School District #8 Superintendent of Schools to contact individual schools regarding the survey (Appendix B). After receiving approval from the University of Victoria to conduct human research, I arranged recruitment of participants with individual schools by sending letters to the four principals (Appendix C). These letters were followed by telephone contact with each principal at which time I described the survey and asked permission to distribute the survey in their schools. Upon receiving permission from all four principals, I mailed information letters to individual teachers (Appendix D) as well as to students and parents (Appendix E) in which the survey was described and an internet address was provided for survey access. A description of the survey was also included in a newsletter at one school. According to the Superintendent of Schools for District #8, written parental consent was not required for participants to complete the survey. A letter of information to parents was sufficient and through completion of the survey, consent was inferred. The teachers were also provided with a script to read to the students introducing the survey (Appendix F). The participants were then able to access the survey online and on their own time which limited disruption to class time. Survey results were collected and managed by Tom Ackerley of the University of Victoria Survey Research Centre. This was funded in part by a BC Research Impact Grant.

To convey appreciation to those who completed the survey, 20 participants were chosen at random to receive $20.00 gift cards to Subway or Dairy Queen. The participant signed up for the random draw voluntarily and provided their address so the prize could be mailed to them. The addresses were kept separate from the survey results. The survey was offered on two occasions, May 2007 and October 2007 and the random draw described above was offered on both these occasions. Each time the survey was offered, the link to access the survey online was active for one month. I was able to monitor the number of completed surveys during this time and communicated the progress by telephone to the principals of each school. Upon completion of data collection, thank you letters were mailed to the principals of each school where the survey was distributed (Appendix H) and thank you letters were mailed to participants who won a prize in the random draw (Appendix I). A copy of the thesis will be made available to participating schools upon completion. In addition, Dr. Shepard and I traveled to Crawford Bay to present the results of the Paths to the Future Project and this survey to the grade 10, 11, and 12 teachers and students. Students and teachers were also invited to participate in an interactive possible selves mapping activity. This research dissemination trip was funded in part by a Myer Horowitz Graduate Student Endowment Award.

In order to generate meaning from the survey results, quantitative and qualitative data analysis was conducted. With the closed questions, SPSS was used to determine descriptive statistics for each variable and, in some cases, means were also compared (Creswell, 2005). Because I was interested in relationships among self-concept, sense of community, and possible selves, I conducted correlation analyses to ascertain if relationships among these measures existed. The open-ended items from the possible selves section were coded according to the

categories outlined by Cross & Markus (1991) and Shepard (1997) and the number of responses were counted and relative frequency scores were calculated.

Research Questions

Table 1

Research Questions

Questions	Analysis
Self Concept	
1. What are rural adolescents' ratings of themselves for the nine subscales of self-concept?	Descriptive Statistics
2. Are there gender differences for the nine subscales of self- concept?	t-test
Possible Selves	
3. What are rural adolescents' descriptions of hoped-for and feared selves considering categories and counts?	Content Analysis Counts Descriptive Statistics
4. What are rural adolescent's ratings of how capable they are of achieving hoped-for selves or preventing feared selves?	Descriptive Statistics
5. What are rural adolescents' ratings of how likely they are to achieve or prevent possible selves?	Descriptive Statistics
6. How many actions do rural adolescents engage in to prevent or obtain possible selves?	Descriptive Statistics
7. Are there gender differences for rural adolescent hoped-for and feared selves?	t-test

Community	
8. What are rural adolescents' perceptions of their rural context?	Descriptive Statistics
9. What are rural adolescents' ratings of sense of community?	Descriptive Statistics
10. Are there gender differences for rural adolescent sense of community and perception of community context?	Descriptive Statistics
Self-concept, Possible Selves, and Community	
11. How is self-concept, both globally and across specific domains, related to the number of hoped-for and feared selves, perceptions of capability for hoped-for and feared possible selves, and sense of community?	Correlation

Summary

Through the use of a cross-sectional survey design, self-concept, sense of community, and possible selves in a rural context were investigated. A combination of open-ended and closed questions were used to access the individual voices of a small sample of rural adolescents while allowing for comparisons among the closed questions. Measurement error was minimized by incorporating pre-existing and proven instruments in the construction of the survey.

In the following chapter, the results from the Person, Place, and Perception survey will be presented. These results include the following three sections: (a) Phase One Analysis: descriptive statistics for Demographics, Community Context, Sense of Community, and Self-Concept; (b)

Phase Two Analysis: an analysis of quantitative and qualitative Possible Selves data, and; (c) Phase Three Analysis: a comprehensive analysis of the relationships among Self-concept, Sense of Community, and Possible Selves.

Chapter Four

Results

The results from the "Paths to the Future: Person, Place, and Perception" survey are presented in response to each of the research questions stated in Chapter Three in addition to a demographic section. All phases of the statistical analysis were completed using SPSS 16.0 (2007). Of the 101 surveys completed, five were considered unusable due to incomplete responses which left an N of 96 for the analysis. Of the five incomplete responses, four had only partial demographic data filled in and the remaining one had completed about half the survey. A small amount of the quantitative data, 1.48%, from the completed surveys was also missing. The missing data was handled by inputting random data using a random number generator (Howell, 2004). Qualitative missing data was left blank.

Demographic Characteristics

In the section of the survey *Tell Us About Yourself* (Appendix A), participants in the four rural communities identified personal characteristics. Much of this demographic information has already been presented in Chapter Three in the Participants section. Results from the Age, Gender, and Community of Residence variables are presented here. Table 2 displays the gender of the participants and Table 3 displays their age at the time of sampling.

Table 2

Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	51	53.1
Female	45	46.9

N = 96

Table 3

Age of Participants

Age	Frequency	Percentage
14	1	1
15	23	11.5
16	57	59.4
17	11	24
18	4	1

N = 96

Rural youth were also asked to indicate their community of residence (item 4) and the school they were presently attending (item 6). The majority of participants resided in Salmo (64.6%) and attended Salmo Secondary (64.6%), followed by Slocan (15.6%) and Mt. Sentinel Secondary School (28.1%), Crawford Bay (4.2%) and Crawford Bay Elementary-Secondary School (4.2%), and Kaslo (1%) and J.V. Humphries Elementary-Secondary School (1%). In addition, 14.6% of the participants indicated living in another community. These other communities were typically outlying towns as these four schools were located in the larger communities in the area.

Self-Concept

1. *What are rural adolescents' ratings of themselves for the nine subscales of self-concept?*

Participants were requested to respond to the Self Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA; Harter, 1988). This self-concept measure consists of 45 questions and nine subscales. Participants selected one of four possible responses for each question. Items are scored 4, 3, 2, or

1 where 4 represents the most adequate self-judgement and 1 the least adequate self-judgement. Scoring for the SPPA includes nine subscale means (Table 4).

Table 4

Self-Concept Mean and Standard Deviation by Gender

Subscale	Males Mean (SD)	Females Mean(SD)	Total Mean(SD)
Scholastic Competence	2.90 (.53)	2.60 (.86)	2.76 (.69)
Social Acceptance	2.89 (.59)	2.93 (.68)	2.91 (.62)
Athletic Competence	2.85 (.64)	2.56 (.91)	2.71 (.79)
Physical Appearance	2.56 (.65)	2.44 (.73)	2.51 (.69)
Job Competence	2.92 (.52)	3.02 (.64)	2.97 (.58)
Romantic Appeal	2.58 (.52)	2.51 (.68)	2.55 (.59)
Behavioural Conduct	2.73(.47)	2.53 (.59)	2.64 (.54)
Close Friendship	2.78 (.66)	3.10 (.75)	2.93 (.72)
Global Self-Worth	2.87 (.60)	2.77 (.75)	2.82 (.67)

N=96

The mean for all the subscales was 2.76 which is above the midpoint of the scale and consistent with other populations who have used this measure. For example Harter (1988) found that means fluctuate around 2.9. Considerable variation was evident among individuals as the standard deviations ranged from .53 to .69 with the mean standard deviation for all the subscales of .63. Considerable variation among individuals was also reported in the Harter (1988) sample.

2. Are there gender differences for the nine subscales of self- concept?

No significant differences were found for any of the nine subscales when analysed by gender with a Bonferoni adjustment to control for Type I error. However, Scholastic Competence ($t(94) = 2.153$, $p<0.03$) and Close Friendship ($t(94) = -2.277$, $p<0.025$) differed significantly by gender without the Bonferroni adjustment, in other words at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance which is a less rigorous test. In this case, females reported more favourable self-concepts in the close friendship domain and males reported more favourable self concepts in the Scholastic Competence domain.

Possible Selves

3. What are rural adolescents' descriptions of hoped-for and feared selves considering categories and counts?

In the possible selves section of the survey, rural youth were asked to list future conceptualizations of both hoped-for selves and feared selves. In addition, they were asked to list their two most important hoped-for and feared selves.

The number of responses per participant ranged from 0 to 14 for hoped-for selves and from 0 to 15 for feared selves. Participants listed their hoped-for selves and their feared selves, participants produced an average of 3.48 (SD =3.24) hoped-for selves and an average of 2.44 (SD =2.38) feared selves. A paired samples t-test indicated that the average number of hoped-for selves reported by participants was significantly larger than the number of feared selves ($t(95) = 3.914$, $p<0.000$).

Hoped-for Selves

Both the hoped-for and feared possible selves were coded into different categories. Specifically, the responses for both hoped-for and feared selves were divided into 11 categories

that were identified by Cross & Markus (1991) and Shepard (1997) and defined by this researcher in Chapter Three: (a) family, (b) personal, (c) physical, (d) occupation, (e) abilities/education, (f) life-style, (g) relationships, (h) material, (i) leisure, (j) success, and (k) social responsibility.

The number of responses listed by each participant ranged from one to 14. The categories of hoped-for selves were ranked according to relative frequency of mention and are displayed in rank order in Table 5. The relative frequency was calculated by dividing the number of selves in a category (e.g., occupational selves) by the total number of hoped-for selves listed by the respondent (Cross & Markus, 1991; Shepard, 1997). For total hoped for selves, the category of Occupation had the highest relative frequency, followed by Material then Abilities/Education. The category of Occupation had the highest relative frequency for both the first and second most important hoped-for selves also.

Table 5

Categories of Total Hoped for Possible Selves (Relative Frequency)

Category	Relative Frequency Male	Relative Frequency Female	Relative Frequency Total
Occupation	0.144	0.132	0.275
Material	0.051	0.051	0.102
Abilities/Education	0.075	0.021	0.096
Leisure	0	0.078	0.078
Lifestyle	0.027	0.036	0.063
Personal	0.024	0.033	0.057
Family	0.021	0.029	0.051
Physical	0.239	0.027	0.051
Success	0.018	0.027	0.018
Relationships	0.012	0.027	0.039
Social Responsibility	0.003	0.003	0.006

N = 96

Table 6

Categories of First Most Important Hoped for Possible Selves (Relative Frequency)

Category	Relative Frequency Male	Relative Frequency Female	Relative Frequency Total
Occupation	0.188	0.071	0.259
Personal	0.106	0.106	0.212
Abilities/Education	0.047	0.059	0.106
Material	0.071	0.023	0.094
Success	0.035	0.059	0.094
Family	0.035	0.035	0.071
Relationships	0.012	0.047	0.059
Physical	0.024	0.035	0.059
Social Responsibility	0	0.023	0.023
Lifestyle	0.012	0	0.012
Leisure	0.012	0	0.012

N = 96

Table 7

Categories of Second Most Important Hoped for Possible Selves (Relative Frequency)

Category	Relative Frequency Male	Relative Frequency Female	Relative Frequency Total
Occupation	0.106	0.071	0.176
Material	0.058	0.058	0.118
Personal	0.094	0.0035	0.129
Success	0.147	0.058	0.106
Relationships	0.058	0.047	0.106
Abilities/Education	0.071	0.024	0.094
Family	0.047	0.047	0.094
Physical	0.035	0.047	0.082
Lifestyle	0.035	0.012	0.047
Leisure	0	0.047	0.047
Social Responsibility	0	0	0

N = 96

A range of responses in terms of both type and number were provided by participants in each of the categories. The following is a list of examples from each of the hoped-for selves categories. The gender of the participant follow the examples in brackets.

Occupation

- "Become a singer, a teacher, a translator, an actress" (female)

- “Go to Japan and teach English” (male)
- “Environmental lawyer, marine biologist, heli firefighter, heli/cat ski tour guide, ski instructor, soccer trainer, professional soccer player, bungie jumper, ski diver, kayaking, archaeologist” (female)
- “Well I want to be a mill writht [sic] or go into the trades like most of my family” (male)
- “Psychologist, get a dope job [sic] as a hair dresser, get a hair dressing apprenticeship” (female)
- “Conservation officer, or the army” (male)

Material

- “I want enough money to at least live, I don’t care if I’m rich because there are so many other poor people out there that need the money more than I do so we should all share lottery money” (female)
- “rich, and wealthy” (male)
- “win the lottery, get my own house” (female)
- “I want a new sled, and a new quad and a new truck and a new house with a whole mountain” (male)

Abilities/Education

- “I want to be able to graduate with a good mark in school, want to be able to get into a good university and try hard” (female)
- “I want to be good at jobs that I do” (male)
- “Go to school for kinesiology (sports medicine)” (female)
- “i want a degree, backelor [sic] at least, probably a masters” (male)

Leisure

- “Travel around the world, raft the kicking horse river” (female)
- “travel to mexico or Hawaii or some place hot and exotic” (female)

Life-Style

- “be a hippie” (male)
- “set a good life for myself and my family” (female)
- “I wanna move out of this town just because there are so many other possibilities and I can expand on myself” (male)

Personal

- “I would like to be happy with myself in the future” (female)
- “still happy” (male)
- “independent” (female)
- “have lots of experience being gay” (male)

Family

- “be a grandmother, have a baby, be a wife” (female)
- “being a father” (male)
- “having a family” (male)
- “being a parent who’s able to fully support their child, being an aunt” (female)

Physical

- “great shape, strong” (male)
- “more athletic” (female)
- “not to be diagnose with a disease” (female)
- “possibly in fantastic shape, hopefully college basketball NBA (definitely doubtfull)” (male)

Success

- "successful" (male)
- "part time making money being successful" (female)

Relationships

- "get married" (female)
- "married" (male)

Social Responsibility

- "good citizen of society" (male)
- "someone who does something for the world" (female)

Feared Selves

The categories for feared selves were the same as for hoped-for selves. The feared selves categories were again ranked by frequency of mention and are presented in rank order in Table 8. The number of responses listed by each participant ranged from one to 15. Lifestyle feared selves were generated most frequently, followed by Personal and Physical while Leisure feared selves were not reported at all and Social Responsibility was only reported by females. For the first most important feared self (Table 9), Personal feared selves were generated most frequently followed by Lifestyle and Physical; the categories of Leisure and Social Responsibility had no responses. For the second most important feared selves (Table 10), Physical feared selves were reported most often followed by Relationships and Lifestyle while Leisure once again had no responses and Social Responsibility was only reported by females.

Table 8

Categories for Feared Possible Selves (Relative Frequency)

Category	Relative Frequency Male	Relative Frequency Female	Relative Frequency Total
Lifestyle	0.094	0.094	0.188
Personal	0.081	0.072	0.154
Physical	0.068	0.085	0.154
Relationships	0.026	0.081	0.107
Success	0.038	0.056	0.09
Material	0.029	0.043	0.073
Occupation	0.047	0.017	0.064
Family	0.017	0.038	0.056
Abilities/Education	0.004	0.043	0.047
Social Responsibility	0	0.004	0.004
Leisure	0	0	0

N = 96

Table 9

Categories for First Most Important Feared Possible Selves (Relative Frequency)

Category	Relative Frequency Male	Relative Frequency Female	Relative Frequency Total
Personal	0.147	0.08	0.227
Lifestyle	0.04	0.12	0.16
Physical	0.08	0.053	0.13
Relationships	0.027	0.093	0.12
Material	0.067	0.04	0.107
Success	0.067	0.04	0.107
Abilities/Education	0.027	0.04	0.067
Occupation	0.04	0.027	0.056
Family	0	0.013	0.013
Social Responsibility	0	0	0
Leisure	0	0	0

N = 96

Table 10

Categories for Second Most Important Feared Possible Selves (Relative Frequency)

Category	Relative Frequency Male	Relative Frequency Female	Relative Frequency Total
Physical	0.195	0.117	0.311
Relationships	0.013	0.104	0.117
Lifestyle	0.039	0.078	0.117
Occupation	0.039	0.065	0.104
Personal	0.078	0.013	0.091
Success	0.039	0.052	0.091
Material	0.026	0.065	0.091
Abilities/Education	0.013	0.026	0.039
Family	0.013	0.013	0.026
Social Responsibility	0	0.013	0.013
Leisure	0	0	0

N = 96

A range of responses in terms of both type and number were provided by participants in each of the categories. The following is a list of examples from each of the feared selves categories. The gender of the participant will follow the examples in brackets.

Life-Style

- "living at home till I'm 50" (male)
- "crappy house, crappy town" (male)

- “homeless” (female)
- “where I work too many hours a day and don’t get to see my family” (female)
- “I fear that I will live in _____ for too long" (male)
- “becoming homeless like the people on the streets in Vancouver on east hastings and just sitting there with nothing or looking in garbage cans eww I fear that most” (female)

Personal

- “not being loved at all, being rejected by society” (female)
- “forgotten, robbed, disliked” (female)
- “lonely, unappreciated” (male)
- “lazy” (male)

Physical

- “deadly sickness” (female)
- “turning into a fat sac” (male)
- “fat, anorexic . . . again, beaten” (female)
- “being in poor health” (male)

Relationships

- “lose all my friends and family, die alone” (female)
- “might not have a girlfriend, might lose someone close to me” (male)
- “not having friends” (male)
- “losing my boyfriend” (female)

Success

- “being a no-body, not succeeding” (female)
- “not being able to make it on my own in a new place” (female)

- “barely making it in life” (male)

Material

- “not having enough money” (female)
- “not in a good financial place” (female)
- “poor” (male)
- “I fear being in debt” (male)

Occupation

- “ mcdonalds low paid job” (male)
- “being stuck with logging or a job that is a low paying job” (male)
- “working at A & W” (female)
- “not fulfilling my dream of a vet assistant” (female)

Family

- “that I might not have kids” (male)
- “in life I fear that I will have children with illness, death of a child” (female)
- “having 12 kids I can’t support” (male)
- “not having kids, having to see my parents sick and suffering” (female)

Abilities/Education

- “I fear that I will not have the courses required to become a free lance photographer or tha the world of photography will shrink and I will not be able to make a living, which is a very possible situation” (female)
- “not going to university” (female)
- “dropping high-school, not going to post-secondary” (female)

Social Responsibility

- “not being able to help people” (female)

Leisure

- No responses in this category

4. What are rural adolescents’ ratings of how capable they are of achieving hoped-for selves or preventing feared selves?

The participants were asked to rate, for their first and second most important hoped for selves, “How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self?” The participants were also asked to rate, for their first and second most important feared selves, “How capable do you feel of preventing this possible self?” The responses were captured by a Likert scale with values from 1 (not at all capable) to 7 (completely capable). The means and standard deviations are provided in Table 11. The overall mean rating for all the questions regarding capability was 4.97 (SD=1.73). A paired samples t-test indicated that participants were significantly more likely to indicate a higher rating of "How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self?" for the first most important hoped-f or self as compared to "How capable do you feel of preventing this possible self?" for the first most important feared self ($t(95) = 3.169$, $p < .002$). A paired samples t-test also indicated that participants were significantly more likely to indicate a higher rating of "How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self?" for the second most important hoped-for self as compared to "How capable do you feel of preventing this possible self?" for the second most important feared self $t(95) = 2.384$, $p < .006$).

Table 11

"How capable" and Possible Selves

Question	Male Mean (sd)	Female Mean (sd)	Total Mean (sd)
"How Capable" and First Most Important Hoped for Self	5.76(1.37)	5.53(1.52)	5.66(1.44)
"How Capable" and Second Most Important Hoped for Self	5.71(1.63)	5.02(1.82)	5.39 (1.74)
"How Capable" and First Most Important Feared Self	5.94(2.34)	4.80(2.04)	4.87 (2.19)
"How Capable" and Second Most Important Feared Self	5.08(2.24)	4.22(2.33)	4.68(2.32)

N=96

5. What are rural adolescent's ratings of how likely they are to achieve or prevent possible selves?

The participants were asked to rate, for their first and second most important hoped-for selves and feared selves, "How likely do you think this possible self is to come true?" The responses were captured by a Likert scale with values from 1 (not at all likely) to 7 (completely likely). The means and standard deviations are provided in Table 12. A paired samples t test indicated that participants were significantly more likely to indicate a higher rating of "How likely do you think this possible self is to come true?" for the first most important hoped-for self as compared to the first most important feared self ($t(95) = 6.808$, $p < .000$) and for the second

most important hoped-for self as compared to the second most important feared self ($t(95) = 5.237$, $p < .000$).

Table 12

"How Likely" and Possible Selves

Question	Male Mean (sd)	Female Mean (sd)	Total Mean (sd)
"How Likely" and First Most Important Hoped for Self	5.48 (1.502)	5.57(1.52)	5.36 (1.52)
"How Likely" and Second Most Important Hoped for Self	5.40(1.74)	5.07(1.82)	5.09 (1.84)
"How Likely" and First Most Important Feared Self	3.72(2.45)	4.85(2.04)	3.53 (2.30)
"How Likely" and Second Most Important Feared Self	3.70(2.42)	4.28(2.34)	3.68 (2.25)

N=96

6. How many actions do rural adolescents engage in to prevent or obtain possible selves?

The participants were asked to think about their first and second most important hoped-for selves and to "Please list anything you have done (or not done) in the last month to make this possible self come true?" The mean number of responses for the first most important hoped-for self was 1.43 (SD=1.28) and for the second most important hoped-for self was 1.05 (SD=1.22). Participants were also asked to indicate for their first and second most feared selves to "Please list anything you have done (or not done) in the last month to avoid or prevent this possible

self?" The mean number of responses for the first most important feared self was 0.78 (SD=0.84) and for the second most important feared self the mean number of responses was 0.84 (SD = 0.84). A paired samples t-test indicated that participants were significantly more likely to report more actions to achieve hoped for selves than to prevent feared selves in the last month for both the first most important hoped-for and feared selves ($t(95) = 5.475$, $p < .000$) and the second most important hoped-for and feared selves (($t(95) = 2.015$, $p < .047$).

The following are some examples of the specific behaviours the rural youth indicated engaging in to obtain or prevent possible selves. While possible selves are conceptualizations of future hopes and fears, these specific and present actions are examples of actual steps individuals are taking to achieve or prevent future conceptualizations. Examples are presented in the participants' own words.

Actions taken in the last month to obtain hoped-for selves.

(a) like i said before ive been prcticing yoga quite a bit and have become very flexible what I have to work on now is talking to people ant the actual teaching part and i have to build confidence in myself and constantly tell myself that i can do it.

(b) I have continued to not drink or do drugs, stayed on my sober path, enjoyed my friends' company, got two jobs, officaly moved into my friends', worked out, biked, and hiked.exercised for 30 minutes every day.

(c) going on a more strict diet to look what i want to look like. travel more. start money managing so there isnt as much worry when it comes to first year university. Become involved in a strong and healthy relationship.

Actions taken in the last month to prevent feared selves.

(a) going to the gym daily, participate in many extra caricular activities, try my hardest in

school so i can get good marks that are good enough to get me into a decent college if i want to. as well as continuing with my part time work experience.

(b) be not so oppinated and work at keeping the relationship with my boyfriend that ilove healthy and keeping us BOTH happy

(c) Went away for the weekend with my family. Made time for friends between studies. Studied hard; stay in shape, stay in sports, tryign to quiet smoking.

7. Are there gender differences for rural adolescent hoped-for and feared selves?

An independent t-test was run to determine any significant differences between hoped-for and feared selves according to gender. There was a significant gender difference for hoped-for selves ($t(94) = -3.05$, $p < .003$). As indicated by the means and standard deviations shown in Table 13, females reported more hoped-for selves than males. A significant gender difference was not found for feared selves ($t(94) = 1.76$, $p > .081$).

Table 13

Number of Hoped for and Feared Selves by Gender

	Male (N=51) Mean (SD)	Female (N=45) Mean (SD)
Hoped-for Selves*	2.57 (2.27)	4.51 (3.84)
Feared Selves	2.04 (2.58)	2.852.07)

*denotes significance at p>0.05

N = 96

An independent t-test uncovered no significant gender differences regarding the question "How capable to you feel of accomplishing this possible self" (t (94) = .594, p=.554) for the first

most important hoped-for self. An independent t-test also uncovered no significant gender differences regarding the question "How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self" for the first most important feared self ($t(94) = .116$, p = 908).

An independent t-test uncovered no significant gender differences regarding the question "How likely do you think this possible self is to come true?" (t (94) = .776, p=.440) for the first most important hoped-for self. An independent t-test also uncovered no significant gender differences regarding the question "How likely do you think this possible self is to come true?" for the first most important feared self ($t(94) = .836$, p = .405).

With respect to actions taken in the last month to obtain or prevent a possible self, first most important hoped-for and feared selves were analysed with an independent t-test for differences in gender. Girls were significantly more likely than boys to report actions taken in the last month to obtain the first most important possible self, $t(94)= -2.88$, $p < .005$ (Bonferroni adjustment to provide sufficient protection against Type I error; 0.05/4 = 0.0125). Girls were also significantly more likely than boys to report actions taken in the last month to prevent their first most important feared self, $t(94)= -3.08$, $p < .003$. Refer to Table 14 for means and standard deviation scores according to gender.

The categories of possible selves were analysed for differences in gender using a chi square analysis. For the total hoped-for selves, there were only significant gender differences in the Leisure category ($\chi^2(2, N = 96) = 14.08, p > .003$) with girls reporting significantly more responses in this category than boys. For the total feared selves, there were significant gender differences in the Abilities/Education ($\chi^2(2, N = 96) = 6.541, p > .038$) and Relationship ($\chi^2(2, N = 96) = 8.246, p > .016$) categories with females reporting more responses in both these categories. For the first most important hoped-for self, only Occupation had significant gender

differences ($\chi^2(2, N = 96) = 4.40, p > .036$) with males reporting more responses in this category than females. For the first most important feared self, only Lifestyle had significant gender differences ($\chi^2(2, N = 96) = 4.36, p > .037$) with females reporting more responses in this category. There were no significant gender differences for the second most important hoped-for self and only the category of Relationship had a significant gender difference for the second most important feared self ($\chi^2(2, N = 96) = 7.04, p > .008$) with males reporting more responses in this category.

Table 14

Counts of Actions and Possible Selves

Question	Male (sd)	Female (sd)	Total Mean (sd)
'Actions' to obtain first most important hoped-for self*	1.08(1.01)	1.80(1.44)	1.43 (1.28)
'Actions' to obtain second most important hoped-for self	0.82(0.75)	1.30(1.55)	1.05 (1.22)
'Actions' to prevent first most important feared self*	0.54(0.65)	1.04(0.94)	0.78 (0.84)
'Actions' to prevent first most important feared self*	0.60(0.76)	1.1(1.02)	0.84 (0.92)

*indicates significance at the level of p>0.05

N = 96

Community

8. What are rural adolescents' perceptions of their rural context?

Participants were asked eight questions about their community (Section C). For each question they were able to respond either yes, no, or sometimes (Table 15). The majority indicated yes when asked "Would you describe your community as rural?" (66.7%). In response to "Does your school offer the courses or programs you want to take?" most participants noted sometimes (45.8%) while 30.2% answered yes, and 24% answered no. Only 32.3% indicated that their "school will prepare you well so you can meet your goals once you finish high school" while most (45.8%) responded sometimes to this question and 21.9% responded no. The majority (45.5%) of participants were undecided whether they would stay in their community after high school while 31.2% noted they did plan to stay and 22.9% did not plan to stay. Thus, in this sample of rural youth a large percentage of individuals are undecided about where they would like to live following high school.

When asked "Do you like living in this community?" 47.9% indicated sometimes, 40.6% indicated yes, and 11.5% indicated no. In response to the question "Are there jobs available in this community for people your age?", most noted sometimes (53.1%), 38.5% indicated yes, and 8.3% indicated no. In response to the question "Are there jobs available in your community for people who have finished high school?" most indicated sometimes again (45.8%), 39.6% indicated yes, and 14.6% indicated no. Thus, the rural youth in this sample perceive their employment opportunities as somewhat limited despite liking their communities for the most part. Finally, when asked "Are there people you can talk to in your community about your future?" the majority (46.9%) indicated yes, 41.7% indicated sometimes, and 11.5% indicated

no. Overall, most rural youth in this sample appeared to view their communities as a place they can find support and a place where they like to be.

Table 15

Community Context Questions

Question	Percentage Yes	Sometimes	No
1. Would you describe your community as rural?	66.7	30.2	3.1
2. Does your school offer the courses or programs you want to take?	30.2	45.8	24
3. Do you think your school will prepare you well so you can meet your goals once you finish high school?	32.3	45.8	21.9
4. Do you plan to stay in this community after you are finished high school?	31.2	45.8	22.9
5. Do you like living in this community?	40.6	47.9	11.5
6. Are there jobs available in this community for people your age?	38.5	53.1	8.3
7. Are there jobs available in your community for people who have finished high school?	39.8	45.8	14.6
8. Are there people you can talk to in your community about your future?	46.9	41.7	11.5

N = 96

9. What are rural adolescents' ratings of sense of community?

The total Sense of Community score is comprised of a sum of all 12 items, so that scores can range from 0 to 12, where 12 represents the greatest connection to community and 0 the least. Sense of Community scores from this survey are presented in Table 16. Regarding the

Sense of Community Score, the overall mean (6.41) was in the average range and lower than the overall mean reported in other studies (e.g., mean = 7.30 and 7.31). In addition, there was a smaller standard deviation for the total Sense of Community score (1.94) than reported in other studies (SD = 3.01 and 2.94) (see Pretty et al., 1996).

Table 16

Sense of Community

Subscale	Males Mean (SD)	Females Mean (SD)	Total Mean (SD)
Total Sense of Community	6.08 (1.95)	6.78 (1.88)	6.41 (1.94)

N=96

10. Are there gender differences for rural adolescent sense of community and perceptions of the rural context?

An independent t-test uncovered no significant gender differences for Sense of Community, t (94) = -1.784, p=.078. The means and standard deviation scores for the total Sense of Community are presented in Table 16.

Regarding the community context questions, a chi square analysis indicated that there were significant gender differences for the question "Does your school offer the courses or programs you want to take?" ($\chi^2(2, N = 96) = 6.523, p > .05$). Specifically, the female participants responded less favourably than boys to this question. No significant gender differences were found for the remaining community context questions.

Self-concept, Possible Selves, Community

11. *How is self-concept, both globally and across specific domains, related to the number of hoped-for and feared selves, perceptions of capability for hoped-for and feared possible selves, and sense of community?*

Correlation analyses were performed among the nine subscales of self-concept, total sense of community, the total number of hoped-for and feared selves, responses to the question "How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self?" for the first most important hoped for self and responses to the question "How capable do you feel of preventing this possible self?" for the first most important feared self. A correlation matrix is provided in Table 17.

Table 17

Correlation Matrix

	Sch Com	Soc Acp	Ath Com	Phy App	Job Com	Rom App	Beh Con	Clo Fri	Global	Sen ComT	Fir HfS Cap	Fir FS Cap	# HfS	*#FS*
SchCom	1	.212*	.245*	.387**	.428**	.088	.517**	.103	.522**	.115	.316**	.002	.115	-.024
SocAcp	.212*	1	.476**	.474**	.279**	.379**	-.035	.529**	.545**	.069	.390**	.015	.109	.076
AthCom	.245*	.476**	1	.160	-.005	.135	.011	.257*	.307**	.129	.303**	.036	-.090	-.107
PhyApp	.387**	.474**	.160	1	.467**	.409**	.156	.318**	.589**	-.002	.417**	.194	.195	.075
JobCom	.428**	.279**	-.005	.467**	1	.076	.242*	.329**	.476**	.061	.366**	.172	.194	.079
RomApp	.088	.379**	.135	.409**	.076	1	.099	.215*	.228*	.003	.370**	.206*	-.049	.005
BehCon	.517**	-.035	.011	.156	.242*	.099	1	-.022	.419**	.067	.273**	.127	-.006	-.060
CloFri	.103	.529**	.257*	.318**	.329**	.215*	-.022	1	.432**	.244*	.284**	.114	.190	.146
Global	.522**	.545**	.307**	.589**	.476**	.228*	.419**	.432**	1	.131	.437**	.009	.142	-.015
SenCom	.115	.069	.129	-.002	.061	.003	.067	.244*	.131	1	.043	.072	.270**	.155
FirHfS Cap	.316**	.390**	.303**	.417**	.366**	.370**	.273**	.284**	.437**	.043	1	.164	.036	.029
FirFS Cap	.002	.015	.036	.194	.172	.206*	.127	.114	.009	.072	.164	1	.158	.176
# HfS	.115	.109	-.090	.195	.194	-.049	-.006	.190	.142	.270**	.036	.158	1	.608**
# FS	-.024	.076	-.107	.075	.079	.005	-.060	.146	-.015	.155	.029	.176	.608**	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Note:
SchComT = Scholastic Competence
SocAcpT = Social Acceptance
AthCom = Athletic Competence
PhyApp = Physical Appearance
JobCom = Job Competence
RomApp = Romantic Appeal
BehCon = Behavioural Conduct
CloFri = Close Friendship
Glob = Global Self-Concept
SenCom = Sense of Community
FirHfSCap = How capable do you feel of achieving your first most important hoped-for self
FirFSCap = How capable do you feel of preventing your first most important feared self
#HfS = Number of hoped-for selves
#FS = Number of feared selves

Self-concept. Regarding self-concept, a significant positive correlation was found between only one subscale of self-concept, Close Friendship, and Sense of Community. With respect to counts of possible selves, none of the subscales of self-concept were correlated to the number of hoped-for or feared selves. Within the self-concept measure itself, not surprisingly, there were several correlations. For example: (a) Social Acceptance was correlated with Close Friendship, Athletic Competence, and Romantic Appeal; (b) Romantic Appeal was correlated with Physical Appearance; and (c) Scholastic Competence was correlated with Behavioural Conduct and Job Competence. Please refer to the correlation matrix for the complete correlation analysis (Table 17).

Possible Selves. The number of hoped-for selves was significantly positively correlated with the number of feared selves. In other words, participants who listed a larger number of hoped-for selves also tended to list a larger number of feared selves.

The measures of capability with respect to achieving or preventing possible selves were included in the correlational analysis as a result of literature connecting perceptions of capability of achieving possible selves with self-concept, (Markus, Cross & Wurf, 1990; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992) and community membership (Cameron, 1999). Results showed a significant correlation at $\alpha = 0.01$ between "How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self?" for the first most important hoped for self and all nine subscales for self-concept (Table 17) with Global Self-Concept, Physical Appearance, and Social Acceptance producing the largest correlations. To summarize, higher self-concept scores both globally and across the eight other subscales correlated positively with a higher rating of how capable a person feels in terms of accomplishing their first most important hoped-for self. A significant correlation between "How

capable do you feel of preventing this possible self?" for the first most important feared self and self-concept was only found between one self-concept subscale, Romantic Appeal.

Sense of Community. A significant positive correlation was found between the number of hoped-for selves and Sense of Community. Thus, for this sample of rural youth, those individuals who listed more hoped-for selves also rated higher on the Sense of Community Index.

Summary

The results from the Person, Place, and Perception Study were presented in this chapter and included: (a) Phase One Analysis: descriptive statistics for Demographics, Community Context, Sense of Community, and Self-Concept; (b) Phase Two Analysis: an analysis of quantitative and qualitative Possible Selves data, and; (c) Phase Three Analysis: a correlational analysis to examine the relationships between Self-concept, Sense of Community, and Possible Selves including significant gender differences.

In Chapter Five, the results presented in this chapter will be considered in more detail in response to the research questions. This will include a discussion of self-concept, possible selves, sense of community, and the connections among these constructs, for rural adolescents.

Chapter Five

Discussion

This study focussed on self-concept, possible selves, and sense of community for rural youth, building on the findings from the previous Paths to the Future Project. The relationships among these constructs were also of interest in this research, as well as any relevant gender distinctions. In the remainder of this chapter, the results of the study will be discussed in more depth in response to the research questions. This chapter concludes with a summary of the research findings.

Self-Concept

1. What are rural adolescents' ratings of themselves on the nine subscales of self-concept?

Despite many unique characteristics of a rural area, the average self-concept of the rural youth in this study was similar to other populations who have been assessed by this same measure (Shapka & Keating, 2005; Hagborg, 1993b; Harter, 1988; Rudasill & Calahan, 2008), although these samples were not specifically rural. However, as self-concept does not develop in isolation; rather, it is shaped within a broader social, historical, cultural, and institutional context (Demo, 1992), it is still worth noting that for the participants of this study self-concept development is situated within a rural context. While the results from the self-concept instrument did not differentiate this sample greatly from other adolescent populations, rural context is a consideration as the future conceptualization of self-concept is discussed, that is possible selves. Furthermore, as the self-concept is quite capable of change and responds to challenges from the social environment (Markus & Wurf, 1987), it follows that "rural settings should produce distinctive contexts for development" (Shepard, 2005, p. 189). Thus, a question remains whether

rural adolescent self-concept is actually similar to other populations or whether the methodology used here was able to uncover any differences.

For example, a qualitative study of rural young women's self-perceptions demonstrated a profound influence from the rural setting (Shepard 2003; 2004). Participants in this study, aged 17 to 19, explored present and future conceptualizations of self through semi-structured interviews, photo essays, and mapping. These young women indicated their sense of self was shaped in different ways by their rural community. Sentiments such as feeling like they were living under a microscope at the same time as experiencing a sense of safety from being known in the community were expressed as well as viewing their rural upbringing as both valuable and a handicap when transferring skills to urban settings. This qualitative study perhaps was able to uncover different layers contributing to the context of the self-concept while the quantitative measure used in this study addressed how strong or positive is the self-concept. Thus, while an assessment of how positive is the self-concept is important, perhaps further consideration of context beyond what is captured by the SPPA would be useful.

2. *Are there gender differences for the nine subscales of self- concept?*

In this research, males scored higher in the Scholastic Competence domain and females scored higher in the Close Friendship domain which is consistent with other research (Shapka & Keating, 2005). The measure of self-concept used in this research (SPPA), which is designed to measure an adolescent's sense of a competent self in a variety of domains, is typically characterized by systematic gender differences, although not at the global level. For example, girls tend to rate themselves higher in social domains such as the area of close friendship while males tend to score higher in the Scholastic Competence domain (Harter, 1988; Friedrichsen, 1997; Shapka & Keating, 2005). This also makes sense as adolescent girls typically gauge their

success in relational or interpersonal terms. In other words females prioritize how competent they are within their social network, whereas adolescent males have drawn on concrete measures of success such as academic or scholastic success to inform their self-concept (Friedrichsen, 1997). Overall, then, it appears that "males gain self-esteem from getting ahead whereas females gain self-esteem from getting along" (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003, p, 222). In other samples, adolescent males have also scored higher in athletic competence and physical appearance domains but significant differences were not found with this group although the reason for this discrepancy with other samples is unclear.

Possible Selves

3. What are rural adolescents' descriptions of hoped-for and feared selves considering categories and counts?

Survey participants in this study were asked to report both their hoped-for and feared future selves. Self-representations of future success, such as hoped-for selves, have been found to be more readily accessible in the working self-concepts of people than self-representations of failure, such as feared selves (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). In this research, participants reported more hoped-for selves than feared selves which is consistent with other studies (see Cross & Markus, 1991; Shepard, 1997). Possible selves are also viewed as representations of personal future potential (Markus & Nurius, 1986). From this perspective then, for this sample of rural youth, estimations of positive future potential (hoped-for selves) are represented in greater numbers than estimations of negative future potential (feared selves). It is also of interest that the participants of this study were able to generate a number of very positive hoped-for selves including "rich, and wealthy" and "successful." Similarly, in another study with young adults aged 18 to 24 (Cross & Markus, 1991), the participants in this study listed a number of extremely

positive and global hoped-for selves such as “rich” and “perfectly happy” (p. 239) which implies that older adolescents and young adults are generally optimistic regarding their futures although perhaps somewhat unrealistic.

In terms of categories of hoped-for selves, Occupation generated the most responses followed by Material then Abilities/Education when relative frequency was calculated. These first three categories accounted for most of the responses. Social responsibility generated the fewest responses. For the first and second most important hoped-for self, Occupation was also the category with the most responses. The participants in this survey were mostly older adolescents approaching the transition from high school. Thus, the prevalence of occupational hoped-for selves is not surprising as career is certainly an important consideration for young people leaving high school (Lapan et al., 2003), this result mirrors other research (Cross & Markus, 1991; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Shepard, 1997; Shepard & Marshall, 1999).

In comparison, the older population of 18 to 24 year olds from the Cross and Markus (1991) study listed hoped-for selves in the Family domain most often, followed by Occupation and Personal domains. These authors believed that the hoped-for selves generated by this group reflected the many transitions of young adulthood and it was a major concern to embrace the social roles and relationships that define early adulthood. In contrast, Shepard (1997) sampled a younger population aged 11 to 13. For this age group, Occupational hoped-for selves were generated the most often, followed by Possessions, Leisure and Lifestyle. Thus, both the younger adolescents as well as the older adolescents sampled most frequently mentioned occupational hoped-for selves and the older adolescents from the Cross and Markus study mentioned occupational hoped-for selves second in terms of relative frequency. Shepard (1997) suggested that for the young adolescents in her study that “occupational position may be a developmentally

meaningful representation of self in the world" (p. 65). This notion of connecting future occupation to how persons view themselves in the world seems applicable for the older adolescents in the present study as well, especially considering that many will soon graduate from high school and be faced with a number of career choices.

In another study of rural adolescent girls aged 17 to 19, Personal and Relationship hoped-for selves topped the list and Occupational hoped-for selves were less prominent than in this study (Shepard, 2005). Despite the impending educational transition, these young women were more concerned with considering who they are and who they will share their lives with than with which occupation they wanted to pursue. In the Shepard (2005) study, the young women were interviewed as compared to the online survey used in the present research. It is possible that with the interview approach, participants are more willing to access the more sensitive and private Personal and Relationship hoped-for selves than with a survey approach.

The occupational hoped-for selves generated by the sample of rural adolescents in the present study were typically quite specific. For example, "go to Japan and teach English," "environmental lawyer," "working as a paediatrician or lab tech," and "marine biology" are just a few of occupations listed. Trades, such as millwright, welder, and mechanic, were listed most often as occupations, followed by professional sports person, health professional, and teacher. Examples of professional sports person included NBA (National Basketball Association), professional golfer, snowboarder and skier. Examples of health professionals included doctor, hygienist, orthodontist, registered nurse, and psychologist. The specific role models available for academic and occupational outcomes may vary between communities thus possible selves are frequently viewed as shaped by the social context (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). For the rural adolescents in this sample, it is possible that the hoped-for occupational selves listed reflected

available options in the community as well as important social identities. More data would need to be collected to be certain.

Furthermore, the evaluation of the self and the development of possible selves have been linked to context, especially in terms of the perception of possibility held by an individual (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Adolescents learn about what is possible and what is valued through the process of engagement with their social context (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). For example, youth in rural settings may experience a restriction of possibilities because certain role models are lacking for a variety of occupational and academic options and because social identities may be felt to conflict with certain possible selves (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Shepard, 2001). More specifically, this might manifest as a youth settling for a job rather than choosing a career due to a lack of occupational opportunities and role models (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Shepard, 2001). In this way, possible selves emerge as joint projects from interpersonal experiences within proximal social environments (Marshall, Young, & Domene, 2006). "Possible selves should be regarded not as free-floating potentialities but as conceived and realized in a context" (p. 187) and this context is shaped partly by a perception of belonging to a particular group (Cameron, 1999).

The second most prominent hoped-for selves category, Material, tended to include references to obtaining wealth and symbols of wealth such as "nice car, nice house" and "I want a new sled, and a new quad and a new truck and a new house with a whole mountain." These responses may represent items that are salient to these adolescents and things they are comfortable sharing given the survey format. The third most prevalent category, Abilities/Education, tended to be characterized by more general responses than were featured under Occupations and included examples such as "go to college", "I want a degree, bachelor at

least, probably a masters", and "finish University." The majority of the Abilities/Education hoped-for selves made reference to finishing high school or going to either college or university.

In terms of feared selves, Lifestyle had the most responses, Personal the next, followed by Physical. Similar to the hoped-for selves, these first three categories accounted for most of the responses. Lifestyle continued to be a significant category for the first and second most important feared selves and Personal feared selves had the highest relative frequency for first most important feared selves. For the group of rural adolescents in this survey, Lifestyle figures more prominently in terms of feared selves than in other samples (Cross & Markus, 1991; Shepard, 1997).

The category of Lifestyle was defined in this study as a particular way of life that could include location, customs or practices, and economics. In this study, most of the examples from the Lifestyle category referred to being "homeless," a "drug addict," or a "poor bum." These down and out images, possibly representing a complete lack of success in life for this group, painted a bleak picture in contrast to the very positive hoped-for selves. These dire Lifestyle feared selves perhaps represented a fear for rural youth of being stuck, of not getting ahead in life.

The pattern for the present sample was somewhat different to that in other studies. The younger adolescents in the Shepard (1997) study indicated Safety feared selves the most often, followed by Relationships, Ideals, and Lifestyle. This younger group was really concerned with dying and physical harm. For the Cross and Markus (1991) study, the 18 to 24 year olds indicated Physical feared selves as the most predominant category followed by Personal, Family, and Occupation. Once again, physical harm was a significant concern even though the category names were different. For the Cross and Markus (1991) sample, some of the feared selves

reflected a concern that life may be disappointing or that an individual would fall short of their own expectations.

The category of Lifestyle was more prominent for rural adolescents in the present study compared to the younger adolescents from Shepard (1997) and the young adults in Cross and Markus (1991). Unlike the other age groups, perhaps the approaching graduation from high school for this group of older adolescents, is viewed as a proximal social marker where individuals assess how they are doing in comparison to peers and concrete representations of wealth provide an easy comparison. A qualitative study of possible selves notes that for a group of 17 to 19 year old rural women that the desire to accumulate wealth or establish financial security was also reported (Shepard, 2005). From the present study, in the Personal category, there were many examples of being "alone" or "lonely" while in the Physical category most examples made reference to poor health or death such as "being sick," "having cancer," "dying at a young age" and only a few made reference to physical appearance such as "ugly" and "big and fat."

4. What are rural adolescents' ratings of how capable they are of achieving or preventing possible selves?

Most participants felt moderately capable of either accomplishing or preventing a possible self. Participants indicated higher ratings of capability in terms of achieving hoped-for selves in comparison with preventing feared selves. Consistent with the very optimistic examples of hoped-for selves described in response to research question three, these ratings of capability also appear positive. This suggests that the rural youth in this study are hopeful about the future with respect to both their perceptions of capability in terms of obtaining hoped-for selves and preventing feared ones, and in terms of the specific examples of hoped-for selves listed.

From the Cross and Markus (1991) study, the 18 to 24 year old participants indicated being much more capable than participants who were older of obtaining hoped-for selves and preventing feared selves, indeed believing anything is possible and rating themselves as highly competent. With the sample of younger adolescents (Shepard, 1997), the average rating of being capable of achieving the first most important hoped-for self was similar to the older adolescents in the present study. Much like the younger adolescents, participants in this study had positive expectations for the future and felt capable of reaching their goals. In terms of capability of preventing a feared self, younger adolescents (Shepard, 1997) also rated themselves as very capable while the older adolescents in the present study rated themselves as slightly less capable than the younger adolescents. It is likely that the older adolescents are more realistic about what they are able to control in life as compared to the younger group.

Possible selves develop from life experiences, including context, in which competence is salient (Vernon, 2004). Performance and behavioural change is influenced by perceived competence, perceived control, and self-esteem (Cervone, 2000; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). It is the specific representations of what is possible (ie. possible selves) that can generate sentiments of efficacy, competence, control, optimism and function as the mechanism that these constructs are able to impact behaviour. Therefore, possible selves are viewed as "carriers of competence without which one's abilities cannot be effectively utilized" (Markus, Cross, & Wurf, 1990, p. 225). Thus, from the reasonably high score of perceived capability in terms of achieving hoped-for selves or preventing feared ones, the sample of rural adolescents from this survey can be viewed as carrying competence which should enhance their abilities to achieve their hoped-for selves and prevent their feared selves.

5. What are rural adolescent's ratings of how likely they are to achieve or prevent possible selves?

For the two most important hoped-for and feared selves, participants rated on a seven point Likert scale "How likely do you think this possible self is to come true?" Adolescents reported that achieving hoped-for selves was more likely than achieving feared selves. This is consistent with other studies that have indicated that individuals rate higher for "How likely...?" in terms of hoped-for selves as opposed to feared selves (Cross & Markus, 1991; Shepard, 1997).

The present participants rated themselves as quite likely to achieve first most important hoped-for selves (mean score of 5.36 out of 7) similar to younger adolescents whose average likelihood score was 5.5 out of 7 (Shepard, 1997). The likelihood scores for feared selves were significantly lower than for the hoped-for selves with the younger adolescents which indicated that this group felt it unlikely that feared selves would come true. Similar results were found for the 18 to 24 year olds in the Cross and Markus (1991) study and for the older adolescents in the present research.

In an effort to define the self, adolescents consider hypothetical versions of the self and evaluate how desired and probable they are for each individual. However, this new type of thinking can be problematic for the self-system because the adolescent may not yet be proficient in this area (Harter, 1989). As a result, hypothetical self-views may be implausible and inaccurate, leading to problems in the self-system such as a perceived discrepancy between the hypothetical images and the current self. Possible selves likelihood ratings are a function of this distance. For example, possible selves are rated as unlikely if they are perceived as discrepant from the current self (Knox, Funk, Elliot, & Bush, 1998). Participants in this study indicated it was more likely that a hoped-for self would come true as opposed to a feared self. Thus, the rural

youth in this survey presented less of perceived discrepancy between hypothetical images of the current self and the hypothetical future self for hoped-for selves as opposed to feared selves. It is possible that this group is nervous to face their fears as feared possible selves are rarely verbalized. In addition, a survey is likely not able to access all the layers of feared selves due to their complex and personal nature.

6. *How many actions do rural adolescents engage in to prevent or obtain possible selves?*

Possible selves are also believed to play a role connecting current behaviours to future states (Markus & Nurius, 1986). To investigate this, the survey participants were asked to list the specific actions they had engaged in over the last month to either obtain a hoped-for self or prevent a feared self. Results indicated that significantly more actions were taken to obtain first and second most important hoped for selves respectively than to prevent first and second most important feared selves. From this result, it appears that there was a greater connection between hoped-for selves and current behaviour as opposed to feared selves and current behaviour which makes sense if individuals think that feared selves are less likely to occur than hoped-for selves.

Participants in this study listed an average of 1.03 actions per person to obtain hoped-for and feared selves in the last month. This is less than the 1.94 actions reported for the young adults in the Cross and Markus (1991) study and the 3.5 listed for the younger adolescents (Shepard, 1997). It should be noted, though, that differences in methodology may impact the number of actions listed by participants. For the younger participants, information was collected during an interview, for the older adolescents in this study a web based survey was used, and for the young adults in the Cross and Markus study (1991) participants filled out a paper questionnaire.

The more specific and vivid a possible self, the more it will be individualized and consequently more likely to positively motivate an individual (Nurius, 1989), as evidenced by the concrete actions taken to achieve or prevent the future self. Possible selves are likely to motivate an individual for two reasons; a) they provide a clear, self-personalized goal to strive for and b) they have an emotional component (Vernon, 2004).

Firstly, in terms of a clear and self-personalized goal, possible selves may include various visualizations or rehearsed actions of the self taking steps toward achieving the desired possible self (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Visualizations may provide a template for behaviour so that individuals can behave in ways that make achieving the possible self more likely. For example, one participant listed "going to Japan" as a hoped-for self and "learn Japanese" as a specific action towards achieving that goal and another participant listed "being a doctor" as a hoped-for self and "taking biology 12, and doing everything i possibly can to get an 'A' in that class" as the actions performed in the last month to achieve the possible self. A feared self listed by one participant was "not finishing school" and "worked hard in school didn't skip class did homework" as the actions performed to prevent the feared self.

Second, regarding the emotional component of possible selves, when individuals think about or visualize themselves achieving a hoped for state they may experience positive emotions and thus may become energized and motivated to persevere in pursuing a goal; imagining a negative possible self could result in an emotional response that mobilizes a person to perform behaviours to avoid that end state (Inglehart, Markus, & Brown, 1989). For example, with respect to actions taken in the past month to obtain a hoped-for self, one participant listed "be happy" as a hoped-for self and "I try to surround myself with my friends... who are so good to me. Try to go out and have fun and do things to occupy my time and try to forget about how life

sucks sometimes and I'm still a very lucky person" as actions to obtain this hoped-for self. Ruvolo and Markus (1992) showed that individuals who imagined possible selves were more likely to endorse the idea that various success type statements were possible for them.

In terms of a feared self with an emotional component, a participant listed "getting fat" as a feared self and then "going to the gym daily, participate in many extra caricular [curricular] activities" as actions performed over the last month to prevent this self. Another example of a feared self with an emotional component was "not being able to raise and half support a family" and this participant noted "I am looking into the courses I will need to get into college I want to get the degree I need to make the money I need to support the family I want" as the actions performed in the last month to prevent this feared self. It has also been suggested that by imagining a possible self, one may anticipate, and perhaps actually experience, some of the affect associated with the end state in addition to some of the visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, or visceral representation of the self in the future (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). Possible selves are an integral part of human motivation as people are motivated to act in ways that will help achieve possible selves (Vernon, 2004). In this way, possible selves can also be considered motivational resources that can organize and energize a person's future behaviour (Inglehart, Markus, & Brown, 1989; Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Considering this, it seems that hoped-for selves, given their greater connection to present behaviours, may provide more motivation than feared selves.

7. *Are there gender differences in rural adolescents' hoped-for and feared selves?*

When analysed for differences in gender, the results from this study showed that girls report more hoped-for selves than boys. No difference was found for feared selves despite other research that has indicated that feared possible selves are reported more and are more salient for

females (Knox, 2006). With respect to actions taken in the last month to obtain or prevent a possible self, girls were significantly more likely than boys to report actions taken in the last month to obtain the first most important possible self and girls were also significantly more likely than boys to report actions taken in the last month to prevent their first most important feared self and their second most important feared self. Gender differences were not found for perceived likelihood of hoped-for and feared selves occurring. In addition, no gender differences were identified for either perceived capability of achieving a hoped-for self or preventing a feared one. This indicates that both males and females have similar self-efficacy expectations regarding possible selves.

With regards to the categories of possible selves, some differences in gender were found in the different categories. Regarding total hoped-for selves, girls reported more hoped-for selves in the Leisure category and for the first most important hoped-for self, boys reported hoped-for selves in the Occupation category. Regarding total feared selves, females reported more than boys in both the Relationship and Abilities/Education categories. For the first most important feared self, only Lifestyle showed gender differences with females reporting the most responses. And finally, for the second most important feared self, in the Relationship category females reported more responses which is consistent with the total feared selves.

It has been suggested that males' possible selves may have the purpose of defining them as unique and different from others and females may be more prone to integrate the perceptions of others in forming possible selves (Knox, 2006). This may help to explain why females in this sample reported more feared selves in the Relationship category as this category considers interpersonal perspectives and why boys reported more hoped-for selves in the Occupation category as these categories have many responses that capture how a person will be defined. A

study of rural young women similar in age to the current sample also notes that Relationship was a prevalent category for adolescent girls (Shepard, 2005). Other research has also noted that girls are more likely to generate feared possible selves in the relationship domain while the occupation domain is associated with more feared possible selves for boys, although in this research it was Occupational hoped-for selves instead of feared selves were boys produced more responses than girls (Knox et al., 2000; Shepard, 1997; Shepard & Marshall, 1999). For females, both present and future self-conceptualizations are typically established in terms of important relationships whereas for males they are shaped by goal attainment and agency (Knox, 2006).

Community

8. *What are rural adolescents' perceptions of their rural context?*

The rural youth surveyed were asked several questions about perceptions of their community. Most youth surveyed felt their school only sometimes offered courses or programs they want to take, and only sometimes prepared them once they finish high school. The responses were consistent with reports on rural education which indicate that rural schools typically offer fewer courses and support services due to a narrow tax base (Looker, 2001) and other research with rural youth that indicates limited opportunities such as few school courses and youth resources are common in a rural context (Harrision, 2005; Marshall 2002; Shepard, 2005). Rural youth are also disadvantaged regarding university access due to the distance they often have to travel to reach post-secondary institutions (Cahill & Martland, 1996; Harrison, 2005; Looker, 2001; Marshall, 2002). This may result in a lower probability of rural youth pursuing valuable university degrees (Frenette, 2002). Youth in rural Canadian communities often face limited access to higher education, narrow school curricula, and fewer programs and services (Cahill & Martland, 1996; Jeffrey, Lehr, Hache, & Campbell, 1992; Lehr & Jeffery,

1996). In terms of educational limitations, the majority of youth in this survey only sometimes perceived their community as being able to offer them the resources they need in order to succeed as they transition from high school and towards life and career as adults. This may be problematic for rural youth as they prepare for their future; the lack of availability of post-secondary institutions in rural areas makes upgrading coursework difficult and expensive; and the cost of pursuing post-secondary education is higher for rural students than for urban students (Dupuy, 2000).

The majority of rural youth from this survey also felt that there were people who they could talk to about their future, which may have had a moderating effect on the other perceived limitations of their community. In general, rural communities offer closer connections to people and the land as well as a strong commitment to supporting others in the community (Bollman & Biggs, 1992). Teachers in rural communities, in particular, are often considered to provide students and families with important social support (Looker, 2001). This feeling of support is important as the ability of individuals to feel supported and connected to community resources has been linked to self-concept development (Chipuer, 2001; Chipuer, Bramston, & Pretty, 2003). In addition, most students Kootenay region (80%) indicate that there is an adult in their family and an adult outside their family (65%), such as a teacher, they would feel comfortable talking to if they had a personal problem (McCreary Centre, 2004). Students with this type of support typically are healthier than those without (McCreary Centre, 2004). Finally, research has shown that youth look towards their peers and close friends more that to parents and other adults to have their needs met and to protect themselves against loneliness (Pretty et al., 2001). However, this study did not differentiate between peers, parents, teachers, or other adults in

terms of social support. It would perhaps be advantageous to make this distinction in future studies.

With respect to occupation, most survey participants indicated that jobs were only available sometimes both for people their age and for people who finished high school. Rural communities have been undergoing profound social and economic change including a decline in rural economies such as forestry, farming, mining, and fishing which has impacted rural community function and viability (Harrision, 2005; Troughton, 1999). Rural youth also seem to be affected by economic hardship (Dehan & Deal, 2001). Dupuy (2000) reported that for young adults, only 31% are employed in a full-year and full-time jobs compared with 50% in urban areas. In the Kootenay region, nearly half (46%) of adolescents have a paid part time job with hours of work typically increasing with age (McCreary Centre, 2004). This is consistent with another study of rural communities in coastal British Columbia where only half of the youth in that study indicated that there were good options for working part-time while in school (Harrison, 2005). Work opportunities are valuable for young people as they encourage youth to remain in school, pursue higher education which will increase long term earning potential (Worklife Report, 2000), and they are beneficial to the mental health of young people (Harrison, 2005).

Only a third of rural youth surveyed reported that they plan to stay in their community after they are finished high school while almost half are undecided and the remaining individuals do plan to leave. This indecision may reflect the mixed feelings that are experienced by many rural young people as they contemplate moving away to pursue educational and/or work opportunities yet identify strongly with their community (Hektner, 1995). Rural communities are often characterized by closer connections to people and the land than urban areas, along with a

strong commitment to supporting others (Bollman & Biggs, 1992). This quality can contribute to the potential tension experienced by rural youth as they weigh the decision of relocating to pursue opportunities available elsewhere. Deep connections to their place of residence can contribute to hesitance for rural youth to pursue higher education or careers (Shepard, 2005). Another reason for indecision regarding staying or leaving and planning for the future in general is a fear of what lies ahead, that it is safer to wait and see (Shepard, 2002).

For this sample of rural adolescents, a minority planned to leave after finishing high school although this potential outmigration of rural youth is common elsewhere in rural Canada. In virtually all Canadian provinces, rural young people aged 15 to 19 years of age are leaving rural areas in greater proportions than their urban counterparts (Dupuy, 2000; Looker, 2001) and only 54 percent of rural youth remain in their community of origin 10 years later (Dupuy, 2000). This migration was reported to be due in large part to less favourable rural labour market conditions and fewer opportunities for post secondary education or occupational training (Looker, 2001).

As part of adolescent development and the transition from high school, youth are provided with educational, economic, and social resources that support and shape the development of relevant skills and characteristics for adult accomplishments (Crockett & Silbereisen, 2000). Rural adolescents, however, are faced with a "bounding process" or a restriction in the range of alternatives in their community (Dehan & Deal, 2001; Shepard, 2003). For example, Shepard (2003) describes that for rural females, social contexts do not provide a range of female educational role models. Thus, the construction and achievement of future selves in educational and occupational domains may require more effort in addition to accounting for barriers when considering what is possible for rural youth. In particular, these limiting factors

facing rural youth have the potential to limit the climate of possibility and restrict the perceived options available for the development of possible selves.

9. *What are rural adolescents' ratings of sense of community?*

As much as rural context was an important consideration, this study was also interested in the perceptions of the rural youth surveyed regarding their connection to their community. This was addressed through the Sense of Community Index (SCI) (McMillan, 1996) which is a measure that is greatly reliant on context for description (Hill, 1996). Regarding the SCI scores from this sample, the overall mean was lower than the overall mean reported in other studies (see Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler, & Williams, 1996). However, it has been reported that adolescents typically report lower scores on this measure than do adults (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999; Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003) and there may be other aspects of community sentiment not captured by the SCI measure that are important for adolescents (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003).

It is important, though, to understand adolescents' ideas of community and community connection in order to account for developmental aspects of community experiences. From the MacMillan and Chavis Model (1986), Membership, Fulfillment of Needs, and Emotional Connection dimensions are integral components in developmental theories. Erikson (1968) identifies the importance of attachment to peers as an important component of adolescent identity development. In particular, tangible social support fills an important developmental need and is a primary correlate of sense of community (Pretty et al., 1996).

Thus, it is an important question whether community is a resource that youth draw on in meeting their developmental needs. Interestingly, the rural adolescents in this survey reported feeling well supported, at least in that they had people they could talk to about their future. This

echoes findings from the McCreary Centre (2004) that describe a majority of youth in the Kootenay region of feeling like there are adults in their family and in the community who they can talk to about personal concerns. Harrison (2005) also named community connections as important supports for youth with almost two thirds of youth feeling that they have good parental and teacher connections and that their contributions to the community are valued. Youth in the Harrison (2005) study spoke of their attachment to the home community. For example, one 17 year old young woman noted "I really like this community because I like the fact of how friendly and close we are" (Harrision, 2005, p. 121). Marshall (2002) also highlights the strong feelings of youth in small British Columbia communities of feeling attached to and supported by their community and the people in them. This perception of social support being available may moderate the limiting effects of occupational and educational challenges and the perceived "bounding process" described in rural areas (Dehan & Deal, 2001) although the same close connections may also constrain rural youth from pursuing opportunities beyond the safety of close family and community (Marshall, 2002).

The British Columbia Atlas of Wellness (Foster & Keller, 2007) presents a series of maps that illustrate the differences between communities for a wide range of variables. Of interest to this research is the map of sense of belonging to a local community for different regions (these results are from the Canadian Community Health Survey, a joint project between Statistics Canada and Health Canada). The Kootenay Boundary region reported the second highest rating of sense of belonging to a local community in the province. The total for ages 12 to 19 (74.89%) was significantly higher than the provincial average (67.32%). In addition, The McCreary Adolescent Health Survey has provided information about the importance of community connections for youth (McCreary Centre, 2004). The youth in Kootenay region reported a level

of family connectedness that was above the provincial average as well as a level of school connectedness that was above the provincial average (Foster & Keller, 2007). In fact, adolescent males had significantly higher levels of school connectedness in the Kootenay region as compared to provincial averages (Foster & Keller, 2007). Thus, although the results from the Sense of Community Index used in this research were not particularly high, there does seem to be a high level of family, school, and community connectedness evident in the Kootenay Boundary region. Perhaps, the Sense of Community Index did not adequately capture community connection for this group of rural youth and a different measure would better be able to assess this effect.

10. Are there gender differences for rural adolescent sense of community and perceptions of the rural context?

While no gender differences for sense of community were evident, for the question, "Does your school offer the courses or programs you want to take?" gender differences were found. Specifically, the female participants responded less favourably than boys to this question. Unfortunately, the survey didn't probe what courses or programs they would have wished for or the reason for the gender difference. The community context questions were quite general and it is possible that they did not capture the differences in perception regarding community context between males and females in enough depth.

Thus, for these rural adolescents, many of whom were nearing their departure from high school, self-concept, possible selves, and sense of community were relevant considerations. The next section will look at some of the connections found among these constructs.

Self-Concept, Possible Selves, and Sense of Community

11. *How is self-concept, both globally and across specific domains, related to the number of hoped-for and feared selves, perceptions of capability for hoped-for and feared possible selves, and sense of community?*

The correlation analyses indicated a positive relationship on only one subscale of self-concept, Close Friendship, and Sense of Community. Both of these measures capture a person's perception of feeling connected either to other people (Close Friendship) or to their community (Sense of Community) and further support the importance of close connections to both people and community for youth (Chipuer, 2001; Pretty et al.,1996). The Sense of Community Model (McMillan and Chavis, 1986) is supported by the conceptualization of sense of community as "a feeling that members have of belonging and being important to each other and a shared faith that members' needs will be met by the commitment to be together" (p. 9) which could also double as a definition for close friendships.

A significant correlation was also found between the Close Friendship subscale of self-concept and the number of hoped-for selves reported and Sense of Community. Thus, individuals with a higher rating on the Sense of Community Index also typically reported a higher score on the Close Friendship subscale and reported more hoped-for selves. This suggests that for the rural youth in this study, a higher sense of community is positively related to having listed more ideas about who they wanted to be in the future and having a more positive self-perception of their close friendships. This could have implications for career programs in schools. Through building both community connections and promoting friendship there may be a link to perceiving more available options in the future.

From the Sense of Community model (McMillan and Chavis, 1986), *influence* characterized the reciprocal relationship of the individual and the community in terms of their ability to affect change in each other. Also, *fulfillment of needs* enables individuals to get their needs met through cooperative behaviour within the community. Both these aspects of the model support an individual to feel not only connected to their community but also able to be able to pursue possible selves through feeling they can effect change and can get their needs met.

A developmental task for youth is acquiring resources to fulfill their needs for intimacy, peer relationships, and consensual validation (Pretty et al., 1996). The demands of this task increase with age as adolescents move away from family and home-centered activities in their pursuit of more independence. Loneliness represents a barrier for this and increases with age. Unless adolescents feel they are accepted members of a community that is available to them, unless they have a "sense" of community, they may choose not to access the resources and opportunities afforded by the community; they may not meet supportive people, develop social networks and acquire social skills, which in turn can impact self-esteem. While high scores on the Sense of Community Index have been related to less loneliness and worry, higher perceptions of happiness and coping abilities, global self-worth, scholastic competence, and social acceptance (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999), in this survey research a significant correlation was only found between sense of community and the number of hoped-for selves as well as the Close Friendship subscale of self-concept.

A correlation between the perception of how capable a person considers themselves to be in terms of obtaining a hoped-for self and current self-concept was found which is consistent with existing literature that connects capability to possible selves, self-concept, (Markus, Cross & Wurf, 1990; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006) and community

membership (Cameron, 1999). In this study, higher self-concept scores both globally and across the eight other subscales correlated positively with a higher rating of how capable a person feels in terms of accomplishing their first most important hoped-for self. Other research has also linked higher self-esteem with greater confidence that positive possible selves will be attained (Knox et al., 1998). Results were less conclusive for feared selves with only the Romantic Appeal subscale correlated with perceptions of how capable a person feels of preventing a possible self.

These results indicate a connection between perceptions of capability in terms of achieving hoped-for selves and self-concept for these rural adolescents. In other words, a high estimation of capability in terms of obtaining a hoped-for self is paired with a high rating of self-concept globally and on these nine subscales; (a) Scholastic Competence, (b) Social Acceptance, (c) Athletic Competence, (d) Physical Appearance, (e) Job Competence, (f) Romantic Appeal, (g) Behavioural Conduct, h) and Close Friendship, and (i) Global Self-Concept. Also, a high estimation of capability of preventing a feared self is paired with a high rating of self-concept on the Romantic Appeal subscale. Thus, there is an important connection between an individual's high estimation of how capable they are of achieving a hoped-for self and a high self-concept or self-esteem score. In other words, how capable a person feels of obtaining a future hoped-for self is connected to how positively a person evaluates him or herself in the present.

In this research, an individual's perception of capability in terms of achieving a future hoped-for self is connected with self-esteem globally and on the eight other subscales. Hoped-for selves that are viewed as attainable by the current self can elicit feeling of self-efficacy and competence (Knox, 2006). This connection underlines an important function of possible selves

as an "evaluative and interpretive context for the current view of self" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p.955), especially in terms of an individual's perception of capability or self-efficacy.

Possible selves are thought to arise from self-competence beliefs at the individual level (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Nurius, 1987; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989; Vernon, 2004) and achieving possible selves is determined by self-efficacy expectations for attaining a particular goal (Bandura, 1986). In his self-efficacy theory, Bandura (1977, 1986) has analyzed agency in terms of mechanisms of the self; the stronger one's perceived self-efficacy, the more effort one will exert and the more one will persist on a given task. Bandura (1986) demonstrated the importance of individuals' beliefs about their efficacy with an efficacy expectation being the individual's belief that he or she is competent or capable to perform a required behaviour or a person's judgement of how capable they are of performing a task (Bong & Clark, 1999; Cervone, 2000). Consistent with this research, higher self-esteem is associated with greater confidence that positive possible selves will be attained (Knox et al. 1998) and "developing a sense of competence and high self-esteem is important during the transition from adolescence to adulthood" (McCreary Centre, 2005, p. 35).

Perception of capability and competence, or efficacy beliefs, and consequently psychological well-being, may be impacted by the compatibility of goals and identities and beliefs about capability that can be shaped by social group membership (Cameron, 1999). An important question to consider is whether identification with a rural context is a barrier to goal attainment due to economic, educational, and occupational limitations or do the close community connections support young people in their pursuits. For example, the participants in this study viewed their rural membership as characterised by some occupational limitations such as having jobs only sometime available for youth and for people who have finished high school as well as

educational limitations such as their school only sometimes offering courses they want to take and only sometimes preparing them once they are finished high school. Thus, while the construct Sense of Community was correlated with self-concept scores on only one subscale, it is possible that the rural setting exerted a contextual influence on the future conceptualization of the self-concept, possible selves, for the participants of this survey.

In addition to a personal sense of capability regarding specific future aspirations or hoped-for selves, present self-concept is also influenced by context. In particular, Cross and Markus (1991) speak of a "context of possibility" that accompanies the affective evaluation of the current self-concept (p. 233). It follows, then, that possible selves are most susceptible to influence from this context of possibility as they are an aspect of the self-system that often changes. This is probably because they are often kept private and not shared with others and, although influenced by others, are primarily defined and evaluated by the individual (Cross & Markus, 1991). In this way, possible selves contribute to the changeable nature of the current self through differential activation depending on social context (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Although research suggests that the close connections experienced by rural youth are significant factors, examples of these were not prominent in the possible selves section of the survey. More typically, responses reflected the educational and occupational limitations in rural area and many responses were linked with leaving the community for jobs, education, and travel. The following are some examples of possible selves that reflect the limitations of the rural context from the present study;

Hoped-for selves.

- *"moving out,*
- *"I want to move to a big city"*

- *"I would like to move to a larger community"*
- *"I wanna move out of this town just because there are so many other possibilities and I can expand on myself"*

Feared Selves.

- *"being stuck with logging or a job that is a low paying job"*
- *"I fear not going to university"*
- *"Not being able to got to college and get a good job that I can be happy with for a long period of time", "crappy house, crappy town", "staying here and doing nothing with my life"*

The current self also provides a context for possible selves; the potential outcomes people imagine are shaped by current personal and social identities (Cameron, 1999). Furthermore, beliefs regarding personal capabilities to achieve a particular goal are likely shaped by important identities, including social group membership such as a rural context. The link between psychological well-being and social identity can be mediated by the belief that group membership enables the attainment of hoped-for possible selves and the prevention of feared ones (Cameron, 1999).

Summary

This study considered self-concept, sense of community, and possible selves for rural adolescents and the connections among these constructs. Many of the rural participants were approaching the transition from high school. A critical aspect of this transition includes looking forward and imagining hoped-for and feared selves in the future. For the participants of this study, occupational hoped-for selves, which referred to specific jobs, positions, lines of work, or employment status, were the most common. In terms of feared selves, lifestyle and personal

feared selves were dominant and these encompassed a particular way of life that could include location, customs or practices, and economics (lifestyle) and references to personal characteristics, ideals, and attributes (personal).

For this group of rural youth, the consideration of the self, both present and future, was viewed through a contextual lens where educational and occupational uncertainties were salient. There was some indication of mixed sentiments regarding the rural communities. Most of the young people were able to find support in their communities and generally liked living there. As well, the close friendship subscale of self-concept and the sense of community scale were positively correlated indicating a connection between closeness to both other people and one's community. However, many of the youth indicated ambivalence about staying in their community after leaving high school.

Finally, an important positive correlation was found between all nine subscales of self-concept and ratings of how capable respondents felt in terms of accomplishing their first most important hoped-for self, thus connecting a sense of capability regarding the future with how a participants evaluate themselves in the present.

The self and the self-system play an important role for adolescents. Connections among past, present, and future are organized by the self-concept and shaped by contextual factors (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). "The self reaches from the current situation into the past and the future, unifying perceptions of 'what currently is' with those of 'what once was' and those of 'what one day might be'" (Cross & Markus, 1991, p. 231). In particular, the future self functions as a standard for comparison and evaluation of the current self, an evaluation that is dependent on the surrounding context of possibility (Markus and Nurius, 1986). This perception of possibility can be shaped by experience and by context. As such, the unique characteristics of a

rural context and an individual's sense of community have the capacity to impact perceptions of possibility and consequently both future and current conceptualizations of the self.

The concluding chapter will address limitations of this research project in addition to implications and future directions.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Implications of Findings

A principal result from this survey demonstrated a connection between a rural adolescent's sense of capability regarding achieving a hoped-for self and current self-concept. This finding, along with other results, have implications for theory and also lead to several important implications for practice for rural youth including (a) build self-esteem though fostering capability and motivation, (b) increase community engagement, and (c) strengthen community connections.

Implications for Theory

This investigation of adolescent self-concept, possible selves, and sense of community was situated within a rural context where there is little research available about the self system. Thus, this research adds knowledge to our understanding of rural adolescent self concept, possible selves, and community connections. From this small sample of rural adolescents, ratings of self-concept were similar to other primarily urban samples. These findings suggest that self-concept differences are not substantial in terms of the ratings of self-concept. However, research has indicated that the context and content of self-concept may differ for rural adolescents (Shepard, 2005). Thus, further research of rural adolescent self-concept may benefit from a qualitative inquiry in addition to assessing self-concept levels.

In terms of possible selves, this sample listed hoped-for selves that were generally very positive which suggests optimistic perceptions, although not always realistic, of future potential. Occupational hoped-for selves figured most prominently which was similar to another rural sample (Shepard, 1997) and different from an urban sample with young adults (Cross & Markus,

1991). This suggests the importance of exploring occupational aspirations with rural adolescents as they approach the transition from high school.

With regards to community connections, this research indicated an ambiguity for participants regarding whether they should stay or leave their community after graduation from high school. On the one hand, they perceived school as not always offering the courses they would like and limited job opportunities but on the other hand, they generally liked living in their community and perceived that there were individuals they could talk to. These findings suggest a potential tension for rural youth between the educational and occupational limitations of their area and strong community attachments. These findings further suggest a regionally specific context. With this in mind, research targeting the self system should be generalized with caution. Finally, the positive correlation between the Close Friendship subscale of self-concept and Sense of Community suggests that interpersonal and community connections may be related. This research did not examine specific community resources being accessed and the types of individuals the rural youth were being supported by. This information may provide a more complete picture of the relationship between community connections and the self-system. This may be particularly important for rural youth in part due to the additional steps, such as moving away from their community, required of many rural youth to access educational and occupational goals. Considering this, it may be very important for rural youth to articulate actions required and challenges they face in moving towards hoped-for selves.

In this study, a positive correlation was found between a higher perception of capability regarding achieving a hoped-for self and a more positive self-concept evaluation. This has implications for the two primary functions of possible selves as an evaluative and interpretive context for the current self and as motivators for present behaviour (Markus & Nurius, 1986),

especially with respect to self-efficacy. Possible selves emerge from self-competence beliefs (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and achieving possible selves is moderated in part by self-efficacy expectations with stronger perceived self-efficacy or perceptions of capability typically leading to more effort or motivation (Bandura, 1986). Thus, the higher self-concept associated with greater estimations of capability may result in motivation to engage in behaviours to achieve the hoped-for self. As a result there will be a favourable evaluation of the current self in relation to the future possible self. The connection found between self concept and possible selves in the present research highlight the value of studying both present and future components of the self together. For instance, possible selves are typically conceptualized as resources that facilitate identity development and that motivate and sustain self-change. In addition, possible selves are relevant self knowledge with which to plan for the future. Thus, when possible selves are accessed, we can really get a sense of the current self-concept in addition to how and individual conceptualizes their future.

Implications for Practice

Build self-esteem though fostering capability and motivation. It is possible that through fostering perceptions of capability, self-esteem will also be positively impacted. This study also showed that youth were able to identify both specific and concrete hoped-for and feared selves in addition to providing examples of behaviours they have engaged in over the last month to achieve or prevent those possible selves. Providing concrete hoped-for and feared possible selves creates personalized goals and connects behaviours to future states (Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, 2007). For example, one study discussed an activities based intervention focused on youth's abilities to imagine themselves as successful adults; connecting these future images to current school involvement was successful in improving school connection and performance

(Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002). Thus, encouraging adolescents to articulate their hoped-for and feared selves in a concrete and specific way may result in actions in the present to obtain or prevent those possible selves. Of the self-system, possible selves are the most malleable component, the element that can most easily assume a new form, and the most responsive to changes in the environment. They are the aspect of the self-concept that that will be the most sensitive to communicating new information about the self and have the potential to influence current evaluations (Cross & Markus; 1991, Markus & Nurius, 1986). Thus, interventions targeting possible selves have great potential to influence possible selves, through the development of hoped-for selves and actions to obtain them. This may also result in a more positive evaluation of self-concept in the present.

Research suggests that structured activities occurring in everyday settings can have great impact on who we think we are and what is possible for us to achieve (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2000). As elements of the self-system that most easily assume a new form, possible selves can easily be addressed through structured interventions which can consequently impact performance (Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, 2007; Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002). Through engaging in structured interventions that explore possible selves, perhaps offered through a school or community organization, adolescents may benefit in terms of present functioning and self-concept, as well as future goal attainment. Through the selection and construction of possible selves, individuals can be viewed as active agents in their own development (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Thus, for rural youth who are less likely to complete a university degree (Dupuy, 2000), a possible selves structured intervention occurring in an everyday setting may enhance the youth's ability to imagine themselves as successful adults. It may also impact how they think about what the self can achieve due to subtle contextual shifts

that may change the sense made of daily experience, which can, in turn, fuel motivation (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002).

Increase community engagement. The Sense of Community Model considers influence as a key component of psychological sense of community. Furthermore, if a person perceives something as out of his or her control or influence, he or she may be less motivated and less likely to engage in behaviours to obtain that end goal (Cross & Markus, 1991). Although the Sense of Community score from this study was not that low, adolescents often perceive a lack of control or influence with respect to their community; they have little choice in where they live as parents usually choose, as well as little opportunity to affect their neighbourhood environments to create a more youth friendly place, which may result in youth apathy regarding community engagement (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999). While youth engagement and perceptions of control was not measured here, it may be important to create space to hear youth voices and involve youth in community decisions and policies in order to foster some control and hopefully encourage motivation towards future goals (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999).

It has been recommended that communities should foster a youth culture that values engagement and to most effectively engage the greatest number of youth, strong partnerships should be developed and maintained between a wide range of community service providers (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2006). In the present study, the Close Friendship subscale of self-concept and Sense of Community were correlated. The rural youth who had more positive perceptions of their close friendships also perceived a stronger connection with their community. Thus, it is important to engage rural youth to increase connections in the community consequently increasing motivation to obtain possible selves as youth navigate the life-career transition to adulthood. This allows them to articulate and access possible selves which are often

viewed as psychological resources, not just in adolescence but throughout adult development, "to motivate and defend themselves" (Cross & Markus, 1991, p. 231).

Strengthen community connections. Despite the educational challenges facing young people in rural communities, teachers are often considered important social supports (Looker, 2001). This is one example of a community connection that can help rural youth as they face the many challenges associated with adolescence and the later transition to adulthood. Thus, it is important to connect rural youth with their community and encourage access to resources (i.e., career planning, rural based training programs, mentoring relationships, volunteer opportunities, employment) to increase perceptions of possibility and therefore motivation to obtain future hoped for selves. Despite facing many challenges and socioeconomic uncertainty, many rural communities are able to adapt and change, demonstrating resilience in the face of adversity (Centre for Community Enterprise, 2000). A key component of developing and strengthening resilience in communities and for their citizens is to strengthen community connections through establishing on-the-ground support and a network of co-operating organizations (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2006; Centre for Community Enterprise, 2000).

I was able to travel to one of the four communities with Dr. Shepard to present results from this research and from the Paths to the Future project. This community demonstrated a number of ways of connecting youth with adult mentors and involved youth in decision making. For example, community members were actively engaged in the school through participating in events, providing resources (e.g., healthy food for events), attended meetings as well as volunteering their time. In addition, this community celebrated youth success with announcements in the hall of the school as well as including youth voices in the design and

building of new resources. Thus, this school provided many examples of initiatives to strengthen community connections.

Limitations of Study

There were several areas of this study that have room for improvement. First of all, changes to the recruitment process may have encouraged a larger number of participants from each community. Recruitment was carried out through communication with school principals over the phone. While the principals were receptive and supportive of this research, it is likely that a presentation in person would have encouraged more participation and more engagement with the research on the part of students.

The sample population in this survey is relatively small thus the results will not be easily generalized to other rural populations. While this is a limitation in some respects, a main purpose of this research was to consider the context of the survey participants. Thus, if context is an integral component of this research, then it follows that the results should not be generalized without considering the context of other communities.

Ethnicity is another potential limitation of the sample population in this survey. Over 88% of participants self-identified as white which creates a bias. As different ethnic groups were minimally represented, generalizations should be done with caution.

This research was exploratory and asked research questions in several areas to guide in this exploration. Future research in this area would benefit from a narrower focus in order to explore individual areas in more depth and hopefully further clarify the connections among self-concept, possible selves, and community discussed here. Also, possible selves are typically kept private (Cross & Markus, 1991) thus a survey may not adequately access possible selves in terms

of number and detail. A face-to-face interview is suggested as an approach that will generate more responses and more details about the responses (Wai-Ling Packary & Conway, 2006).

The nature and development of the self-system is intimately connected to contextual factors. Separation from those in a research setting may result in an incomplete understanding. This has implications for measurement of the self as well. Quantitative measures of self-concept, like the SPPA, assess levels of how positive is a person's self perception in a number of different domains. Although this is an important assessment, a quantitative measure is not able to capture the contextual factors that have contributed to a person's self-concept or the level of self-esteem of that same person.

Future Directions

A central finding of this research was the connection among capability, possible selves, and self-concept. Thus, future research efforts could be put into better understanding the relationship between these constructs. Clarification of the link between individual estimations of capability in achieving hoped-for selves and current evaluation of self-concept or self-esteem are particularly needed due to the potential implications for motivation and the impact on current behaviour. Understanding the relationship between capability of achieving hoped-for possible selves and self-concept may help develop ways of supporting youth as they navigate the life-career transition to adulthood through fostering capability or self-efficacy and achieving a healthy self-concept.

The role played by community in adolescent self-concept development is another area that requires further exploration and clarification. The Sense of Community Index (McMillan, 1996) was not able to account for levels of self-concept for these rural adolescents. Rather, the

rural context more likely impacted the perception of possibility and the resulting construction of possible selves. Thus, it is unlikely that community is not related to self-concept development but more likely that the influence of community was not captured by the SCI measure. A distinct possibility is that the extent to which rural youth are actually accessing services and the types of services being accessed are a more important assessment of community connection. Thus, future research could address the impact of community resources on current adolescent self-concept as well as the construction of possible selves.

Another important consideration of community for future research is the changes brought by the internet in terms of both economy and access to post-secondary education. There are now many options available online for upgrading coursework and for different types of training. These distance learning opportunities provide some reprieve against the traditional educational limitations of rural communities. Also, there are opportunities for people to operate web based businesses. These ventures have the potential to generate jobs and improve the economy as well as provide more opportunities for people in rural communities. It is also possible that the internet and television media impacted rural adolescents though providing a stark contrast to their rural surrounding thus widening the perceived gap between where the rural youth are now and where they want to go. This research did not collect data on the impact of web-based educational and occupational opportunities or on the influences of other media on self-concept development for rural adolescents and this would be an important question for future research.

Concluding Remarks

As adolescents approach graduation from high school, they face a potentially difficult life-career transition. A number of factors have the potential to impact this process for young people including the context in which they live, their sense of self, and what they believe is

possible for the future. In the interest of better supporting rural adolescents as they navigate the transition from high school, this research explored the self concept, possible selves, and sense of community for rural youth, the relationships among these three constructs as well as any gender differences.

For this group of rural youth, the consideration of both present and future self was viewed through a contextual lens where educational and occupational challenges were salient. However, even though many of the young people surveyed were undecided about staying in their community or leaving after high school, they were able to find support in their communities and generally liked living there. Indeed, the close friendship subscale of self-concept and sense of community scores were positively correlated highlighting the importance of close connections to other people and one's community alike. With the transition from high school fast approaching, in terms of hopes and fears for the future, it was no surprise that occupational hoped-for selves were listed most often while lifestyle was the main concern with respect to feared selves. Furthermore, clear, personalized, and emotionally relevant possible selves were often connected to actions in the present to obtain or prevent this self. This is consistent with other research indicating the more specific and vivid a possible self, the more it will be individualized and consequently more likely to positively motivate an individual (Nurius, 1989).

An important connection was also found between a high estimation of capability for obtaining a future hoped-for self and a high rating of self-concept globally and on the eight remaining subscales. In other words, how capable a person feels regarding obtaining a positive future self-conceptualization is connected to how positively a person evaluates him or herself in the present. With respect to possible selves theory, this suggests that the higher self-esteem associated with greater estimations of capability will result in motivation to engage in behaviours

to achieve the hoped-for self. As a result there will be a favourable evaluation of the current self in relation to the future possible self. The results also highlight the importance of considering both the economic and educational challenges of rural areas and the close community supports that are characteristic of rural areas. Finally, there were several important practical implications for rural youth including building self-esteem through fostering perceptions of capability and motivation, increasing community engagement, and strengthening community connections. In practical terms, the variable nature of possible selves and their connections to perceived capability underlines the value of interventions targeting both of these areas in order to support rural youth as they venture beyond high school.

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Appendix A

Paths to the Future:
Person, Place, and Perception Survey – University of Victoria

Introduction

We would like your thoughts about your community, what you are like right now, and who you would like to be in the future. This survey is part of my thesis and Master's research in the Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies. It will take about 30 minutes to complete and your participation is voluntary. Survey results will be summarized and presented in reports, community workshops, conferences, and academic journals. No one will be identified in publications or presentations. A copy of the study will be sent to your school or community agency.
Thank you,

Meg Kapil

Section A: TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF[1]

1.What is your birth date?

_____ _____
Month Year

2. Are you male or female?

☐ Male
☐ Female

3. How would you describe yourself?

❒ Aboriginal
❒ Asian or Asian Canadian
❒ Black or African American
❒ Hispanic or Latino
❒ Indo-Canadian
❒ White
❒ Other (specify) _____

4. In which community do you reside?

❒ Kaslo
❒ Crawford Bay
❒ Slocan
❒ Salmo
❒ Other _____

5. How long have you lived in this community?

_____ years

[1] The questions in this section are from the Healthy Youth Survey (www.youth.society.uvic.ca)

6. If you are in school, what school do you attend?_____

7. What grade are you in? (if you are taking courses in multiple grades, choose the grade you are taking most of your courses in)

10 11 12

Other (Please specify): _____

8. What is your current living situation? (who do you live with?)

- ❒ Both parents
- ❒ Mother only
- ❒ Father only
- ❒ Back and forth between mother and father
- ❒ Mother and friend/partner/step-father
- ❒ Father and friend/partner/step-mother
- ❒ Guardian(s) or foster parent(s)*
- ❒ Other (specify):_____

(* eg. Grandparent(s), with friends, on my own, etc. . .)

9. What is the highest level of education completed by your father/male parent/guardian (if known)?

- ❒ Did not finish high school
- ❒ Finished high school
- ❒ Vocational training (eg., trade school, welding, course, computer course, etc…)
- ❒ Some college/university courses
- ❒ Finished college/university
- ❒ Don't know

10. Is he currently working in a paid job?

- ❒ No
- ❒ Yes
- ❒ What does he do? _____

11. What is the highest level of education completed by your mother/female parent/guardian (if known)?

- ❒ Did not finish high school
- ❒ Finished high school
- ❒ Vocational training (eg., trade school, welding, course, computer course, etc…)
- ❒ Some college/university courses
- ❒ Finished college/university
- ❒ Don't know

12. Is she currently working in a paid job?
- ❒ No
- ❒ Yes
- ❒ What does she do?_____

13. How many years have you lived at your current home?

_____

14. How many times do you remember moving to a different home in your life?

_____

15. Do you have a health condition or disability that keeps you from doing things other young people your age do (such as school sports, getting together with friends)? (*Mark all that apply*)

- ❒ No
- ❒ Yes, a physical disability (such as deafness, cerebral palsy, wheelchair, etc.)
- ❒ Yes, a long term illness (such as diabetes, asthma, etc.)
- ❒ Yes, a mental, emotional or learning condition (such as depression, eating disorder, ADHD, learning disability, etc.)

16. Are you currently dating? (By dating we mean seeing someone or going out with someone who is more than just a friend [could be boyfriend or girlfriend]

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

17. Have you traveled outside of your community in the last 5 years?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

18. Have you traveled outside of Canada in the last 5 years?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

19. Have you traveled outside of North America in the last 5 years?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

Section B: SENSE OF COMMUNITY [2]

The following are some statements that people might make about their community. Each time you read one of these statements, please indicate if it is mostly true or mostly false about your community by simply checking "true" or "false" in the boxes to the right of the statement.

1. I think my community is a good place for me to live.	❒ True ❒ False
2. People in this community do not share the same values.	❒ True ❒ False
3. My neighbours and I want the same things from the community.	❒ True ❒ False
4. I can recognize most of the people who live in my community.	❒ True ❒ False
5. I feel at home in this community.	❒ True ❒ False
6. Very few of my neighbours know me.	❒ True ❒ False
7. I care about what my neighbours think of my actions.	❒ True ❒ False
8. I have no influence over what this community is like.	❒ True ❒ False
9. If there is a problem in this community, people who live here can get it solved.	❒ True ❒ False
10. It is very important to me to live in this particular community.	❒ True ❒ False
11. People in this community generally don't get along with each other.	❒ True ❒ False
12. I expect to live in this community for a long time.	❒ True ❒ False

[2] These questions are from the Sense of Community Index (McMillan, 1996)

Section C: COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The following are also questions about your community. Please read each question and mark the box that best represents your answer and only mark one box per question.

1. Would you describe your community as rural?	❒ Yes ❒ Sometimes ❒ No
2. Does your school offer the courses or programs you want to take?	❒ Yes ❒ Sometimes ❒ No
3. Do you think your school will prepare you well so you can meet your goals once you are finished high school?	❒ Yes ❒ Sometimes ❒ No
4. Do you plan to stay in this community after you are finished high school?	❒ Yes ❒ Sometimes ❒ No
5. Do you like living in this community?	❒ Yes ❒ Sometimes ❒ No
6. Are there jobs available in this community for people your age?	❒ Yes ❒ Sometimes ❒ No
7. Are there jobs available in your community for people who have finished high school?	❒ Yes ❒ Sometimes ❒ No
8. Are there people you can talk to in your community about your future?	❒ Yes ❒ Sometimes ❒ No

Section D: WHAT I AM LIKE?[3]

We have some sentences here and, as you can see from the top of the page where is says "What I am like", we are interested in what each of you is like, what kind of a person you are like. This is a survey, not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Since people are very different from one another, each of you will be putting down something different.
First let me explain how these questions work. There is a sample question at the top, marked (a). This question talks about two kind of teenagers, and we want to know which teenagers are most like you.

1. So, what I want you to decide first is whether you are more like the teenager on the left side who would rather go to the movies or whether you are more like the teenagers on the right side who would rather go to a sports event. Don't mark anything yet, but first decide which kind of teenager is most like you, and go to that side of the sentence.

2. Now, the second thing I want you to think about, now that you have decided which kind of teenagers are most like you, is to decide whether that is only sort of true for you, or really true for you. If it's only sort of true, then put an X in the box under sort of true; if it's really true for you, then put an X in that box, under really true.

3. For each sentence you only check **one** box. Sometimes it will be on one side of the page, another time it will be on the other side of the page, but you can only check one box for each sentence. You don't check both sides, just the one side most like you.

4. OK, that one was just for practice. Continue with these sentences on your own. For each one, just check one box, the one that is most true for you, what you are most like.

Sample Sentence

	Really True for Me	Sort of True for Me				Sort of True for Me	Really True for Me
a)	☐	☐	Some teenagers like to go to movies in their spare time	BUT	Other teenagers would rather go to sports events.	☐	☐

[3] This section is the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988)

	Really True for Me	Sort of True for Me				Sort of True for Me	Really True for Me
1.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel that they are just as smart as others their age.	BUT	Other teenagers aren't so sure and wonder if they are as smart.	☐	☐
2.	☐	☐	Some teenagers find it hard to make friends.	BUT	For other teenagers it's pretty easy.	☐	☐
3.	☐	☐	Some teenagers do very well at all kinds of sports.	BUT	Other teenagers don't feel that they are very good when it comes to sports.	☐	☐
4.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are not happy with the way they look.	BUT	Other teenagers are happy with the way they look.	☐	☐
5.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel that they are ready to do well at a part-time job.	BUT	Other teenagers feel that they are not quite ready to handle a part-time job.	☐	☐
6.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel that if they are romantically interested in someone, that person will like them back.	BUT	Other teenagers worry that when they like someone romantically, that person won't like them back.	☐	☐
7.	☐	☐	Some teenagers usually do the right thing.	BUT	Other teenagers often don't do what they know is right.	☐	☐
8.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are able to make really close friends.	BUT	Other teenagers find it hard to make really close friends.	☐	☐
9.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are often disappointed with themselves.	BUT	Other teenagers are pretty pleased with themselves.	☐	☐
10.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are pretty slow in finishing their school work.	BUT	Other teenagers can do their school work more quickly.	☐	☐
11.	☐	☐	Some teenagers have a lot of friends.	BUT	Other teenagers don't have very many friends.	☐	☐

	Really True for Me	Sort of True for Me				Sort of True for Me	Really True for Me
12.	☐	☐	Some teenagers think they could do well at just about any new athletic activity.	BUT	Other teenagers are afraid they might not do well at a new athletic activity.	☐	☐
13.	☐	☐	Some teenagers wish their body was different.	BUT	Other teenagers like their body the way it is.	☐	☐
14.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel they don't have enough skill to do well at a job.	BUT	Often teenagers feel that they do have enough skills to do a job well.	☐	☐
15.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are not dating the people they are really attracted to.	BUT	Other teenagers are dating those people they are attracted to.	☐	☐
16.	☐	☐	Some teenagers often feel guilty about certain things they do.	BUT	Other teenagers hardly ever feel guilty about what they do.	☐	☐
17.	☐	☐	Some teenagers can be trusted to keep secrets that their friends tell them.	BUT	Other teenagers have a hard time keeping secrets that their friends tell them.	☐	☐
18.	☐	☐	Some teenagers don't like the way they are leading their lives.	BUT	Other teenagers do like the way they are leading their lives.	☐	☐
19.	☐	☐	Some teenagers do very well at their class work.	BUT	Other teenagers don't do very well at their class work.	☐	☐
20.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are very hard to like.	BUT	Other teenagers are very easy to like.	☐	☐
21.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel that they are better than others their age at sports.	BUT	Other teenagers don't feel they can play as well.	☐	☐
22.	☐	☐	Some teenagers wish their physical appearance was different.	BUT	Other teenagers like their physical appearance the way it is.	☐	☐
23.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are proud of the work they do on jobs they get paid for.	BUT	For other teenagers, getting paid is more important than feeling proud of what they do.	☐	☐

	Really True for Me	Sort of True for Me				Sort of True for Me	Really True for Me
24.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel that people their own age will be attracted to them.	BUT	Other teenagers worry about whether people their own age will be attracted to them.	☐	☐
25.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are usually pleased with the way they act.	BUT	Other teenagers are often ashamed of the way they act.	☐	☐
26.	☐	☐	Some teenagers don't really have a close friend to share things with.	BUT	Other teenagers do have a close friend to share things with.	☐	☐
27.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are happy with themselves most of the time.	BUT	Other teenagers are often not happy with themselves.	☐	☐
28.	☐	☐	Some teenagers have trouble figuring out the answers in school.	BUT	Other teenagers almost always can figure out the answers.	☐	☐
29.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are popular with others their age.	BUT	Other teenagers are not very popular.	☐	☐
30.	☐	☐	Some teenagers don't do well at new outdoor games.	BUT	Other teenagers are good at new games right away.	☐	☐
31.	☐	☐	Some teenagers think they are good looking.	BUT	Other teenagers think that they are not very good looking.	☐	☐
32.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel like they could do better at the work they do for pay.	BUT	Other teenagers feel that they are doing really well at work they do for pay.	☐	☐
33.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel they are fun and interesting on a date.	BUT	Other teenagers wonder about how fun and interesting they are on a date.	☐	☐
34.	☐	☐	Some teenagers do things they know they shouldn't do.	BUT	Other teenagers hardly ever do things they know they shouldn't do.	☐	☐
35.	☐	☐	Some teenagers find it hard to make friends they can really trust.	BUT	Other teenagers are able to make close friends they can really trust.	☐	☐

	Really True for Me	Sort of True for Me				Sort of True for Me	Really True for Me
36.	☐	☐	Some teenagers like the kind of person they are.	BUT	Other teenagers often wish they were someone else.	☐	☐
37.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel that they are pretty intelligent.	BUT	Other teenagers question whether they are intelligent.	☐	☐
38.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel that they are socially acceptable.	BUT	Other teenagers wish that more people their age accepted them.	☐	☐
39.	☐	☐	Some teenagers do not feel that they are very athletic.	BUT	Other teenagers feel that they are very athletic.	☐	☐
40.	☐	☐	Some teenagers really like their looks	BUT	Other teenagers wish they looked different.	☐	☐
41.	☐	☐	Some teenagers feel that it's really important to do the best you can on paying jobs.	BUT	Other teenagers feel that getting the job done is what is really counts.	☐	☐
42.	☐	☐	Some teenagers usually don't get asked out by the people they would like to date.	BUT	Other teenagers do get asked out by people they really want to date.	☐	☐
43.	☐	☐	Some teenagers usually act the way they know they are supposed to.	BUT	Other teenagers often don't act the way they know they are supposed to.	☐	☐
44.	☐	☐	Some teenagers don't have a friend that is close enough to share really personal thoughts with.	BUT	Often teenagers do have a close friend that they can share personal thoughts and feelings with.	☐	☐
45.	☐	☐	Some teenagers are very happy being the way they are.	BUT	Other teenagers wish they were different.	☐	☐

Section E: POSSIBLE SELVES[4]

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 possible 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 may be only vague thoughts or dreams about he future, like 'traveling 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 likely, like 'being in poor health', while others 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.

_____

_____

_____

[4] The section is based on the Possible Selves Questionnaire (Cross & Markus, 1991)

Which are your two most important hoped-for selves?

1.
2.

For each of these two possible selves, please circle the most appropriate number in response to the following questions.
For the first possible self:
1 (a) How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(not at all capable) (completely capable)

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

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(not at all capable) (completely capable)

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.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

For the second hoped-for possible self:
2 (a) How capable do you feel of accomplishing this possible self?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(not at all capable) (completely capable)

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

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(not at all capable) (completely capable)

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.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Which are your two most important feared selves?

1.
2.

For each of these two possible selves, please circle the most appropriate number in response to the following questions.

For the first possible self:
1 (a) How capable do you feel of preventing this possible self?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(not at all capable) (completely capable)

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

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(not at all capable) (completely capable)

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.

_____

_____

_____

For the second possible self:
2 (a) How capable do you feel of preventing this possible self?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(not at all capable) (completely capable)

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

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(not at all capable) (completely capable)

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.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing the survey.

Appendix B

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies
PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 3N4 Canada
Tel (250) 721 – 7799, Fax (250) 721 – 6190

Pilot Study

(date)

Dear participant:

My name is Meg Kapil and I am a Master's student in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria. My supervisor is Dr. Blythe Shepard in Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, principal investigator in the "Paths to the Future" research project. I am conducting research regarding the influence of living in a rural British Columbia community on adolescent identity, self-esteem, and future hopes and fears, which builds on the "Paths to the Future" research. We need youth participation in order to pilot test the survey we have developed. Specifically, we are looking for input regarding clarity, comprehension, as well as time and effort to complete the survey.

This survey asks some demographic questions as well as addressing self-esteem, sense of community, and future possible selves. We would like youth from grades 10, 11, or 12 to complete the survey which takes about 30 minutes. Their participation must be voluntary. First Completion of the survey is taken as consent to participate. If anyone decides to withdraw after beginning the survey, they are not required to finish. There will be no consequences.

I will contact you regarding your approval. If you have any questions, please contact myself at (250) 686-9942 or kapils@shaw.ca or Dr. Blythe Shepard at (250) 721-7772 or blythes@uvic.ca Thank you.

Sincerely,

Meg Kapil

Appendix C

School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake)
Office of the Superintendent of Schools
570 Johnstone Road, Nelson, B.C. VIL 6J2
Telephone: (250) 505-7037 Fax: (250) 352-6686
Toll Free: 1-877-230-2288 (Extension 7037)

August 22, 2006

Dr. Blythe Shepard
PO Box 3010 Stn CSC
Faculty of Education
University of Victoria
VICTORIA, B.C. V8W 3N4

Dear Dr. Shepard:

"Paths to the Future" Research Project

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter requesting permission to distribute a survey regarding the influence of living in a rural B.C. community on adolescent self-esteem and future hopes and fears.

Permission is granted to contact the principals of the targeted schools: Crawford Bay Elementary-Secondary, J.V. Humphries Elementary-Secondary, Mount Sentinel Secondary, and Salmo Secondary. We receive a number of requests to do surveys and individual schools may or may not participate, depending upon individual circumstances.

Thank you for your interest in the Kootenay Lake School District.

Sincerely,

Wm. Reid,
Superintendent of Schools

WR/cb
Cc: Mr. J. Brisebois, Principal, Crawford Bay Elementary-Secondary
Ms. A. Verkerk, Acting Principal, J.V. Humphries Elementary-Secondary
Mr. A. Leathwood, Principal, Mt. Sentinel Secondary
Mr. P. Judd, Principal, Salmo Secondary

Appendix D

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies
PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 3N4 Canada
Tel (250) 721 – 7799, Fax (250) 721 – 6190

Dear Principal:

My name is Meg Kapil and I am a Master's student in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria. My supervisor is Dr. Blythe Shepard in Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, principal investigator in the "Paths to the Future" research project which emphasized the importance of understanding life-career development as a subjective experience. I am conducting research regarding the influence of living in a rural British Columbia community on adolescent self-concept, self-esteem, and future hopes and fears, which builds on the "Paths to the Future" research. We need youth participation in order to better understand the role of a rural community in the transition to adulthood that faces older adolescents.

In an earlier part of this study, several individuals in your community participated in interviews related to this topic. Using the information from those interviews we have developed a survey which we would like to give to a larger number of youth in your community. This survey asks some demographic questions as well as questions about self-esteem, sense of community, community context and future possible selves. We would like as many youth as possible from your community to complete the survey. The survey takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and can be completed online and outside of classroom time, we are just requesting a few minutes of classroom time to introduce the survey and distribute an information letter that will contain the web address for students to access the survey. We would like as many adolescents in grades 10, 11, and 12 to participate and I hope to have your assistance for this phase of the research project.

This research is concerned with adolescent emotional, social, and personal development as important factors in the development of healthy and active educated citizens in addition to preparing adolescents for life after high school For participating schools, following survey completion we would like to offer to make available resources from a workshop titled Future Bound designed to support youth in the transition to adulthood and in career exploration.

Your School District has approved this research. We are asking for your help to obtain participants in your classroom or agency. Please ask whether your students are willing to complete the survey. Their participation must be voluntary. A summary of the thesis results will be provided to all partners and to individuals if they request it. Research findings will also be communicated to rural residents, parents, and interested professionals through interactive workshops. The results of the study may also be published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at professional and/or scholarly conferences.

I will contact you regarding your approval. If you have any questions, please contact myself at (250) 686-9942 or kapils@shaw.ca or Dr. Blythe Shepard at (250) 721-7772 or blythes@uvic.ca
Sincerely,
Meg Kapil

Appendix E

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies
PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 3N4 Canada
Tel (250) 721 – 7799, Fax (250) 721 – 6190

Paths to the Future: Person, Place, and Perception Survey

Teacher Information

Dear Teacher:

My name is Meg Kapil and I am a Master's student in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria. My supervisor is Dr. Blythe Shepard in Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, principal investigator in the "Paths to the Future" research project which emphasized the importance of understanding life-career development as a subjective experience. I am conducting research regarding the influence of living in a rural British Columbia community on adolescent self-concept, self-esteem, and future hopes and fears, which builds on the "Paths to the Future" research. We need youth participation in order to better understand the role of a rural community in the transition to adulthood that faces older adolescents.

In an earlier part of this study, several individuals in your community participated in interviews related to this topic. Using the information from those interviews we have developed a survey which we would like to give to a larger number of youth in your community. This survey asks some demographic questions as well as questions about self-esteem, sense of community, community context and future possible selves. We would like as many youth as possible from your community to complete the survey. The survey takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and can be completed online and outside of classroom time, we are just requesting a few minutes of classroom time to introduce the survey and distribute an information letter that will contain the web address for students to access the survey. We would like as many adolescents in grades 10, 11, and 12 to participate and I hope to have your assistance for this phase of the research project.

This research is concerned with adolescent emotional, social, and personal development as important factors in the development of healthy and active educated citizens in addition to preparing adolescents for life after high school. For participating or interested schools, following survey completion we would like to offer to make available resources from a workshop titled Future Bound designed to support youth in the transition to adulthood and in career exploration. Upon completion of the survey, students will be able to enter a draw to win a gift certificate. At this point they would enter their contact information so that if they were to win, I could send them gift certificate to. This contact information would be kept separate from the survey data, which is anonymous.

Your School District and your principal has approved this research. We are asking for your help to obtain participants in your classroom. I would like permission to come and speak to your class to introduce the suvey or have you introduce the survey for me and have attached a script of what either you or I would probably say for this introduction. Please ask whether your students are willing to complete the survey. Their participation must be voluntary. A summary of the thesis results will be provided to all partners and to individuals if they request it. Research findings will also be communicated to rural residents, parents, and interested professionals through interactive workshops. The results of the study may also be published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at professional and/or scholarly conferences.

I will contact you regarding your approval. If you have any questions, please contact myself at (250) 686-9942 or kapils@shaw.ca or Dr. Blythe Shepard at (250) 721-7772 or blythes@uvic.ca
You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca.
For any issues or questions relating to the online survey distribution and access please contact Tom Ackerley at the University of Victoria Survey Research Centre Ph: (250) 472-5250
Fax: (250) 472-5388 E-mail: ackerley@uvic.ca Web: http://www.coag.uvic.ca/src.htm

Sincerely,

Meg Kapil

Appendix F

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies
PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 3N4 Canada
Tel (250) 721 – 7799, Fax (250) 721 – 6190

Paths to the Future: Person, Place, and Perception Survey

Participant and Parent Information Letter

Dear Students and Parents:

My name is Meg Kapil and I am a Master's student in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria. My supervisor is Dr. Blythe Shepard in Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, principal investigator in the "Paths to the Future" research project which emphasized the importance of understanding life-career development as a subjective experience. I am conducting research regarding the influence of living in a rural British Columbia community on adolescent self-concept, self-esteem, and future hopes and fears, which builds on the "Paths to the Future" research. We need youth participation in order to better understand the role of a rural community in the transition to adulthood that faces older adolescents.

This research is concerned with adolescent emotional, social, and personal development as important factors in the development of healthy and active educated citizens in addition to preparing adolescents for life after high school. For participating schools, following survey completion we will to make available resources from a workshop titled Future Bound designed to support youth in the transition to adulthood and in career exploration.

In an earlier part of this study, several individuals in your community participated in interviews related to this topic. Using the information from those interviews we have developed a survey which we would like to give to a larger number of youth in your community. This survey asks some demographic questions as well as questions about self-esteem, sense of community, community context and future possible selves. We would like as many youth in grades 10, 11, and 12 as possible from your community to complete the survey. The web-based survey takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and can be completed online and outside of classroom time.

As a way to compensate for any inconvenience related to participation, students will be given the opportunity enter a draw to **win one of 30 - $20.00 gift certificates for either Dairy Queen or Subway** at the end of the survey. At this point you would enter your contact information so that if you were to win, I could send the gift certificate to you. The draw will occur on October 31, 2007 and at this point the survey will no longer be available online. If you do not submit the survey on-line your name will not be entered into the draw for one of the gift certificates, however, if you still wish to be included in this draw you may email your contact information

you may email your contact information to the researcher and you will be entered into the draw. This contact information would be kept separate from the survey data, which is anonymous. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Your School District has approved this research. Participation of students must be voluntary and the decision to participate will not be known by either your teacher or your principal and will not have any bearing on your grades or other school related assessment. Participants are permitted to withdraw at any time from completing the survey but once the survey is submitted it is logistically impossible to withdraw the anonymous data. Through completion of the survey their consent is inferred. Completing and submitting the survey implies that students and parents have had the opportunity to have their questions answered and give their consent to participate in the study. A summary of the thesis results will be provided to all partners and to individuals if they request it. Research findings will also be communicated to rural residents, parents, and interested professionals through interactive workshops. The results of the study may also be published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at professional and/or scholarly conferences.

If you have any questions, please contact myself at (250) 686-9942 or kapils@telus.net or Dr. Blythe Shepard at (250) 721-7772 or blythes@uvic.ca
You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca.
For any issues or questions relating to the survey functioning and access please contact Tom Ackerley at the University of Victoria Survey Research Centre Ph: (250) 472-5250
Fax: (250) 472-5388 E-mail: ackerley@uvic.ca Web: http://www.coag.uvic.ca/src.htm

Sincerely,

Meg Kapil

The web address for the survey is: http://survey.uvic.ca/pttf/pttf.htm

Appendix G

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies
PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 3N4 Canada
Tel (250) 721 – 7799, Fax (250) 721 – 6190

Introduction to Person, Place and Perception Survey

Verbal Script to be read by teachers to students:

I am introducing a survey that has been designed by Meg Kapil, a Master's student in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria. I (the teacher) am not involved in this research and will not have any knowledge of your participation and your decision to complete the survey or not will not have any impact on your school evaluation. Meg is looking for youth participation in order to better understand the role of a rural community in the transition to adulthood that faces older adolescents, such as yourselves.

The web-based survey takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and can be completed online and outside of classroom time. You will be provided with an information letter that includes all of this information as well as the web address where you can access the survey and contact information in case you have any questions or concerns. Upon completion of the survey, you will be able to enter a draw to win one of 30 $20.00 gift cards to either Subway or Dairy Queen. At this point you would enter your contact information so that if you were to win, the gift certificate could be sent to you. This contact information would be kept separate from the survey data, which is anonymous. If you withdraw from the survey, you can still enter the draw by emailing Meg your contact information.

Participation is completely voluntary and the decision to participate will not be know by either your teachers or your principal and will not have any bearing on your grades or any other school related assessment. Participants are permitted to withdraw at any time from completing the survey but once the survey is submitted it is logistically impossible to withdraw the anonymous data.

This information can also be found in the information letter I will now hand out.

Thank you

Appendix H

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies
PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 3N4 Canada
Tel (250) 721 – 7799, Fax (250) 721 – 6190

(Date)
(Address)

Dear Principal,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of the Paths to the Future: Person, Place, and Perception Survey. Your assistance in distributing information and recruitment material has been instrumental to the success of this project. I have now finished collecting data from the survey and am beginning to analyse and process the results. Upon completion of my thesis in Spring 2008, I will make a copy available to you and your school as well as to any other interested parties. At this time, I would also like to offer to visit your school and explain the research findings in person in addition to making available a workshop about supporting youth in their transition to adulthood. I welcome any further questions or comments and will consult with you prior to disseminating the research results in your school.

Sincerely,

Meg Kapil
MA candidate, Counselling Psychology
Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, University of Victoria
Email: kapils@telus.net
Phone: (250)686-9942

Appendix I

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies
PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 3N4 Canada
Tel (250) 721 – 7799, Fax (250) 721 – 6190

November 10, 2007

Dear Participant,

In appreciation of your participation in the Paths to the Future: Person, Place, and Perception Survey, you have won one of 30 - $20.00 gift certificate for either Dairy Queen or Subway.

This research is part of my master's thesis at the University of Victoria regarding the influence of living in a rural British Columbia community on adolescent self-concept, self-esteem, and future hopes and fears. Youth participation was needed in order to better understand the role of a rural community in the transition to adulthood that faces older adolescents.

This research is concerned with adolescent emotional, social, and personal development as important factors in the development of healthy and active educated citizens in addition to preparing adolescents for life after high school. A summary of the thesis results will be provided to all partners and to individuals if they request it. Research findings will also be communicated to rural residents, parents, and interested professionals through interactive workshops. The results of the study may also be published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at professional and/or scholarly conferences.

If you have any questions, please contact myself at (250) 686-9942 or megkapil@uvic.ca or Dr. Blythe Shepard at (250) 721-7772 or blythes@uvic.ca
You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca.
For any issues or questions relating to the survey functioning and access please contact Tom Ackerley at the University of Victoria Survey Research Centre Ph: (250) 472-5250
Fax: (250) 472-5388 E-mail: ackerley@uvic.ca Web: http://www.coag.uvic.ca/src.htm

Sincerely,

Meg Kapil