An Ethnographic Report: The Intersection of Self, Career, and Education in the Life of Kelly Smoker

Kelly Smoker

Follow this and additional works at: https://mosaic.messiah.edu/honors

Part of the Sociology Commons

Permalink URL: https://mosaic.messiah.edu/honors/259
An Ethnographic Report: The Intersection of Self, Career, and Education in the Life of Kelly Smoker

By Kelly Smoker

Senior Thesis
Sociology Seminar
SOC 430
Dr. Stephen Cobb
Spring 2005
Word Count: 18,938
An Ethnographic Report: The Intersection of Self, Career, and Education in the Life of Kelly Smoker

Subject Context

It’s no surprise that the senior year of college brings with it several major life decisions, most notably what career one will decide to pursue. For some this decision comes easily – Dave has wanted to be a doctor as long as he can remember, Jenny knew she wanted to be a teacher when she pretended to teach grammar to her little cousins. However, for others the decision of career path endeavor becomes quite a road block. It may raise hard questions, cause one to question his or her natural talents and developed skills, strike fear in the hearts of the indecisive, and even threaten to cause students to give up on trying to decide what to do after school.

If I am honest, I must place myself in the second category mentioned above. While I have not resorted to giving up quite yet, the decision has become a large and sometimes overwhelming one. Like many other children, I had aspirations as a youngster. I can clearly remember “playing school” with my younger cousins, during which I was always the teacher. However, once my college years approached, education did not seem as appealing anymore. So I started pursuing a degree in Psychology and halfway through my four years decided that Sociology would be a better fit for me. Now I stand less than three months from receiving my college degree (unless Doc Cobb decides otherwise), and I realize that a huge world of opportunity awaits me. While I have not experienced panic attacks of any kind, it is rather unsettling to feel significantly
undecided regarding future career plans. So, I embark on an ethnographic study of myself. It is important to make clear from the beginning that as I undertake this journey of self-discovery, there are several different aspects of myself and my life experience that I intend to examine and analyze in regards to my future career possibilities. However, as I continue in this process, I expect that I will find that certain factors are more influential than others. Therefore, as I continue my soul-searching and research on various career options, it is likely that I will change my focus slightly. The factors that I present from the beginning are those that seem most influential to me. They include: gender, religious background, personality, upbringing, talents and abilities, and other people's opinions about what I should do. I may add items to this list that appear to be overwhelmingly influential or remove those that turn out to be less influential than I thought. However, throughout this project my focus will remain on those factors that have influenced me the most in my life until this point, and those that I think will be most significant as I choose a career to pursue and dive into it.

At the core of this journey lie several goals. First, I intend to explore those career options that incorporate my personality and talents and abilities, as well as my educational background in Sociology. I will also look deliberately and closely at the impact my gender, religious background, upbringing, and perceptions of others' expectations have on my desires and thoughts about my future career. Ideally, the end result will be a clearer idea of what type of career I would most enjoy and seem best suited to pursue.
Working Hypotheses

It is important to note the word “working” here. I begin with several hypotheses that stem from my understanding and knowledge of myself, as well as my limited knowledge of careers that I am interested in at this point. However, I do anticipate changes in my ideas and I am fully aware that I may prove these hypotheses wrong. It is also important to me that the reader is informed of this. As I begin this journey, I hypothesize that:

1) I will become aware of several different career options that can sufficiently incorporate my education, personality type, and talents.
2) These career options will include jobs in the fields of education, law, and human resources.
3) There will not be one specific occupation that is the “perfect fit” for me.
4) A common characteristic among the career options that seem to fit me best will be working with people, and most likely serving people.
5) This process will prove to be eye-opening in that the self-discovery tests will bring to light personality traits and abilities that I am currently unaware of or oblivious to.
6) Some factors that I will find to have been influential in my views on career include: gender, religious background, upbringing, and others’ expectations of me.
7) Of the influential factors, I will find that I am more affected by my upbringing and what I perceive to be others’ expectations of me than I am affected by my gender and religious background.

Methodology

A significant part of this original research will be conducted through interviews. Because the basis of this thesis is discovering more about myself, a majority of interviews will include myself as both the interviewer and the interviewee. I will also interview close family members and friends who know me very well, perhaps even better than I may know myself, and incorporate this data with my own perceptions of myself. Additionally, I will be taking a variety of tests. I anticipate that these tests will help me better understand different aspects of my personality and will also make me more aware of my talents and abilities. To access these tests and other resources, I will be utilizing the services of the on-campus Career Center. I anticipate several visits to the facility, including meetings with a career counselor. I also plan to use the Career Center to find resources that relate my Sociology degree to career options. Finally, I will be using various literary works including books and articles to gain information to aid in this process. The main purpose of using literature sources will be to learn more about careers in sociology, to explore the variety of different jobs that exist and what specific occupations entail.
Theoretical Analysis

It is expected that the majority of the theoretical analysis involved in this project will emerge as the project unfolds. I expect to find more theoretical explanations as I continue in my self-discovery and research about careers. However, there are several theoretical frameworks that I expect to be aware of and use frequently throughout this project. Standpoint theory will be especially useful in viewing my life and my decisions by understanding the various groups I am a part of and how levels of power vary among them. The concept of "definition of the situation" will most likely be applied often as well. This concept essentially means that if I believe that a situation is real, then I will act according to my perception of the situation even if it is not congruent with the reality (Ritzer 2003: 60). Another concept is that of Charles Horton Cooley, the looking-glass self. Cooley coined this term to refer to the idea that we tend to define who we are by how other people respond to us (Ritzer 2003: 60). I expect that this concept will be especially applicable when I evaluate my upbringing and conduct interviews with my parents. I know that my mother has always been a significant figure in my life and I anticipate that if I am able to look at the situation objectively that I may realize that I tend to define who I am by what she feels I should be or who I am. Again, it is important to note that as I continue in this research, other theoretical concepts will become more relevant. As this happens, these concepts will be incorporated into the thesis.
Findings and Conclusions

It must first be noted that while this research does intend to be exhaustive, researching the self is a never-ending project, resembling a bottomless pit of memories, influences and decisions. Because of the nature of this project, I was forced to draw lines at certain points and decide not to pursue research beyond them. I did delve into a significant amount of information, and explored many aspects of myself and my history. However, to keep from writing a novel instead of a paper, I did not address every specific aspect that has been influential in my life regarding this decision. I gleaned information from Messiah College’s Career Center, interviews with employees of several fields that are appealing to me, interviews with those who know me the best, a job fair on campus, and self-reflection about my history and the factors in life by which I have been most influenced.

Help from the Career Center

While on the pursuit of the “career for me,” I decided to enlist the help of the Career Center on Messiah’s campus. There, I was directed to three different assessment tools that are made available to students and which seemed like they could be useful with this project. In the proceeding section, I will describe each test, present the results, compare the results of all three tests, critique the tests and present my response to the results.
Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator

The first assessment tool that I was directed to and completed was the Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator. I think this is a test that I have completed at some point before this, but it was still helpful to go through the questions again, and I received more information regarding my specific personality type that is very helpful.

The Myers-Briggs consists of four different scales, and the participant’s response indicates where he or she falls on each scale. Each scale consists of two contrasting personality traits. The first scale measures how extraverted or introverted an individual is. This indicates whether the individual is energized by things outside or inside of him or her. The second scale indicates whether the individual prefers working with “known facts” (Sensing) or searching for relationships and possibilities (Intuition). The third scale measures whether an individual bases his or her decisions on personal values (Feeling) or impersonal logic (Thinking). Finally, the fourth scale measures an individual’s preference for flexibility and spontaneity in life (Perception) or organization, plans and decisions in life (Judgment) (Kummerow 1987).

My results from this test indicate that I fall on the extraversion, intuition, feeling, and judgment ends of each spectrum. My position on the first three scales was rather easy to place, but I had some trouble deciding whether I fell on the judgment or perception end of the last scale. However, it seems that I fit the “judgment” description better, so I am going to place myself on that end of the spectrum. So, my personality type is indicated by the combination of letters ENFJ.
ENFJ’s can be described with words such as “warm, empathetic, loyal, responsive, highly attuned to the emotions, needs, and motivations of others, sociable, responsive to praise and criticism” (Myers 1998). They also “facilitate others in a group, provide inspiring leadership and want to help others fulfill their potential” (Myers 1998). It is also important to recognize potential weaknesses of this personality type. These include avoiding conflict, taking criticism personally, and seeing others ideally instead of in reality (Communication Consultants, LLC 1993).

There are particular aspects that ENFJ’s prefer in regards to work environment. For someone who has a personality type like me, a career should include opportunities to form relationships and meet people, creativity, and an environment that is “supportive and friendly” (Communication Consultants, LLC 1993). Some potential careers for people with an ENFJ personality type include: entertainer, advertising sales executive, personal counselor, minister, teacher, housing director, social worker, career counselor, human resource trainer, newscaster or politician (Communication Consultants, LLC 1993).

My Response

Most of the information I gathered through this tool was not surprising for me. I have always considered myself to be an extravert, and I am very aware that I often think with my heart instead of my head. The weaknesses described also fit me very well. I avoid conflict and allow it to build up instead of dealing with it when it happens. I am also very sensitive to criticism, even if it is meant to be constructive. The description of a
career that would be preferable for me is helpful and the characteristics provided are very appealing to me. I am also fascinated by the list of potential jobs. Some of them are very appealing while others are ones that I certainly would not consider. Overall, this information seems accurate and I am confident that it will be helpful to be aware of the preferences that I possess in regards to a job and the workplace environment.

One critique I have of this test, and the other two I completed as well, is that because they are completed by the individual about himself or herself, there is a great opportunity for error in regards to bias. If I see myself as (or if I think I should be) very extraverted or intuitive, it is likely that I will answer the questions and place myself on the scale where I think I should be, regardless of whether or not I was truly honest in answering the questions. While it cannot be dismissed that self-reflection is a very helpful tool, it remains necessary to make note of the possible shortcomings that accompany it. So, in analyzing these results, it is important to keep in mind that these tests are not perfect, nor are they the ultimate truth on my specific personality type. Instead, these tools are being used to expand my understanding of myself, and hopefully gain some helpful information regarding careers that may be options for me to pursue.

**Campbell Interest and Skill Survey**

The Campbell Interest and Skill Survey (CISS) is a survey consisting of 320 questions regarding the test-taker’s interest and skill levels in regards to various vocational fields and specific occupations. The goal is to find a career in which a high level of both skill and interest are present. The survey results are designated in three
different scales: seven orientation scales which are broad vocational themes, basic 
interest and skill scales, subscales of the previously mentioned orientation scales, and 
occupational scales, in which my interest and skill levels for various occupations are 
compared with the interest and skill levels of employees from these fields.

There are seven different “Orientation Scales” in the profile that relate to different 
occupational arenas. They are: influencing, organizing, helping, creating, analyzing, 
producing, and adventuring. My interest and skill levels were calculated for each of these 
areas. The scales range from 30 to 70. Scores between 30 and 40 are considered “very 
low,” 40 to 45 is “low,” 45 to 55 is “mid-range,” 55 to 60 is “high,” and 60 to 70 is “very 
high.” The survey also has the designations of pursue (high interest and high skill), 
develop (high interest and lower skill), explore (lower interest and higher skill), and 
avoid (low interest and low skill). The designations are applied to the seven broad 
orientations as well as specific occupations in these fields. In regards to the orientation 
scales, the test results show that I should avoid the influencing, analyzing, producing, and 
adventuring work arenas, and pursue helping activities (Campbell 1994:2).

Under each orientation scale there are subscales called basic scales (Campbell 
1994: 3). These scales include more specific fields under the broader orientations. For 
example, under the influencing orientation, there are basic scales such as leadership, 
public speaking and sales. The organizing orientation consists of the basic scales of 
supervision, financial services, and office practices. The helping orientation includes 
basic scales such as counseling, child development, and religious activities. The creating 
orientation includes performing arts, writing, and fashion. Mathematics and science
constitute the analyzing orientation. The producing orientation is characterized by basic scales such as animal care and mechanical crafts. Finally, the adventuring orientation consists of basic scales of athletic/physical fitness, military/law enforcement, and risks/adventure (Campbell 1994:3). The only orientations in which there were basic scales that resulted with pursue or develop were organizing, helping, and creating. The results indicated that supervision and culinary arts are areas that I should develop and that I should pursue areas of office practices, adult development, counseling, and religious activities (Campbell 1994:3). It is important to note that even though some of the orientation scales are designated “avoid,” there are aspects of the subscales that may be designated “develop,” “explore,” or “pursue.” I will now present findings from each orientation, as well as comment on how accurate I feel the results are.

Influencing Orientation

For the most part, the CISS results for this orientation suggest that I should avoid “influencing” careers, such as an attorney, a financial planner, or a realtor. My results indicate that there are a few occupations in the influencing orientation that I could develop or explore. Corporate trainer, media executive and advertising account executive were all listed as career options that I could develop, which means that my interest level is rather high, but my skill level is lower. This was a bit surprising to me because I would not think of myself as the “executive” type. Pursuing a career as a corporate trainer is more appealing to me. However, I do not feel like I have a complete understanding of what these jobs entail. This is probably in part due to the fact that they
seem more like “business” careers, which is not a field that I have looked into at all. The one career that was listed as one that I should explore is a human resources director (Campbell 1994:4). This is especially interesting to me because this is the position that my mom holds, and I have heard her say before that she thinks I would also do well in the field. I address the impact my mother has on my life elsewhere in this paper, but I do find it significant that the same career that my mom has decided to pursue appears as one that I may also enjoy. Overall, the results from this section are to a certain degree what I would expect, such as the suggestion to avoid careers of a realtor and an attorney. I was also surprised by some results, such as the suggestion that I pursue a career as a media executive or advertising account executive.

**Organizing Orientation**

The two subscales within this orientation in which I scored the highest were supervision and office practices. This strikes me as an interesting combination in regards to gender roles. Typically, and I would say this is especially true within the church, women are not expected to hold supervisory positions to the degree that men are. However, when I think of “office practices,” I think of a position such as a secretary. I would say that this is stereotypically a woman’s domain. So I find it fascinating that these are the two areas in which I scored the highest, in the organizing orientation. According to the survey, I could pursue the occupation of a secretary, and develop the career of being a bank manager. In addition, I should avoid trying to be an insurance
agent, a hospital administrator or an accountant (Campbell 1994:5). These results do not necessarily surprise me, especially the careers that are suggested I avoid. One thing that I should mention is that I have found myself becoming organized within the past year. I think this is due in part to the fact that I have been balancing my senior year of college (at a new school nonetheless) and planning a wedding. However, I have found that I have increasingly become “anal” about having my space clean, and needing to organize things, especially when I am feeling stressed. As I envision my future husband and myself living in an apartment, I am picturing myself cleaning fairly often and keeping everything tidy. Because of my increased need to be clean and organized, I wonder if a career that entails organizational activities will become more appealing to me. Overall, I do feel that this part of the survey was fairly accurate in describing careers that I would and would not appreciate.

Helping Orientation

This is the one orientation that was designated with the label “pursue.” This did not come as a surprise to me. Helping and serving others is something that has always been important for me and very rewarding as well. It is also appropriate to mention here that one of my working hypotheses that was formulated before beginning this project was in regards to potential careers and the presence of people and the inclusion of helping or serving people. This survey seems to confirm this hypothesis by showing how important helping is to me, especially within a career.
The survey states that "helpers are seen as supportive, nurturing, trusting individuals who value compassion, interpersonal harmony, and service to others" (Campbell 1994:6). I think this sentence describes me perfectly. I see these qualities as some that are internally and spiritually a part of my makeup, and not characteristics that will change as I continue in life. The only two careers listed in this section for which results indicate that I should avoid are a nurse and nursing administrator. This was not surprising to me at all. The medical field has never interested me and I have never even entertained the thought of pursuing a career as a nurse, doctor, or any other job that would require me to enter a hospital or doctor's office on a daily basis.

One result from this section that I found very interesting is that the career of psychologist was not labeled as one that I should develop, pursue, or even explore. Considering the fact that I spent half of my college life as a psychology major, and now am finishing my degree with a psychology minor, this is fascinating to me. I have sometimes doubted my decision to transfer out of the psychology program, so it is somewhat reassuring to see that this survey coincides with that decision. Two of the careers listed in this section were deemed ones that I should develop: child care worker and kindergarten through twelfth grade teacher (Campbell 1994:6). I am rather surprised to see that child care worker showed up this way, because I have never pictured myself working with young children. However, I am not surprised to see that teaching is a career that I should develop. This is a career path that I have thought about since I was a young child, but for some reason I have not pursued it.
The three careers from the helping orientation that results suggest I should pursue are: guidance counselor, religious leader, and social worker (Campbell 1994:6). I am not surprised by the first of these — I think guidance counseling is something I would really enjoy. My fiancé and I have also talked about becoming youth pastors after we are married, so I am also not very surprised to see religious leader show up as a career possibility. I probably should not be surprised to see social worker in this category either, but it is not a career path that I am interested in pursuing. From what I have heard about this field, it is very stressful and I do not think I would find it rewarding. In general, I can say fairly confidently that I will pursue a career path that includes helping activities, regardless of whether or not it is one of the careers listed in this survey.

Creating Orientation

This section did not have many careers for me to pursue. Several of the careers were labeled “develop,” and while it may sound fun to be a musician or a writer, I do not see it as something that I would enjoy as a career (Campbell 1994:7). I have had a decent amount of exposure to music during my life thus far. My family is very musical, and I have been involved with orchestras, choirs and theater during my elementary, middle and high school years. Singing is one of my favorite things to do and I have been able to do it rather frequently over the past few years, but I have realized that performing is not something that fits my personality and character very well, and therefore I cannot see
myself pursuing a musical career. I do envision myself making use of my musical abilities in church during the next several phases of my life.

Analyzing and Producing Orientations

Both of these sections had “avoid” written all over them (Campbell 1994:8-9). This is not surprising to me. I am not interested in math or science, and careers such as architecture and carpentry are not appealing to me.

Adventuring Orientation

This section was another one that does not hold much potential for me in regards to possible career options. I know that I am not a risk-taker, so I was not surprised to see that working as a ski instructor, test pilot, or military officer would not be advised for me. However, the results did show two careers that have potential for being fulfilling for me: athletic coach and fitness instructor (Campbell 1994:10). Not surprisingly, I showed rather high levels of interest in these careers but low skill levels. While these jobs sound like “fun” to me, I do not think that they would be the best choices for me to pursue.
“Special Scales”

This survey also included two “special scales.” One is related to academics, in regards to which the results state: “People who have scores as low as yours typically report almost no interest and very little confidence in academic activities, such as studying, conducting research, and writing scientific papers” (Campbell 1994:11). This was very surprising to me, because for most of my life I would say that I enjoy school and I have always done well at it. I think that one factor that probably affected this in a significant way is that I completed the survey during my last semester of college, at a point where I am extremely ready to be done with schooling for awhile. The other scale was related to extraversion. I was very surprised to see that I only fell at the mid-range level on this scale. I have always thought of myself as an extravert, and in every other assessment tool I have used that I can think of, I have tested as an extravert. While these tools are being used to gain information about myself, it is important to keep in mind that a single personality assessment tool cannot be taken as the ultimate truth about any aspect of personality. There may be times when patterns among the results of assessment tools and behaviors evident in an individual may be a more accurate indication of personality attributes. However, it is possible that as I continue to grow, mature and discover more about myself and who I am, that I may become more introverted than I used to be. I am not opposed to this happening, and perhaps it has begun to happen already.
Critique and Response

For the most part I found this survey to be helpful. As I have mentioned in regards to each section, I agree with most of the results of the survey. While I do not take the results as divine or definite plans for my life, I am glad that I took the test and I think it will prove fairly accurate as I pursue a career.

One specific critique in regards to this test is that it attempts to measure skill level. Before I took the survey, I was encouraged to be generous when reporting my skill level, even though the various descriptions to choose from indicate a much higher level of skill than that which is actually present. This is recommended so that there is more variety in the skill levels instead of all of the career options showing an average amount of skill. Although I was probably more generous than I would have been without this advice, it still seems a bit inaccurate to have someone judge their own skill level in these various areas. As I mentioned at the beginning, that is one of my biggest critiques of these tests – I may define a certain skill level as one thing, but the next person who takes the test may define it in a completely different way. So, as I have said before, these results are not being perceived as a printout of my career plan, but simply as suggestions and various options to consider.
Strong Interest Inventory

The Strong Interest Inventory (SII) is very similar to the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey, except that it exclusively measures interests and does not address skill level. The SII results consist of six general occupational themes, twenty-five basic interest scales, and 211 occupational scales. The six occupational themes are: social, conventional, enterprising, artistic, realistic, and investigative. The two themes in which I scored the highest were social, which includes interests of instructing and helping, and conventional, which encompasses activities such as accounting and processing data. Religious activities, culinary arts, teaching, office services, and social service are the five basic interest scales in which my interest levels were highest (SII 1994:2)

The SII includes a comparison of my results within the various basic interest scales with other women’s level of interest. I find it interesting that with the exception of religious activities, the basic interest scales that I scored highest on (listed above), are all areas that, according to the SII, women typically have higher interest in. This is also true for the two occupational themes that I scored the highest in (SII 1994:2). This is interesting to me because I do not think of myself as one who would prefer to stick to “women’s work.”

I will now present each general occupational theme, the findings in relation to each theme, and the occupational scales which fall under them, as well as my response to these findings.
Realistic

The words used to describe this theme are “building, repairing, and working outdoors” (SII 1994:3). Considering this, I was not surprised to find that the results indicate that I have “very little interest” in this category (SII 1994:2). Examples of some occupations in this category include auto mechanic, carpenter, electrician, forester and military officer. All but one of my scores fell below the mid-range level. The only occupation for which my interest level was in the mid-range was that of a radiologic technologist. However, even this score was barely into the mid-range level, so it is clear that careers of this category are most likely not good fits for me (SII 1994:3).

Investigative

As expected, this general area of occupations is not one that is particularly appealing to me. “Researching, analyzing, and inquiring” are used to describe this area, and these words are not indicative of anything that interests me. These scores were even lower than those of the realistic arena, with only one score falling within the mid-range (SII 1994:3). However, I was informed by the career counselor that the specific occupation that I tested somewhat higher in has been determined as not valid for this inventory. So, clearly, this field is also not one that I should pursue a career in.
Artistic

Generally, my scores in this area were low. Two of my scores in this section did fall above the line that designates I would probably enjoy that type of work. These were advertising executive and corporate trainer (SII 1994:4). This is interesting because both of these careers appeared in the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey and were designated as career options that I should develop. A career such as an advertising executive has never been an option I have considered, and it is not very appealing for me. I do not feel like I fully understand what being a corporate trainer entails, but from what I have heard about the job, it may be something I could consider in the future. I do find it interesting that these specific careers surfaced in both surveys and showed fairly high levels of interest.

Social

Considering the fact that relatively soon I will be completing my bachelor’s degree in Sociology, I would expect my interest in careers of this section to be fairly high. Indeed this is the occupational theme in which I scored the highest. Careers with highest scores include: speech pathologist, special education teacher, social worker, child care provider, elementary school teacher, community service organization director, high school counselor, and home economics teacher (SII 1994:4). Four of these careers (social worker, child care provider, teacher, and guidance counselor) also appeared in the
Campbell Interest and Skill Survey as occupational paths that I should develop or pursue. According to this survey, my interest levels are high for these careers, but several of them do not appeal to me. I cannot see myself as a social worker, home economics teacher, child care provider, or speech pathologist. Community service organization director is a career that I have not considered prior to this survey, and I am not sure if it would be a good choice for me or not. I do not necessarily see myself as the “director” type, but perhaps it is something that I could learn to enjoy. However, teaching and counseling are two areas that are more appealing to me. So I was not particularly surprised to see that they appeared as potential career options on both of these surveys. These two careers are also addressed more in-depth later in this paper.

Enterprising

My interest levels for careers in this field were relatively low. The one career that I scored fairly high in was that of a human resources director (SII 1994:5). This career also appeared in the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey as one that I could explore, and the fact that this same career has appeared on my surveys makes me think that perhaps I should look into this occupational path. As I consider this career, I realize that while I think I have a significant amount of knowledge about the career – particularly because this is my mother’s job – I do not have a complete understanding of what it entails. This is a career that I would enjoy looking into and learning more about. Perhaps it is one that I could pursue. The rest of the careers in this arena are less appealing to me. The only
other occupational choices that fell in the mid-range level of interest were a flight
tendant and hair stylist (SII 1994:5). I do not have a strong desire to be on planes daily
or weekly, and I have enough trouble taking care of my own hair, so I do not see these
careers as working very well for me.

Conventional

This is not a word that I would typically use to describe myself, but it appears that
these types of careers are appealing to me. There were several careers in this section that
I showed relatively high levels of interest in. They are: banker, business education
teacher, credit manager, farmer, and paralegal (SII 1994:5). I am still wondering how I
scored so high on the farmer scale. This career is not appealing to me at all. I do not see
myself as a banker or credit manager. The career of business education teacher does not
seem very “me” either. However, it is interesting to me that the teaching theme has
appeared once again. It makes me wonder if my childhood dream of being a teacher
should be pursued after all. I still am not sure that teaching is a career that I would fully
enjoy, but it is something that I would like to put serious thought into.

Paralegal is another career that I thought might be interesting, but after asking a
co-worker who holds this position about her work, I am not sure that I would enjoy it
after all. She mentioned the paperwork involved, and that is something that is just not
appealing to me at this stage of life. Perhaps after being out of school for several years
and being away from the paper-writing environment this career will have more appeal for me, but right now it is not something that I am planning on pursuing.

**Personal Style Scales**

Similar to the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey, this inventory also included several other scales that relate to learning, leadership and work styles. The first scale was a work style scale which indicated either a preference to work alone or to work with a team. I was not at all surprised that this scale indicated my preference to work with others as part of a team. I have always seen myself in this way, and it is something that is very important for me as I look for jobs.

The next scale was a learning environment scale, which was similar to the scale in the CISS that referred to academics. This scale indicated my preference for more practical learning as opposed to an academic environment of books and lectures. This result coincides well with the scale from the CISS, as well. The way the SII words this preference makes the result seem more accurate to me. It states that someone at this end of the spectrum “prefers practical learning environment; learns by doing; prefers short-term training; seeks training to achieve a specific goal or skill” (SII 1994:6). This seems to fit me very well. I would much rather learn something by doing it instead of sitting in a classroom learning about it. This preference seems to be something that I should take into consideration when choosing a career. It also makes me feel more legitimate in my
strong feelings opposing graduate school right now. While I am sure that these feelings are intensified because I am ready to be done with school for awhile, it does seem that my learning style lends itself to a preference not to pursue years upon years in higher education. This is also very interesting for me because throughout my four years of college I have second-guessed my decision to pursue a college degree, and during my sophomore year I debated taking a year off from school. However, I did not think that I was “allowed” to have these thoughts. I have always been “good” at school, so I guess it seemed to me that this meant I should continue pursuing a college education. I can also remember discussing this with my mom and trying to explain to her that I really did not enjoy school. I remember her telling me that my grades indicate that I did not dislike it too much. It seemed that to her, my accomplishments in the academic world indicated my desire to be there. To realize at the end of my college career that my learning style probably does not fit extremely well with the typical “academic environment” is very enlightening and freeing for me.

The personal style scale section also included a leadership style, indicating whether or not the test-taker is more comfortable taking charge of others. I fell fairly close to the middle on this scale, but my score did reflect a slightly stronger desire towards not taking charge, and perhaps leading my example instead of telling people what to do (SII 1994:6). Leadership is an issue that I am a bit unclear about right now. During middle school and high school I considered myself to be one who enjoyed taking charge and leading groups. For example, I was the senior class president of my graduating class in high school. However, I have not been involved in leadership
positions during college. I do not know if I will continue in this trend after college. Perhaps I just have not felt comfortable taking leadership in the college setting. Another contributing factor could very well be the fact that during my four years of college, I have attended three different colleges. It is likely that my continuous transitions influenced my lack of desire or confidence to become involved in leadership positions. If this is case, once I settle into a job somewhere, maybe I will feel comfortable once again and begin taking leadership initiative. At this point I am uncertain how this will unfold.

The final personal style scale was a risk taking/adventure scale. I was not at all surprised to find that my scores indicate a lack of risk-taking activities (SII 1994:6). I am not one to take chances or seek adventure. This scale seemed to be “right on” regarding this aspect of my personality.

Critique and Response

There were several careers suggested in this inventory that I do not see as complementary to my personality and desires. Being a farmer and working in culinary arts were two options for which my scores indicated a high level of interest, but neither of these occupations are appealing to me. In regards to the culinary arts, I assume that I demonstrated high levels of interest pertaining to entertaining and hostessing, and perhaps that is why this vocational field was suggested. However, I hardly ever cook and it is certainly not something I could make a living doing! In regards to farming, I really
do not have an interest in this, and I cannot understand why the results indicate that I could pursue a life as a farmer. Perhaps I showed interest in aspects of nature, and that caused the results. Regardless of these two careers that seemed “off,” overall this test was helpful. Certain aspects were even enlightening, such as my preference for a practical learning environment. I am glad I completed this inventory, and the results have proven relevant in regards to this project.

My critique of this test is the same as the others I have completed. Because all of the information that is gathered and analyzed for the results comes directly from me, it seems that there may be room for biases in the inventory. I do think that for the most part these results are accurate. However, I wonder if the same results would be achieved if I would take complete the inventory during a different part of the day, month, or year. It seems that factors as trivial as fatigue or hunger would impact my choices. Additionally, immediate previous experiences could be influential. For example, if I had just heard a story about a airplane crash on the news, I would hypothesize that I would be less likely to look favorably upon pursuing a career as a pilot. Again, these criticisms should not be taken as reasons why the tests are not accurate. Instead, it is important to keep in mind that the inventories are not perfect, and are susceptible to errors such as biases.
Interviews

I also felt that it would be helpful to speak with individuals who have firsthand experience in the career fields that I might consider. While I could not interview someone from every career field that has ever interested me, I picked three of the most appealing and spent time talking with people who work in these fields.

Special Education

The occupation of special education teacher did appear on one of my inventories as a career that I could pursue. Because I have expressed interest in this particular field earlier in my life, I thought it would be beneficial to interview someone who has experience in this field, and try to get a better idea of what a job in this arena might entail.

Interview with Kari Smith, Special Education Teacher

I interviewed Kari Smith, a member of my home church body. Kari is part of the Itinerant Learning Support at Lampeter-Strasburg High School, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Her job involves going into what she termed a “regular ed” classroom and co-teaching with a “regular ed” teacher. She teaches mainly social studies and math classes and has anywhere from five to ten learning disabled students in her classes (Smith, interview).
Kari has several degrees. She had a double major during college – she majored in Elementary Education and Special Education. She also completed graduate school and has a Masters degree in Teaching and Development with a focus as a Reading Specialist (Smith, interview).

As an Itinerant Learning Support teacher, Kari co-teaches three classes a semester. Classes meet everyday for an hour and a half, due to block scheduling. At the beginning of every day Kari has 80 minutes of “prep,” which allows her to prepare for the day. At the end of each day she also has 50 minutes of “flex,” which is like a Study Hall, and again allows her to get her work done (Smith, interview).

When I asked Kari what the stress level is like, she responded “It is really stressful” (Smith, interview). There is a high burnout rate among special ed teachers – they will teach a maximum of ten to fifteen years. She explained that “regular ed” teachers do not understand the life of special ed teachers. There is a significant amount of paperwork, and one mistake could cost the school thousands of dollars if a parent decides to bring a lawsuit against the school system. The majority of the paperwork consists of Individual Education Programs (IEPs), which need to be done for every student and are often fifteen to twenty pages long. These documents include goals and objectives for the student. Right now there is a push to have this requirement changed at the national level, so that IEP’s only need to include one goal instead of five or more goals, each with perhaps ten different objectives. Kari informed me that parents are really fighting this change, but she cannot see any negative impacts it could have. She says that “good” special ed teachers will teach the same whether they list one goal or five
goals for students. Because Kari co-teaches with a “regular ed” instructor, the amount of work is split between them and she says usually she does not have to take work home with her. The exception would be a week when she needs to finish three IEPs (Smith, interview).

Kari says that the hardest part of her job is the paperwork. She also says that she needs to have really good tact with other teachers. As she mentioned earlier, special education seems to be in a completely different world than regular education. Because of this, there can be conflicts between teachers from these two camps. She shared a story about one of her students whose grade in a class dropped significantly and when Kari asked the teacher why this had happened, he replied that the student had not handed in a project. The student claimed that he did, there was a substitute teacher in that day and the student was sure he handed in the project. While Kari believed the student, the teacher did not and he gave the student a week to hand in the project, which was hopeless for the student because of the size of the project and the requirement that each student had to work with someone else. Kari was frustrated by this but did not feel like she was in the position to say anything to the teacher. A couple days later, Kari noticed that the student’s grade had gone back up and when she asked why she discovered that the student’s paper had been in the stack with everyone else’s, but the teacher could not read his name on the paper. For both the student and for Kari, this was a frustrating experience. It showed me what Kari meant when she said that regular ed and special ed are like two different worlds. It also helped me to understand the necessity of being tactful with other teachers (Smith, interview).
Kari told me that what she likes most about her job is working one-on-one with students. In regards to regular education, Kari said she knew she did not want to do that because you teach a group of kids and you don’t know where each one is at with the material. She said the one-on-one aspect of special education is what made her want to enter the field. She says, “I don’t like letting kids fall through the crack – that’s what regular education is.” She shared that in the education field they are told that a third of the class will be “with you,” a third of the class with be ahead, and a third of the class will be behind. This was not appealing to Kari, so she decided to pursue special education (Smith, interview).

Kari says that it is “really easy to get a job” in the field of special education. She thinks that the market will be in the specific field she is in – Itinerant Learning Support. The federal government has made some changes and is now requiring a highly certified teacher in every classroom. This means that some teachers who have been teaching special ed mathematics at the high school level for years will now either need to have a degree in math or be able to pass a math Praxis exam. This change has not been well-received by special ed teachers and it seems that they have good reason. If someone is teaching math in a high school in the special ed department, they are not teaching high school level math and there is not really any reason that they need to have a great knowledge of high school math. Kari says that “inclusion is the way to go.” Inclusion means that you are co-teaching with a regular ed instructor. Only one teacher in each classroom needs to be highly certified, so as long as the regular ed teacher has a degree in the subject being taught, everything is alright (Smith, interview).
Another aspect that I asked Kari about is what the pay is like for a special education teacher. She said that she thinks special ed teachers today can start around $37,000 a year and have the option of moving into the $50,000’s quickly. Kari and her husband have three daughters, and although she is on maternity leave right now, Kari is the main breadwinner in the family. She says that she hears co-workers complain about the pay, but she attributes that to the fact that many of them are married to businessmen and engineers who make significantly more than teachers. However, she is happy with the pay (Smith, interview).

When I asked how flexible the job is, Kari laughed and replied, “Teaching is not flexible.” She is able to get maternity leave, but she is not getting paid while she’s gone. Kari feels that part-time teaching would be better, but it is very hard to get. She started as part-time at the school she is at now, but after a year or two they asked her to take full-time hours. She said this is typical, even if you are able to start as a part-time teacher, there will be pressure for you to go to full-time (Smith, interview).

Because of the nature of my project, I asked Kari what she sees as important qualities for someone to have if they plan on entering the field of special education, and what qualities it is important not to have. She said that most of the special ed teachers she works with are first-borns and she thinks they can do the job the best. She said it is very important to be driven and committed and have the ability to laugh things off and have a sense of humor with the kids. She said people who are laidback or easily stressed probably would not do as well in the field (Smith, interview).
Finally, I asked Kari if she would recommend this field to others. Before we began the interview she told me that every other time someone had asked her about special ed, she had talked them out of it. She labels special ed “a really tough field” (Smith, interview). Her advice in regards to education in general is that if you cannot decide between special ed or regular ed, you should go with regular ed. An interesting thing she shared is that it is nearly impossible for someone with a dual major (Special Education and “Regular” Education) to just teach in the regular education setting. If you are certified in special education, that is where schools are going to want you. She said she has friends who have been in this situation, and they are not able to get teaching jobs that are not in special ed. However, Kari chose to have a double major so that she would have regular ed to “fall back on” if she ever gets “burnt out” (Smith, interview).

**My Response**

It was so interesting to interview Kari and hear her firsthand experience in the field of special education. If I am honest I have to admit that it did not make me want to pursue a career in this field. As much as I have always thought I could be a teacher and even thought I wanted to be a special education teacher, I do not know if I could handle the stress that Kari described. One aspect that she mentioned that I know would be really hard for me is the fact that as a special education teacher, I would be responsible for the success of my students. If a student fails, the blame is on me. I know that this would be hard for me, that it would be very stressful for me, and that I would place a great deal of pressure on myself and blame myself for things. Another aspect that is not at all
appealing is the amount of paperwork that is required of special ed teachers. I am aware that because I am in my last semester of college and I have several major projects that require a lot of writing, I am disgusted by the thought of having to continue with paperwork after I graduate. I do not know if some time out of school will change my feelings about this significantly or not. However, the stress level and the lack of flexibility she described made me feel like this occupation is not one that would be a good fit for me. Conducting this interview was extremely helpful for me in realizing how important it is to really know about the field before pursuing it. It makes me glad that I did not decide to major in special education as a freshman in college, because there aren’t really other career options I could pursue with such a specialized degree. I feel pretty safe in saying that this career option is “crossed off the list.”

It is also important to note that interviewing a special education impacted my feelings regarding “regular” education as well. As I have mentioned throughout the paper, education is a field I have always considered, but have not yet decided to pursue. Even though my communication was with a special education teacher, it decreased my interest in any type of teaching position. This may very well be due to the fact that I am extremely ready to be finished with school, so the thought of entering one everyday for work is not necessarily appealing right now. As with other careers, perhaps a few years from now this will become more attractive. If so, I can pursue graduate school.
Human Resources

As I was typing up my results from the personality tests, I realized that human resources director showed up on both of the interest inventories. Because of this, I decided it would be helpful to talk to someone who is involved in this field. Fortunately, I have a friend who is involved in this field. Joe is a friend of mine from church who works in human resources.

Interview with Joe Good, Human Resources Department

Joe Good’s official title is “Recruitment Specialist.” This position is part of the Human Resource Department of the produce company where he is employed. Typical activities in Joe’s daily routine include conducting interviews, making phone calls to applicants, conducting new-hire orientations, solving problems, and doing “legal stuff”, such as reviewing hiring, firing, and discrimination policies. In regards to problem-solving, Joe says, “it’s almost like customer service but our employees are our customers” (Good, interview).

Joe says that his favorite part of his job is working with people and being able to help people. He enjoys “being able to make a difference in people’s lives.” Specific ways that he feels he is able to do this include: helping people find employment, having opportunities to encourage people, becoming involved in people’s lives, and helping people understand why the company does what it does (Good, interview).
He says the worst part of his job is the need to enforce policies. He says this is not always easy to do. An example includes having a friend interview for a job and not being the one chosen for the position. He explains that there are two different spheres – the work sphere and the friend sphere, and they need to remain separate at some times (Good, interview).

Joe has been out of college for almost three years. He graduated from Houghton College with Bachelor degrees in Sociology and Spanish. His interest in Human Resource work developed during his senior year in college when he took a Human Resource Management class. Joe also completed a Professional Human Resources test, which validates or certifies him as a Human Resource employee. He indicates that this is not necessary to be involved in the field (Good, interview).

I also asked Joe about the financial aspect of a job in the human resource field. He indicated that an administrative assistant in the human resources department could probably start at $20,000-$25,000/year. He offered that he started around $30,000/year without any experience (Good, interview).

In regards to flexibility, Joe shared that he does not think it would be a problem to work part-time in this field. He said the particular company that he works in is pretty flexible. For example, one of their employees worked from her home for a year. This is a significant difference from the response I got from Kari regarding flexibility. Because I do hope to start a family within the next five years or so, it is important to me that I find a career that will be relatively flexible in this regard. Kari also indicated that it is very
difficult to find part-time work in the teaching field, while Joe did not see that as being a problem within human resources (Good, interview).

I asked Joe what his opinion was on the availability of jobs in this field. He said it is easier to find a clerical job than it is an administrative position. He shared that HR work is becoming more and more important and valued, and that “blowing it off sets you up for trouble.” He said for most companies there are, or should be, one HR person for every 75 employees. Another interesting piece of information is in regards to gender. Joe shared that he thinks there are more women in this field than there are men (Good, interview).

Finally, I asked Joe what personality traits are important to have if pursuing a job in the HR field, and what traits are important not to have. He said, to be involved in HR work, one should be “energized by people”, sympathetic, good at listening, able to be firm, organized, willing to work within structure but also be flexible and able to handle things that come up during the day, positive, patient, and willing to learn and stay current regarding legal matters. As far as personality traits that are not desirable in this field, Joe simply said that the opposites of the previously listed are traits that would not be helpful in the HR arena (Good, interview).
My Response

I was almost scared at how appealing this field sounds to me. That sounds odd, but after encountering so many careers that are not appealing, it almost seems too good to be true, I suppose. Almost everything that Joe shared about this career sounded good to me. I love working with people, and that is one thing that I will absolutely require in my career. I have also enjoyed working in customer service as a waitress and at other “tourist-y” locations. So when Joe described HR work as customer service with employees, it sounded great to me. As he listed the personality traits that would be important for someone to have when entering the field, I almost felt like he was describing me. While I cannot say that I feel like I am a perfect fit for a job in this career, it is by far the most appealing I have run across yet.

Guidance Counseling

As a career that was mentioned by all three of my close friends and family that I interviewed (these results are presented later), and appeared in the personality assessments, I thought it would be helpful to speak with someone involved in the field of guidance counseling.
Interview with Roger Landis, Guidance Counselor

Roger Landis has been a guidance counselor at Hempfield High School in Lancaster County for twenty-six years. His undergraduate degrees are in History and Psychology. He also completed his Masters degree in Counseling through Millersville University, and received his certification for School Counseling in public schools (Landis, interview).

As a high school counselor, Roger is responsible for 360 students – specifically those students whose last names begin with Kel-Mer. His responsibility for these students also includes a responsibility to their “networks”– their parents, teachers, etc. Roger has other various responsibilities as well. For example, he is the NCAA Eligibility liaison in the high school. A typical day for Roger begins around 7:15 a.m. and ends around 5:00 or 6:00 p.m., depending upon how much paperwork he needs to complete after the students leave school (Landis, interview).

An interesting aspect about guidance counseling that Roger shared with me is that it first began after the Russians sent “Sputnik” to space. At that time, guidance counseling consisted of encouraging students to get into math and science so that the United States could “catch up” to the Russians. Obviously the field has changed considerably since its beginnings (Landis, interview).

Roger describes his job as consisting of three major components. There is the academic counseling aspect of the job, which includes tasks such as revising programs
within the school and tracking students’ credit fulfillments so they can graduate on time. The second component is the personal, social, and family counseling aspect. This includes meeting with students in regards to issues that are not directly related to academics. This job at times requires a referral to a professional psychologist. Finally, Roger’s job includes a component focused on jobs and careers. In the guidance office is a career center with plenty of information for students to access regarding career, educational, and military opportunities (Landis, interview).

I discovered through my discussion with Roger that guidance counseling is significantly different than what I had thought it was, and I expect that this is the case for many others as well. Roger shared one example of an elementary teacher within Hempfield’s school system who really wanted to get into high school counseling and did so for a couple years but it was not at all what she expected so she did not continue doing it. Roger shared that often when a student or parent is frustrated with a teacher, the guidance counselor is the person who gets to hear about the frustration – they become the ones on whom these individuals “dump” the problem. Another significant issue is the political arena. With so many educational issues becoming legislated, teachers and guidance counselors alike are under more pressure to do things in a certain way. If paperwork is not properly completed, and events documented, lawsuits could be brought against these individuals and the school system. Roger describes this job as consisting of a lot of “covering your tail” (Landis, interview).
In regards to the stress level of being a guidance counselor, Roger says, “you have to be able to walk out of the building and let it there.” He says the times he becomes stressed are when he feels like everyone is coming at him with demands at the same time. This is something that he says happens “enough.” Roger says that the career is fairly flexible. If counselors want to, they can have their summers basically free (Landis, interview).

In regards to pay and benefits, Roger thinks that these positions could start in the low $30,000’s. In Pennsylvania public schools, a Masters degree is required to start at an entry-level position. Roger notes that a guidance counselor would earn more than a teacher starting with a Bachelor degree. He also said that the benefits in public education are “decent” (Landis, interview).

Roger shares that he is “energized” by being with the students. He enjoys watching the “evolution” of students as they progress through high school. He tries to make himself available to the students by walking the halls and sometimes venturing into Study Halls to find students he needs to chat with about minor issues. He does note that the more available he is, the more he is presented with. He shares that there are other ways to become involved with the students, such as chaperoning. He also coached girls’ tennis for twenty-three years and boys’ basketball for fourteen years. Because of his percussion skills, he has also been able to get involved musically (Landis, interview).

Roger says one of the worst parts of the job is the paperwork involved. From his perspective, some of this paperwork seems unnecessary. Another aspect of the job that
he mentioned is that seeing the dysfunction present in families can sometimes make him feel very hopeless (Landis, interview).

In regards to obtaining a job in this field, Roger feels that a very important factor is personal contact, such as knowing someone already in the field. He said that there are different surges of positions that open up as waves of counselors come and go. He suggested that having another skill, such as coaching, would be beneficial. He also mentioned that a resume, internship, and experience are important (Landis, interview).

Finally, I wanted to know what specific personality traits Roger saw as being important in the field of guidance counseling. He shared that organizational skills, a sense of humor, flexibility, communication and people skills and an ability to adapt to meet people’s demands are important traits for someone to possess if they want to pursue a career as a guidance counselor. Roger also said that it is important to be upbeat and optimistic, respect people from all walks of life, and have an “at least I tried” attitude. Guidance counselors cannot “ride strictly on successes” or hold stereotypes toward groups of people (Landis, interview).

My Response

It was interesting for me to see a career other than teaching within the education system. I have had a desire to work in the education system, but I am not always sure that teaching is the best route for me. So, it was good to see another option presented.
However, I was disappointed to hear that Roger’s actual interaction with the students is limited. The reason that I would like to work in the education system is because I would enjoy being with students, especially having an impact on their lives in the ways that my own teachers have. While I am appreciative of Roger’s creative ways to experience more interaction with students, such as walking the halls and entering Study Halls, he did say that being available also results in having more work.

Another aspect of this kind of work that is not at all appealing to me right now is the need to finish more schooling. As I mention elsewhere in this project, I am feeling very burnt out with school right now and the last thing I want to think about is going for several more years. This may change in a few years, but right now it is not something that I have the desire to pursue. The flexibility and variety that Roger described was appealing to me because I know that I could not do the exact same thing day after day. Overall, it was interesting and enjoyable for me to learn more about guidance counselors. Talking with Roger did not necessarily increase my desire to pursue a career as a guidance counselor. While it is not a career that I currently feel the desire to pursue, I do not rule it out as an option to consider in the future.

Helping Professions Job Fair, Messiah Campus

This is an experience that I thought might be helpful in regards to my career hunt, and I thought it would be a good experience overall. However, I was disappointed after
going to the job fair. The most disappointing aspect for me was that none of the careers I inquired about excited me, or even seemed appealing. Perhaps this is just because I am sick of thinking about careers and school, but I don’t really think this is the case. I do not even know what it was about the careers that did not appeal to me, but I can say with confidence that I left without thinking that I wanted to pursue any options that were presented.

Upon thinking about this experience, I began to think more about the “helping” aspect of a career that appeals to me. I remembered that I had heard a parable from the Bible at a younger age and it had stuck with me. It is the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in the book of Matthew, and in it Jesus says, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me” (New International Version 1992:882). I realized that this verse held some pressure for me. I think for most of my life I have felt that there is a certain way in which I need to “help the least of them.” I am not sure how exactly I think this has to be done, but I am fairly sure that all of the career options I saw at the job fair would fit into the “OK” category. This is a rather new revelation for me, and one that I need to spend some more time thinking about. I do know that I enjoy helping others. I love serving people, that is just part of who I am. So I do not feel like I am in a field that is completely wrong for me. But it does seem like there are some issues that I need to look at and think through before pursuing a career.
So, while the job fair was not necessarily productive in regards to job leads or ideas, I found the experience to be very helpful in regards to this entire process. It has raised new questions and brought enlightenment in new areas.

**Family Interviews**

In addition to seeking information from the Career Center and other literature, I thought it would be helpful to interview the people who know me the best. I was interested in seeing how they would describe me, and what kinds of careers they envision me pursuing, or not pursuing. I decided to interview my mother and father, as well as my fiancé. I will present their answers to each question that I asked them. I also asked myself the same questions that I asked them, and I will compare their answers with mine as well. I asked each interviewee (including myself) the same questions: What would you say some of my best qualities/talents are? What are some of my worst qualities/areas to grow in/bad habits? What fields and/or specific occupations do you see as fitting me well? What about my personality/talents makes these jobs good for me? What fields and/or specific occupations do you see as bad fits for me? What about my personality/talents makes these jobs bad for me?
What are my best qualities?

In regards to this first question, my father gave fairly basic answers. He described me as confident, fun and easy to be around, smart, pretty, friendly, loyal, a good listener and processor and also possessing musical abilities (Smoker, interview). My mother described me as insightful, compassionate, sensitive, determined, a musician, and possessing a “unique blend of organized and creative” (Smoker, interview). Duane, my fiancé, used the following characteristics to describe me: caring, fun-loving, “justice-striving”, a “people person”, trustworthy, good at singing, a “sweetheart”, likes to laugh, good listener and of high moral character (Lapp, interview). The words I used to describe myself include: friendly, work well with people, encouraging, happy, compassionate, justice-oriented, detail-oriented, responsible, musically talented and having a servant’s heart. For the most part, I think that my answers seem fairly congruent with those of my parents and fiancé. Confident and creative were the two characteristics that they listed that I am not sure I would use to describe myself, but they are attributes I would like to have.

What are my worst qualities?

The answers given by my parents and Duane were fairly similar. They included dealing with anger and frustration, allowing criticism to “shut me down”, not allowing myself to feel emotions that I don’t feel legitimate in experiencing, and noticing negative
aspects of situations and allowing them to affect me (Smoker, interview; Lapp, interview). I agree with all of these qualities, and they match those I listed of myself almost perfectly. I am aware that I do not handle conflict or criticism well, and I tend to stay “stuck” on negative aspects of situations.

Which fields are good for me and why?

In regards to careers, my mom listed special ed teacher, guidance counselor, advocating for justice for women, children or minorities, education, human resources and customer service as ones that would be “good fits” for me. She listed my compassion, insightfulness, creativity, internal sense of justice, and people skills as traits that would allow me to enjoy these careers (Smoker, interview). My dad listed the following careers as ones that I could pursue: counselor, working with kids, interview, singer, paralegal, human resources person, teacher, social worker, or “something related to people.” His reasons for these jobs closely resemble my mother’s and include the fact that I work well with people and enjoy being with them, am compassionate, and ally for the less fortunate (Smoker, interview). My fiancé listed these careers as those that would fit my personality: social work with kids, elementary education teacher, guidance counselor, mission work, paralegal, secretary, and housewife. My love for kids, desire to help those less fortunate and organizational skills were listed as traits that make these jobs fitting for me. In regards to me being a housewife, Duane says, “I think there’s part of you that might like that” (Lapp, interview). This is something that I address later in this paper.
The careers that I listed for myself are somewhat similar to those offered by my family, but there are some differences as well. Three careers that were mentioned by my family that appeared on my own list are guidance counselor, secretary and something related to music. However, the other careers that I listed were restaurant manager and assistant to a photographer or florist, which do not resemble anything else that was mentioned by my family. I think my reasoning for listing restaurant manager is because I have worked at a restaurant for the past four years, and I really enjoy working in customer service and engaging with people. My current situation certainly impacts my desire to be an assistant to a photographer or a florist, because I have been working with these kinds of people as I am planning my wedding. The appeal in a job like this for me is the creativity involved, the ability to be involved with the processes but not responsible for them, it includes variety, I would be able to work with people, and I would enjoy being a part of a small company such as an independent photographer or florist. I am interested to see if my desire for a job like this remains after this “wedding season” is over or not.

**Which jobs should I avoid and why?**

There was a variety of careers offered in this category, and they portray a wide variety of fields. These jobs included: factory worker, database administrator, fast food worker, kitchen worker, politics, data entry, production line worker, health care, addictions counseling, construction worker, and information technology. The reasons
that I would not enjoy these fields include: I would rather work with people than things, I don’t enjoy being by myself, I’m not “callous” enough (to be a politician), I don’t like blood and body fluids, I’m not interested in computers, and simply because I “wouldn’t like it” (that was said in regards to a career as a construction worker) (Smoker, interview; Lapp, interview).

I agree with all of the careers my family listed as ones that I should avoid, and I think the reasons they provided for why these would not be good matches for me are also accurate. I included the medical field and computer work in my own list of jobs not to pursue, for the same reasons my family gave – I don’t handle blood and other bodily fluids well, and I would rather work with people than computers. However, I also listed the careers of a social worker and a career in the business field. Social worker is an occupation that was offered by my fiancé and my dad as one that I should pursue, so it is interesting that I include it on my “not to pursue” list. I think a career as a social worker would be too stressful for me, and not rewarding enough. I am not sure that I would actually feel like I was helping people. I say this because of a conversation I held with a friend who recently graduated and is employed in the field of social work. Her description of the work she is involved in led me to believe that it would be hard for me to determine whether or not I was helping the children involved in the system. My strong desire to help others and see them achieve success and happiness in their own lives may cause work in this field to be more stressful and less rewarding than what I would hope to experience in a career.
Conclusions

I decided to conduct and include these interviews because I was curious to see if I view myself the same as those close to me do in regards to my talents and personality traits. I was also interested in knowing which careers my family would picture me thriving in and those that they would not recommend. I wanted to see if there were any new careers offered that I had not considered, or other personality traits that could serve as assets in a particular career that I had been overlooking. I was honestly rather surprised at the similarity between my answers and my family’s answers. While there were some differences, there was nothing radically different about them. I think that this shows how well my family knows me, and also how well I know myself. Additionally, it shows that I may be more real and honest about myself than I had previously thought.

Influential Factors

As much as books, interviews, and personality tests can be helpful in assisting me determine what kind of career I may want to pursue, I also feel that it is important to engage in self-reflection regarding this issue. I am aware that there are several aspects of my life that may have a significant impact on my ideas about what I should “do” with my future. These include my gender, religious background, upbringing and perceptions of what others expect me to do. The following section consists of my self-reflections regarding these aspects and how I feel that they may have and may continue to affect me.
It is important to note that these factors are not necessarily viewed as ones that will directly determine my career choice. Instead, I think that it is important to address these factors because they help explain how I have arrived to the place that I am today.

**Gender**

My gender is an aspect of my life that I obviously had no control over. It is also one that has been a part of who I am since the day I was born. It is the reason I wore dresses, played with Barbies, and had a play kitchen when I was little. It is important to note that I do not feel that I have been negatively affected in any way by the treatment I received as a young girl. I also want it to be very clear that I am happy and proud to be a woman. I mention the gender issue not because it is something I am upset about or because I feel that it makes me inferior in any way, but because I think it may be something that impacts my thinking regarding a future career.

The biggest issue I see in regards to the gender issue is the conflict between the “housewife” and the “career woman.” I think I have tended to view the “housewife” idea negatively and the “career woman” in a more positive way. I am not entirely sure where these feelings come from, but they probably accompany my independent streak and strong feelings of female equality in that we can do just as well in careers as men can do. However, as I near the end of my college years, I have realized that even if I do think that I should be a career woman, I do not know what career I want to pursue.
As I have gone through the process of gathering information and reflecting on my own thoughts regarding my future, I have realized that the idea of "just being a homemaker" has become more and more appealing. What is more interesting to me is that as I have experienced these feelings, I have also felt like I should not be having them. I have thought that people would be disappointed in me, that my education would be a waste, and even that as this thesis was being read, the reader would be judging me. As I acknowledge these feelings I am surprised that I would feel so ashamed about not wanting to pursue a career. I respect women who do not work outside the home, but choose to stay home and maintain the house and her family. It is not that I feel that this lifestyle is less significant or important. It does seem that I feel that others have this opinion though.

I think it is significant to mention that I am getting married in June and that this event may have an impact on these feelings. I have been engaged for almost a year and a half, and dating my fiancé for almost five years, so this is a time that I have been looking forward to for quite some time. As I have mentioned elsewhere in this paper, I am also feeling very tired of schoolwork and the stresses that accompany it. So, it may be that the combination of these two factors — a readiness to become a wife and a desire to be completely done with school — are strongly influential on my apparent desire not to have a career. Of course, I think that it is probably natural for some students to reach the end of their college career and not want to enter "the real world" or begin a "real job." So I do think in some ways that these feelings are normal. However, I am rather fascinated by
these feelings that I have been experiencing, and I am curious to see if they last and if so for how long.

Obviously, one factor that would be important to consider if I really decide that I would rather stay at home instead of working, is whether or not my future husband and I could financially handle that. It would require living on one income, and it is likely that doing so will not be possible at least for several more years. I also think that even though this idea sounds nice, I believe that I would get “antsy” after a period of time and need to get out of the house and get involved in something.

Religious Background

My relationship with Christ is something that is extremely important in how I define who I am. I also think that it is an important factor regarding the choices I will make regarding my future. Because of my faith, I believe that I will value a work environment that does not discourage my beliefs. This does not mean that I can only work with Christians, in a Christian setting. However, activities such as frequent swearing would be very offensive and unsettling for me. Similarly, I would feel uncomfortable if I worked in a setting in which I was unable to discuss my spiritual walk with others. In my current job as a waitress, I have been very fortunate to experience an environment that is encouraging, uplifting, and where I am surrounded by fellow
believers. Because of this experience, and because of my values in regards to my faith, I do hope to find a workplace similar to this.

Another issue that relates gender and religion is whether or not women are valued and appreciated in the world, and particularly in the church. Verses from I Corinthians read, “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission...it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church” (New International Version 1992:1031). These verses are tough to argue with, and as a woman they are hard to hear. I am still trying to work through exactly what they meant during the time they were written, and what they mean for us today. It is very hard for me to imagine that God really created women with the intention that we not have any verbal participation during church services. However, this is not an issue I want to delve into in this paper. While these verses relate particularly to women in the church setting, I think it is important to note that the lack of authority that these verses seem to imply for women reaches far beyond the doors of a church.

My Upbringing

I believe that my upbringing has a significant impact on my feelings about what I “should do” with my life. The factor that I think has been most influential has been the fact that my mother has worked the majority of my growing-up years. She did work inside the home, teaching piano lessons, while I was very young, but she then took a job
outside of the home and has continued working since then. As my mother, obviously she plays a very influential role in my life, and I think that if she had chosen to stay at home and not work, I may have had stronger feelings to do the same. In this particular situation, I think that the behavior modeled for me during my childhood is the behavior I feel that I should follow. It should be noted that had I been negatively affected by the fact that my mother worked (which I was not), it is likely that my feelings would be just the opposite, and I would not be considering a career outside of the home.

I think another part of my life that has influenced my career/school choices has been the differences between my brother and me. My brother and I are two very different people, and this was noticeable in regards to academics. As he got older, my brother seemed to lose interest in school, his grades began to fall, and he began getting into trouble. However, I enjoyed school, and placed a lot of pressure on myself to do well. As I look back, I can remember this difference rather clearly. I remember that he would receive “rewards” for achievements like making the honor roll for a semester, while I would accomplish that every semester and get a verbal congratulation. As I reflect upon this situation, I wonder if the difference in our actions and the treatment we received encouraged me to feel that I was simply “supposed” to do well in school. If this is the case, and I began to internalize this feeling, I think it explains why I chose to pursue college and continue through all four years even though I often wished that I was not attending school. I think that I took on school achievements as my “responsibility”, perhaps because my brother did not and I felt that everyone was looking to me to do so. Another theory is that I saw my brother’s behavior and decided that I did not want to
follow in his footsteps, but that I wanted to be the "good daughter" and so I maintained a high level of academic achievement.

Finally, I believe that some of the choices that my mother made when she was younger have affected some that I have made. My parents dated after high school, and after my mom began attending college. However, soon after they decided they were ready to get married, and because my dad was not going to school it made sense for my mom to quit school so they could get married. My mom did complete her undergraduate degree two years ago, but I know that it was harder for her to go back and finish her degree after having a family. I have been aware of my parents' desire that I finish college, and I think it has had a very large impact on my decision to do so. During my sophomore year, I considered the idea of taking a year off of school. However, it was largely the opinions of my parents (mostly my mom) that dissuaded me from doing so. I think that my decision to wait until I am finished with school to get married is also largely due to the fact that my mom did not do this. Because she finished school during her adult years, I have watched her balance a career, family, home, and education. It has helped me realize how much easier it is to finish while I am this age, instead of postponing my education until I am older. I have also been very aware of her desire that I finish school before I decide to enter marriage.
What Does Everyone Else Think?

This is a question I have considered far too often. In addition to wondering what others' opinions are, I tend to let them affect my decisions as well. As I mentioned earlier, school came quite easily for me as I was growing up, and it was something that I knew I was “good at.” Again, as I realized this, I was aware that other people knew this as well – my grandparents, aunts, parents, etc. Because of my personality and my tendency to please others, I began to think that because these people knew that I could succeed at school, they then expected me to do so. I remember thinking that my family and extended family expected me to go to college after graduating from high school. I do wonder how strong my desire was to attend school, or if a significant reason why I pursued a degree was because that is what I thought I was “supposed” to do. I do not intend to “blame” my family for this decision, or imply that it was solely because of others’ expectations that I decided to pursue a college degree. However, it is interesting for me to look back upon these situations and take note of what I took into account when making the decision. It makes me wonder if five or ten years from now, when I have entered a career, I will look back and identify various factors that influenced my career decision in similar ways.

As I said, these factors do not necessarily influence the specific career path that I may choose, but instead shed light on the decisions that I have made in regards to schooling and now in considering a career.
Theory

One of the most important aspects of this project is incorporating and applying the knowledge of sociological theory into my research and findings. This becomes an interesting project because I am required to analyze myself and apply this theory. So, as I endeavor into this theoretical analysis, I attempt to take an unbiased and open look at myself in regards to theoretical aspects.

Ethnomethodology

George Ritzer (2003) defines ethnomethodology as, “the study of ordinary members of society in the everyday situations in which they find themselves and the ways in which they use commonsense knowledge, procedures, and considerations to gain an understanding of, navigate in, and act on those situations” (154). In other words, this theoretical concept addresses how people make sense of the world they find themselves in. Harold Garfinkel, the founder of ethnomethodology, says that this kind of daily organization of a person’s surroundings are considered extraordinary to the ethnomethodologist (Ritzer 2003:155). It is not hard to see how this theory has been applied throughout this project. The majority of the previous fifty pages of writing consists of myself “making sense” of my current world, particularly in regards to the situation I am presently in regarding graduation and finding a career.
It is also important to note that ethnomethodologists do not view daily activities and decisions as those that require reflection by the individual involved in them; instead they are viewed as “routine and relatively unreflective” (Ritzer 2003:155). Again, this particular aspect can be applied because until I deliberately took time to look at my current situation and the factors that have impacted where I am (such as my gender, religious background, upbringing and perceptions of others’ expectations), I did not realize how influential they have truly been. I would venture to say that this may be the case for many of us. How many people get involved in such self-reflection (unless it is required by a project such as this one)?

Accounts and accounting are two important components of ethnomethodology. Accounts are “the ways in which actors explain specific situations” (Ritzer 2003:155). Accounting is the process by which individuals use accounts to explain their worlds (Ritzer 2003:155). I see the concept of accounts being particularly applicable in how I used factors such as my upbringing to explain why I decided to go to college and why I feel that I need to pursue a career. Of course, in doing this I am engaged in the process of accounting.

Another concept that goes hand-in-hand with these two is that of accounting practices, which involves the process of one offering an account, and another either accepting or rejecting that account (Ritzer 2003:156). This is a concept that I have not really had to deal with as I have gone through this research, because I have simply written about my accounts and accounting instead of presenting them to people for
acceptance or rejection. However, there may be a certain degree of this process involved in my presentation of this research. It is essential to note however, that from the viewpoint of ethnomethodologists, accounts offered by an individual are not judged, but analyzed (Ritzer 2003:156).

**Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism is another school of theory that is helpful in analyzing this project. The essence of the school of symbolic interactionism is the concept of symbolic interaction, which is defined as “the distinctive human ability to relate to one another not only through gestures but also through significant symbols” (Ritzer 2003:59). There are two particular aspects of this school of thought which seem to fit very well into the research and findings I have endeavored upon. They are definition of the situation and the concept of the looking-glass self.

**Definition of the Situation**

The concept of “definition of the situation” was created by a husband and wife team, W.I. Thomas and Dorothy S. Thomas (Ritzer 2003:60). The basis of this theoretical idea is that what matters most to an individual is his or her definition of a situation, not what the reality of that situation is. If an individual views a situation as real, the consequences for him or her are real. Situations in which an individual is
involved are defined by his or her mind, and the resulting actions are based on the mind’s
definition of that situation (Ritzer 2003:60).

It seems to me that the fact that I wrote my thesis on myself and my current
situation exemplifies this theoretical concept. I analyzed career options because my
definition of my current situation is that after one graduates, it is necessary to pursue a
career. Because this is my definition of the situation, I am considering career options and
trying to decide what might work the best for me. As I see the definition as being real,
the consequences become real. Also in terms of various careers, I define situations. For
example, I define the field of social work as one that would not work well for me. Due to
my definition, the consequences of me not pursuing a career in that field become real.

Looking-Glass Self

This concept was created by Charles Horton Cooley. The essence of this concept
is that we tend to define ourselves by how we are viewed by others. Others, and
particularly their reactions, serve as a mirror for us to evaluate “who we are and how we
are doing” (Ritzer 2003:60). If others confirm our sense of self, we continue as we were,
but if we detect a different reflection in the mirror of others, we need to reassess our
sense of self (Ritzer 2003:61).

There are a couple different areas in which I see this concept being applicable.
The more obvious one is the way in which my actions are influenced by the perceived
expectations of others. As I mention earlier, I feel that my family has certain
expectations for me to live up to. As I am aware of these expectations, I begin to define
myself as one who needs to live up to these expectations. (It can also be noted that the
concept of definition of the situation is also applicable in that I define the situation as
involving others’ expectations, which then produce very real consequences on my
behalf.)

The other situation to which I feel the looking-glass self can be applied is at the
Helping Professions Job Fair that I attended on campus. I remember a specific woman
that I interacted with, whom I did not find extremely kind or helpful. Because of her
reactions to me, including tone of voice and facial expressions, I felt that I was not
qualified for a job in her agency. In this way, the concept of looking-glass self was quite
evident. Again, the concept of definition of the situation is also applicable in that
because I defined the situation as me being under qualified for a specific job, the
consequence was very real in that I will not pursue that job. Regardless of whether or not
my definition of that situation was congruent with reality, it was real for me, and
therefore the consequences are real for me.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a school of philosophy that will be helpful and applicable here
as well. Alfred Schutz was aware of phenomenology, and wanted to incorporate the
ideas of this school into the sociological realm. Schutz’s view on phenomenology stems from the belief that “in consciousness people establish meaning, understand, interpret, and engage in self-interpretation” (Ritzer 2003:71). It may be noted that this approach resembles that of ethnomethodology as well. Several key components that Schutz was especially interested in include meaning and motives. Meaning is defined as “how actors determine what aspects of the social world are important to them” (Ritzer 2003:71). While this can be determined on our own subjectively, Schutz sees objective meanings as better understood scientifically. Subjective meanings are too “unpredictable and idiosyncratic” for Schutz, and he feels that those meanings with objectivity can be scientifically studied. These are the meanings he emphasizes in his phenomenological sociology (Ritzer 2003:71).

Viewing objective meanings requires assuming that they are “culturally and collectively” shared (Ritzer 2003:71). From this perspective, I see the assumed need to find a career as a meaning that is shared by our American culture. It then makes sense that this is meaningful for me, considering this is a culture I have been embedded in for my entire life.

Motives are the other key concept of sociological phenomenology that Schutz emphasizes. Motives, quite simply, are “the reasons people do what they do” (Ritzer 2003:71). Schutz distinguishes between “in-order-to motives” and “because motives.” In-order-to motives are not focused on because they are seen as inaccessible to the individual while the action is being completed. Additionally, the scientist is then unable
to study the in-order-to motive. However, “because motives” indicate that the action has already taken place, and they explain why an individual behaved as he or she did. I have focused on these motives when I discussed some of the factors that have influenced my academic decisions.

**Exchange Theory**

The aspect of exchange theory that seems most applicable is George Homans’ social exchange theory. A specific aspect of social exchange theory is Homans’ rationality proposition. Ritzer (2003) explains that in this proposition, “people are seen as choosing from the available alternatives, the action for which, given the person’s perception at the time, there are greater rewards and greater probability of getting those rewards” (165). Essentially, individuals assess a situation by considering the benefits of what may happen, and how likely it is for these benefits to be realized. This concept is certainly applicable to my decision regarding a career. As I consider various careers, the core issues I reflect upon are whether or not I would be “good” at the particular job, and whether or not I would enjoy it. These two aspects serve as rewards, and as I assess careers, I am essentially deciding how great these benefits would be – how adept would I be in this specific career and how much would I enjoy it – and basing my decision upon these factors.
The rationality proposition also includes the statement that “whether or not people perform an action depends on their perceptions of the probability of success” (Ritzer 2003:166). The use of the word “perceptions” alludes to a correlation with the theoretical concept previous mentioned in this section, definition of the situation. If I perceive my chances of success in the field of human resources, for example, to be great, the consequences will then be real in that I am more likely to pursue a job in that arena.

**Standpoint**

Standpoint theory suggests that individuals view the world from a particular place within the social structure. These different places also involve varying degrees of power (Ritzer 2003:198). There are several different positions I see myself holding. As a woman, it is unfortunately likely that I may possess less power than my fellow men within society. As a Caucasian, non-Hispanic individual, it may unfortunately be likely that I will hold a greater degree than those who belong to minority groups. Finally, in the career realm, as a college graduate I will probably possess more power than someone without a degree, and less power than someone who has a graduate degree. According to standpoint theory, because I belong to these various groups, my view of the world is “never total and objective,” but limited to what I see from where I am (Ritzer 2003:198).

Overall, the theoretical concepts that have been viewed as applicable to this project seem to be rather interrelated. It was interesting to watch this unfold and see the
connections between the various theories and how they explain different aspects of my life. In another aspect of self-reflection, I was surprised at how well these theories seemed to "make sense" to me as I was comparing them to my research. Due to my lack of interest in theory, this was rather encouraging! While I assume that there are numerous other theoretical concepts that could be applied to various aspects of this project, I do feel that these are very prominent and significant. Again, while this project is intended to be exhaustive, it would be unreasonable to list every theoretical construct that is in any way applicable. For that reason, I have chosen to highlight these theories in their relevancy to my research and experiences.

**What About the Working Hypotheses?**

At the onset of this project, I formulated several working hypotheses that I anticipated proving (or disproving) through my research. Now that I have reached the end of my research, I would like to address each hypothesis, and what I have discovered in relation to it throughout this period of research and self-reflection.

**Working Hypotheses:**

1) I will become aware of several different career options that can sufficiently incorporate my education, personality type, and talents.

   Interviewing my family and completing the personality assessment tools did yield many different careers that could be options for me to pursue. However, it must be noted
that many of these careers are not appealing to me. So while there may be a variety of jobs available to me regarding my education, talents and personality type, there may only be a couple that I would consider pursuing. However, in essence, it seems that this hypothesis was proven true.

2) These career options will include jobs in the fields of education, law, and human resources.

The fields of education and human resources did surface as two that would seem reasonable to pursue considering my personality makeup. However, law was a field that was not as prominent as I expected it to be. The Campbell Interest and Skill Survey suggested that I avoid the field of attorney (Campbell 1994:4). However, the Strong Interest Inventory indicated that I have relatively high levels of interest in the career of a paralegal (SII 1994:5). So, it seems that there may be some positions in this field that would work well for me, while there are others that may not be advised. It does seem that this hypothesis was proven true.

3) There will not be one specific occupation that is the “perfect fit” for me.

I don’t know that there is ever a career that is a “perfect fit” for someone if that implies that he or she is only meant to pursue that specific career. Also, it must be noted that we are all “works in progress” and because we all change, there will probably not be one specific career that will be the best fit for us across the entire life span. So in this regard, I think this hypothesis is true. However, I was surprised at how attractive human
resources work was for me. So I must say that I feel like I got closer than I expected to finding the “job for me.”

4) A common characteristic among the career options that seem to fit me best will be working with people, and most likely serving people.

   I certainly see this as being true. Of the three careers I interviewed current employees of, all of them included working with people, and they all include helping people in some form. I really don’t ever see myself in a job such as data entry or computer work that does not involve frequent interaction with people. This hypothesis was definitely proven to be true, and I would have been shocked it if would not have been.

5) This process will prove to be eye-opening in that the self-discovery tests will bring to light personality traits and abilities that I am currently unaware of or oblivious to.

   I do not necessarily feel like this statement was proven true through my research. While I probably could not have predicted exactly what my scores would be in these inventories, there was not any information that completely shocked me, or brought to light new information in myself.

6) Some factors that I will find to have been influential in my views on career include: gender, religious background, upbringing, and others’ expectations of me.
I would certainly say that this statement was proven true. The self-reflection part of this research proved to be the most fascinating for me. While I was obviously aware of all the events and aspects I discussed, realizing the full impact that they have had on me was very eye-opening and interesting.

7) Of the influential factors, I will find that I am more affected by my upbringing and what I perceive to be others’ expectations of me than I am affected by my gender and religious background.

While I am not sure how effectively this was portrayed through my writing about these various events, I do feel that this is true. I have always known that I am the type of person who is very “tuned into” what others think of me, and how I think that I am viewed by others. Because of this, it seems quite likely that I would be strongly influenced by my perceptions of others’ expectations. I also think that because of the events of my upbringing, and just because it is a factor that is part of every aspect of my life, and every day of my life, it is unreasonable to think that this would not be a very significant factor influencing my decisions in the future. Therefore, I would say that this hypothesis has been proven true, through my research and self-reflection.

Closing Summary

So, what does one do if she is unsure what she wants to pursue next in life? She spends hours looking deep within herself. She decides what her talents, desires, personality traits, and abilities are and how they would best be used. She seeks the
opinions of those who know her best, makes several trips to the Career Center for advice and information, and converses with those involved in specific careers that she finds appealing. This is just the journey I have endeavored on over the past several months, and about which I have just expounded upon. In the pursuit of the “career for me” I have engaged in self-discovery, valuable self-reflection and useful information-gathering.

This project has proven to be eye-opening, fascinating, and extremely worthwhile. While I have not concluded with a “perfect career” that I intend to pursue in the upcoming months, I have narrowed down my job options. I feel confident that I will be able to find a career that will incorporate my education, strengths and personality, as well as prove to be rewarding for me. I have also been able to spend valuable time in self-reflection, particularly in regards to my past and what factors have been present in my life and have contributed in making me the person that I am today. I have greatly appreciated the chance (and, in this case, the requirement) to engage in activities of this type, and the results have included several “ah ha” moments.

As I conclude this paper, I do want to take the chance to encourage readers to take advantage of the opportunity to engage in self-reflection as much as possible. Before approaching this project, I had not taken advantage of the opportunity to participate in self-reflection to this degree. However, the benefits that I have gained from this experience seem invaluable. While the outside perspective of others is often helpful, no one is able to analyze an individual in the way that he or she can analyze himself or herself. This being said, I do promote the pursuit of self-reflection as much as possible for all individuals.
References


The Personality Type Tool Kit. 1993. Communication Consultants, LLC.


TypeFocus Personality Profile. 2005. Retrieved and completed February 17, 2005

(http://www.typefocus.com).