2014

Career Aspirations and Perceptions of Self-Efficacy of Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Students of Economic Disadvantage

Karen Gomez
Lehigh University

CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY OF FOURTH- AND FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS OF ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

By

Karen Gomez

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee
Of Lehigh University
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
In
Educational Leadership

Lehigh University
April 2014

Approved and recommended for acceptance as a dissertation in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Date

Dr. Floyd D. Beachum, Dissertation Advisor

Accepted Date

Committee Members:

Dr. Floyd D. Beachum, Chair
Associate Professor, Educational Leadership
Lehigh University

Dr. Jill Sperandio, Committee Member
Associate Professor, Educational Leadership
Lehigh University

Dr. L. Brook Sawyer, Committee Member
Assistant Professor, Teaching, Learning, and Technology
Lehigh University

Dr. Anne Marie FitzGerald, Committee Member
Assistant Professor, Educational Foundations and Leadership
Duquesne University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

Career development in children largely involves learning about the world of work from family members, peers, and classroom exploration in elementary school. For children of economic disadvantage, a lack of resources, restricted access to information, and limited experience observing positive role models employed in a variety of work environments may curtail their ability to envision career attainment. The current mixed-method study explored the career aspirations of fourth- and fifth-grade students living in poverty to discern their career interests, knowledge background, understanding of educational and career pathways, and their self-efficacy for achieving their vision for the future. The data collection process involved surveys, focus groups, and individual case studies. However, the investigator highlighted the qualitative component, direct verbal exchange with and among students, as the most critical approach to understanding children's aspirations. Giving "voice" to participants allowed the researcher to develop a comprehensive portrait of student's ideations from their perspective. Study results indicated that the children of economic disadvantage envisioned a future of educational and occupational attainment, but their "dreams" were often circumscribed by their limited knowledge of and exposure to employment options. Nevertheless, participants described a strong family support system and fervent optimism regarding achieving their goals. Extant research on the career development in children has devoted a minimal focus to the elementary years, less on the impact of poverty on aspirations, and negligible emphasis on hearing the "voice" of children. The current study offers insights to begin to fill that void in understanding.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Developing career interests in children involves a process that initiates in the elementary years and actualizes in adulthood. As children evolve in their understanding of career choices, they progress from narrow, simplistic views of careers to more sophisticated, selective, and personalized perspectives of employment conceptualization. By the fourth/fifth grade, children are able to articulate occupational interests and goals, and this ideation involves fewer notions of fantasy and includes influences beyond parental input (Seligman & Weinstock, 1991). Children learn about an array of professions in a variety of ways, such as from schooling, parents, peer group associations, their living environment, and personal experiences (Watson & McMahon, 2005). Adults who have an impact on children's career aspirations, largely parents, caretakers, and teachers/counselors, frequently provide job information and career guidance to adolescents as they are nearing the age to make choices about the vocational path they will pursue. For some students, this intervention occurs too late, after they have jeopardized their academic success, become disillusioned with the relevance of the schooling experience, and possibly even dropped out of school completely (Schultheiss, 2005).

The rudimentary steps towards a lifelong career development process emerge during childhood, when children begin to envision the future, initiate vocational decision-making, explore opportunities, and build self-efficacy (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2008). And yet, students in the elementary years often receive negligible support to enrich the career development process (Trice & Hughes, 1995). The school curriculum may devote minimal time to "career days" in which a few adults visit a classroom to describe the duties of their profession and answer students' questions. Guidance counselors may provide short-term career

exploration opportunities to familiarize children with career options or help them to reflect on their personal interests. Basic-level presentations about healthcare occupations, the world of business, and service-related professions, for example, may whet students' curiosity. Ongoing programs that expose young students to a spectrum of career choices and foster a vision of future vocational success, however, are rare. Hoffman and McDaniels (1991) emphasize the need for educators and counselors to develop effective, system-wide, career development programs to help elementary students begin to consider their future roles in the work force. Magnuson and Starr (2000) also insist that intentional, proactive instruction in career exploration in elementary school would engender a process of lifelong vocational planning. Further, vocational constructs that emerge during childhood serve as the critical foundation for career development in middle and high school and into adulthood (Porfeli, Hartung, & Vondracek, 2008). Moreover, this developmental process must address students' sense of self-efficacy and its potential impact on their career aspirations (Gillies, McMahon, & Carroll, 1998). Whether or not children believe they can achieve their vocational dreams/goals may determine their occupational aspirations for the future (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). Therefore, it behooves educators to consider students' perceptions of confidence in their abilities for attainment in adulthood.

For children of economic disadvantage, fostering career aspirations in the early years of schooling is especially critical because their socioeconomic status (SES) often hinders their access to rewarding professional opportunities (Weinger, 1998). Where generational poverty prevails, family dynamics frequently present a unique set of characteristics. Conversations about academic topics are of little value, and a job is a means to acquire money for survival. The concept of career development may never be considered (Payne, 2005). Moreover, financial constraints could limit access to resources to enhance career exploration, such as books,

computers, and visits to libraries or worksites (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Coll, 2001). Watson and McMahon (2008) affirm that research on children's career development must consider the unique characteristics and circumstances of minority populations, such as children of low socioeconomic status (SES), diverse ethnicity, and with special needs.

Children of economic disadvantage may have limited aspirations or may not know how to aspire because they may have had no exposure to or familial experience with vocational prosperity. Consequently, they may be unable to envision career success (Weinger, 1998). This study examined children's self-reported occupational preferences and the influential factors that led to these choices, their knowledge of career options, their awareness of pathways to career attainment, and their personal perceptions of self-efficacy to accomplish their vocational goals. The school that served as the investigative site for this endeavor was Newhope Elementary School, embedded in a subsidized, public housing community on the periphery of an urban school district in a state on the East Coast. The specific research interest was to elucidate the thought processes of children living in poverty at the elementary level and to uncover aspects of their socioeconomic condition that may have contributed to those processes. The researcher implemented a mixed-method study in order to provide opportunity to prompt students for more in-depth responses and to allow students to elaborate on their responses. Giving "voice" to the children afforded the researcher the opportunity to gain a more genuine, empathic understanding of how young, disadvantaged students envisioned their futures as workers.

This unique perspective contributed to extant literature regarding elementary students and the career development process, and, more specifically, from the vantage point of economic disadvantage. Few research studies zero-in on the elementary school years as germane in a career development process that spans a lifetime. By spotlighting younger students, this investigation

helped to diminish the void in research regarding career development prior to adolescence. Data gathered from surveys, focus group discussions, and one-on-one interviews disclosed what elementary students living in poverty thought about their vocational futures and how they perceived their potential to achieve their aspirations. Study results provided valuable insight for professional reflection on current career exploration programs in the milieu of education and to inform practice. Moreover, findings warranted discussions regarding special considerations for appropriate, effective career development programs for children of poverty.

Research Problem

Elementary school children may experience few opportunities to learn about occupational choices and pathways during the pre-teen years. While a variety of resources contribute to a child's knowledge base regarding future careers, perhaps schools most frequently provide formal instructional opportunities. Yet, in an era when many schools have a strong focus on core content to ensure they meet standards of academic accountability, there may be little dedication to career development in the school curricula. State standardized testing primarily measures student achievement in Reading and Math. Consequently, elementary school administrators and teachers may dedicate nearly the entire instructional day to these core areas, leaving minimal or no time devoted to academic content not currently subjected to standardized testing scrutiny, such as Social Studies, of which career exploration is a component. Moreover, vocational counseling typically does not appear as an emergent need in school systems until the middle and/or high school years. However, the career development process initiates for elementary-aged children as they observe different occupations/professions they encounter or hear fragments of information from significant others, regardless of the presence or absence of formal instruction. Providing career exploration in elementary school could plant the seeds for

career aspirations to flourish.

For students who undergo economic deprivation in the early years, envisioning personal success in their futures may be illusory or even impossible. The impoverished environment may offer few resources, such as literature and technology, role models with adequate background knowledge relating to career choices, or opportunities to travel and visit employment sites that may inspire a child to pursue a particular vocational direction (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). Research spanning the last two decades touts the importance of career development as a lifelong endeavor, involving vocation-related decisions made as early as the elementary years (Auger, Blackhurst, & Wahl, 2005). However, the paucity of information on the career development process in the elementary years that focuses on children of poverty is evident and warrants further research. The current investigation aimed to narrow this gap in research literature.

Research Purpose

Research on career development in the elementary school years does not abound. Most studies focus on the high-school years when students are preparing for their imminent independence. While it is true that high schools routinely offer some level of counseling to assist students as they face challenging career decisions, elementary schools provide an ideal venue to initiate long-term vocational planning and to reinforce the relevance of schooling (Howard & Walsh, 2011). Studies involving younger children may highlight stages of career development and types of occupational interests, but few investigations present a qualitative perspective in which children describe their aspirations. Moreover, very little professional literature is available relating to individual subgroups, such as economically disadvantaged children, and career development. The current study offered insights based on first-hand student accounts.

The purpose of this study was to explore the career aspirations and perceptions of self-

efficacy of fourth- and fifth-grade students of economic disadvantage regarding their future roles as adults in the workforce. The investigation aimed to elucidate the unique perspective of this specific age group and demographic subgroup. Primarily, the goal was to determine study participants' knowledge/awareness of vocational options and pathways to career attainment and their vision for the future. This research sought to contribute to extant literature on the career development of children by presenting findings specifically related to students of poverty at the elementary level. Moreover, the researcher intended to offer implications for elementary school educators that would highlight the potential need to address the occupational decision-making process of children of economic disadvantage. The investigator proposed an overarching question to guide this study – Do children of economic disadvantage envision a future of occupational prosperity?

Research Questions

1. How do fourth- and fifth-grade students of economic disadvantage describe their career aspirations and their background knowledge of career options?
2. What factors and/or significant others, as reported by fourth- and fifth-grade students of poverty, influence their career aspirations and their perceptions of self-efficacy in attaining their career aspirations?
3. How do fourth- and fifth-grade students of economic disadvantage describe their understanding of pathways to attaining career goals?
4. How do fourth- and fifth-grade students of poverty perceive their self-efficacy in attaining career aspirations?
5. What differences in responses exist, if any, between fourth- and fifth-grade students?

6. What differences in responses exist, if any, between boys and girls?

Significance of the Study

This research has the potential to expand knowledge in several different areas. First, this study explored three variables - elementary children of poverty, their career aspirations, and perceptions of self-efficacy, not found in extant literature by the investigator. Researchers often spotlight vocational decision-making for adolescents, but fail to examine the value of proactive preparation for career development for younger children, before entering middle or high school (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005). Moreover, the current investigation addressed a specific demographic subgroup - children of economic disadvantage. While few research studies explore children and careers, even fewer consider the unique characteristics intrinsic to the minority circumstance that might influence the career development process. Therefore, this research added to the existing body of knowledge regarding the career development process during the elementary school years, with a specific focus on children of disadvantage.

Second, this mixed-method study gave "voice" to the participants. There was a quantitative component to glean students' background knowledge regarding career choices and interests. However, the qualitative interaction afforded the researcher an opportunity to better understand the children's frame of reference regarding their future aspirations as well as the life factors that influenced their dreams. Children's first-hand disclosures provided a more comprehensive, authentic account of how they envisioned their futures and whether or not they considered themselves capable of attaining their goals. Thus, the participants revealed responses unique to this subgroup and not found in previous research involving older participants and/or from varying degrees of economic prosperity.

Finally, this research served to heighten the awareness of school educators about the

potential need to adopt a proactive stance regarding career development interventions in the elementary years, especially for children of poverty, often lacking the resources, experiences, and exposure to career options available to more affluent peers. Familiarizing students of poverty with vocational options and pathways to achievement could help them envision success. Moreover, engendering a "can-do' attitude in children of economic disadvantage could bolster their perceptions of self-efficacy and ward off feelings of marginalization. Without adequate instructional and emotional scaffolding some children are unable to connect schooling to future career outcomes, and they become disillusioned with the academic enterprise (Meier, 2002). This, in turn, may deter them from pursuing post-secondary training or higher education. Therefore, it behooves educators to consider the potential impact of early career development to provide direction, instill promise, and fortify self-efficacy for children of low SES in order to lay the foundation for vocational success.

Limitations

Several study limitations were evident. First, the participants formed a sample of convenience. The children were already previously enrolled in fourth- and fifth-grade classes at the elementary school chosen for this study, and the researcher limited participation to the number of fourth and fifth-grade students of low income in this one school setting. Second, the environmental context of the research was somewhat unique in that nearly the entire student body lived in subsidized public housing. Since "poverty" was a key factor in this study, these surroundings offered pre-existing parameters conducive to the research. That is, families in the local neighborhood needed to demonstrate financial need in order to qualify to reside in this area. Therefore, study participants shared common living conditions found in some low-income areas, such as not having outdoor recreational spaces and small living quarters. Third, in addition to the

high concentration of low SES residents, this community represented a largely Hispanic population. While 90% of the study participants were of Hispanic origin, this investigation did not aim to explore ethnic values or propose a connection between ethnicity and poverty. Nevertheless, cultural factors, such as ethnic traditions, beliefs, and the roles of family members, not under investigation in this study, may have influenced students' responses regarding knowledge and experiences, family dynamics and perspectives, and other idiosyncrasies of heritage. Fourth, researcher bias must be considered since the school principal conducted interviews, had had personal contact with many of the students, and, therefore, had pre-conceived expectations regarding some student responses and study outcomes. In order to eliminate any bias, the researcher used member checking, thereby allowing students to verify their responses and the data collected. In addition, despite the principal's visit to participating classrooms to reassure students that their participation was voluntary, and there would be no repercussions for anyone who decided not to participate, some students may have felt anxious about or intimidated by interacting directly with the school administrator. Students who had met with the principal for disciplinary infractions may have felt uncomfortable and wished to avoid associating with the administrator in the research endeavor. Nevertheless, for the purposes of documenting and reporting student responses, the investigator maintained student confidentiality by never revealing a student's true identity. That is, participants did not put their names on the surveys, focus group discussions (audio-recorded) did not refer to any names, and one-on-one interviews used fictitious names. Finally, this research targeted a specific population and location. Study results were only credible when attributed to a similar sampling and bounded system of a neighborhood school.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Theoretical Framework Overview and Foci for the Current Investigation

Several theories and fields of knowledge served as the foundation for this study. The theoretical framework included theories of career development and aspirations, poverty, and self-efficacy, with a primary focus on career development and student aspirations and their interrelatedness to poverty and self-efficacy (See Figure 1). Theoretical approaches to career development abound. Super (1980) proposes the concept of a Life-Career Rainbow to describe the many aspects of a career development process that spans a lifetime. He describes nine life roles, from child to pensioner, and four social arenas of performance (home, school, community, workplace) at varying life stages. He contends that career patterns begin during childhood and are mediated by both situational and personal determinants. Gottfredson (1981) proposes that all people share the same images of occupations – a cognitive map, based on sextype, prestige, and field of work. She endorses a theory of occupational aspirations involving four progressive stages of occupational preferences and self-concept initiating in the pre-school years and culminating with an orientation to the internal self, at age fourteen.

For the current study, the Social Cognitive Career Theory offered a conceptual baseline to understand career development as a process in which environmental factors play an influential role (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). As proponents of this theory, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) present a career development approach involving three interconnecting aspects: the formation of career interests, the selection of academic and career options, and performance in educational and vocational goals. They emphasize the critical nature of self-efficacy and expectations to attainment. Perhaps the most salient characteristic of this theoretical framework

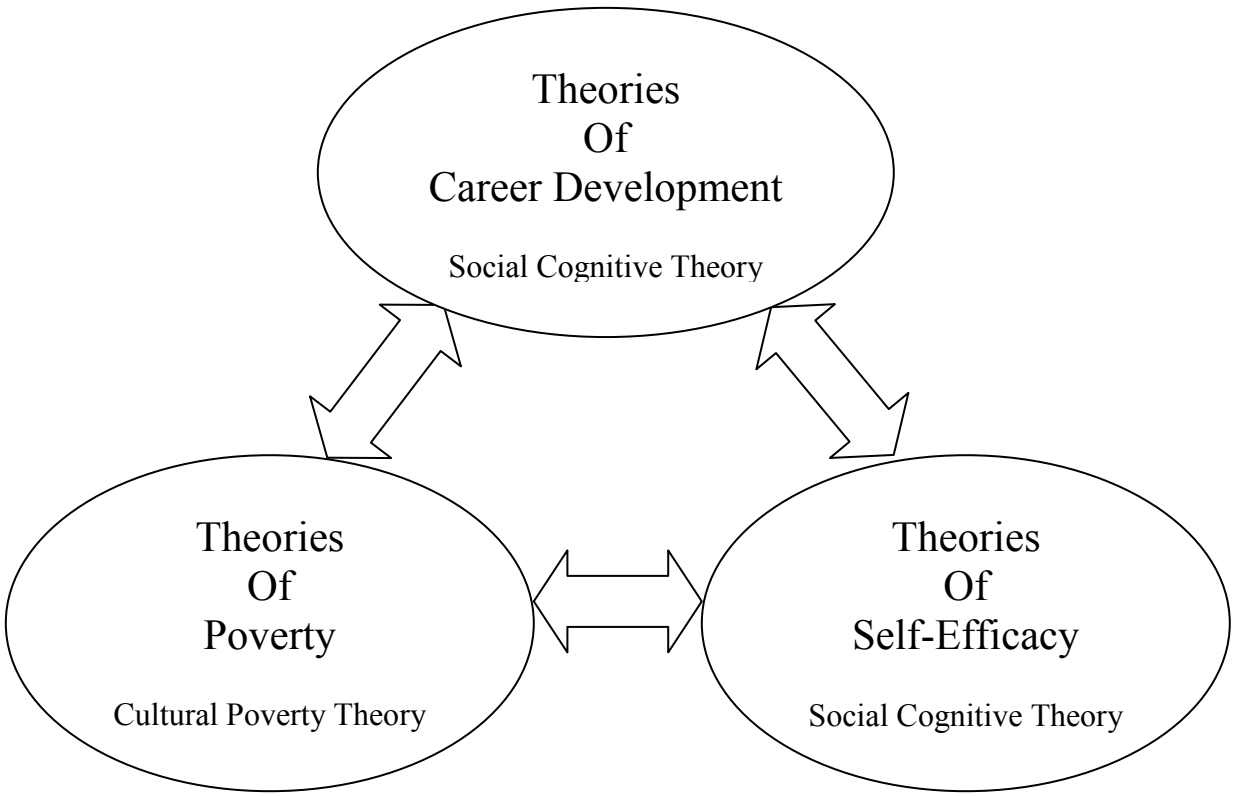

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

is the emphasis on context and life conditions as critical components of career development (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000), similar to Super's proposal. However, where this researcher focuses on the interplay of life roles and contexts as they relate to career development, the Social Cognitive Career Theory underscores the critical nature of environmental support systems to facilitate the career choice process. Lent et al. (2000) acknowledge the impact of real world factors, such as cultural and economic conditions, that may fortify or stifle the connections among occupational interests, goals, and actions. This perspective lends itself most poignantly to the current investigation. Exploring the career aspirations of children without consideration of cultural, personal, situational, and environmental conditions would provide an incomplete and inaccurate descriptive portrait of study participants and their career aspirations.

Theories of poverty can be derived from a wide range of vantage points. While some theorists tout a specific phenomenon, such as earnings from investment in education/training and from actual income (Cellini, McKernan, & Ratcliffe, 2008), as a principal root of poverty, a convergence of a variety of socio-political, economic, and cultural events and circumstances more aptly explain the reality of the poverty condition (Wolf, 2007; Payne, 2005). Bradshaw (2007) proposes five competing theories describing the origins of poverty. First, the individual deficiency theory maintains that individuals are to blame for their state of poverty because they do not work hard enough, make poor life decisions, or are deficient intellectually. Second, the culture of poverty theory proposes that the beliefs, values, norms, and behaviors engrained in a subculture, and often not shared by the mainstream population, are perpetuated from one generation to the next, thereby indoctrinating their youth into what may be a dysfunctional lifestyle. The third theory relegates the root of poverty to the economic, political, and social systems fraught with inequities that stifle opportunities for financial well-being. The fourth

theory of poverty emphasizes the disparities in geographic locations that lack the necessary resources to sustain adequate income and well-being, common in areas of subsidized housing projects. The final theory contends that poverty is caused by cumulative and cyclical interdependence of the other four theories, so that individuals and their communities are entrenched in a reciprocity of disadvantage that continues to spiral.

Wolf (2007) also ascribes to the notion of multiple theories of poverty. She offers four theories to explain the cause of urban poverty from a sociological perspective. The social stratification theory suggests that society and its economic and political systems force certain citizens into poverty, resulting in segregation. The social capital theory touts the importance of a familial and community support system that has the potential to enhance or hinder an individual's prospects for the future. Cultural and value norms can also be attributed as causes of poverty. That is, members of the lower class accommodate their values from the ideal to more realistic goals, thereby tolerating illegitimacy, low-status employment, and incomplete schooling. Finally, the author posits that social policies, such as the welfare system, perpetuate poverty because they disavow opportunity for mobility, thereby fostering generational poverty.

Portes (1998) also highlights the concept of social capital and its impact on children of poverty. He defines having social capital as one's ability to derive benefits from membership in social networks. For children in impoverished communities, these connections/relationships may be with extended family members or friends who provide interaction and support. However, Rankin and Quane (2000) posit that living in high-poverty communities is detrimental for residents who seek social networks of stably employed members. They further insist that community members often have few friends with secure jobs or a college education, and many are on public assistance. The negative influence of social networks may also be evident when

children seek affiliation with social organizations that are not a source of public benefit, such as gangs, gambling rings, and prostitution. Additionally, while the strong ties that enhance the networking repertoire provide support within poor communities, they may lack ties to the outside world. This failed connection may stifle upward mobility and access to job opportunities (Curley, 2005). Therefore, children may be exposed to neighborhood relationships and associations that offer protective cocoons, but they may experience difficulty connecting to a broader social context.

For children of poverty, having a strong social network of significant others who nurture their dreams and engender a vision for the future that is positive, can have a powerful impact on career decision-making. Parents, among the most influential adults in children's lives, have the greatest impact as role models regarding children's career aspirations (Blackhurst & Auger, 2008; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). McLeod and Shanahan (1993) warn, however, that the stress that parents undergo due to their economic disadvantage may impede their ability to respond effectively to their children's physical and emotional needs. Thus, social capital can benefit children as well as hamper their aspirational endeavors. Theories that support the concept of poverty as a cultural phenomenon that impacts children in a socioenvironmental context, rather than merely as a socioeconomic factor, are most relevant for the purposes of the current research.

From a social science viewpoint, Lehning, Vu, and Pintak (2007) describe a two-prong theory of poverty that encompasses both psychological and sociological contexts. The former involves individual resilience and one's ability to rise above adverse conditions. The latter deems poverty to be the result of failed social structures. The authors endorse a reciprocal relationship that exists between individual human behavior and the social environment to explain the origin of poverty. Here, too, Lehning et al. insist on the multifaceted nature of theories of poverty.

Bradshaw (2007), Wolf (2007), and Lehning et al (2007) share several common perspectives regarding theories of poverty. The theorists agree that no one phenomenon can be considered the sole origin of poverty but rather a convergence of factors. The authors also concur that inequities in social systems engender poverty. Moreover, they elucidate the socioenvironmental elements involving support systems of human capital and behavioral norms that can ameliorate or further sabotage the poverty condition. Perhaps the theory of cultural poverty provides the most comprehensive approach to understanding poverty as it includes components of human behavior and values as well as an environment replete with daily living challenges.

Since the current investigation involved elementary-aged children as recipients of a socioeconomic status beyond their locus of control, the researcher highlighted the impact of cultural poverty, with an emphasis on the environment living conditions, social capital, and significant others. The immediate living environment plays a critical role in child development. Rosenbaum, Reynolds, and Deluca (2002) propose that neighborhood characteristics and residents' experiences in a community profoundly affect their capabilities and beliefs in self-efficacy. For children of economic disadvantage, toxic living arrangements can have a negative impact on their socioemotional well-being (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Low-income households are often characterized by high levels of noise, crowding, little structure, few routines, unpredictability, confusion, and chaos (Evans, Gonnella, Marcynyszyn, Gentile, & Salpekar, 2005). Moreover, children of poverty are more likely than their more affluent counterparts to experience family upheaval, violence, instability, and frequent mobility. Their housing may be deteriorated and contain more safety hazards, and their neighborhood may experience frequent criminal activity and have few, if any, safe recreational areas for children to

play (Evans, 2004). Bradley and Corwyn (2002) concur with the deleterious effects of low SES and affirm that the impact on children begins before birth, involves health as well as cognitive and socioemotional outcomes, and extends to the family and the neighborhood. Regarding future educational and employment prospects, Haveman and Wolfe (1995) purport that children of poverty tend to have little access to economic resources or opportunities, which, in turn, decreases their chances for educational and employment attainment.

Finally, the theory of self-efficacy completes the theoretical framework by describing how children develop a belief in their ability to achieve their goals. According to Bandura (1977), for children of poverty, the experience of being disadvantaged may instill a sense of hopelessness for the future. Since their socioeconomic status is outside their locus of control, they may feel helpless and incapable of attaining future success. The author addresses this notion of hopelessness/helplessness and affirms that people stop trying to achieve certain behaviors because they lack self-efficacy, or, because they expect their environment to be unresponsive to their behaviors. Sheehan and Rall (2011) endorse a theory of hope as a means to instill a belief in children that they can alter their life conditions. They further explain that children need to develop agency or capacity to believe they can achieve with the appropriate strategies and support that schools can offer. Bandura (2002) concurs with the notion of agency. His social cognitive theory encompasses three types of agency that contribute to self-efficacy. He proposes that a blend of personal, proxy, and collective agency influence one's functioning and life circumstances. Personal agency refers to one's ability to act on one's own behalf, while proxy agency involves having others act on one's behalf, and collective agency involves the community, and the impact of its norms and behaviors on the individual. The theorist maintains that personal agency is most critical for developing self-efficacy, however, for elementary

children, dependence on parents/significant others (proxy agency) and community support (collective agency) are of paramount importance as well. Lent, Brown, and Larkin (1986) support Bandura's approach to self-efficacy and further suggest from their research that self-efficacy is related to the career development process.

For the current study, the social cognitive theory of self-efficacy provided a perspective that connected well to children of poverty and the career development process. That is, personal agency is crucial for children to develop capacity to act in their own best interest. Additionally, proxy agency best describes the role of parents and significant others to influence children's pathways to achievement. Fulcher (2011) explains that mothers' attitudes about their children's capabilities largely determine children's self-perceptions for the future. Finally collective agency relates directly to the community and the norms and behaviors of cultural poverty that may enhance or suppress self-efficacy beliefs.

Research Studies on Career Development and Aspirations

Researchers of children's career development and aspirations often turn their attention to adolescent populations as this age group is nearing vocational decision-making. In one longitudinal exploration of students' aspirations, Marjoribanks (2002), conducted a quantitative study in which he examined the relationship among several variables that impact students' educational and occupational aspirations, such as family context, defined as family social status and parents' aspirations for their children, individual student characteristics, which included academic achievement and academic self-concept, and proximal settings, defined as students' perceptions of their family and school learning environments. The participant selection process began with a random sample of 301 schools in Australia, followed by a random selection of classes, and a final study sample of 1,724 boys and 1,788 girls in ninth grade. The author

administered several surveys involving Likert-type scales to measure student responses regarding family context, individual characteristics, proximal learning settings, and student aspirations.

Results from regression analyses revealed that family context had a medium to large association to adolescents' educational aspirations, and a small association to occupational aspirations. Students' individual characteristics had significant associations with educational aspirations. Lastly, gender-related differences were evident in the relationships among family context, individual characteristics, proximal learning settings, and student aspirations. Girls' perceptions of family and school environments were not associated with their occupational aspiration, whereas boys' perceptions of the family environment had a small association with occupational aspirations. This study advanced the research knowledge base regarding factors that operate synergistically to effect adolescents' educational and occupational aspirations.

In their research study on career aspirations, Canale and Dunlap (1987) considered a wide range of children, spanning grades two, five, eight, and twelve. The purpose of their investigation was to ascertain key factors that influenced career aspirations at these different age levels. The authors' focus involved children's grade level, gender, and self-concept, in addition to their parents' occupations, income level, education, and career aspirations and expectations for their children. Canale and Dunlap selected a total of 150 students across the four grade levels to participate in the study. Each of the students completed a questionnaire in which they responded to questions about career aspirations, expectations for achieving their goals, and reasons for wanting a particular job or career. In addition, the researchers administered the *Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory* to determine a measure of self-concept for each participant. Students' parents also took part in the study by completing a questionnaire in which they reported their aspirations and expectations for their children as well as their personal demographic information.

Regression analyses revealed four variables that were significant predictors of students' occupational aspirations. First, male students tended to choose traditionally masculine occupations, and female students tended to choose traditionally female occupations. Additionally, Students at different grade levels aspired to different careers. Chi Square analyses showed that second and twelfth graders more often chose neutral prestige-level occupations, while fifth and eighth graders more often opted for high prestige-level occupations. Second, parents who expressed expectations for prestigious/traditionally masculine careers for their children tended to have children with high occupational aspirations, especially in the eighth and twelfth grades. Third, students of higher family income status aspired to more prestigious jobs. Finally, mother's occupation had predictive value concerning children's career aspirations, especially for fifth graders. Students whose mothers had high status jobs tended to aspire to higher status, traditionally masculine jobs. However, self-concept was only a predictive variable for twelfth graders. This inquiry advanced extant research by spotlighting student response differences at varying age/grade levels and for the parental aspirations/expectations component.

Helwig (1998) also focused his research interests on children's occupational aspirations at several grade levels. However, for his investigation he implemented a longitudinal study that assessed a cohort of children in second grade with follow-up assessments in fourth and sixth grades. The purpose of this study was to examine hypotheses from previous research on vocational development. These hypotheses maintained that children will report fewer opposite gender occupational aspirations, fewer occupations with increased social value, and more realistic occupational aspirations as they develop from second to sixth grade. Moreover, children will identify occupations that reflect their parents' aspirations for them.

The initial participant sample included 208 second graders. This group decreased in size

in fourth and sixth grades to 160 and 130 respectively. All the children attended one of four suburban, public schools. A team of researchers implemented the *Survey of Interests and Plans*, a 34-item inventory, along with a 20-minute interview for each student. This same assessment protocol was repeated at each of the three grade levels. The investigators also asked students to name four occupations in response to questions relating to the job they aspired to have as an adult, the job their mothers and fathers wanted them to have, and the jobs they expected to have. An additional component of the instrument triangulation was a student record document that included demographic information supplied by the students' schools. In addition, students' parents described their occupational status and levels of education on a vocational information document.

Study results disclosed that boys chose more same-sex occupations, as described in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT), as they got older, whereas the opposite was true for girls. Both boys and girls selected occupations with increased social value from second to sixth grade. Boys reported more fantasy occupations with age than girls, whose reported numbers did not change significantly. Finally, results were mixed regarding children's occupational aspirations and their parents' aspirations for them. That is, in terms of professional, technical, and managerial job levels, children identified occupational goals consistent with their parents expectations. However, as the children got older they reported more autonomy in their perceptions of parents' aspirations. Perhaps the most salient contribution of this study to the milieu of research is its insight into the developmental process of occupational aspirations in the elementary school years over time.

In their study of elementary-aged children and career development, Auger, Blackhurst, and Wahl (2005) conducted a qualitative inquiry involving the career aspirations and

expectations of 123 children in first, third, and fifth grades, with a median family income between $51,000 and $60,000. The purpose of their study was to garner information that would be useful to school counselors working with children in the career development process. The researchers addressed four areas of interest: occupational aspirations based on fantasy or reality, aspirations for sex-typed occupations, the social prestige of occupations, and the relationship of children's career aspirations and their parents' occupations. All the sample participants attended one of two public schools in a semirural community in the Midwest. In order to gather more than one source of information, the authors assigned trained graduate students to interview the children for 20 to 30 minutes using audiotapes for each session. In addition they asked parents to complete a document pertaining to demographic information about their families.

The interviews focused on two main questions: What do you want to be when you grow up? What do you think you really will be when you grow up? Chi Square analyses showed that the majority of children could provide specific career aspirations. First-grade students had the highest percentage (88%) of realistic career choices as well as the highest percentage of sex-typed career aspirations (66%), involving jobs in which 75% or more of the people in that occupation were male or female as indicated by the U. S. Census Bureau (2001). Among the three grades, prestige rankings of career aspirations did not differ significantly. Regarding responses to the question of what children thought they really would be when they grew up, first graders had the highest percentage of specific careers with 73%. This group also had the highest percentage choosing sex-typed careers with 58%. Third graders most often reported fantasy careers, such as professional athlete, artist, singer, and astronaut, with 27%. However, the data analyses revealed very little correspondence between children's aspirations and parents' occupations. The researchers' investigation advanced previous research by giving voice to a

student sample spanning several grade levels and by conducting simple, direct interviews to ascertain aspirations and expectations.

Seligman and Weinstock (1991) also conducted research on career development and elementary-age children. They affirmed that 10 was the pivotal age in the career development process. The purpose of their inquiry was to discern the relationship between this process and children's perceptions of their families, their self-image, their understanding of careers, personal interests, and aspirations. Twenty-four children participated in the study. Of this sample, sixteen students were in fourth grade, seven were in fifth grade, and one was in sixth grade. All the children were Black, White, or Asian, attended private or public school, and were largely from middle-class backgrounds. Each participant completed three study measurements: a 47-item questionnaire developed by the researchers, the Kinetic Family Drawing, and the What I Like To Do (WILD) assessment.

The authors conducted data analyses on seven data clusters that included professional orientation, career maturity, family orientation, positive family environment, self-image, father positive, and mother positive, in order to measure children's perceptions of themselves and their families and correlate those variables to career development. Findings demonstrated that a positive relationship with the mother was critical for children's positive self-image. However, by age 10, professional orientation and family orientation no longer had a significant correlation. The researchers defined professional orientation as children's expression of professional, occupational, and educational goals and their perceptions of the parents' aspirations for them, while family orientation referred to wanting to marry and have children. A significant positive correlation existed between the father positive variable and children's interest in active play and performing arts. Children reporting strong positive relationships with their mothers showed an

interest in social sciences. By age 10, parental influence on career aspirations tended to decline due to children's exposure to other influences. The researchers offered valuable insight regarding the opportune timeframe for parental influence to impact children's vocational vision.

In her investigation involving eight to eleven year old children, Phipps (1995) examined children's career dreams and background knowledge, and how these vary in relation to an array of demographic variables, including ethnicity, SES, gender, grade, ability, and achievement level. This study focused on elementary students largely from minority subgroups and of low-income status. Seventy-four (38 third graders, 14 fourth graders, and 22 fifth graders) randomly selected children comprised the research sample. Of this participant pool, 51% was Black, 36% was White, 12% was Hispanic, and 1% was Asian. In addition, 37 were boys, and 43 were girls. Sixty-eight percent of the sample received free/reduced lunch, and each student was enrolled in one of 10 elementary schools in the same urban district. The researcher implemented four data collection instruments: a 15-minute interview, a demographic data sheet, the *Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills*, and the *Cognitive Skills Index.* Personnel unaffiliated with the schools conducted one-on-one interviews within the school setting. Interviewers asked the children about occupations in which they envisioned themselves, the types of job they would like and why, the steps they would have to take to achieve their preferred occupations, and the obstacles they might encounter.

Data analyses exposed response differences according to gender, ethnicity, grade, and SES, and demonstrated the relationship between occupational dream and knowledge variables and the variables pertaining to ability and achievement. Study findings disclosed a relationship between gender, ethnicity, and SES and one or more of the occupational variables (what children want to be and why and the education level required). However, grade, ability, as measured by

the Cognitive Skills Index (CSI) and achievement levels did not relate to the occupational variables. The focus on vocational aspirations of elementary school children contributes to the dearth of extant research on the career development of this age group.

Schultheiss, Palma, and Manzi (2005) also attested to the need to conduct more extensive research on career development involving children. Their qualitative study spotlighted students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (59% White, 24% Black, 13% Hispanic, and 4% Arab American, Native American, or Asian, and of low SES, with 89% qualifying for free/reduced lunch. Forty-nine students ranging from nine to twelve years old and attending urban elementary schools participated. This sample included 19 boys and 30 girls. Of these, 34 were fourth graders and 15 were fifth graders. The authors' purpose was to assess students' knowledge of self and occupational information, the roles of significant people in their lives, education and career goals, and the decision-making process.

The data analyses conducted by Schultheiss et al. (2005) entailed categorizing students' written responses by gender and grade into one of seven occupational domains. Findings demonstrated that more girls than boys and more fifth graders than fourth graders reported an awareness of career interests. More girls than boys and more fifth graders than fourth graders stated that significant others provided social support. Additionally, more fourth graders than fifth graders declared an internal locus of control and considered health and safety issues in their decision-making. Finally, more boys than girls emphasized a consideration of health and safety issues, and more fifth graders than fourth graders stated they consulted others about career choices. The researchers' investigation is commendable for exploring the variables of gender and grade-level in relation to career development in the elementary years, and for underscoring the urgency for more in-depth research on the career development process in the elementary years.

Ferreira, Santos, Fonseca, and Haase (2007) implemented a unique longitudinal study to elucidate how students' career development results from the interaction between personal characteristics and psychosocial factors. The purpose of their investigation was to identify variables evident in the early school years that served as predictors of student dropout in the adolescent years. These variables included gender, parental influences, psychological characteristics, and social context. The sample pool involved 445 students initially assessed in second grade (age seven) and then again in grades six, nine, and twelve, The researchers randomly selected children from urban, suburban, and rural public schools in central Portugal. By the fourth assessment period (12th grade), 297 participants remained in school, while 143 had dropped out. Study instrumentation included a child behavior checklist completed by parents, a teacher report document, and a self-report of antisocial behavior questionnaire administered to students.

Using regression analyses, the researchers calculated the probability that a student would remain in school to a certain grade level and the probability that a student would drop out of school. Results indicated that the probability of continuing into each grade decreased over time, with only 68% of students remaining by the twelfth grade. Conversely, the probability of dropping out of school increased over time to about 37% by twelfth grade. The authors found that parents' education and SES were significant predictors of dropout. Moreover, as both these variables increased, the dropout rate decreased. Finally, they confirmed that the dropout rate escalated with an increase in reported antisocial behavior and with more severe behaviors as described by teachers. Ferreira et al. (2007) contributed worthwhile research findings to existing research regarding variables affecting completion of secondary school education, but they failed to connect these results to student career development as they originally purported.

Similarities and differences can be discerned across these eight studies relating to career development and aspirations. Marjoribanks (2002), Canale and Dunlap (1987), and Ferreira et al. (2007) presented quantitative research involving surveys and questionnaires, while the other five research investigations used a mixed-method design to include a qualitative component composed of recorded interviews, student written responses, and drawings. Five of the studies focused on a participant pool spanning two or three elementary grade levels. However, Canale and Dunlap (1987) used a student sample from second through twelfth grades, and Ferreira et al. (2007) and Marjoribanks prepared longitudinal research that followed participants from grades two through twelve and nine through twelve respectively. All the studies explored the variables of grade-level and gender. Parents' occupations and aspirations for their children were variables highlighted by all the researchers except Phipps (1995), and SES was a key variable in all the investigations except those conducted by Auger et al. (2005) and Helwig (1998). The current study shared commonalities with the aforementioned research and introduced unique components. The researcher also implemented a mixed method design, but with a largely qualitative focus involving rich narrative descriptions. The study sample highlighted fourth- and fifth-grade students living in poverty and key variables included grade-level, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Research Studies on Issues of Poverty

Since the socioeconomic status of elementary school children is a critical factor in this study, a review of extant research that explores how students of poverty envision their future careers/employment was warranted. Cook, Church, Ajanaku, Shadish, Kim, and Cohen (1996) conducted a study in which they compared occupational aspirations and expectations of inner-city boys of economic disadvantage to those of their more affluent counterparts. The authors'

main purpose was to investigate how job preferences vary between these two populations at different grade levels. They contended that occupational expectations depended largely on the context of a child's living environment involving positive influences and negative forces. Cook et al. further posited that these pressures are especially consequential for poor, inner-city boys who expect to encounter barriers to job attainment, have fewer mentors to guide them through the job acquisition process, tend to believe that working hard in school does not translate to future success, and envision few good job opportunities in their unsafe communities.

Cook et al. (1996) selected a study sample of 220 boys in grades two, four, six, and eight from four elementary schools and two middle schools. Two elementary and one middle school were considered low-income. Two researchers conducted individual student interviews using open-ended and close-ended questions to assess students' occupational aspirations and expectations. They also included a 10-item questionnaire to evaluate the children's educational expectations and their perceptions of parental educational expectations. Data analyses revealed that the inner-city boys experienced a larger gap between their occupational aspirations and their expectations than that experienced by the more affluent boys. In addition, the two groups showed greater disparity in their expectations than in their aspirations, with the students of low income displaying higher expectations for academic success in the lower grades, followed by a continual decline in expectations thereafter. The researchers concluded that occupational aspirations depended largely on age and whether or not students lived with both biological parents. Expectations were more closely related to grade level and population group, and included mediating influences such as family structure, the number of role models boys report, the number of obstacles to success they perceive, and their educational expectations. The authors contend that occupational expectations are embedded in their proximal world of family and local

environment, whereas aspirations depend on the media, school policies, and social norms and mobility.

Sellers, Satcher, and Comas (1999) also zeroed in on students of poverty in their investigation of children's occupational aspirations by comparing the variables of gender, gender role identity, and socioeconomic status. The authors focused their research on third- and fourth-grade students. The purpose of their inquiry was to determine whether or not children would select occupations associated with their gender. The researchers also aimed to discern whether or not children of lower SES would choose gender-stereotyped jobs more often than more affluent children. In addition, the authors wanted to discover whether or not differences existed between the selection of gender stereotyped occupations when compared to gender-role identity.

Sellers et al. (1999) formed a study sample of 103 students between eight and eleven years old. Of this group, 54% received free or reduced lunch price due to their low-income status. The authors collected data using three instruments: the *Children's Sex Role Inventory*, a demographic questionnaire, and individual interviews in which students were asked what they wanted to be when they grew up. Data analyses demonstrated significant gender differences regarding occupational aspirations, no significant difference in how children of different SES selected gender stereotyped occupations, and no significant difference in occupational aspirations when compared to gender-role identity.

Howard, Carlstrom, Katz, Chew, Ray, Laine, and Caulum (2011) spotlighted the career aspirations of youth in their study of eighth and tenth graders. As in the previous study, the researchers aimed to discern the variables that impact the occupational goals of students. The purpose of this research was to examine the variations in students' career aspirations and to determine the effects of race/ethnicity, SES, and gender, and the interaction of these variables on

the future occupational vision of the study participants. Howard et al. proposed three research questions: What are the effects of race/ethnicity, SES, and gender on the occupational aspirations of youth? Are the relationships between these variables and aspirations similar across three methods of coding? When controlling for SES, is race/ethnicity associated with prestige level, education requirements, and average salary of occupational aspirations? The researchers selected a sample of 22,136 students from a dataset of middle- and high-school children in a Midwestern state. The gender split was nearly even, with 49% female and 51% male. Additional demographic data revealed that 88.2% was White, 5.1% was Black, 4.3% was Latino, 2.2% was Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.4% was Native American. Regarding SES, 24% of study participants were considered low income by their free/reduced lunch designation.

The authors used the Wisconsin Career Assessment system, an online career interest assessment database, to measure and gather student response data. Each participant selected up to two "dream occupations" from a list of careers organized by clusters. For this study, the "dream" jobs represented occupational aspirations. These aspirations were coded by prestige level, minimum education level to enter the occupation, and median income of workers in that occupation. Findings regarding gender and career aspirations indicated that of the top 20 occupations selected, gender preferences were evident for 16. Moreover, across all race/ethnic groups, girls consistently aspired to careers requiring a higher level of education than did boys. When considering the interaction of race/ethnicity, SES, and career aspirations, the researchers reported that when SES was controlled, there was little difference in career aspirations between race/ethnic groups. However, when examining the effects of SES within groups, the Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans of non-poverty status aspired to jobs of higher prestige, required higher educations levels, and yielded higher salaries. In addition, low-income,

Native American boys reported lower aspirations than low-income youth of any other race/ethnic group. Regarding SES and career aspirations, findings indicated that this relationship might vary across groups, but might not be meaningful for this age group. Their contribution to research on students' career aspirations provides valuable information regarding the differences among demographic subgroups as well as within-group differences relating to SES.

In her study of students of poverty, Weinger (1998) examined career aspirations by giving voice to the children. The purpose of her qualitative inquiry was to reveal how children of economic disadvantage perceived their own employment potential when compared to that of their more affluent peers. Five research questions guided her study: What do children of poverty perceive as opportunities available to them when they become adults? Are these children hopeful about attaining economic success? What dreams do they hold for their futures? Do they consider their world to be supportive of their personal potential and aspirations or to exclude them based on their SES? Do younger children express more or less hope than older children? The researcher selected a convenience sample of 24 students divided into three groups by age, five to seven years old, eight to ten years old, and eleven to thirteen years old. All the children lived in the same low-income neighborhood and attended the same elementary school in the Midwest.

The interview process, which lasted 45 minutes, involved showing participants two photographs, one of a run-down home, and one of a middle-class, suburban ranch. The children were asked about career choices and perceptions of career goal attainment for three different instances: an imagined child living in each of the two houses, the participant's best friend living in each of the two houses, and the participant himself/herself living in each of the two houses. All responses were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Results indicated that the children perceived fewer opportunities for poorer children in imaginary situations, but maintained a

certain level of optimism regarding their own futures, as if disassociating themselves from the child in the run-down house. Participants predicted also predicted that their friends would follow a similar career path as the imaginary child in the run-down house. The research was poignant for exposing children's candid perceptions of poverty and how they envisioned the future.

Wagmiller, Lennon, Kuang, Alberti, and Aber (2006) analyzed the life chances of children of poverty from a unique perspective. While many studies on poor populations focus on "disadvantage" based on low-income status, this group of researchers dissected the construct of poverty into smaller units, including the effects of exposure to poverty, duration of poverty episodes, transiency in and out of poverty, the timing of poverty episodes, and the sequencing of exposure to poverty. The purpose of their investigation was to determine which of these variables were more/less favorable for children's future achievement/attainment. The researchers conducted a longitudinal study of 947 children over a 12-year period. When the study began, all the children were between birth and three years of age and living in poverty based on their families' total annual income. The authors identified four classes of children that differed according to their experiences of disadvantage: long-term poor, moving out of poverty, moving into poverty, and non-poor.

Study results indicated that early onset and longer duration of economic disadvantage had a negative effect on achievement in early adulthood. In addition, children moving into poverty had higher educational achievement than children moving out of poverty, which emphasized the detrimental effect of poverty in early childhood. However, for high school graduation, persistent poverty was most harmful. By differentiating various circumstances of poverty, Wagmiller et al. (2006) demonstrated that not all experiences of disadvantage affect children in the same way or at the same time in terms of achievement later in life. This contribution to previous literature on

children of economic disadvantage provides a more in-depth understanding of poverty for educators.

In their research on the aspirations of students of poverty, Chiapa, Garrido, and Prina (2012) spotlighted the critical role of parents to guide and inform their children regarding pathways of academic and occupational success. They contended that parental influence can optimize or stifle children's prospects for the future because low-income parents may perceive a limited range of life choices, and, in effect, are unable to aspire. This dim outlook, in turn, may lead to negative attitudes about or negligible personal investment in their children's education. In this study involving families living in poverty, Chiapa et al. explored the impact of an antipoverty program on the educational aspirations of parents for their children. First, they aimed to determine whether PROGRESA (*Programa de Educación, Salud, y Alimentación)*, a social service program in Mexico involving education, health, and nutrition, could improve parents' aspirations for their children's educational attainment. Second, they investigated how mandated exposure to professional medical personnel could affect parents' aspirations. Finally, the researchers revealed the association between parental aspirations and educational outcomes.

Chiapa et al. (2012) conducted a mixed method study including a quantitative random sampling as well as qualitative measures involving coded responses. Five hundred and six localities in Mexico participated in PROGRESA. Of these, 320 formed the experimental group, and 186 served as the control group. A total of 8,106 households participated in eight survey rounds and provided data on aspirations. Each family was required to have check-ups at local health centers. The frequency of visits depended on the ages of the children in the family. Compliance afforded them a stipend. In addition, families with children ages nine to seventeen who maintained a school attendance rate of at least 85% received grant funds that increased with

grade.

The investigators posed two questions to parents: Up to what level would you like your daughters to study? Up to what level would you like your sons to study? They coded responses by education level. Data analyses revealed that the impact of PROGRESA at six months and one year demonstrated an increase in parents' educational aspirations of .34 and .30 school years respectively. Moreover, exposure to medical personnel resulted in an increase in parental aspirations of .40 to .50 school years for their children. Findings also suggested that parental aspirations had some predictive value regarding children's educational outcomes, though causal interpretations could not be made. This research is praiseworthy for its investigation of families of poverty from a macro-system vantage point involving a social intervention aimed to hone in on children's aspirations. The most salient quality of this study is the focus on human capital as the overarching influence on parental aspirations and the resulting educational attainment of their children.

Peterson, Stivers, and Peters (1986) also underscored the critical nature of human capital in the development of aspirations for children of poverty. In their research inquiry, they proposed that a variety of significant others serve as sources of information to guide children in the career decision-making process. The purpose of their study was trifold: to identify the people who influence the vocational paths of students of economic disadvantage living in the rural south, to discern any race differences in children's selections of significant others affecting their career decision-making, and, to use the existing research data to offer intervention implications for education professionals. Peterson et al. implemented a longitudinal study that spanned from 1969 to 1979. They selected a purposive sample of 390 students of economic disadvantage, including 273 White children living in rural Appalachia, and 117 Black children living in the rural south.

The investigators collected data from questionnaires administered during participants' early adolescence (1969), late adolescence (1975), and early adulthood (1979). The students indicated their choices of significant others who had provided advice regarding career planning among the following options: mother, father, older siblings, other relatives, teachers, peers, others, and no one.

Findings from chi square analyses revealed that during most of the three development phases, both the White and Black student populations identified mothers and fathers as significant others influencing future career plans more frequently than the alternative choices, including older siblings, other relatives, teachers, peers, others, and no one. Both groups also described a more diverse selection of significant others during the late adolescent years, which declined for White students in the early adulthood period, but not for the Black students. The authors noted two unexpected findings: the infrequent selection by both student groups of other relatives as significant others in the vocational planning process, and, the lack of race differences in the students' choices of significant others. Regarding future implications, the investigators highlighted the need to develop family intervention programs that would provide information about vocational pathways. In addition, they stressed the urgency to develop career education programs in schools. Their longitudinal investigation is noteworthy for elucidating the powerful influence parents have on the career decisions of children of economic disadvantage.

While many studies on children of poverty report on the effects of disadvantage relating to the physical needs of children, such as healthcare and living conditions, Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn, and Smith (1998) focused their research on the effects of poverty on children's cognitive and behavioral development. This, in turn, as they purported, impinges on opportunities for success in adulthood. The purpose of their study was to discern the impact of

family income on children at various stages of childhood. The authors used data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) to relate parental income during early, middle, and later childhood to children's completion of schooling and non-marital fertility. In addition, they implemented their analyses from two different approaches, one based on 1,323 individual participants, and one based on differences of 328 sibling pairs.

Results from the individual analyses indicated that family income was more strongly related to completed schooling than to non-marital childbirth. Findings also showed that family income during early childhood had a greater influence on completed schooling than did income during middle childhood. Additionally, family income had the greatest impact on completed schooling for children of poverty. Results regarding the sibling-based analyses were not definitive. Duncan et al. (1998) concluded that increasing the income of families in poverty would improve their children's attainment, while additional income for non-poor families or families with older children would not affect their children's achievement. Therefore, persistent poverty during the early years appears to have the greatest negative impact on children's attainment for low-income families. The researchers also disclosed that other family events and peers more strongly influenced children's behaviors than family income. Their contribution to extant research on children of economic disadvantage is commendable as it affirms the timing of family deprivation as a critical factor affecting the completion of schooling, and, consequently, the opportunities for success later in life.

Comparisons and contrasts can be found regarding the research linking career development and aspirations with poverty. The design of the studies differed in that Cook et al. (1996), Sellers et al. (1999), and Chiapa et al. (2012) used a mixed methods approach to data collection/analysis involving surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, while Howard et al.

(2011), Wagmiller et al. (2006), Peterson et al. (1986), and Duncan et al., (1998) conducted quantitative investigations, and Weinger (1998) chose only qualitative measures. Moreover, Wagmiller et al. (20060 and Peterson et al. (1986) implemented longitudinal studies that spanned twelve and ten years respectively. A very large range in sample size was also evident among the studies, with only 24 participants in the research by Wenger (1998) and 22,000 students comprising the sample for Howard et al. (2011). The researchers all included elementary, middle and/or high school students in their investigations with the exception of Sellers et al. (1999) who focused solely on third and fourth graders. Since all the investigations related to poverty, SES was the main focus. Studies by Cook et al. (1996), Sellers et al. (1999), Howard et al. (2011), and Weinger (1998) primarily examined occupational aspirations, while Chiapa et al. (2012) and Peterson et al. (1986) highlighted significant others who influenced participants career interests, and Wagmiller et al. (2006) and Duncan et al. (1998) explored the effects of poverty on children's academic development.

Research Studies on Self-Efficacy

A final area of research that lends support to the current study relates to the concept of self-efficacy. Children's beliefs of self-efficacy strongly influence their aspirations, motivation, vocational interests, and occupational capabilities (Bandura et al., 2001). Additionally, children's confidence in their abilities to be successful in occupational endeavors affects their career choices. This sense of self-efficacy does not develop in isolation but rather from several environmental forces, such as parents and socioeconomic conditions. Parental affirmation of self-efficacy, for example, may strengthen children's beliefs. However, for children living in poverty, a perception of hopelessness regarding their job potential may override more positive life influences (Weinger, 1998).

Bandura et al. (2001) conducted a research study in which they explored children's perceptions about their occupational efficacy and the impact on career choices they made. The authors' purpose was to determine correlations among an array of variables: perceived self-efficacy, parental and children's academic aspirations and achievement, parental perceived academic efficacy, children's perceived occupational self-efficacy, and occupational choice. The authors purported that children's beliefs of self-efficacy strongly influenced their aspirations, motivation, vocational interests, and occupational capabilities. Their study sample included 272 children between 11 and 15 years of age in sixth or seventh grade. Of this sample, 142 were boys, and 130 were girls, 134 were in sixth grade, and 138 were in seventh grade. Students' mothers and teachers also participated in the investigation.

The researchers implemented several measures. The children completed a 37-item measure of their beliefs regarding perceived self-efficacy. They also responded on a seven-item instrument relating to academic aspirations and a 69-item document describing occupational pursuits. Mothers completed an eight-item measure of their beliefs in their efficacy to support their children's intellectual development as well as a four-item measure of their valuation of academic activities and their academic aspirations for their children. To complete their triangulation of participant data, the investigators also solicited teachers' input regarding academic achievement. Several important findings emerged. Parents' aspirations correlated positively to children's perceived self-efficacy. In turn, children's perceived self-efficacy contributed to beliefs in their occupational efficacy, which was linked to the types of career pathways they would pursue. This study was noteworthy as a comprehensive investigation of children's perceived self-efficacy and its impact on career aspirations and pathways.

Ji, Lapan, and Tate (2004) emphasized occupational sex-typing in their research on

eighth-grade students. The purpose of their study was to measure children's perception of the percentage of men and women employed in specific occupations as well as their level of interest and self-efficacy for those occupations. The authors contended that boys' and girls' responses would reveal agreement in perceptions regarding the percentage of men and women in various jobs. Ji et al. also proposed that boys and girls would demonstrate more interest and a higher self-efficacy level for the occupations that they perceived as employing more members of their gender. The convenience sample they selected included entire classrooms, for a total of 334 eighth-grade students from three suburban middle schools. This sample included 171 girls and 163 boys. Participants' demographic distribution was 68% White, 17.7% Black, 9.9% Asian, .6% Native American, and 3.9% classified as "other".

Study participants completed the *Mapping Vocational Challenges* instrument to determine their career interests, self-efficacy levels, and occupational sex-typing ratings. Results from the data analyses supported the researchers' two hypotheses. Boys and girls demonstrated similar perceptions regarding the percentage of men and women in various jobs. Moreover, boys and girls reported greater interest and higher self-efficacy levels for occupations they perceived as employing more members of their gender. This research is laudable for highlighting sex-typing as an influential factor in the career development of children and for underscoring the need for school counselors to address this concern throughout the career development process.

Lapan, Hinkelman, Adams, and Turner (1999) also chose to highlight self-efficacy in their investigation on career development with high school students. The purpose of their research was to explore why and to what extent rural adolescents circumscribe their vocational interests as related to self-efficacy and gender. The authors used a sample of convenience involving 126 students enrolled in 10th through 12th grades in a rural, Midwestern high school.

Study participants prepared a map that indicated how their career interests interacted with perceptions of male/female employment patterns, perceived self-efficacy and value associated with careers, and perceived parental support for different careers. They responded on this research instrument as part of career exploration and advisement activities supervised by the school counselor. The entire mapping assignment required three, 50-minute class periods to complete.

Lapan et al. (1999) conducted their data analyses using 42 careers representing Holland's six occupational themes (1985): Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC). The results showed that students who expected parental support expressed greater efficacy for Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, and Conventional careers, but not for Social or Enterprising vocations. The investigators further posited that students chose careers that matched the personal hierarchy of occupational values they assigned to the 42 careers within the six themes, and these values shaped the occupational interest patterns for these adolescents. The study offered valuable understanding regarding perceptions of self-efficacy and career interests for this age group in a rural setting.

Weiser and Riggio (2010) examined students' self-efficacy from a different perspective. Their focus did not relate to career development, but pertained to the association among self-efficacy, family background, and academic achievement. The purpose of their study was to determine whether self-efficacy acted as a mediator in the relationship between family background and academic achievement outcomes. They described family background as encompassing family structure, SES, parental relationships, parental involvement in school, and parental aspirations for schooling. The authors postulated that family background variables would determine self-efficacy scores, grade-point averages, and expectations of academic

achievement. Self-efficacy scores would determine grade-point averages and expectations of academic achievement. And, self-efficacy would mediate the relationship between family background and academic achievement, so that family background variables would not directly predict academic achievement.

The chosen convenience sample included 193 college students from psychology courses taught by Riggio. These students all received college credit for their participation. The authors implemented seven different assessments in order to gather extensive data on general self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, expectations of success, parental involvement, parents' educational aspirations, the quality of the participant/parent relationship, and socioeconomic status. For each measure, students responded to Likert-type scales. Findings from data analyses demonstrated that many family background variables predicted both self-efficacy variables, but few predicted academic outcome variables. Both self-efficacy variables were significant predictors of academic variables. In addition, the investigators discovered that self-efficacy did not mediate the relationship between family background and academic outcomes. This study offered noteworthy data regarding the association among self-efficacy, family background, and academic achievement.

In their investigation spotlighting career development and middle-school students, Lapan, Adams, Turner, and Hinkelman (2000) explored the vocational interests of seventh graders. The purpose of their study was to identify differences in employment preferences and patterns of efficacy between boys and girls. The authors aimed to answer two key questions: To what extent do boys and girls agree in their understanding of male and female employment patterns? Can student responses be categorized into homogeneous groupings of interest and efficacy patterns? The authors hypothesized that girls would demonstrate interest and efficacy for female-

dominated jobs, and boys' responses would largely correspond to male-dominated employment. The study participants included 68 girls and 44 boys attending an ethnically diverse middle school, and from lower, middle-class neighborhoods in the Midwest.

Lapan et al. (2000) presented the students with occupational information on 45 careers representing Holland's themes (1985): twelve Realistic, nine Artistic, five Social, five Enterprising, and five Conventional. For vocational interests, participants chose the 15 careers they liked most and the 15 they liked least. Regarding perceived employment patterns, the children judged the proportion of men or women employed in each of the 45 careers. Finally, regarding self-efficacy, students completed a grid on which they indicated the careers for which they had expectations for successful performance. All the measurement instruments were administered during four, 40-minute social studies classes. Findings from data analyses showed that boys and girls have the same understanding of male/female employment patterns. Differences in vocational interests reflected these patterns. Regarding Holland's themes, both boys and girls fell into low, medium, and high efficacy categories. Boys in the medium confidence group were more interested in Realistic and Investigative careers, while boys in the high confidence group showed more interest in the Enterprising and Artistic occupations. However, girls did not differ among the three confidence groups on the Holland interest patterns. This study provided poignant implications for educators/counselors regarding students' career decision-making as it relates to their self-efficacy and perceptions of male/female employment potential.

Tracey (2002) also explored students' career interests and self-efficacy in his research endeavor involving a year-long longitudinal study of fifth and seventh graders. The author posited two purposes for his investigation: to assess changes in the structure of students' interests

over time, and, to examine the reciprocal influence that interests and self-efficacy beliefs have on each other. Two separate student samples, consisting of 126 fifth graders and 221 seventh graders, participated in the study. Both groups were assessed twice over the course of one year. Tracey implemented an instrument modeled after Holland's (1997) six interest themes (RIASEC). The new measure, called the Inventory of Children's Activities – Revised (ICA-R), (Tracey & Ward, 1998) consisted of 30 children's activities divided into two sections. The author aimed to resolve two research questions: 1. Are there grade and gender differences in interests and competence ratings? 3. Was there reciprocal causation between interests and competence beliefs?

In the first section of the ICA-R, sample participants indicated how much they liked each activity using a Likert scale. In the second section, they indicated their perceived competence regarding the same activities, also using a Likert scale. Results from data analyses demonstrated that the ICA-R was found to be a viable measure of children's interests. Regarding the interest and competence scales and gender, boys scored higher on R and I, and girls scored higher on A, S, and C. The grade-level effect showed that elementary students scored higher on all the interest scales and the A and E competence scales. Finally, both interests and self-efficacy affected each other reciprocally over time. Tracey's study is commendable for its adaptation of the original Holland RIASEC model of career interests. In addition, findings from the revised inventory contributed to extant research regarding children's career interests and their perceptions of self-efficacy.

Gallavan (2003) offered a unique perspective on research pertaining to self-efficacy and career education and involving elementary school children. Instead of selecting student participants, the author relied on a purposive sample of 32 teachers enrolled in a graduate course

related to elementary school social studies. The focus of the class was to examine the current status of vocational education in their classrooms. Each of the participants completed a two-part survey. In part one, the teachers defined "career education". In part two, teachers described how they taught career education.

The data analyses disclosed that 24 of the teachers reported teaching vocational education as an occasional lesson. Two of them conducted team-taught units relating to a variety of career choices, parents' employment, and jobs in the community. As teachers completed the career exploration assignments required for their graduate course, they began to extend their vision to include careers within a global society. In addition, they discovered research on self-efficacy and career decision-making. From their participation, teachers gained a new perspective, one that adopted a more realistic school-to-work vocational development approach. They concluded their semester-long exploration by providing 10 suggestions for elementary school teachers. The professional development in this graduate coursework resulted in the teachers' increased valuing of career development for elementary students.

The studies relating to self-efficacy shared more similar characteristics than the previous two groupings of research on career development/aspirations and poverty. The method of data collection was quantitative for all seven self-efficacy investigations, and only one, Tracey (2002) conducted longitudinal research. The range of the participant pools spanned from 32, in the study by Gallavan (2003) to the research by Tracey (2002) with 347. The paucity of extant literature on elementary school children and self-efficacy was evident, as the available research involved student samples from middle school, as with Bandura et al. (2001), Ji et al. (2004), and Ji et al. (2004), from high school, as with Lapan et al. (1999), and extending to college students in the study by Weiser and Riggio (2010) and to teachers in the investigation by Gallavan (2003).

Tracey (2002) presented the only research focusing on elementary-aged students by using a sample of fifth graders. The researchers explored several variables and their association with self-efficacy. Weiser and Riggio (2010) and Bandura et al. (2001) examined parental academic aspirations for their children and student academic achievement, while Ji et al. (2004), Lapan et al. (2000), and Lapan et al. (1999) investigated participant sex-typing of occupations. Tracey (2002) as well as Ji et al. (2004) highlighted students' career interests, while Gallavan (2003) studied the status of career education instruction in schools.

A number of findings across studies warrant highlighting as they attempt to investigate the same or similar variables. Marjoribanks (2002) found that family context was associated with students' educational and occupational aspirations, while Weiser and Riggio (2010) determined that family background was a good predictor of self-efficacy, which , in turn, predicted academic achievement. The study by Seligman and Weinstock (1991) demonstrated that parental influence on children's career aspirations declined by the time they reached age 10. Moreover, Peterson, Stivers, and Peters (1986) discovered that the influence of significant others, excluding parents, on students' career choices, increased in late adolescence. Results from the study by Schultheiss, Palma, and Manzi (2005) revealed that fourth- and fifth-grade girls more often than boys consulted significant others for support in career exploration, while Lappan, Hinkelman, Adams, and Turner (1999) found that parental support influenced students' efficacy regarding career interests. Canale and Dunlap (1987) demonstrated that students of higher SES aspired to more prestigious jobs. However, Helwig's finding (1998) indicated that boys and girls chose occupations with increased social value with age. Finally, an investigation by Weinger (1998) disclosed that preadolescent students reported fewer opportunities for prosperity for children of economic disadvantage, whereas Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn, and Smith (1998) found that

family income had the greatest impact on completed schooling for children living in poverty. While these research studies do not explore the exact same variables with identical age groups, related findings can be discerned.

Summary

The researcher presented a three-prong approach to the theoretical framework and extant research review to inform the current study. The social cognitive career theory provided the core elements to understanding the career development process, followed by an array of empirical studies describing this process along with students' career aspirations at varying grade-levels. An overview of theories of poverty offered valuable background knowledge for understanding aspects intrinsic to cultural poverty. The studies on children of poverty revealed a variety of perspectives concerning children's knowledge of and aspirations regarding careers, factors influencing their aspirations, and the effects of poverty. Finally, an examination of self-efficacy as it relates to career aspirations completed the framework and further explores Social Cognitive Theory. Supporting research studies examined students' career interests, occupational sex-typing, familial aspirations/influence, and student perceptions of occupational self-efficacy. By presenting a theoretical foundation and literature review that encompassed career development, poverty, and self-efficacy, the researcher provided a comprehensive foundational understanding of the critical issues relating to children's vision for their future prosperity while they are immersed in a lifestyle/environment of economic disadvantage.

The current research shared some characteristics in common with the three groupings of studies on career development/aspirations, poverty, and self-efficacy, and presented key elements that enabled this investigation to offer a unique perspective. Similar to some of the aforementioned studies, the present research involved a mixed-method approach to data

collection/analysis that included quantitative and qualitative instruments. Additionally, the investigator selected a participant pool exclusively from elementary school, examined gender and grade-level response similarities and differences, and assessed students' career interests. However, the current study utilized methods not commonly found in extant research. That is, the researcher introduced student focus groups that allowed participants to respond to open-ended questions in an informal, discussion-panel format. Free responses were encouraged so students could express themselves above and beyond the researcher's questioning structure. In addition, the focus-group venue allowed children the opportunity to hear what their peers had to say and provide comments in response. Moreover, the investigator conducted case studies involving one-on-one interviews. By allowing the student "voice" to emerge through direct verbal exchange, the researcher could offer a first-hand accounting of children's ideations. Additionally, the current study sample only included students living in poverty since the condition of economic disadvantage was a critical factor under consideration for this investigation of career aspirations.

CHAPTER 3

Method

The current research was a mixed-method investigation. That is, there was a quantitative component involving numerical analysis of survey data and a qualitative multiple-case study involving descriptive data from focus groups and interviews. The case study method of inquiry served as the focal point of data collection because it solicited authentic, in-depth responses to engender extensive descriptions of the phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2009). For the current study, the participants' "voice" provided data relevant to their real-world experiences and personal perceptions regarding the issues of career aspirations and self-efficacy within the context of economic disadvantage. Other forms of qualitative research do not lend themselves to

a multiple-case exploration format to illustrate the complexity of an issue (Creswell, 2013). That is, narrative research, ethnographies, phenomenological and grounded theory approaches to investigation are not conducive to presenting an in-depth picture of several cases in order to explore a real-life, here-and-now, central topic of concern. Therefore, the case study method was the most appropriate qualitative approach for the current study.

The researcher administered several data collection instruments in order to aggregate a comprehensive, fourth- and fifth-grade student frame of reference related to career development. The author presented a multiple-case exploration within a bounded system. That is, specific boundaries were established for this inquiry that included one school, a targeted sample of participants of economic disadvantage, and a limited time frame (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The quantitative component of data analysis provided comprehensive baseline information across grade levels, while the qualitative data from focus groups and individual interviews contributed in-depth descriptions. Moreover, pre-existing student demographic data was included to provide a personal portrait of racial, ethnic, and SES for each case study.

Regional Context

The urban area chosen for this study has experienced a unique historical heritage. Its origin dates back to the mid-eighteenth century when immigrants of German descent established a religious, communitarian settlement. Community residents shared in a common economy and lived an austere lifestyle. They earned their livelihood by farming and as small-scale merchants (Taft, 2013). By the end of the Civil War, the local economy underwent a pivotal trajectory into the milieu of steel manufacturing, generating a striking contrast in the local way of life. The city's close proximity to ore and fuel deposits was conducive to an economic boon and its eventual ascent as a leading steel manufacturer. The steel industry flourished throughout the first

half of the 20th century, with the local plant reaching a status of number one in shipping and number two in steel production worldwide. During the 1960s and 1970s the company began its descent as the forerunner in steel manufacturing. Management turnovers, competition from foreign imports, high salaries for executives and unionized laborers, decreased demand for steel, a decline in steel shipments, and the increased cost of raw materials led to the company's demise, ending in bankruptcy in 2001 (Ragucci & Gulbro, 2004). Since the mid 1960s, a wave of Hispanic immigrants began to settle in the local region and surrounding counties. This influx of the Latino population has been especially explosive over the past decade (Dewey, 2011). Currently, the region is undergoing a revitalization. One major endeavor to boost the local economy is the development of a river waterfront area to include retail shops, entertainment venues, heritage attractions, and a gambling casino. This combination of cultural ancestry and the legacy of the steel empire draws tourists to the region thereby rekindling the somewhat diminished economic health of the area (Taft, 2013).

School District Context

The local school district reveals somewhat dichotomous traits. Many students reside in the urban hub of the area and may experience economic disadvantage, while others live in extended suburban neighborhoods and may experience economic affluence. The total enrollment is 13,500 students, with a demographic make-up of 49% White, 36% Hispanic, 10% Black, 4% Asian, and 1% multiracial. The district is proud of its diversity and provides an extensive English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for students with limited English proficiency. Twenty-two schools, including two high schools, four middle schools and sixteen elementary schools comprise the public school system. Half of these receive federal Title I funds due to the percentage of students who live at or below the poverty level. The school district employs 1,192

teachers and 2000 total staff members, making it one of the largest employers in the region.

Local Context

Newhope Elementary School has a total student enrollment of 342 students. The majority of students in this Pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade setting are of Hispanic heritage (78%). Black and White students represent 12% and 6% respectively, and Multiracial students account for the remaining 4% of the total enrollment of 345. Newhope has the highest percentage of students of economic disadvantage of all the schools in the district, with 92% of students living at or below the poverty level. In 2001 the school was rebuilt to allow for increased enrollment and to provide a facility that better responded to instructional needs, such as a larger gym and library and several small-group instruction rooms. Newhope is a neighborhood school, so all the students live within walking distance. The immediate vicinity outside the school grounds, however, presents safety concerns due to frequent illegal activities involving drugs and violence. Many community residents depend on the school to assist them with services that extend beyond purely academic instruction, such as healthcare, counseling, housing, and employment. Consequently, Newhope serves as a safe haven for students and their families against an economically depressed backdrop.

Participants

The current study examined the career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy of fourth and fifth-grade students of economic disadvantage attending Newhope in the fall of 2013. The study participants included all fourth and fifth-grade students who qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch due to their low socioeconomic status during the 2013-2014 school year. A total of 94 students were enrolled in fourth and fifth grades, but only 84 of these students met the criteria of low SES. Of the total, 54 were in three, fourth-grade classes, and 30 were in two,

fifth-grade classes. Forty-seven were girls and 37 were boys. All the children were between nine and eleven years old and divided into academically, heterogeneously-grouped classes. That is, students were distributed evenly among the classes regarding high/low academic ability/achievement. Students exhibiting frequent behavioral concerns were also assigned across all classes. Selected distribution occurred for English language learners (ELLs) and students with learning disabilities to allow for more effective provision of support in the classroom. Therefore, all ELLs were placed in one classroom at each grade level, and students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) were placed in another classroom.

Since only a few students in the fourth and fifth grades did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the study, they were invited to complete the survey, even though data was only analyzed for students who qualified. This step precluded the researcher from drawing attention to any student who did not qualify to participate due to his/her SES. In addition, students were informed of the randomized selection process for focus groups so that no student perceived marginalization or bias on the part of the researcher. The researcher purposefully selected a sample of students to take part in the in-depth interviews from the participant pool of focus-group candidates. The criteria for inclusion was based on students' willingness to participate and engage in more extensive, verbal responses in English or Spanish, as the researcher was fluent in both languages. All required permission forms were sent to participants' parents in both English and Spanish due to the high percentage of Hispanic families with limited English proficiency. The investigator also solicited permission from the children using student assent forms.

Procedures

Prior to the instrument implementation phase of the study, the researcher met with each of the five classes to provide a brief description of the research goals, the three

measurements that would be utilized, and expectations for student participation. Students had the opportunity at that time to pose any questions relevant to the research process and their involvement. All required parent/student consent/assent forms documents were gathered and filed before investigative proceedings initiated. Once contact with students commenced, all measurements were administered in school during the Social Studies lesson. There was no need for students to stay for additional time beyond the regular school day.

During the first phase of measurement, teachers in all five classes distributed the survey/questionnaire portion of the study on the same day and during the same time block. The researcher determined that the daily Social Studies instructional block would serve as the appropriate timeframe for administration. The five teachers received instructions regarding survey distribution, implementation, and collection during grade-level meetings that were held two weeks prior to assessment. The survey measurement was administered orally to the 39 students who submitted consent/assent forms confirming their willingness to participate. The children needed 30 to 45 minutes to complete the surveys using paper and pencils. The 45 remaining, eligible fourth- and fifth-grade students who elected not to take part in the study met with the counselor in the library for a lesson on career exploration. A reading specialist was assigned to administer the survey to students who were absent on the designated assessment day upon their return to school. All surveys were collected and returned to the researcher at the conclusion of the assessment session.

The second phase of measurement involved focus groups. One focus group was randomly selected from each of the five classes, with a total of five students per group. Two or three students were selected from each pool of girls and boys to have a nearly equal number of girls and boys within the grade levels. Having small groups of five allowed every student the

opportunity to share ideas and respond to questions in a 45-minute session. The investigator conducted the focus groups when students normally had their daily Social Studies lesson. Each group responded to the same open-ended questions and engaged in discussions that ensued as prompted by the researcher's questions or student responses. As different topics emerged during group discussion, the researcher posed additional questions relevant to the ongoing dialogue. All researcher-prepared questions related to career development and aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy regarding career preparation and attainment. The researcher audio-recorded each group and transcribed recordings for analysis.

Undoubtedly, a key component of the data collection process pertained to the in-depth interviews that constituted the basis for 4 case studies. The researcher selected two students, one boy and one girl, from each grade level. Creswell (2013) maintains that there is no exact number of cases to constitute a multiple-case study, however researchers typically select four or five cases. For the current study, the investigator chose 4 case studies in order to have an equal number of boys and girls across the two grade levels. This allowed for cross-case analysis of gender and grade. Since the interviews aimed to yield rich descriptive student responses, it was critical for the case study sample to include students who were more prone to verbal engagement and more eager to share their personal perspectives. Therefore, the sample selection was purposeful. That is, the researcher randomly selected four participants from a pool of students who provided rich verbal responses during the focus group sessions, and therefore qualified as the best candidates to inform an understanding of the central phenomena (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001; Creswell, 2013) and to contribute the best information to address the research questions (McMillan, 2012). The interviews lasted about 45 minutes per student and were also conducted in the school library. The children had the option to be interviewed in English or

Spanish, and they all elected to converse in English. Since this study aimed to explore career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy, the interviewer/researcher prepared open-ended questions for each of these concepts. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The researcher ensured student confidentiality by assigning numbers to student surveys, numbers and alphabet letters to focus groups and participants, and fictitious names for in-depth, one-on-one interviews. All data was stored and secured in the researcher's office desk on a daily basis. Once measurements were completed, all data was stored/locked in the researcher's residential desk. No one had access to data materials except the investigator. Audio recordings were destroyed upon study completion.

Instruments

The researcher gathered data by using three different measures. The first instrument was the *Childhood Career Development Scale* (Schultheiss & Stead, 2013) a 52-item survey involving a five-point, Likert scale. The range of responses included: Strongly Agree (I agree a lot), Agree, Uncertain (I am not sure), Disagree, and Strongly Disagree (I do not agree at all). Each survey item corresponded to one of eight scale categories: Information (6), Curiosity/Exploration (7), Interests (6), Locus of Control (7), Key Figures (5), Time Perspective (4), Planning (11), and Self-Concept (6). As creators of the instrument, Schultheiss and Stead (2004) reported Cronbach's alpha for each scale as follows: Planning = .84, Self-Concept = .84, Information = .72, Interests = .68, Locus of Control = .79, Curiosity/Exploration = .66, Key Figures = .68, and Time Perspective = .69 (See Appendix A).

Fourth and fifth-grade students completed the survey in a 45-minute class period. Surveys of students who did not qualify as "economically disadvantaged" were not tabulated in

the data analysis. Classroom teachers administered and collected all surveys. The investigator prepared open-ended questions for the five-member focus group sessions. The questions were based on the survey items in the previous instrument. Students responded to seven questions related to careers and self-efficacy (See Appendix B). Since the objective of the focus groups was to solicit candid student responses, thereby providing a forum for the student "voice", it was imperative for the researcher to prompt all the students to actively participate by providing detailed responses. All focus group sessions lasted 45 minutes. Members of the focus groups were excused from their daily social studies lesson in order to participate in these discussions on careers, aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy.

The final instrument involved case studies with one-on-one interviews. Once the focus groups were completed and audio-recordings were reviewed, the researcher determined which students appeared to be the best candidates for consideration as case studies based on their potential to provide extensive information. One boy and one girl were selected from the fourth- and fifth-grades, for a total of four students. The researcher/interviewer asked each student the same seven open-ended questions during the interview process (See Appendix C). Student responses prompted the researcher to investigate further with more probing questions depending on the topic/issues that emerged during the interviewer/interviewee dialogue. Spontaneous questioning/answering further enhanced the authenticity of student responses and provided a candid portrayal of real-life experiences and future aspirations. All questions related to the surveys and information that emerged during the focus groups regarding career knowledge and awareness, current vocational aspirations and factors influencing that vision, knowledge and awareness of required academic pathways to career goal attainment, and perceptions of self-efficacy regarding goal attainment. The investigator's goal was to garner descriptive accounts

that elaborated on students' lived experiences and personal perspectives. Here, too, the interview process took place during students' social studies classes. The interviewer served as the sole data collector for focus groups and interviews.

Data Analysis

In order to triangulate data collection, the researcher relied on three different sources of evidence – surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The forms of data analyses for this study varied depending on the information-gathering instrument. Student responses on the survey regarding career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy were tallied and displayed in a frequency distribution table (Yin, 2009). The researcher also provided bar graphs that revealed the number of responses for each choice on the Likert scale for each survey subscale to allow for within-item visual comparisons. A narrative description offered an overall summary/interpretation of the more salient features of the composite of student responses for the survey. Since fourth- and fifth-grade participants completed this component of the study as a paper-and-pencil assignment, the data provided broad, rudimentary information regarding students' perspectives.

The investigator gathered more extensive, in-depth data from the 25 students participating in the five focus groups. All recordings were transcribed directly from the audio tapes by the researcher, who completed this process by hand. Transcriptions from each of the five audio recordings were also coded by hand to discern recurring themes. A pre-established codebook that included a set of codes and operational definitions served as a guide for analyzing interview data (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011) from the focus groups as well as the one-on-one interviews (See Appendix D). The codes were then combined into broader categories (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). A frequency distribution table displayed the individual

focus group codes and categories (themes). A narrative summary compared and contrasted focus group codes and categories to elucidate commonalities and dissimilarities as they related to research questions.

The one-on-one interviews involving four purposively selected students (cases) provided the most critical data for analysis. Once again, the investigator transcribed all recordings directly from the audiotapes by hand. Transcriptions from each of the four audio recordings were also coded by hand for prominent themes. The researcher used structural coding. That is, a process of coding text according to each specific question used during the interviews (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998). As mentioned above, the investigator planned to utilize the pre-established codebook as a baseline approach to data analysis involving etic codes. That is, from preconceived concepts that involved professional jargon as determined by the investigator as an outsider to the topic under study. However, a revised codebook was presented upon completion of data collection to incorporate emic codes that emerged from the vernacular jargon of the students to further elucidate the insider "voice" (MacQueen et al., 1998). The codes from the expanded codebook were aggregated to form larger categories. For each case, the researcher provided a description of the case and a narrative report of themes and categories. Additionally, within-case and cross-case theme analyses were interpreted in narrative form and displayed in a table. Moreover, detailed personal accountings from students were included to enrich the understanding of the children's "voice" and to allow for In Vivo coding to capture the essence of student narratives. This process was a form of emic coding that acknowledges participant-generated wording, often reflecting subculture expressions (Saldaña, 2013). Finally, a graphic figure provided a visual display of the steps involved in the data analysis process during the interview phase of the multiple-case study (Creswell, 2013).

The methodology for the current study aimed to elicit the candid perspectives of children regarding the vision they held for their futures. The methodological design was conducive to the school environment, thereby allowing for a child-friendly, natural setting. Moreover, the researcher obtained a comprehensive student perspective by triangulating data collection and analyses. Member checking by students and two adults working and/or living in the community further enhanced study credibility. This strategy involved having participants reflect on the investigator's data, interpretations, and conclusions for the accuracy and comprehensive quality of the account (Creswell, 2013). This ensured the researcher that she was representing participants' "voice" with rigor and credibility (Glesne, 1999).

Validity/Credibility

Many qualitative researchers refer to credibility as the primary criterion for study evaluation rather than referring to validity and reliability, intrinsic to quantitative research. Credibility involves the accuracy and trustworthiness of collected data, data analysis, and study conclusions (McMillan, 2012). Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2011) endorse methodological triangulation involving surveys, focus groups, and interviews as appropriate steps to establishing validity. Golafshani (2003) concurs that multiple methods for gathering data are appropriate for establishing qualitative validity and reliability. Creswell (2013) proposes a number of qualitative research strategies that confirm validity, including triangulation of methods, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, and rich, thick descriptions. Moreover, Wallen and Fraenkel (2001) endorse a variety of procedures to enhance validity and reliability including triangulation of data collection and audiotaping. In his discussion of truthfulness and accuracy of data in qualitative research, Bryant (2004) also advocates member checking and triangulation as key approaches. For the current investigation, the researcher determined study findings as credible using several

methods. Results from the surveys, focus groups, and interviews were compared to discern similar conclusions and provide a variety of evidence. This study also provided the investigator's personal perspective, feedback from participants on data gathered, and in-depth, vivid descriptions of participants' accounts. The Cronbach's alpha ratings for the survey, previously created by an outside source, is presented in the "Instruments" section of this study.

Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher's interest in this study stemmed from three distinct yet interrelated vantage points. The primary impetus for exploring career aspirations of children of economic disadvantage originated from a classroom activity the investigator assigned as an elementary school ESL teacher 10 years prior to this study. After reading a story about an astronaut, the researcher asked her fourth and fifth-grade students what they wanted to be when they grew up. Many of the children responded with a blank stare. A second inquiry prompted students to share their dreams for the future. To the researcher's dismay, the students revealed very limited vision regarding their aspirations, including living on Welfare subsidies so they wouldn't have to work or having babies in just a few years. They shared dim prospects for their futures, had no "dreams", were unaware that they were entitled to envision prosperity, and, most importantly, they didn't know they had options. Given their limited environmental/familial exposure to educational/career attainment, the students, in essence, didn't know what they didn't know. The realization that children of poverty exhibited limited expectations for future success kindled the teacher/researcher's desire to explore this phenomenon further.

As an elementary school principal in an economically disadvantaged community, the investigator's concern regarding children's career aspirations reached a heightened level of cultural awareness and understanding. That is, aspects of children's impoverished environments,

such as living conditions and family structures/dynamics, may have a detrimental effect on children's career aspirations as well as their perceptions of self-efficacy. The school leader was in a unique position to implement career development programs that aimed to counteract life experiences that stifle children's aspirational development by expanding their understanding of academic pathways and knowledge of career options in the social studies curriculum. As Larson and Murtadha (2002) maintain, principals with an equity focus implement programs that serve the academic needs of all children. Moreover, Gallavan (2003) further posits that elementary school administrators must develop curriculum conducive to student engagement in learning opportunities that are relevant to their world today. Additionally, the school setting has the potential to instill a "can do" attitude in students and a positive outlook for the future, most specifically through guidance services. Antrop-Gonzalez and Velez (2005) support this notion and contend that children's self-concept reflects their perspective on their future and what they hope to become. The school principal/researcher acknowledged the opportunity to utilize her leadership role to further investigate how children perceived their futures in the workplace. Her role in this investigation was both as an insider and an outsider. That is, as the school administrator, she was knowledgeable as to students' background and directly observed their behavior on a daily basis. However, as an outsider, she had never experienced living in a culture of poverty. It was critical for the school leader to clearly define her role as a researcher to study participants so as to allay any apprehension students may have had regarding her position of authority and their candor during the data gathering phase of the investigation. Therefore, the investigator informed students that their decision to participate or not would have no effect on their grades, their relationship with school personnel, or any other aspect of their schooling experience.

From a global, macro-level perspective, the researcher's interest in the career aspirations of children of poverty stemmed from her fervent advocacy for social justice. With the advent of the technological boon came a worldwide interconnectedness that enabled the average citizen to tap into a bottomless reservoir of knowledge and information, including the labor market, nationally and abroad. However, not everyone has adequate access or opportunity to avail himself/herself of scientific innovations and technology on a continual basis. Bradley et al. (2001) affirm that poverty often precludes children from exposure to developmentally enriching materials and experiences. Evans (2004) further confirms that children of low SES are less likely to have computers in their homes or access to Internet services. Therefore, children of economic disadvantage may not be able to tap into the knowledge pool or develop the more savvy skill set to be technologically competitive with their more affluent peers in terms of their readiness for the employment marketplace. For the researcher, this dilemma potentially relegates children of poverty to a position of disadvantage relating to career attainment. Addressing impediments to equal opportunity for future prosperity is the crux of democratic societies – an espousal of moral purpose, which, in education, is tantamount to "making a difference in the life-chances of all students – more of a difference for the disadvantaged because they have further to go" (Fullan, 2001, p. 1).

The researcher was well aware that her role as a school leader, in a position of authority, could cause students and/or parents to feel a certain level of intimidation regarding participation in the study. Therefore, it was critical for the researcher to inform parents and students that participation was completely voluntary. Moreover, refusal to take part in the study would have no negative consequences. Students/parents were informed that this study would have no impact on students' academic performance grades. The researcher wanted students and parents to feel

comfortable about their decision to participate or not. Consent forms for parents and assent forms for students explicitly affirmed the volunteer nature of the study and the freedom to quit at any time.

The long-range intention of the investigator upon completion of the study was to improve academic programming for students. That is, study results would allow the researcher to derive implications for educators regarding aspects of current career development programs that could better reflect the needs of students. By listening to and documenting students' ideas regarding their aspirations and self-efficacy, the researcher/school administrator intended to evaluate how well the Social Studies curriculum addressed possible knowledge gaps or concerns that students of economic disadvantage disclosed. Providing students with a broader understanding and knowledge regarding the pathways to career attainment and their potential role in the future workplace might help to diminish their "disadvantage" in terms of career development, and allow students to make informed decisions regarding their vision for the future. Findings from this investigation served the researcher/administrator by elucidating areas of deficiency in the curriculum that warrant attention, such as career development instruction.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Survey Data-Analysis

Results from the survey provided a broad overview of all study participants' perceptions relating to career development and self-efficacy and served as an informational baseline prior to initiating the qualitative component of the investigation. The *Childhood Career Development Scale* (Schultheiss & Stead, 2013) was comprised of eight subscales, including *Information*, *Curiosity/Exploration*, *Interests*, *Locus of Control*, *Key Figures*, *Time Perspective*, *Planning*, and

Self-Control (Table 1). The researcher provided analyses of student responses for each of the subscales in terms of the percentage of students choosing each of the Likert scale options (Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). In addition, similarities/differences in responses between grade levels and gender were also examined. Bar graphs (Figures 2-9) for each of the subscales offered a visual representation of the percentage of students, by grade and gender (fourth-grade boys, fourth-grade girls, fifth-grade boys, and fifth-grade girls) choosing each of the Likert options. Means and standard deviations were presented for the whole sample, by gender, and by grade for each subscale (Table 2). T-Test scores and p values were also reported as well as Cronbach alpha scores.

The *Information* subscale included six survey items that determined participants' awareness of the importance of occupational information (e.g., I need more information to choose my favorite job). The data indicated that the highest percentage of fourth-grade boys (44%) and girls (55%), as well as fifth-grade girls (47%) strongly agreed with item statements. However, only 22% of fifth-grade boys strongly agreed while 44% of this group agreed. The percentage of students responding steadily declined from strongly agreeing to strongly disagreeing for both grade levels and genders except for fifth-grade boys, where the steady decline initiated after the "agree" choice. This group also had the highest percentage (28%) choosing "uncertain" as a response. Additionally, 16% of fourth- and fifth-grade boys disagreed or strongly disagreed with item statements, whereas only 6% of fourth- and fifth-grade girls chose these options. Overall, fifth- grade boys revealed the lowest percentage of students who agreed with statements about the importance of occupational information, and they depicted the highest percentage of uncertainty.

In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the data, the researcher

Table 1

Childhood Career Development Scale – Percentages of Respondents

Subscales	Survey Responses	Fourth Graders Boys (n = 11)	Fourth Graders Girls (n = 14)	Fifth Graders Boys (n = 3)	Fifth Graders Girls (n =11)
Information					
	Strongly Agree (SA)	44	55	22	47
	Agree (A)	29	24	44	35
	Uncertain (U)	17	19	28	14
	Disagree (D)	7	1	6	0
	Strongly Disagree (SD)	3	1	0	4
Curiosity/Exploration					
	Strongly Agree (SA)	30	43	9	23
	Agree (A)	36	29	24	38
	Uncertain (U)	16	16	48	21
	Disagree (D)	6	3	14	10
	Strongly Disagree (SD)	12	9	5	8
Interests					
	Strongly Agree (SA)	83	82	39	70
	Agree (A)	9	13	61	24
	Uncertain (U)	5	5	0	6
	Disagree (D)	0	0	0	0
	Strongly Disagree (SD)	3	0	0	0
Locus of Control					
	Strongly Agree (SA)	70	65	10	35
	Agree (A)	17	16	71	27
	Uncertain (U)	12	18	19	25
	Disagree (D)	0	1	0	9
	Strongly Disagree (SD)	1	0	0	4
Key Figures					
	Strongly Agree (SA)	49	64	20	53
	Agree (A)	18	16	66	18
	Uncertain (U)	20	19	7	16
	Disagree (D)	4	0	7	7
	Strongly Disagree (SD)	9	1	0	6

Table 1 (contd.)

Childhood Career Development Scale – Percentages of Respondents

Subscales	Survey Responses	Fourth Graders Boys	Fourth Graders Girls	Fifth Graders Boys	Fifth Graders Girls
Time Perspective					
	Strongly Agree (SA)	61	80	25	75
	Agree (A)	25	7	50	14
	Uncertain (U)	5	13	17	11
	Disagree (D)	7	0	8	0
	Strongly Disagree (SD)	2	0	0	0
Planning					
	Strongly Agree (SA)	74	62	6	58
	Agree (A)	13	25	60	34
	Uncertain (U)	7	10	27	7
	Disagree (D)	5	3	6	1
	Strongly Disagree (SD)	1	1	0	0
Self-Concept					
	Strongly Agree (SA)	60	80	17	59
	Agree (A)	29	10	67	21
	Uncertain (U)	9	8	17	18
	Disagree (D)	1	2	0	1
	Strongly Disagree (SD)	0	0	0	0

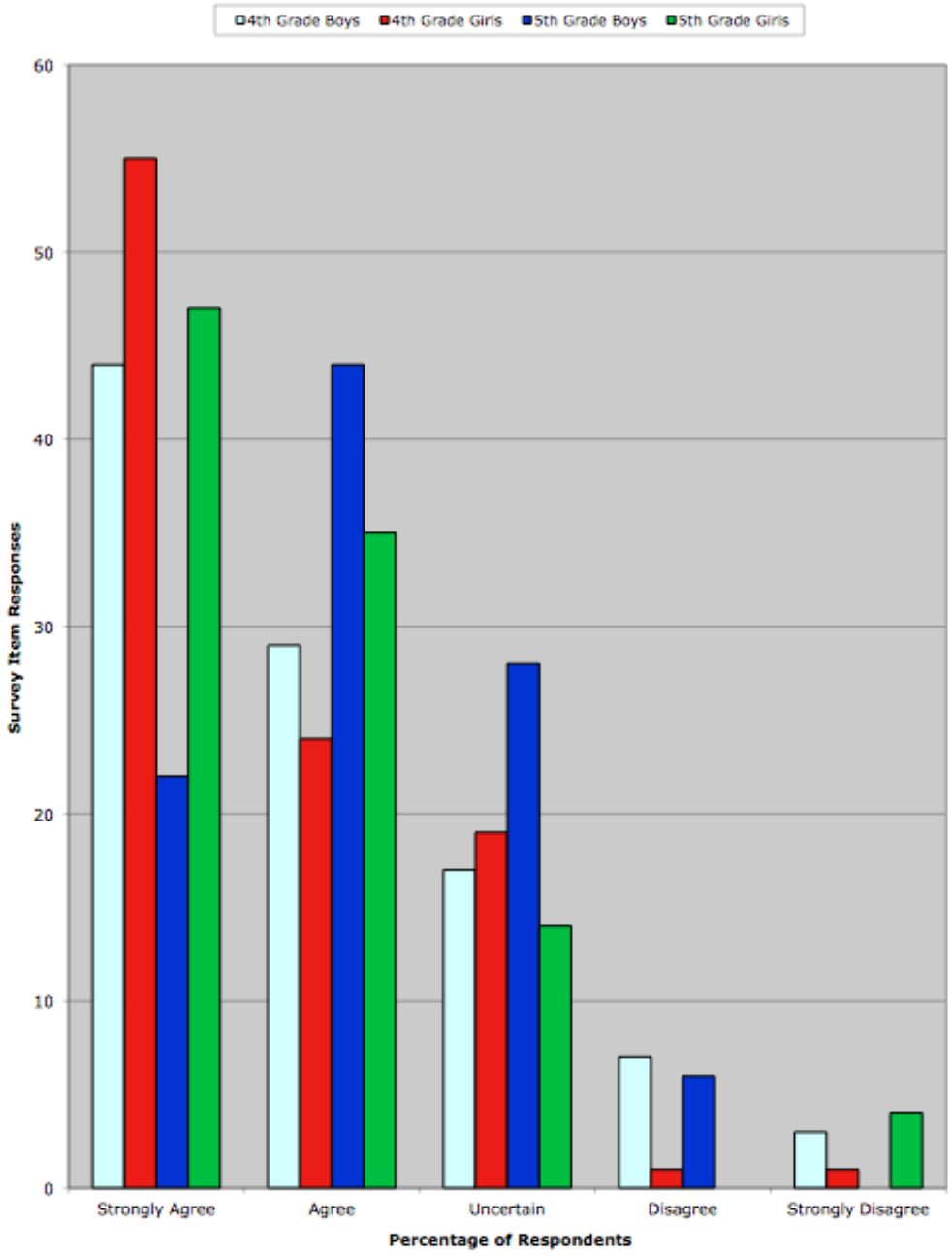

Figure 2. Childhood Career Development Survey results for the Information Scale

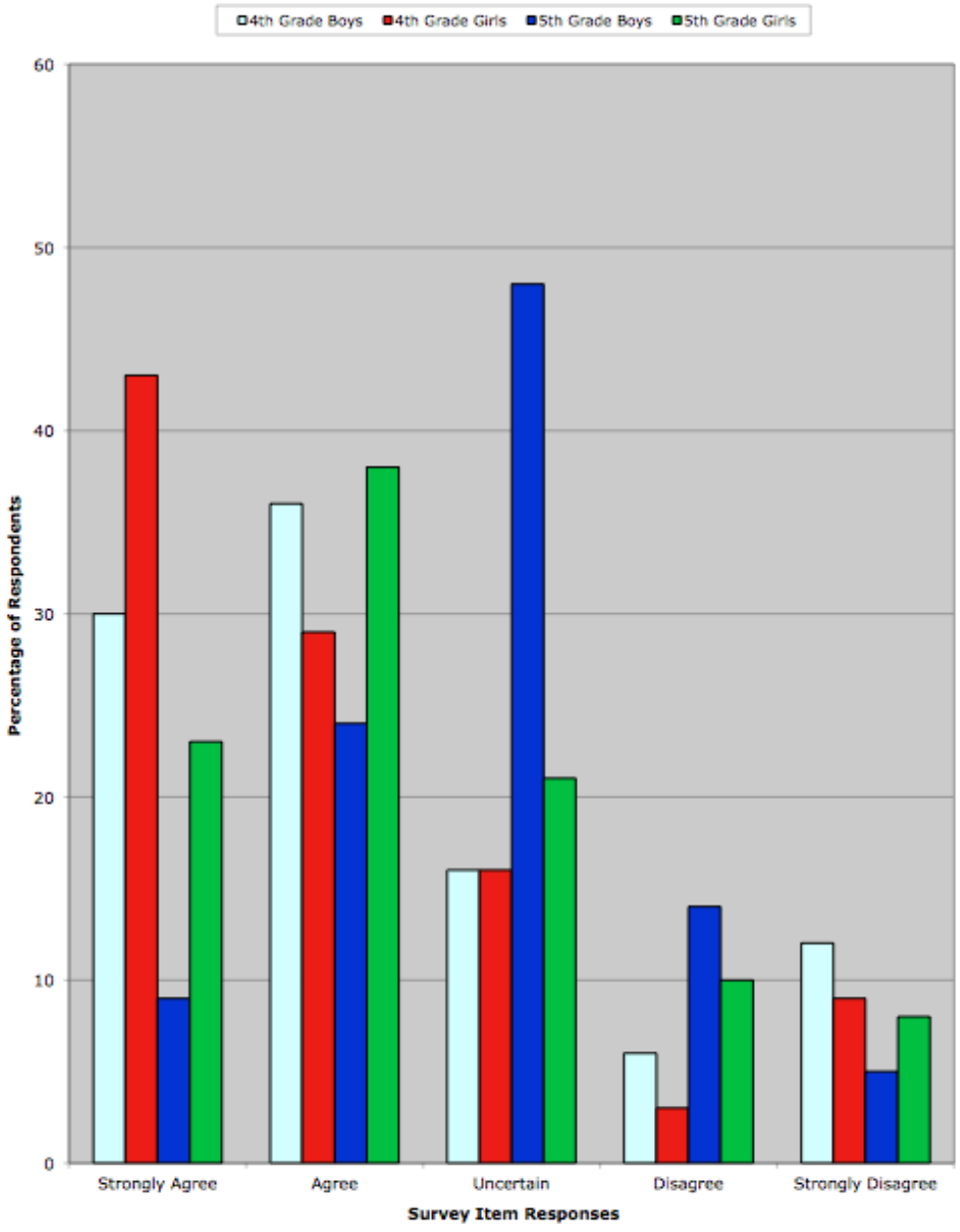

Figure 3. Childhood Career Development Survey results for the Curiosity/Exploration Scale

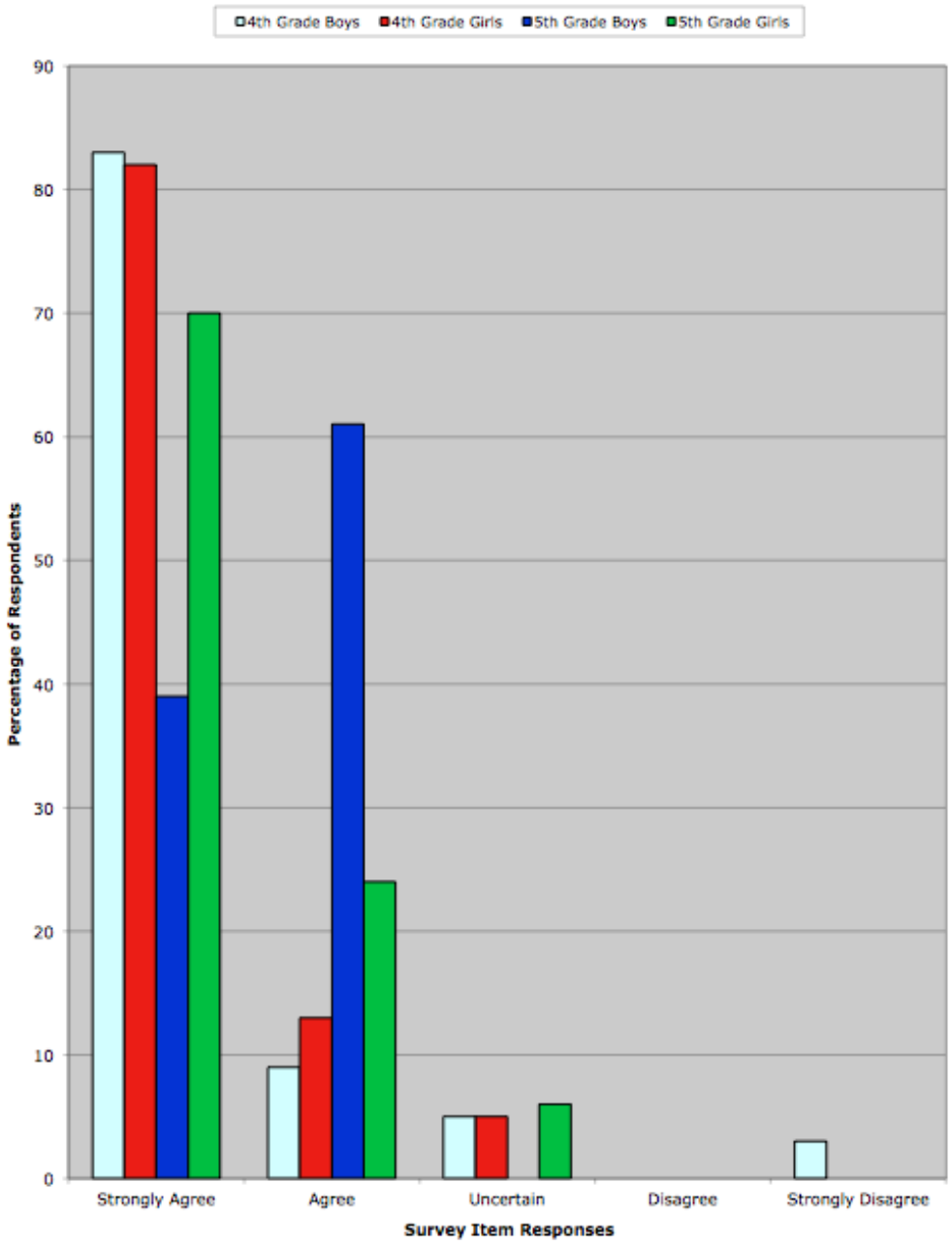

Figure 4. Childhood Career Development Survey results for the Interests Scale

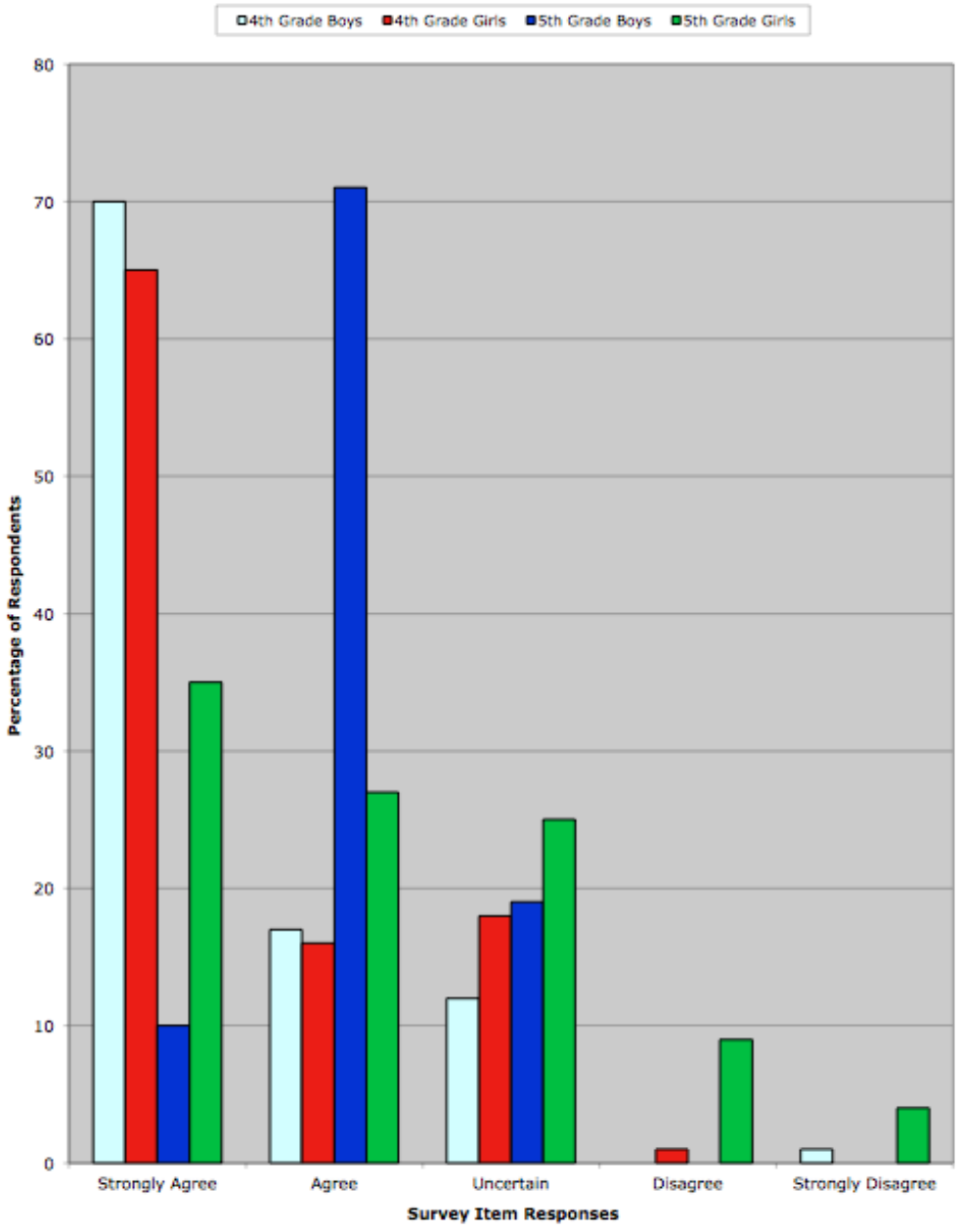

Figure 5. Childhood Career Development Survey results for the Locus of Control Scale

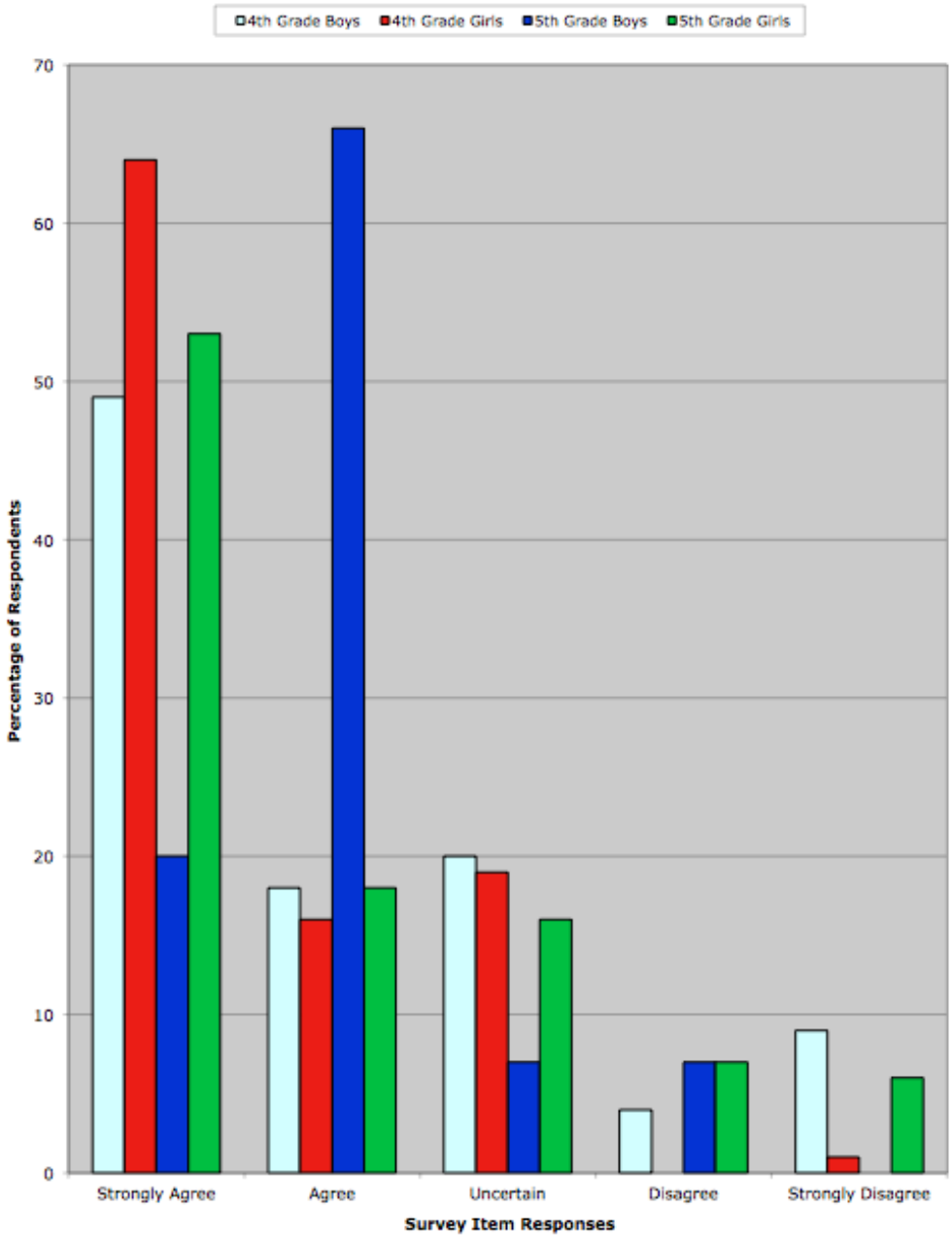

Figure 6. Childhood Career Development Survey results for the Key Figures Scale

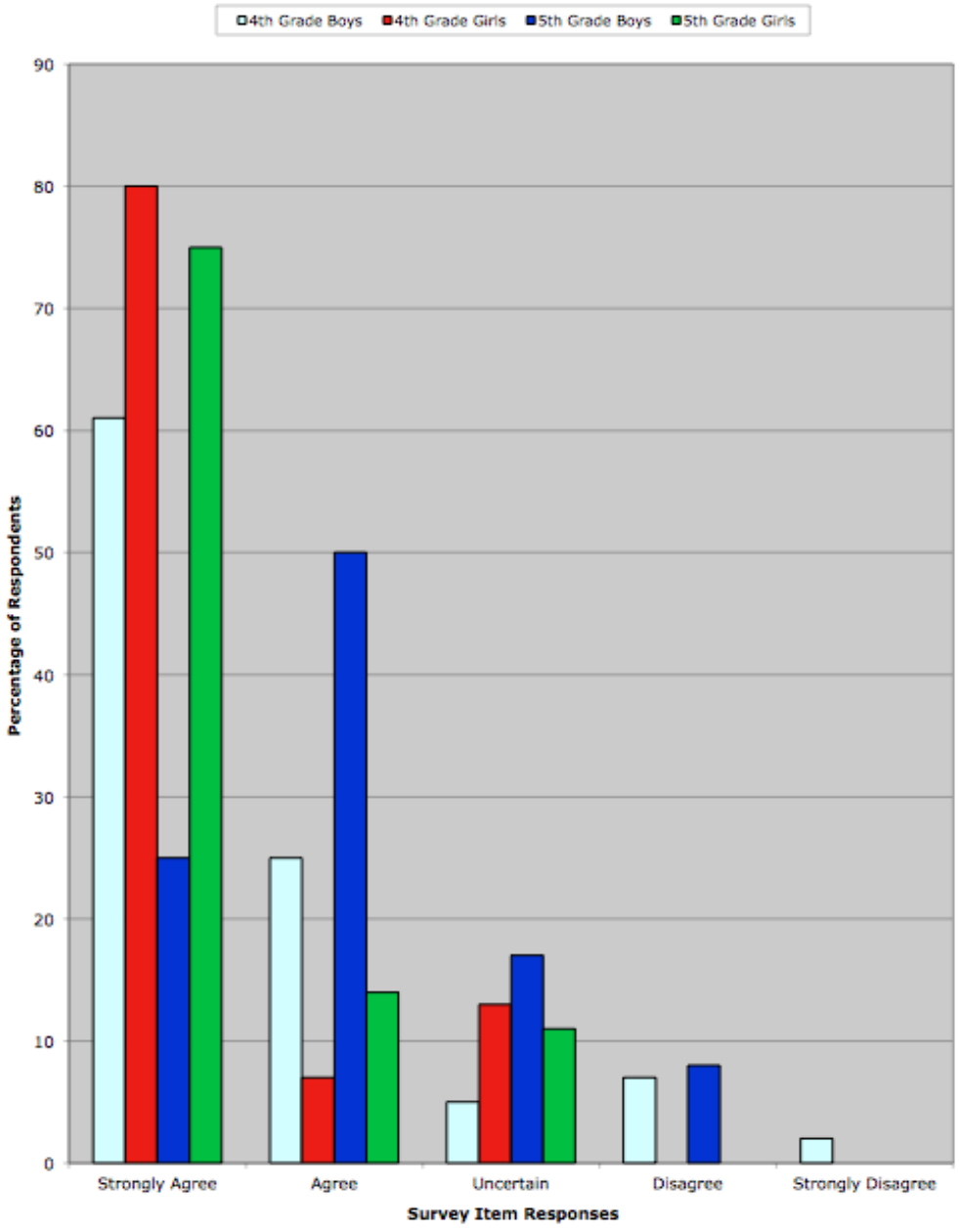

Figure 7. Childhood Career Development Survey results for the Time Perspective Scale

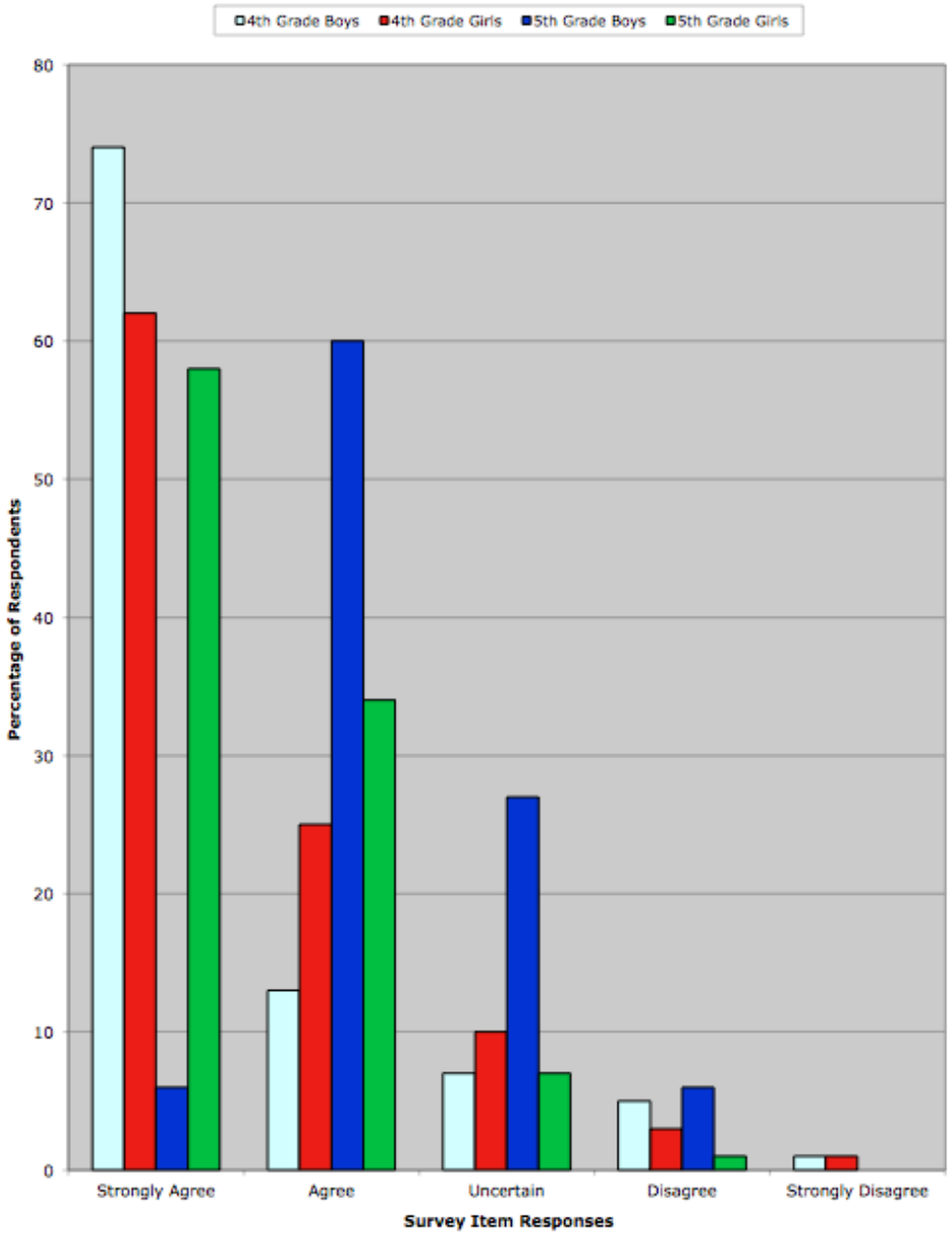

Figure 8. Childhood Career Development Survey results for the Planning Scale

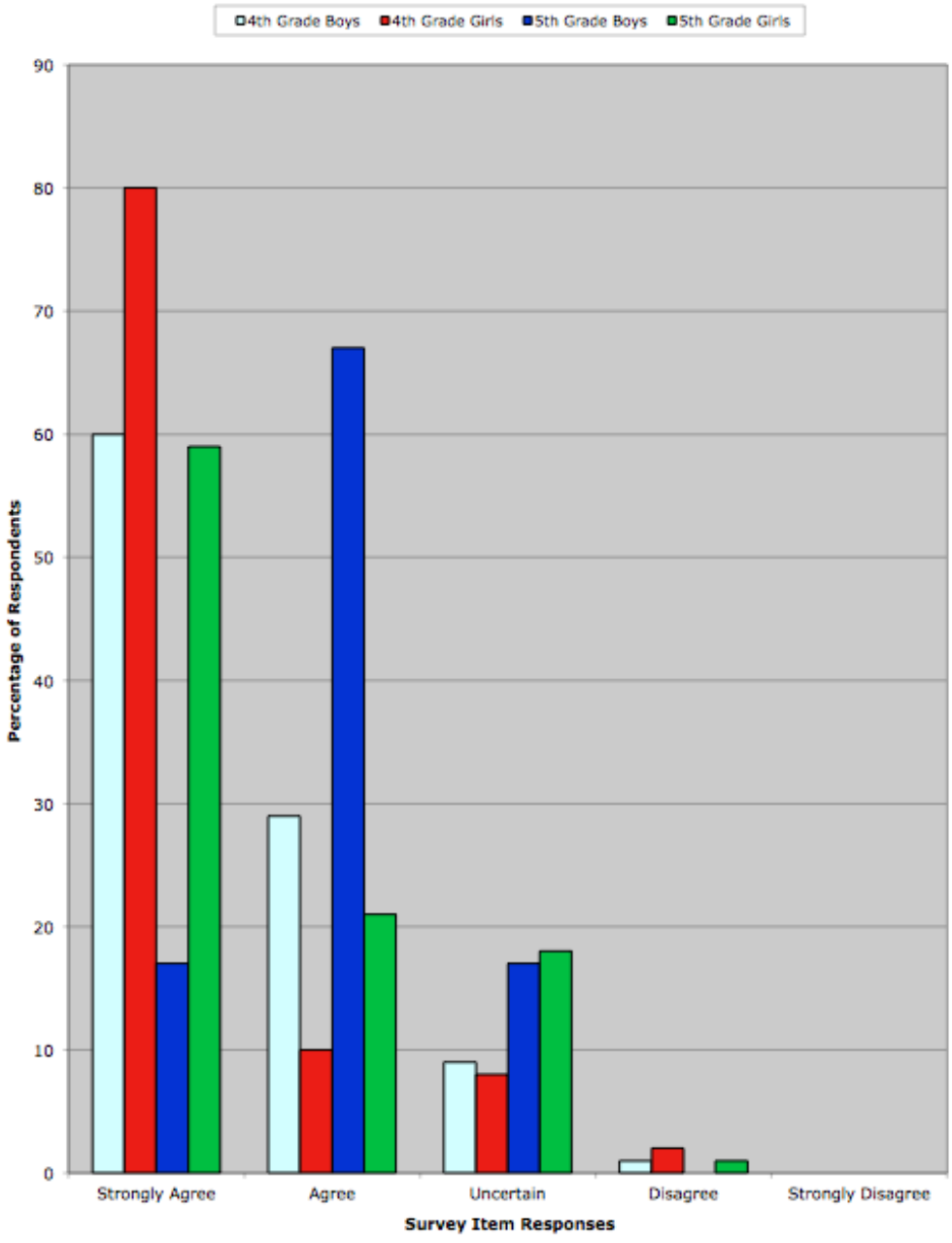

Figure 9. Childhood Career Development Survey results for the Self-Concept Scale

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Childhood Career Development Scale

	Full Sample (n = 39)		By Gender: Males (n = 14)		By Gender: Females (n = 25)		t	p
Subscale	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*		
Information	4.160	.610	3.988	.645	4.253	.578	-1.319	.195
Curiosity/Exp.	3.729	.571	3.561	.564	3.823	.564	-1.389	.173
Interests	4.684	.317	4.631	.328	4.713	.314	-.774	.444
Locus of Con.	4.253	.716	4.408	.577	4.166	.781	1.015	.317
Key Figures	4.244	.720	4.071	.847	4.340	.637	-1.121	.270
Time Pers.	4.519	.545	4.268	.532	4.660	.510	-2.269	.029
Planning	4.424	.494	4.351	.624	4.466	.413	-.692	.493
Self-Concept	4.483	.587	4.381	.491	4.540	.637	-.808	.424
			By Grade: Fourth (n = 25)		By Grade: Fifth (n = 14)			
Information			4.180	.649	4.119	.549	.297	.768
Curiosity/Exp.			3.857	.539	3.500	.573	1.940	.060
Interests			4.740	.281	4.583	.363	1.504	.141
Locus of Con.			4.491	.527	3.827	.826	3.075	.004
Key Figures			4.307	.713	4.131	.746	.726	.472
Time Pers.			4.540	.543	4.482	.567	.314	.755
Planning			4.487	.494	4.312	.490	1.067	.293
Self-Concept			4.587	.555	4.298	.617	1.499	.142

included critical descriptive statistics (Table 2). For the *Information* subscale, the mean score for the entire student sample, was 4.16, with a standard deviation of .61. Therefore, responses were largely in the "agree" range. Gender differences were minimal, with girls scoring slightly higher. Grade-level differences were also negligible, with fourth grade scoring slightly higher. The p value was not significant for gender or grade. However, the Cronbach alpha score was .68, approaching a substantial level of reliability.

The *Curiosity/Exploration* subscale consisted of seven survey items that assessed students' inquisitiveness and desire to investigate (e.g., I wonder about different jobs, curiosity; I like to explore my world by visiting libraries). The fourth-grade girls (43%) had the highest percentage that strongly agreed with item statements, while fifth-grade boys (9%) had the lowest percentage. Once again, this group (48%) exceeded the percentage of students in fourth grade (16% boys and girls each) and fifth-grade girls (21%) who chose the "uncertain" response. The percentages of girls who agreed, were uncertain, and strongly disagreed were closely aligned across grade levels, whereas percentages of boys for each response option were dissimilar across grade levels except for the "agree" choice. Comprehensively, fourth-grade girls demonstrated the most agreement with survey statements, while fifth-grade boys showed the most uncertainty and disagreement.

More rigorous statistical analysis revealed that the mean score for the entire sample on the *Curiosity/Exploration* subscale was 3.73, with a standard deviation of .57. The range of student responses was largely between the "Uncertain" and "Agree" choices. The difference between mean scores of boys and girls was again minimal, with girls scoring slightly higher. Grade-level means were not significantly different, though fourth grade scores were slightly closer to the "Agree" response option. Once again, the p values were not significant. The

Cronbach alpha score was .50, indicating a low level of reliability.

Undoubtedly, the smallest percentage of student response disparity was evident on the *Interests* subscale, involving six survey items that indicated participants' awareness of their likes (e.g., I know what subjects I like in school). Nearly equal or equal percentages of fourth-grade boys (83%) and girls (82%) strongly agreed, were uncertain (5%), and disagreed (0%) with survey statements, with minimal differences in "agree" (boys 9%, girls 13%) and "strongly disagree" (boys 3%, girls 0%) responses. Percentages of fifth-grade boys and girls selecting "disagree" and "strongly disagree" were identical (0%). However, while fifth-grade girls (70%) greatly exceeded fifth-grade boys (39%) in percentages of students who strongly agreed with item statements, fifth-grade boys (61%) demonstrated a much higher percentage than fifth-grade girls (24%) of participants who chose the "agree" response. Overall, students across both grade levels and genders largely strongly agreed or agreed with survey items regarding interests. The percentage of students expressing uncertainty was minimal and equal or nearly equal among groups (fourth-grade boys and girls, each 5%, and fifth-grade girls, 6%) except for 5th grade boys who demonstrated no uncertainty. Moreover, a much higher percentage of fourth graders (boys 83%, girls 82%) than fifth graders (boys 39%, girls 70%) opted for "strongly agree" responses, while a much higher percentage of fifth graders (boys 61%, girls 24%) than fourth graders (boys 9%, girls 13%) selected "agree" as an option. Therefore, nearly all the participants appeared to be well aware of their personal interests.

The statistical findings for the *Interests* subscale regarding the entire sample demonstrated the highest mean score, 4.68, of the eight subscales, and the lowest standard deviation of .32. The range of student responses was very positive, that is, between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". The mean scores between boys and girls were very closely aligned as were the

means between grade levels, though girls and fourth graders scored slightly higher. There were no significant p values for gender or grade. Moreover, the Cronbach alpha score of .39 was the lowest of all the subscales, indicating minimal reliability.

The *Locus of Control* subscale was comprised of seven survey items that examined the degree to which study participants believed they had control over their lives (e.g., I have control over the things I do). Fourth-grade boys (70%) and girls (65%) had the highest percentages of students who strongly agreed with item statements, while the percentage of fifth-grade boys (10%) was the lowest. However, this group showed the highest percentage (71%) for the "Agree" option. The percentages of participants who strongly agreed or agreed with having a sense of control did not differ greatly among fourth graders (boys 87%, girls 81%) or fifth-grade boys (81%), however only 62% of fifth-grade girls chose these response options. This group also showed the highest percentage of students who were uncertain (25%), disagreed (9%), or strongly disagreed (4%) with survey statements about one's sense of control over one's life. Student responses indicated that both grade levels and genders largely believed they had control over their lives.

The statistical analyses for the *Locus of Control* subscale involving all the participants demonstrated a mean score of 4.25, with a .72 standard deviation. Students again chose mostly positive responses ranging from approaching "Agree" to approaching "Strongly Agree". There were no significant differences between mean scores of boys and girls. However, boys scored minimally higher than girls. A significant difference was evident between fourth and fifth graders, with fourth graders scoring higher. The p value was not significant for gender, however, for grade, the value of .004 was significant. The Cronbach alpha score of .89 was indicative of high reliability.

In the *Key Figures* subscale, which included five survey items, the focus was on role models or people that study participants looked up to (e.g., I know people who I want to be like). Once again, the percentage of fifth-grade boys who strongly agreed (20%) differed substantially from the percentages of fourth-grade boys (49%) and girls (64%) as well as fifth-grade girls (53%) who selected this survey response. However, when the "strongly agree" and "agree" responses were combined, the fifth-grade boys represented the highest percentage group (86%) choosing these survey items. Moreover, this group had the lowest percentage of students expressing uncertainty (7%) when compared to fourth graders (boys 20%, girls 19%) or fifth-grade girls (16%). The same percentages of fourth-grade boys (13%) and fifth-grade girls (13%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements about role models, whereas only 1% of fourth-grade girls and 7% of fifth-grade boys chose these survey responses. In summary, study participants largely agreed with statements about students having role models in their lives.

The mean and standard deviation for the *Key Figures* subscale were 4.24 and .72 respectively, for the whole student sample. Here, too, the gender difference between means was not substantial, though girls scored slightly higher. The difference between grade levels was insignificant, but fourth graders scored marginally higher. The p value levels were not significant for gender or grade. However, the Cronbach alpha level of .77 was strong, demonstrating sound reliability.

Four survey items comprised the *Time Perspective* subscale which reflected students' thoughts regarding the future (e.g., I think about the job I might have after I finish school). While the percentage of students who opted for the "strongly agree" response was high for fourth graders (boys 61%, girls 80%) and fifth-grade girls (75%), only 25% of fifth-grade boys strongly agreed that they think about the future. Nevertheless, at least 75% or more of students in each

participant group strongly agreed or agreed that they thought about the future. The fifth-grade boys (17%) represented the highest percentage group expressing uncertainty. Neither of the girl groups disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the survey items, however a small percentage of fourth- and fifth-grade boys (9% and 8% respectively) selected these response options. Comprehensively, students demonstrated agreement with statements that reflected their thoughts about the future.

The descriptive statistics for the *Time* subscale involving the entire sample depicted a mean score of 4.52 and a standard deviation of .55. Again, student responses were largely positive, ranging between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". A significant difference was appreciable between genders, with girls scoring higher, as indicated by the p value of .03. The difference in means between grade levels was extremely small, with fourth grade marginally higher. Moreover, the Cronbach alpha score of .43 revealed a low level of reliability.

The *Planning* subscale consisted of 11 survey items that assessed students' awareness of the importance of planning (e.g., It is important to plan now for my future job). Perhaps the most salient characteristic of the data was the difference in the percentage of fifth-grade boys (6%) who strongly agreed that planning was important when compared to fourth graders (boys 74%, girls 62%) and fifth-grade girls (58%). However, fifth-grade boys represented the group with the highest percentage (60%) of "agree" responses. Only 7% of fourth-grade boys and fifth-grade girls, and 10% of fourth-grade girls expressed uncertainty regarding the importance of planning, while 27% of fifth-grade boys opted for this survey choice. Small percentages of participants across both grade levels and genders disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements about planning, with fifth-grade girls representing the lowest percentage of students (1%), while boys showed the highest percentages with 6% in each grade. Overall, at least 66% of students strongly

agreed or agreed with the importance of planning.

The statistical descriptives for the whole sample relating to the *Planning* subscale demonstrated a mean and standard deviation of 4.42 and .49 respectively. Here, too, students chose largely positive responses of "Agree" and nearing "Strongly Agree". Means for boys and girls were closely aligned, with girls scoring minimally higher. Regarding grade differences, fourth grade again scored minimally higher, though means were similar. While the p values were not significant, the Cronbach alpha score of .82 depicted substantial reliability.

Finally, the *Self-Concept* subscale included six survey items that assessed students' perceptions of self-knowledge (e.g., I know what I am like as a person). Once again the percentage of fifth-grade boys (17%) opting for the "strongly agree" response differed markedly from the remaining groups (fourth-grade boys 60%, girls 80%, fifth-grade girls 59%). However, fifth-grade boys represented the highest percentage of participants selecting the "agree" response. Only 9% and 8% of fourth-grade boys and girls respectively, expressed uncertainty about self-knowledge, while fifth-grade boys (17%) and girls (18%) represented a considerably higher percentage of students. A mere 1% of fourth-grade boys and fifth-grade girls, and 2% of fourth-grade girls disagreed with statements relating to self-knowledge, and no students chose the "strongly disagree" option. A comprehensive data review indicated that at least 80% of students strongly agreed or agreed with survey statements, and fifth graders depicted the highest percentages of students revealing uncertainty.

The statistical descriptives pertaining to the entire sample on the *Self-Concept* subscale revealed a mean of 4.48 and a standard deviation of .59. The range spanned from approaching "Agree" to "Strongly Agree". The mean differences relating to gender and grade were not significant. However, girls and fourth graders again scored slightly higher. The p values did not

reach significance, but the Cronbach alpha score of .86 was a strong indicator of reliability.

Several key results emerged from a collective data analysis of the subscales on the *Childhood Career Development Scale*. The total percentages of all students at each grade level and for each gender who strongly agreed and agreed with survey statements was far greater than the combined percentages of students who were uncertain, disagreed, and strongly disagreed, indicative of an overall positive perspective regarding subscale themes. Moreover, higher percentages of fourth-grade students chose positive responses than fifth-grade participants, which could signal a more carefree perception on the part of the fourth graders, and a bit more apprehension from the fifth graders as they are about to enter middle school. Fifth-grade boys also emerged as the group with the lowest percentage of students who strongly agreed with survey statements in each of the subscales, and with the highest percentage of students who agreed with survey statements in all but one of the subscales (*Curiosity/Exploration)*, indicating they perceived less assuredness in their responses than the other three groups. In addition, fifth-grade boys represented the highest percentage of participants expressing uncertainty when considering all subscales, which supported the notion that this group of participants did not share the same degree of absolute confidence expressed by the other three groups.

The comprehensive statistical analyses also depicted critical findings. Whole group means revealed largely positive student responses, from tending toward "Agree" to "Strongly Agree". Gender differences were only significant for the *Time* subscale, with girls scoring higher. Moreover, girls scored higher for all the subscales except for *Locus of Control*. Grade-level differences were only significant for *Locus of Control, where fourth grade scored higher,* as they did on all the subscales. The Cronbach alpha scores of reliability were high for the *Locus of Control, Key Figures, Planning, and Self-Concept* subscales and approaching a high level for

the *Information* subscale.

Focus Group Data-Analysis

While the survey data provided a broad overview of study participants' understanding of career development and perceptions of self-efficacy, the focus group analysis aimed to directly solicit the students' "voice" by engaging them in a verbal exchange of ideas relating to career aspirations. This second phase of data analysis revealed detailed, in-depth responses to elucidate participants' thought processes and feelings regarding their future career vision. Transcriptions from focus group recordings were classified using structural coding, a process involving the application of a conceptual phrase to a segment of data that relates to a research question (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher modified the *a priori* codebook to reflect only the codes most related to student responses and to include In Vivo codes that captured participants' verbatim expression. Patterned coding, a process that identifies similar codes and organizes them into categories or themes (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2013), was implemented to collapse the original codes into broader groupings at the micro level. That is, these categories, or themes at the micro level referred to the narrow context of this study. The researcher then combined the categories or micro-level themes to form macro-level themes within a societal context. These broader themes are discussed in Chapter 5. Figure 10 depicts the data analysis process for focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Table 3 displays focus-group codes and categories along with the frequency of student responses. Moreover, to develop a more comprehensive portrait of individual student aspirations, a perusal of participants' responses regarding the jobs/careers they would like to have as well as their expectations for future employment, as displayed in Table 4, was germane to understanding students' thought processes.

In order to strengthen research study credibility, the investigator reconvened focus groups

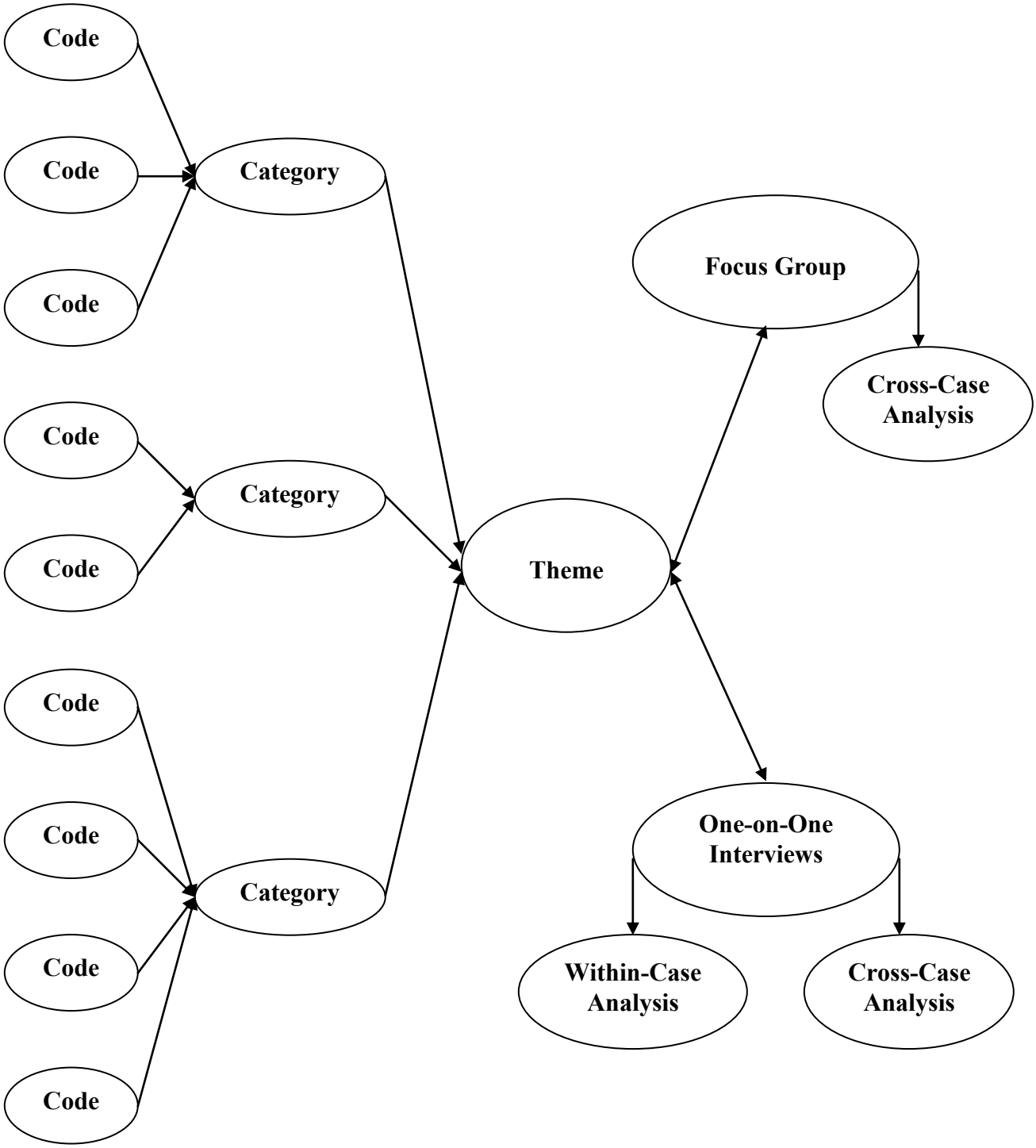

Figure 10. Multiple Case Study Approach to Data Analysis

Table 3

Focus-Group Coding and Frequency of Responses

Codes	Categories (themes – micro)	Fourth Graders Boys (n = 8)	Fourth Graders Girls (n = 7)	Fifth Graders Boys (n = 3)	Fifth Graders Girls (n = 7)
	Career Aspirations				
Vision for the future		7	5	3	7
Plans for the future		2	0	2	0
Job/Career interests		7	7	3	6
Job/Career preferences		8	6	3	7
Jobs/Careers related to celebrity		3	1	2	3
Reasons for job/career preferences		8	7	2	7
	Jobs/Careers Knowledge				
Background knowledge		7	6	2	6
Information about jobs/careers		8	7	3	7
Career Development in school		0	0	0	0
Reference to technology research		2	2	1	0
Reference to earning money		6	1	3	6
	Support Network				
Communication about jobs/careers		8	7	3	7
Reference to significant others		8	7	3	7
Interest in parent's job/career		1	3	0	1
Interest in job/career of significant other		3	2	1	1
Reference to job/career aspirations of others		4	1	0	1
	Schooling/Education				
Knowledge about college		1	1	1	0
Education/training to attain jobs/careers		7	7	3	4
Education/training plans		8	6	3	7
Reference to getting good grades		3	1	1	0
Desire to learn about jobs/careers in school		8	7	2	6
	Influential Factors/Decisions				
"You need to practice."		1	3	0	1
"I saw it on TV."		2	1	1	0
"I change my mind"		4	2	1	3
Repetition of response from previous student		5	4	0	2
Repetition of career choice of previous student		3	1	0	2

Table 3 (contd.)

Focus-Group Coding and Frequency of Response

Codes	Categories (themes – micro)	Fourth Graders Boys (n = 8)	Fourth Graders Girls (n = 7)	Fifth Graders Boys (n = 3)	Fifth Graders Girls (n =7)
	Self-Efficacy				
Belief in ability perform a job/career		7	6	3	7
Belief in job-related skills		7	6	3	1
Belief in job-related experience		0	1	0	5
	Positive Outlook				
"I think it's fun"		3	4	0	2
Anticipated happiness		8	7	3	7

Table 4

Focus-Group Participants' Job/Career Choices

Group	Desired Job/Career	Expected Job/Career	Fourth Graders Boys	Fourth Graders Girls	Fifth Graders Boys	Fifth Graders Girls
1	Firefighter	Firefighter	X			
	Firefighter	Firefighter	X			
	Clothing designer	Babysitter		X		
	Babysitter	Daycare owner		X		
	Pediatrician	Pediatrician		X		
2	Fed Ex worker	Fed Ex worker	X			
	Construction worker	Mechanic	X			
	Prof. basketball player	Mechanic	X			
	Nurse	Prof. fighter		X		
	Veterinarian	Teacher		X		
3	Gym teacher	Prof. video game player	X			
	Scientist	Scientist	X			
	Dancer	Dancer/Police Officer	X			
	Prof. gymnast	Prof. skater		X		
	Veterinarian	Artist (Fine Arts)		X		
1	Architect	Engineer			X	
	Prof. football player	Lawyer			X	
	Dancer/Singer	Doctor				X
	Hairstylist	Hairstylist				X
	Teacher	Hairstylist				X
2	Prof. baseball player	Disc jockey			X	
	Cosmetologist	Cosmetologist				X
	Chef for U.S. Pres.	Chef for U.S. Pres.				X
	Artist (Fine Arts)	Singer				X
	Cosmetologist	Seamstress				X

a second and final time to implement "member checking", giving study participants the opportunity to verify the accuracy of data collected as well as the researcher's interpretation. The

participants seemed eager to hear their own comments and contributions to the discussion. A sense of pride and self-worth was evident in their reactions as the investigator repeatedly featured their statements. Sometimes they giggled, and sometimes they expressed surprise by saying, “Did I say that? Oh, yeah, now I remember”, but mostly they beamed with joy at hearing their “voice”, tantamount to reveling in a spotlight moment on stage. None of the focus group students refuted any of the investigator’s findings/reflections regarding their responses.

A guidance counselor who had worked at this school for 25 years also provided feedback as to the authenticity of students’ responses. Her long-term experience as a home/school liaison handling students’ emotional and behavioral concerns as well as attendance issues warranted her study participation as an ideal candidate to corroborate the veracity of student responses. Moreover, her understanding of the local community immersed in poverty and her first-hand knowledge of the Hispanic culture further enhanced her ability to assess the typicality of student input. In order to garner representation from the immediate neighborhood, the researcher also solicited feedback from a long-time resident of 23 years to affirm the plausibility of student responses. This adult, and mother of a Newhope student not involved in this investigation, had served as a classroom assistant in the pre-school program and as a valuable resource person to interface between the school and parents. As a member of the Hispanic community having had personal experience with economic disadvantage, she was knowledgeable regarding study participants’ lifestyles, background knowledge and experiences, and resources, and, therefore, could appraise the accuracy of students’ comments. The procedure for “member checking” involved the researcher describing each category and code followed by the number of students

who provided a response for that code (Table 3). The investigator indicated the differences/similarities between fourth and fifth graders and boys and girls. For each code, a

short discussion ensued in which the two participants shared their opinions and posed questions to the researcher. The two adults exchanged ideas and explained why they believed the findings from the coding process provided a realistic portrait of students' thought processes. In addition, the investigator solicited feedback from the adult participants regarding students' desired and expected career choices (Table 4). That is, the researcher described individual student's desired job/career choices followed by the job/career the participant expected to have. Here, too, the adults assessed the credibility of student responses. This meeting lasted 1 hour 20 minutes and occurred only once. Both adults concurred that from their experience working with Newhope students, the preliminary data analysis represented an accurate, plausible accounting of participants' thought processes, expression, and feelings regarding their vision for the future.

Research question #1. The structural approach to examining the data was implemented to align with the coding process. That is, the research questions served to guide the data analysis. The percentages depicted in the focus-group analysis refer to the frequency of students responding to a particular code (Table 3). The first question involved how participants described their career aspirations and their background knowledge of career options. Table 4 displays students' desired and expected career choices by the end of the focus-group discussions. When asked if they thought about the future, most students offered immediate responses such as, "Yes, I think about like what I'm gonna be and how I'm supposed to start.", "I think I should think about the future because like it will help you more to whatever you want to be. It could help you more to look up stuff and think about it.", and "I don't think about it, not that much because like the (pause) I don't know what's gonna happen in the future, so I don't think about it much." Of

the 25 focus-group participants, 88% had contemplated the future. Deeper probing about students' interests, preferences, and reasons for those choices revealed that the overwhelming

majority (95%) could name the specific job/career they aimed to pursue and why. As two students described,

> Well, I think I want to be a construction worker because you could do a lot of stuff. You could design houses however you want and have really fun doing it. You could be outside. Maybe some of your friends could be working with you, helping you. There'a lot of teamwork in it, and that's all.
>
> I would like to be a veterinarian because helping animals is fun, because you can help someone keep their companions, and you can actually help them not to die so (pause) and some people are worried that their pets might die, but since there's a veterinarian, you can keep your pets safe.

A considerable portion (36%) of students aspired to jobs/careers that had some connection to fame/celebrity, as evident in two participants' comments: "I like to be a basketball player because it takes hard work and focus and you can't give up. I want to play basketball because you have to be tall, you have to be smart, and yeah.", and "I think I'd like a career like do people's hair in movies."

While most of the students readily shared their thought regarding vocational goals, only a few (16%) could outline any plans. One student hoping for an NFL career stated,

> If you want to be a football player, you have to be playing for the team for like four or more years (in college) to get into the NFL, . . . unless you go to like Canadian football. Like if you do good over there and come back to the U.S., then you could like enter yourself in a draft, and they might pick you.

Another student revealed his primary job choice followed by his back-up plan. “If the job that I would like as a dancer doesn’t work out, I would like to be a cop for the DEA. It’s like the S.W.A.T. of the FBI team.”

A close examination of student’s background knowledge regarding jobs/careers demonstrated that 84% of participants reported having at least some knowledge about some jobs/careers, and students largely obtained that information from immediate family members. As several study participants shared, “I know about a lot of jobs cuz my mom and dad and step dad have been telling me a lot.”, “I know like two of them (jobs) because my dad and mom come home and talk about their day to me and I learn more stuff about it.”, and

> I think I know a lot about some jobs, like my big sister is always talking to me about cosmetologist, and my mom is always talking to me about designing clothes. . . . and my dad, he like works in a construction place, . . . and he talks to me a lot about that job.

However, to exemplify the lack of sophistication in their decision-making process, 64% of students revealed their ideations regarding future earnings: “I would work at my brother’s place, Federal Express, and I’ll be happy because I’ll earn a lot of money.”, “I guess you get a lot of money when you do hair, and it would make me happy.”, and “I’d rather have firefighter, you could earn a lot of money.”

More in-depth inquiry regarding students’ resourcefulness to acquire additional information about jobs/careers demonstrated that 100% of study participants could describe the steps they would take. Several students explained how they would proceed: “You could like ask your mom or dad or anybody in your family who has the job that you want, or you could just like go to like the library that has your job book in it.” And,

> Um, I would say, if you want to get more information about jobs, I would say you rather

> go there because if like, you want to work at a store, go there, like Walmart or something, and you can see the cashier. You can see like the manager, and you know you probably could get some ideas.

Still other participants disclosed their reliance on technology.

> Um, you could probably look up research on your phone, like say like if you want to go to McDonald's, like look up McDonald's on your phone and if it finds it for you, and then you could read all about it.

and,

> You could look on the internet and probably type in what job you want, and you could read through it and see if there's actually some cool things about it, and then you know that in the future you want to be what you want to be.

A specific probe to discern students' experience with acquiring job/career related information in school revealed that none of the participants had ever received classroom instruction about job/careers. Their exposure to career development was limited to teachers' inquiry as to students' job interest/preferences. As several students explained, "I talked to my third-grade teacher, Mr. P. He talked about like what do you want to be when you grow up?", "Last year, um, I talked to Mrs. M cuz she was asking us stuff, like what we want to be.", and "When I was in fourth grade, she (the teacher) was asking everybody, 'what do you want to be?', that's all." Clearly, the students never had had a classroom opportunity to explore employment options or learn of the pathways to career attainment.

An overview summary of focus-group discussions in response to the first research question regarding students' career aspirations and background knowledge demonstrated several key findings. The vast majority of participants were able to articulate their vocational vision for

the future as well as their job/career interests, preferences, and reasons for their choices. Moreover, some of these choices involved students' fantasy-type thinking. That is, inspired by the lure of celebrity/fame. However, only a few students could delineate the rudimentary steps they would take to acquire their goals. Regarding their knowledge base, participants expressed their familiarity with job duties that related largely to immediate family members, yet all the students felt confident that they could readily access information about jobs/careers. In addition, participants unanimously affirmed that their school did not provide career development instruction, and they did not cite their school as a future resource for vocational information.

Research question #2. The second research question aimed to discern the factors and/or significant others that influenced students' aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy in attaining job/career goals. As evident in Table 3, all the focus-group participants stated that they had communicated with someone about their futures. Some students cited their immediate or extended family members as sources of support: "Um, yes, I talk to my mom and my aunt, so my mom, I asked mom what I should be.", "Um, I talk to my grandparents and my mom because they um are like the closest people to me.", and

> I talk to my family about my future because I would like to see what their opinion is. I would like to get my family's opinion cuz they know what's best for me . . . I mean my mom, my dad, my aunt, and uncle.

Other focus-group members referred to sharing their visions for the future with friends: "I talk with my friend a lot because I feel like I can actually let everything out and tell her what I would do, and I talk with her a real lot." and

> I talk to my friends because I trust them and I know they will tell me the truth. They'll be honest with me . . . because if they don't like the job, they'll say it even if that's not

what I want to hear.

In addition to reporting that important people in their lives served as resources for feedback and support, some students (20%) described their interest in pursuing the same job/career as their parents: “I talk to my mom cuz she had the same future job (nurse) as me and I want to get information from her about my future job.” and

> Um, one time I was with my mom at Dunkin Donuts. She worked there. I was sitting down thinking in my head, one day if I work here I probably could bring my kids . . . and give the kids something to eat. So I thought my mom’s job would be fun.

Moreover, 28% of focus-group members revealed their interest in undertaking the occupational endeavors of other relatives: “I think I want to do the same thing as my sister (cosmetology) cuz it’s very interesting.”, “I want to go into like the um, I want to be like my grandfather. He like um, like I want to be an engineer. He designs helicopters.”, and “I talk to my cousin and my aunt because I want to be a nurse, and my aunt is a nurse, so she helps me with a lot of stuff like that.” Family members and friends not only influenced students’ aspirations, but also bolstered their perceptions of confidence in achieving their goals. As several students disclosed, “Well, I also talk to my aunt. . . she says she just believes in me, what I’m gonna do. She says you could do anything. I could support you any way.”, “Um, I talk to my dad cuz he used to play (football) in college . . . and he keeps on telling me to push forward and try to achieve that goal.”, and “To be a singer and a dancer, like you need to take singing classes and like really practice for it . . . and my family says, ‘Go for it. You can do anything.’”

In addition to the support network involving family members, 24% of participants repeated the same job/career choice as the student who responded immediately before them. Two students described, “Um, well, I agree with M (student’s name). I would like babies and stuff and

I would like to take care of them." and "Um, I, if I want a firefighter, I think I should be along two or three years (in college), like E (student's name) chose." While significant others have reportedly influenced students' aspirations, another factor also contributed to participants' occupational choices. Children's exposure to the media impacted their vocational ideations. Several students (16%) explained that watching television and movies served as a source of inspiration: "Um, I would say, I have more skills in a cop because I watch 'CSI Miami'." and "You could watch TV shows and um you could see what they have."

Several key findings emerged from focus group responses relevant to factors that influenced students' career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy in occupational attainment. All the study participants had had conversations about their future job/career interests with significant others. And further, the students readily identified these influential people in their lives. Moreover, 48% of the students revealed that their vocational choices mirrored the employment patterns of immediate and extended family members, while 24% repeated the occupational choices of peers in their focus group. Additionally, a few students referred to the media as having an influential role in their career development.

Research question #3. The third research question aimed to ascertain how students described their understanding of pathways to attaining their job/career goals. When questioned about their awareness of the types of education/training they would need to acquire their desired employment objective, 84% of participants could provide their perceptions of the kind and amount of schooling they would need beyond high school. Two students shared their understanding, largely reality-based: "If you want to be a football player, you have to be playing for the team (college) for like four or more years to get into the NFL." and

You would need to have a bachelor's degree. . . . It means you have to go, um, you have

to go for, um, four years. . . . Most likely, I would like to go further to get the master's degree. . . . That would mean you have to go to school for six years.

However, many study participants expressed misconceptions or confusion about the type of college/training they would need and/or the years of schooling required, as evident in their comments: "Um, I gotta go to a lot of schools to learn to be a vet and stuff, that I always wanted. I gotta get good grades, graduate and stuff, so I get a good job, like six weeks.", "If I was a pizza delivery, I wouldn't go to college more. I would only stay there four or five years so I could learn about pizza and how to deliver it to the customer.", "Maybe five or six years to do all the classes that I'm trying to do . . . cosmetologist and own my own hair salon, a doctor, and a teacher.", and "Um, my sister told me that like to be a pediatrician, I'll have to go to school like two or three years." Despite these obvious misunderstandings and informational void, 96% of the students affirmed, with conviction, that they intended to pursue further education after high school.

Despite their perceptions of knowledge regarding career paths, students asserted their overwhelming support for career development instruction in school. When questioned about their desire to learn more about jobs/careers, 92% of participants wanted more information. One student expressed an interest in gaining a broad view of employment options: "I want to know about a lot of different ones (jobs) and take a test to see what you'd be good at." Other participants preferred to learn more about their vocational choice: "I want to know more about pediatricians and what I need to know.", "I want to know more about cooking, specific details and the big stuff." Still others expressed an interest in learning about job performance: "Well, for DJ, I want to know how to do it." and "I'll need to know how to do it once I find a job in the future." While it was evident that students were eager to expand their knowledge base, they did

not envision a relationship between getting good grades in school and job/career goal attainment in the distant future. Only 20% of the students referred to their academic achievement as instrumental in laying a foundation for future success: “My mom and dad help me to get good grades so I could get a better life, and I could have a better house, like a good life.” and “Um, you have to go to elementary school, middle school, high school, and college . . . to be, um, somebody that really doesn’t want to get bad grades, he wants to get good grades so he could get good jobs.”

Some students (40%) readily articulated that while they could describe vocational interests now, they would probably continue to change their minds. As several students shared, “I think maybe I should work at a restaurant, but then I change my mind to other jobs, like, um, a vet.”, “At first I wanted to be a cop, but in fourth grade, right now, I changed my mind. I want to be a construction worker.”, and “I have to think about what I want to be, like, cuz I might change my mind.” Still other participants changed their minds throughout the focus-group process by presenting one job/career preference at the onset of the interview and a completely different occupational choice by the end of the session. One student initially stated, “I want to be a teacher or a veterinarian,” then later declared, “Hair, because I do my sister’s hair at home . . . and then I do my mom’s hair, and then it just goes on.” While another participant related completely dichotomous selections from her choices during initial questioning when she stated, “I want to be a nurse because I want to save people’s live if they’re hurt” to final probing in which she announced, “That (job) would be a WDD [*sic*] diva fighter, and every day I go home and fight with my cousins, and every day I win. And I always wanted that since I was in third grade.”

The focus-group results depicted a few critical highlights regarding participants’ understanding of how to attain career goals. The vast majority of children could articulate their

perceptions of prerequisite education/training to achieve their vocational aspirations. However, their preconceived notions of post-secondary education were often misguided. Additionally, most of the students expressed a desire to learn more about jobs/careers in elementary school and they planned to seek further education after high school. Nevertheless, few students were able to make a connection between academic achievement and future employment. Moreover, their indecisiveness regarding career choices was apparent for many students who reported or demonstrated that they often changed their minds.

Research question #4. The focus of the fourth research question was to determine how study participants perceived their self-efficacy in reaching their vocational aspirations. When students were questioned about their belief in their ability to perform the job of their choice, 92% demonstrated confidence in their future competence. Their comments disclosed a positive mindset, as in the following statements: "I think I would be really good at being a vet because I really love animals.", "I would be good as a doctor because I like writing on the board (clipboard) and, um, I like wearing the gloves and asking people how are they doing.", and "I think I'll be good as a mechanic because when I was a little kid, like I was five, I always like to play with mechanical stuff." A deeper probe to ascertain whether or not the students believed they had job-related skills also demonstrated affirmative conviction for 68% of the children. Two study participants shared their feelings of efficacy: "I think I have skills and because I do it now. I do the singing and dancing now." and

> I'd like to be a policeman for the DEA because I have a lot of toy guns at my house, and I have a pretty good aim. Every time I set my target, I shoot it, and it lands there.

Additionally, several students (24%) described their successful, job-related experiences: "Yeah, I think I do (have experience) because um, upstairs with Mr. W. we had to do this thing, we had to

design a house, a dream house. It turned out pretty good." and "I was pretty good at making music as a DJ, like when we were at computers, the teacher used to let us play on 'garage band', and I made music, and my friends said it was pretty nice."

As further testament to students' positive outlook on their future employment prospects, every focus group member adamantly affirmed that the job/career they expected to have as adults would make them happy. Several participants disclosed their thoughts: "Definitely, I think that would be the job (daycare owner) that I want because I think it will make me happy, because um, they're kids!", "I think that being a firefighter would make me happy because I could have all my friends be by my side, and my best friend could probably help me save people." Moreover, 36% of focus-group members anticipated that their jobs would be entertaining. As two children avered, "Being a cop (would make me happy), it would be kind of fun practicing with the guys and catching bad guys and driving a car to chase them if they don't want to stop." and "Yeah, I think it (being a pediatrician) will make me happy because you can have fun with the kids too, and do a lot of different stuff."

These findings revealed that students overall strongly believed in their ability to perform their occupational duties as adults. The majority of participants also expressed confidence in perceived, basic skills that would serve them in their future jobs/careers. In addition, some students shared job-performance experiences they considered conducive to employment attainment. Perhaps the most positive finding related to self-efficacy involved students' unanimous affirmation that they anticipated that their future occupations would make them happy. Moreover, some of the participants even described their expected job tasks to be fun. Students' comprehensive outlook regarding prospects for future employment was very positive, and tantamount to sound self-efficacy.

Cross-grade analysis (research question #5)**.** A cross-case analysis of grades depicted similarities and differences between fourth and fifth graders. The researcher compared/contrasted the frequency of student responses in relation to coding categories (themes). For the category of Career Aspirations, the two grades responded similarly regarding job/career interests and preferences as well as reasons for occupation choices. However, a higher percentage of fifth graders (100%) could provide their vision for the future when compared to fourth graders (80%). Contrast also was evident regarding having specific plans for the future. While 20% of fifth graders could articulate their thoughts, only 13% of fourth graders were able to do so. The greatest difference between grades was demonstrated in students' selection of jobs/careers related to celebrity. Only 27% of fourth graders commented about employment connected to fame whereas 50% of fifth graders made this choice. Overall, fifth graders demonstrated having a vision and plans for the future more frequently than fourth graders, indicating more career development readiness. However, fifth graders also revealed a desire for celebrity-related jobs/careers more frequently than fourth graders, indicating their interest in fantasy-type occupations.

Regarding their knowledge about jobs/careers, fourth and fifth graders showed similarities in frequency of responses regarding their background knowledge, how to obtain information about different occupations, and the current status of career development in school. Surprisingly, 27% of fourth graders named technology as a resource to find out more about jobs/careers, whereas only 10% of fifth graders referred to technology. While it is true that study participants were only one year apart in schooling, it would seem reasonable to expect fifth graders to express a greater reliance on internet research. This group, regardless of access to technology at home, has had one more year of computer class in school. Fourth graders appeared

to be more aware of the assistive value of using technology to garner information. Regarding references to earning money, however, fifth graders (90%) more frequently commented about job income than fourth graders (47%), indicating an increased interest/concern with how well jobs/career paid.

Participants across both grades revealed the identical frequency of responses (100%) in the Support Network category regarding communicating with others about jobs/careers and referencing significant others as influential in their career development. In contrast, 27% of fourth graders compared to only 10% of fifth graders expressed having an interest in pursuing the same job/career as their parents. Similarly, 33% of fourth graders described their preference for the occupations of significant others (not parents), while only 20% of fifth graders reported their interest. Fourth graders appeared to be more strongly influenced by family members to emulate their job choices. Fifth graders appeared to demonstrate more independent thinking regarding their future job prospects.

Regarding the Schooling/Education category, the frequency of responses was similar regarding fourth (13%) and fifth (10%) graders' knowledge of college and plans to pursue education/training beyond high school (93% and 100% respectively). However, 93% of fourth graders demonstrated awareness of the kind and amount of education/training they would need to attain their desired employment, while only 70% of fifth graders expressed that awareness. Similarly, a higher percentage of fourth graders (100%) than fifth graders (80%) revealed a desire to learn more about jobs/careers. A difference was also evident in the percentage of participants, 27% of fourth graders and 10% of fifth graders, who referenced getting good grades in elementary school as a precursor to potential job attainment. Overall, a higher percentage of fourth graders showed an interest in learning about jobs/careers and getting good grades than

fifth graders. Students in the lower grade seemed to be more aware of the education/training needed to achieve their job goals.

The category of Influential Factors largely depicted differences in frequency of responses between fourth and fifth graders. Regarding the emergent, In Vivo codes, "You need to practice" and "I saw it on TV", fourth graders responded more frequently, with 27% and 20% respectively, when compared to fifth graders, with only 10% responding for each code. Clearly, fourth graders were more frequently influenced by TV. Moreover, they expressed the need to practice job-related skills than fifth graders. Fourth graders (60%) also more frequently repeated responses of their peers when compared to fifth graders (20%), demonstrating more independent thinking of the latter group. Regarding decision making, fourth graders (27%) described changing their minds about job/career interests only slightly more frequently than fifth graders (20%).

The categories of Self-Efficacy and Positive Outlook also depicted mostly differences between the grades. Regarding participants' belief in their ability to perform a future job, 100% of fifth graders revealed confidence, while 87% of fourth graders stated their efficacy. However, a much higher percentage of fourth graders (87%) than fifth graders (40%) believed they already possessed job-related skills, even though a higher percentage of students in the latter group (50%) when compared to the previous grade (7%) stated they possessed job-related experience. When comparing students' outlook on jobs/careers, 47% of fourth graders described their job preferences as fun, whereas only 20% of fifth graders concurred. Moreover, all the participants in both grades affirmed that they expected their future jobs would make them happy. The vast majority of students in both grades showed confidence in their future job performance and appeared hopeful that they would be happy.

Cross-gender analysis (research question #6). Comparisons of gender responses for the Career Aspirations category revealed minimal differences in the frequency of responses for boys and girls. That is, 91% of boys and 86% of girls articulated a vision for the future, 91% of boys and 93% of girls described their job/career interests, 100% of boys reported their occupational preferences whereas 93% of girls disclosed their choices, and 91% of boys provided reasons for their preferences, while 100% of the girls could explain why they wanted certain jobs/careers. Regarding jobs/careers related to celebrity, more boys (45%) than girls (29%) affirmed a desire for fame in their occupations. However, the greatest disparity in frequency of student responses related to plans for the future. Here, 36% of boys described the steps they intended to take to reach their employment goals, while none of the girls had contemplated this process. Overall, boys' and girls' frequency of response coincided except boys more often considered the pathway to job attainment and preferred jobs/careers associated with fame.

In the category of Job/Career Knowledge, the frequency of boys' and girls' responses were very closely aligned. All the participants in both groups attested to their ability to access information about occupations, and they all reported that they had no experience with career development instruction in school. Additionally, nearly the same percentage of boys (82%) and girls (86%) avowed having some background knowledge about jobs/careers. The greatest contrast in frequency of response was evident in their reliance on technology to research vocational interests and in their references to earning money. That is, 27% of boys stated they did or would use the internet, while only 14% of girls commented on utilizing this resource. Moreover, 82% of boys discussed the money they would earn on the job, whereas only 50% of girls made statements about salaries. Thus, boys and girls demonstrated similar response patterns regarding job/career knowledge, though boys referred to technology and money more often.

The Support Network category revealed that boys (100%) and girls (100%) had identical frequency of response patterns involving communicating with others about jobs/careers and making references to significant others in their lives. Interestingly, while a higher percentage of girls (29%) than boys (9%) declared an interest in their parents' jobs/careers, the opposite occurred regarding jobs/careers of significant others. Here, a higher percentage of boys (36%) than girls (21%) disclosed their interest. A comprehensive review of this category demonstrated largely similar responses between boys and girls. Additionally, students reported having open communication with family members and friends regarding their vocational interests.

The frequency of student responses relating to the Schooling/Education category revealed similarities in three areas. A majority of boys (91%) and girls (78%) attested to having some awareness of the kind of education/training they would need to achieve their vocational objective. High percentages of boys (100%) and girls (93%) also affirmed their plans to seek post-secondary schooling. In addition, a similar percentage of boys (36%) and girls (29%) asserted their desire to learn more about employment options. Nevertheless, the frequency of response differed between boys (18%) and girls (7%) regarding their knowledge of college. Moreover, while 36% of boys referred to getting good grades as important for future endeavors, only 7% of girls commented about their academic achievement. Once again, boys and girls demonstrated similar response patterns overall, though boys knew more about college and valued the importance of their current grades more frequently.

The Influential Factors category depicted three areas in which the frequency of student responses was similar for boys and girls. Both boys (45%) and girls (43%) repeated responses offered by their peers during focus-group sessions. Additionally, the percentage of boys (27%) and girls (21%) who repeated the same career choice as focus-group peers was similar.

Regarding decision-making and changing one's mind, boys and girls differed somewhat in frequency. While 45% of boys commented on changing their minds about jobs/careers, only 36% of girls attested to doing so. The frequency of student responses differed more dramatically between boys and girls involving the In Vivo codes of "You need to practice" and "I saw it on TV". Boys (27%) more often cited TV as influencing their career decisions when compared to girls (7%). However, girls (29%) more often than boys (9%) cited practicing job skills to help determine job preferences. Overall, student responses were largely similar for boys and girls, though boys' responses reflected a greater influence by the media, and girls' responses revealed a greater emphasis on job-related skills practice.

The final categories of Self-Efficacy and Positive Outlook for the future revealed more differences in boys' and girls' responses than similarities. High percentages of boys (91%) and girls (93%) demonstrated belief in their ability to perform on the job as adults. However, 91% of boys could describe job-related skills they already possessed, while only 50% of girls could do so. Interestingly, 43% of girls reported having job-related experience, while none of the boys stated that they had this background. A higher percentage of girls (43%) than boys (27%) also described their job/career of choice to be fun. Moreover, both boys (100%) and girls (100%) affirmed their expectation that their future employment would make them happy. Boys and girls seemed to respond similarly regarding broad issue of self-efficacy, but they tended to differ with specific aspects of job efficacy.

Researcher's field observations. While study participants readily shared their perceptions during the 45-minute focus-group sessions, their responses alone failed to provide a comprehensive portrait of student's knowledge and understanding in the career development process. While it was true that nearly all the students could articulate their career interests and

preferences, their reasoning for job selection was often fraught with superficiality and naivete, as in the case of one student who thought that she would make a good doctor because she liked to wear the gloves, carry a clipboard, and ask people how they were doing. And yet another student thought he would be a good cop because he had a pretty good aim with his toy guns. The lack of knowledge was also evident regarding students' awareness of post-secondary education. A few participants accurately described college as a four-year learning process, but most students randomly guessed at the length of time they would need to study. One child described how she would probably need to go to college for two or three years to be a vet, while another student believed she would need at least five years to become a cosmetologist, a doctor, and a teacher.

The pattern of student responses was also telltale. Some children would respond with slight hesitation and merely echo what the previous student said, as if the idea of the job just mentioned sounded good to them, so on the spur-of-the-moment they decided that was what they wanted to be. A few participants stated one job/career of interest at the onset of the interview, but then followed the lead of a classmate and changed their minds rather quickly. Some students also aspired to follow in the footsteps of their parents or relatives because they were only familiar with those occupations. Such was the case for one student who, at one point, talked about cleaning hotel rooms as his mother, father, and grandmother did, or the boy who planned to work for Federal Express because that was what his brother did.

Interestingly, students never referred to their economic disadvantage. They did not express perceptions of any obstacles in the way of achieving their goals, nor did they report that they considered themselves to have less opportunity or potential to attain the jobs/careers they wanted because they lived in poverty. About two third of the children mentioned "money" in the discussions, but not as a primary goal or focus of interest, and none of them stated that they

wanted to be wealthy. They did not appear to be aware that they were economically disadvantaged. This may be due to their lack of familiarity with a lifestyle of greater affluence. That is, they only knew about what they experienced.

Individual Interview Data Analysis

The final phase of data analysis involved one-on-one interviews with four participants, one boy and one girl from grades four and five. The researcher aimed to elicit the students' "voice" at a more personal level while garnering a more in-depth student perspective. The process of coding interview transcriptions was identical to the steps implemented for the focus groups. Figure 10 depicts the schematic for data analysis. Several codes included in focus-group inquiry were not emergent during the individual interview proceedings. Moreover, additional codes, developed during the one-on-one verbal exchange, were included for analysis. Table 5 provides a comprehensive display of codes and frequency of responses. Once again, member checking served to verify the accuracy of transcriptions and the researcher's interpretations. The interviewees attested to the accuracy of the investigator's data.

All four students responded very positively to this procedure. They thoroughly enjoyed hearing their personal thoughts and feeling reflected back to them, as evidenced by their smiles and occasional laughter. The participants demonstrated a sense of satisfaction and self-importance when the researcher empowered them with the locus of control and solicited their critique of how well she had captured their "voice". As previously noted, residents in the community surrounding the school were mostly of Hispanic heritage, and, within this group, the Puerto Rican population represented the largest subgroup. Nevertheless, only one of the four students participating in the one-on-one interviews reported that both her parents were originally from Puerto Rico, and another student stated that one parent hailed from Puerto Rico while the

Table 5

Individual Interview Coding and Frequency of Responses

Codes	Categories (themes - micro)	Fourth Graders Boy	Fourth Graders Girl	Fifth Graders Boy	Fifth Graders Girl
	Career Aspirations				
Vision for the future		X	X	X	X
Plans for the future		X	X	X	X
Job/Career Interests		X	X	X	X
Job/Career preferences		X	X	X	X
Jobs/Careers related to celebrity		X			
Reasons for job/career preferences		X	X	X	X
	Job/Career Knowledge				
Background Knowledge				X	
Information about jobs/careers		X	X	X	X
Reference to technology research				X	
Reference to earning money		X			X
	Support Network				
Communication about jobs/careers		X	X	X	X
Reference to significant others		X	X	X	X
Interest in parent's job/career					X
Interest in job/career of significant other			X	X	X
Reference to job/career aspirations of others					X
	Schooling/Education				
Knowledge about college				X	
Education/training to attain jobs/careers			X	X	
Education/training plans		X	X	X	X
Knowledge of steps to develop a career		X		X	
Reference to getting good grades		X	X	X	X
Reference to current academic status		X		X	X
Reference to relationship between grades and jobs		X		X	X
Reference to future academic goals		X		X	X
	Influential Factors/Decisions				
"You need to practice"		X	X		
"I saw it on TV"		X	X		X
"I change my mind"			X		X
Decision-making and influential significant others		X			X
Factors affecting decisions		X	X	X	X

Table 5 (contd.)

Individual Interview Coding and Frequency of Responses

Codes	Categories (themes – micro)	Fourth Graders Boy	Fourth Graders Girl	Fifth Graders Boy	Fifth Graders Girl
	Self-Efficacy				
Belief in college/training success		X	X	X	
Belief in ability to perform a job/career		X		X	
Belief in job-related skills		X		X	
Belief in job/career goal attainment		X		X	X
Belief in having control over job/career goal attainment		X		X	X
Belief in future job/career success		X		X	X
	Positive Outlook				
"I think it's fun"		X	X	X	X
Anticipated financial security		X	X	X	X
Hope for the future		X	X	X	X

other was a native of the Dominican Republic. The third participant revealed that both his parents emigrated from South America, specifically Colombia and Ecuador, while the fourth student disclosed that both her parents moved to the United States from Costa Rica.

Case #1 – Wilfredo (fourth-grade boy). Wilfredo was a very gregarious, verbal 10-year old student. He was excited to be chosen to participate in the interview process and demonstrated enthusiasm throughout the one-on-one discussion session. His responses demonstrated that he was articulate and had some very specific, well thought-out ideas about his future. Spending time in conversation with Wilfredo was a pleasant experience for the researcher due to the student's constant smile and upbeat personality. His heritage was Hispanic, having one parent from Puerto Rico and the other from the Dominican Republic. Wilfredo lived in a two-parent household along with one sibling, a younger brother. His father was employed, while his mother stayed at home tending to domestic duties.

***Research question #1*.** The first research question targeted students' descriptions of their career aspirations and background knowledge of different types of jobs. Wilfredo was quite explicit about his two vocational selections, and he revealed, without hesitation, that he envisioned becoming a professional dancer or a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) cop. He demonstrated very simplistic reasoning for those choices: "I really like dancing. It's fun for me and it's a job I think I really would like. And the DEA, I'd give about the same answer." Wilfredo also divulged an emotional connection to his artistic selection: "I just want to be a dancer because . . . when I'm dancing, it's the one place where I feel like I'm smarter. It feels right." When the investigator probed deeper to ascertain Wilfredo's preference of the two options, the student was adamant in his predilection to be "a dancer because the (pause) sometimes I just think about being a cop in the DEA if I don't get that far in life, and my dream

doesn't really come true." He later revealed how he entertained the notion that his passion for celebrity might not reach fruition and, therefore, he would need a more realistic back-up plan:

> I think that I'm a pretty good dancer, but I think like a million people would love to be a dancer and show up on TV. So, I think I wouldn't have such good chances. So, I think I would have better chances being a cop, but if I did actually get the dancing job, I'd stick with it.

Regarding his background knowledge of different employment possibilities, Wilfredo affirmed that he had a limited understanding of only a few jobs. However, when questioned about how he would get more information about jobs/careers, Wilfredo stated, "I'd find someone who does that job and I'd ask them," indicating his ability to be resourceful. His awareness of job-related salaries was not completely accurate. As he explained, according to his perception, "I think both of those jobs pay well, being a cop especially. And I think if I end up on TV, it will pay a lot too." While Wilfredo candidly discussed his lack of knowledge/information about different jobs, he also expressed confidence in his responses relating to his preferred careers.

Research question #2. Regarding factors and significant others that influence career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy in attaining career goals, Wilfredo depicted unyielding trust in support from people close to him. He stated that he had spoken only to his parents and friends about his future job/career vision and firmly believed in their guidance. The student reported, "they give me a talk, like whatever I choose, they support it. I'd feel really good about that. . . . My parents and my friends would always want me to be happy." Wilfredo seemed very relaxed and self-assured while discussing his reliance on significant others for advice and direction. He firmly believed he could count on their assistance and encouragement to realize his vision. At the same time, he was firmly grounded in independent thinking, as he was

not planning to follow in the vocational footsteps of any family member or friend.

Research question #3. Question #3 involved students' understanding of pathways to attaining career goals and factors affecting the decision-making process. While Wilfredo could not elaborate on the steps he would take to attain his goal, he could provide a rudimentary plan of how he intended to pursue post-secondary education:

> Um, to be a dancer, I'm pretty good, but I think I would need more lessons, so that way I'd be ready to be on TV or becoming a professional dancer. And to be a cop, I think I really need to go to college for five years.

As further testament to his conviction to accomplish his dream, Wilfredo referenced his academic status: "I got all As and Bs, just one C in math, and I've been trying to get that up." When the researcher inquired as to the connection between grades in elementary school and future prosperity, the student acknowledged the importance of his current education: "Like, you can't go to medical school without knowing multiplication and division. It's something you really need in your life. Like if you're buying something, you need to know how much change you're gonna get back." Moreover, Wilfredo also attested to the relationship between academic achievement in childhood and future employment: "I think it's pretty important getting good grades in elementary school cuz that's something they might look at when you are getting a job and you're an adult."

In his discussion about factors that had an impact on his vocational decisions, Wilfredo referred to character-related skills as germane to job/career attainment:

> I think that's what people are really looking for, people that love doing what they do and that won't complain about doing their job because they don't like it. Because the jobs that I've chosen, I think I really like them, and I won't complain about them being too

hard.

When describing his work ethic, Wilfredo adamantly affirmed that "you have to put a lot of effort into that job, so that way you can stay in that job if you like it. . . . You can't just do something randomly just because you want it to be over with." He expounded further on personal attributes he considered critical to job acquisition, such as "commitment, smarts, strength, um . . . (and) willpower."

Research question #4. How students perceived their self-efficacy in attaining their job/career goals was the focus of the fourth research question. Clearly, Wilfredo demonstrated a high degree of confidence in his own abilities to accomplish his vision. As he asserted, "I think I can achieve my goals if I believe in myself and if I never give up, cuz I think if you put enough work into things, you might get what you want to be." When the researcher asked Wilfredo if he thought he would be successful in his chosen careers, he reaffirmed his self-confidence: "Yes, cuz I always put a lot of effort into things when I do them, and I'm a pretty hard worker." Moreover, an inquiry about having personal control over job/career attainment revealed that Wilfredo did not foresee any obstacles that would deter him from achieving his vision. As he averred,

> I think that it's up to me because no one can control what you will be in life. It's not up to anyone. And just because they don't accept you in one place doesn't mean you can just give up. You have to keep trying until you get the job.

Additionally, Wilfredo's outlook on the future was extremely positive. He confirmed that he was hopeful about having a successful future, and he described his choice locations for living with vehement conviction: "I would go to NY in the summer, then go back to Puerto Rico in the winter." Moreover, he envisioned having a very comfortable living, which he depicted as, "a

pretty big house, two kids, a wife, and a car, just one car, and three bedrooms in the house, one for me and my wife, and two bedrooms for my kids. Each one would have their own room."

Within-case analysis. Wilfredo was able to articulate his future job/career interests and preferences as well as his reasoning for his choices. He could also describe his vision and how important his family was as a resource for support in his endeavors. Nevertheless, Wilfredo's responses indicated that he had very little knowledge about the education/training he would need to realize his vision. He also lacked information regarding salaries for job positions he discussed. His awareness of the connection between academic achievement and job attainment was noteworthy as he understood the process of learning basic skills/knowledge in the elementary years as a prerequisite for more advanced learning after high school.

Throughout the interview process, Wilfredo displayed confidence in his abilities and decisions. He clearly demonstrated that he valued his own decision-making and firmly felt in control of the kind of life he would ultimately have. His thought process revealed formidable tenacity as he reiterated his determination to achieve his goals. Moreover, he never referenced his economic disadvantage or it's affect on his future. While finances were discussed briefly in response to the researcher's prompts about jobs, Wilfredo did not focus on money, nor did he mention lacking resources that could help him reach his goals, such as having a computer or a car. Overall, Wilfredo was extremely optimistic about his future, and his responses gave no indication that he perceived he was living in poverty.

Case #2 – Alicia (fourth-grade girl). Alicia was a very friendly, soft-spoken nine-year old. She lived with her mother and father and an older sister. Both of her parents were from Puerto Rico and employed at the time of the interview. Alicia's gentle nature and ability to get along with everyone stood out among her most prominent characteristics. In spite of her

incessant smile, Alicia was often quiet when speaking, reserved in her behavior, and somewhat serious in her demeanor. The interaction between the researcher and the student during the interview was very cordial and slow-paced. Her willingness to answer questions was evident, and she appeared to respond with complete candor.

Research question #1. The first research inquiry purported to discern participants' career aspirations and the extent of their background knowledge regarding career options. Initially, Alicia provided her career vision without hesitation. She was decisive in her choice and her reasoning for that determination: "I want to be a pediatrician because I want to work with kids, and it's fun to work with kids." However, when the investigator questioned the student about additional job options she was considering, her response contrasted dramatically with the lofty endeavor of becoming a doctor: "I would like to work for like (professional) football players, like give them water and clean towels." Alicia did not seem to perceive any difference between these two goals. Moreover, her knowledge of a pediatrician's job performance was rudimentary: "A pediatrician helps the babies, and like if they're sick or they need help."

Research question #2. The key elements of inquiry in the second question focused on factors and significant others that influenced students' career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy in attaining their career goals. Alicia readily attested to the family members she had communicated with about her career ideations: "I have spoken to my mom, my dad, my sister, my aunt, and my cousin." However, the student did not comment further on support or guidance from her immediate family regarding the career decision-making process. As the researcher probed further to ascertain whether or not the participant could acquire job information from her family members, Alicia offered a perplexing response: "Yeah, because my aunt is a pediatrician, and sometimes she takes me to her job on the weekends, and I help her with the babies and stuff

like that." Since it seemed unlikely that a nine-year old would be permitted to work with/handle babies in a medical facility or a doctor's private practice office, the investigator doubted the veracity of Alicia's comment. It seemed plausible that she never actually "helped" her aunt with the babies, or that the aunt may have worked in the medical profession in a different capacity other than as a pediatrician. Nevertheless, Alicia perceived her aunt to be a pediatrician and was influenced by her to pursue that career.

Research question #3. The intent of the third question was to determine how students described their understanding of pathways to attaining their career goals and factors affecting the decision-making process. The idea that becoming a pediatrician would involve additional schooling was completely acceptable to Alicia. As she reported, "I will have to study a lot, go to college every day, like practice what to do and what not to do." Moreover, she affirmed that she had a vague notion of what college was, though she could only provide a limited description:

> Um, college is like high school, but college is different because they help you, like what you want to do when you get bigger, and what career do you want, what job, and what do you like about the jobs that you want to be.

During a discussion regarding Alicia's perception of how current academic performance could relate to future job/career goals, the student was decisive in her response, but seemed confused. Despite the researcher's attempt to clarify the question, Alicia declared,

> It doesn't matter what grade you have, and it doesn't matter what job you want. It doesn't matter if they go together or not. Well, now for us little kids, it matters for us, but when we get bigger, it really doesn't matter.

Regarding factors affecting her decision process, Alicia stated that she "learned about being a pediatrician on a TV show". Therefore, her aunt may have influenced her decision to

strive for a career in pediatrics, but the media kindled her interest in this endeavor. Besides the impact of television, Alicia referred several times to the importance of practice as affecting future career decisions:

> First, you have to practice what you're gonna do when you grow up for your career, and you can't mess up on it. If you mess up, well, it's one mistake, but then you have to keep on practicing to get it right.

While Alicia seemed fervent in her commitment to becoming a pediatrician, she also considered other options and the notion of changing her mind: "I'll see if I can be helping the football players, and if I can't do that, then I'll be a dancer, and if I can't do that, I'll look for another job." Clearly, her desire to be a doctor was a predilection that she did not perceive as absolute.

Research question #4. The fourth research question pertained to students' perceptions of self-efficacy to achieve their career aspirations. It was evident that Alicia demonstrated minimal confidence in her abilities. When asked if she believed she would be successful in college, the student affirmed her expectation for a favorable outcome. However, the investigator's inquiry about Alicia's belief that she would one day have her "dream" job, prompted a less than positive reply: "Maybe, maybe not, because it's hard to get into a job that you really want." Further probing revealed contradiction in Alicia's responses. She asserted that she envisioned herself being successful as a pediatrician, but when the researcher asked if she believed she would have the job she wanted, she immediately announced, "No, because it's really hard to get into the job because there are a lot of people that want to get in too, and you want to be the first one to get in, but you can't." This assertion demonstrated that Alicia did not seem confident about her ability to be competitive in the labor market. Despite her reported self-doubt, Alicia avowed that she anticipated a successful future that included financial security.

Within-case analysis. The interview with Alicia revealed several dichotomous thought processes. On one hand the student avowed her penchant for pediatrics and working with babies, a career path requiring many years of dedicated study. And yet, when prompted to choose her second job/career of interest, Alicia opted to be a water girl and supply athletes with drinks and towels, a position requiring negligible skills and training. This disparity in responses indicated her lack of background knowledge and understanding of vocational options. Given the naivete of her youth and considering her minimal information bank, Alicia's limited awareness was within the parameters of expectation .

However, Alicia's inability to acknowledge how school performance in elementary school could impact future prosperity was somewhat unanticipated by the researcher. The participant lacked clarity in her comments and seemed a bit confused. She adamantly rejected the notion that grades had anything to do with acquiring employment. Then she further explained that, indeed, academic achievement was important for children, but not as you get older. The contradictory comments indicated her confusion. Perhaps no one had ever expressly pointed out the connection between schooling and eventual vocational prosperity.

Still another aspect of the interview that elicited unexpected responses involved Alicia's perceptions of self-efficacy. She clearly lacked confidence in her ability to become a pediatrician. The student expressed her concern with a competitive job market as a potential impediment to job attainment. Alicia also referred several times to the importance of "not messing up" with job skills as a prerequisite to realizing her "dream" job. Despite her poor perception of self-efficacy, Alicia maintained an overall positive outlook on her future. Moreover, she never referenced her economic disadvantage as a barrier to future prosperity.

Case #3 – Pedro (fifth-grade boy). Pedro was a very articulate 11-year old student. In

contrast to the other interviewees, Pedro lived in a single parent household with his mother and he had no siblings. His father resided in another state, so direct interaction with Pedro was limited. Pedro's heritage was Hispanic, as his mother's country of origin was Colombia, and his father was from Ecuador. The interview experience was very pleasant for the researcher since Pedro was willing to share his vision for the future without reservation. His verbal responses were often brief until the investigator prompted him to elaborate. While Pedro was very friendly and enjoyed selective interaction with peers, his demeanor was somewhat reserved. Both his comments and his behavior depicted a higher level of maturity than what is typically observed in fifth-grade boys.

Research question #1. Pedro's description of his career aspirations and background knowledge of vocational options clearly revealed that he had conceived a specific plan for his future: "Well, I want to be an architect and, um, help people build their homes, build schools, like design how the schools are gonna be or houses . . . because I want to develop the family business like my grandfather." Pedro's focus was steadfast in that he expressed no other career interests except possibly engineering, which he considered analogous to architecture. In addition, Pedro could provide some details regarding the job performance tasks of architects. He related that among their duties,

> They'd have to decide if, let's say, like if there's a, um, people want a house of three bedrooms and a bathroom, you have to decide where those things would go best, and where it would go best and look best. If not, I don't think anybody would pick you.

Along with this basic understanding of his career preference, Pedro was cognizant of the critical role of technology in the field of architecture. As he affirmed, "you'd have to learn how to use the computer." Clearly, Pedro had developed a vision for his future that included a skeletal plan

for his career preference and a primitive, albeit accurate, understanding of job performance.

Research question #2. The second research question aimed to determine the factors and significant others that influenced students' career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy. When questioned about influential people in his life, Pedro referred to a support network of three key members, his mother and grandparents. Throughout our discussion, however, the student did not interject any further information about his family except to talk about his grandfather. Pedro expressed pride in his desire to emulate his role model: "I want to be like my grandfather. . . . He's an engineer, and he finds out what kind of problems there is with helicopters and, um, he tries to fix them". The investigator probed deeper to discern whether or not Pedro's significant others discussed additional career options with him. While the participant conceded that such conversations had taken place, he remained committed to his predilection: "They talk to me about careers, but usually the careers they talk about I'm not really interested in." At this point in life, Pedro affirmed an unyielding fervor for architecture/engineering, and he seemed resolute in his conviction, unwilling to ponder additional suggestions from family members.

Research question #3. The third research question purported to investigate how students describe their understanding of pathways to career goal attainment and the factors affecting their career choice decisions. Pedro clearly understood the academic direction he would need to pursue to realize his "dream" job:

> You need to have a Bachelor's degree, which is four years. But I want to go on to get a Master's degree. So, then, you could have a better chance in getting hired for a job, and, like, be better at it.

In addition, the student was keenly aware of the relationship between acquiring academic knowledge as the bedrock for future job performance: "I'll have to learn a lot of math because

you really need to know it to do jobs like engineering and construction and architecture. You need to know a lot of math." Pedro also referred to guidance from his grandfather as impacting the relevance of education. The student explained:

> My grandfather told me this, that they look at your records of how good you did in school, and they, um, if you didn't do good on one of these (pause), like if you're not as smart as you need to be, they won't accept you in a certain college.

As a testament to his mature thought processes, Pedro's comments were anchored in reality. Moreover, the participant elaborated on his knowledge of job search procedures: "To get a job you probably have to, like, apply for a couple of jobs, . . . like, um, sign up for one, like, try to get an interview for a job and try to make them hire you." Pedro also attested to needing other people, such as the right teachers and a good construction crew, in order to realize his vision, but he avowed to make his career decisions on his own, without direct reliance on significant others.

Research question #4. How students perceive their self-efficacy to attain their career aspirations was the focus of the fourth question. It was evident that Pedro strongly believed in his ability to reach his goals and, ultimately, a prosperous future. When the researcher questioned the interviewee about his confidence to be successful in college, he emphatically replied, "I think it will be difficult, but I'm willing to go for it." Further probing about Pedro's expectation for "dream" job attainment revealed that he was self-assured about a positive outcome: "If I study hard enough, and if I do my best, you could achieve anything." He further added, "I think I'm going to be successful," indicating his overall positive outlook on future career prosperity. His self-assuredness was also evident in his perception of financial security, and he affirmed his expectation for a comfortable lifestyle. Moreover, Pedro's responses were grounded in reality, even though some of his responses demonstrated a paucity of knowledge/information.

Within-case analysis. Throughout the interview session, Pedro demonstrated that his ideations about future employment involved careful forethought. He had previously researched information about his career preferences and had conceptualized a plan to achieve his vision that included specific prerequisite education. While he did not describe a host of significant others to support him along his career path, his grandfather served as a powerful aspirational agent. Pedro's understanding of the education/employment connection was a testament to his maturity and helped him to tentatively solidify his future plan of study.

Pedro's perceptions about job attainment and schooling were reality-based. Furthermore, he displayed a formidable degree of self-confidence. He never waivered from his decisive plans. Moreover, he believed that he could and would achieve whatever he set his mind to with hard work and tenacity. Pedro never expressed any doubt that he would reach his goals nor did he allude to his current circumstance of economic disadvantage as a deterrent to future success. Overall, his vision was hopeful and replete with lofty plans and expectations for prosperity.

Case #4 – Arianna (fifth-grade girl). Arianna was a vivacious 10-year old who relished the opportunity to share her thoughts. Her household included both parents and two siblings, younger and older sisters, as well as three extended family members, an aunt and uncle, and baby cousin. Arianna's cultural background was Hispanic, as both her parents immigrated from Costa Rica. Her father was employed while her mother stayed home, though Arianna reported that her mom worked in the summers. Throughout the interview process Arianna grew more and more comfortable as the center of attention, and she became increasingly more verbal. It appeared as if the distinction of being selected for participation empowered her to assume a sense of self-importance that was very self-gratifying. The interaction between the researcher and the student was very relaxed and pleasant, to the extent that Arianna seemed disappointed

when the session ended.

Research question #1. With the first question, the researcher proposed to ascertain how students described their career aspirations and background knowledge of career options. Arianna's comments very thoroughly responded to this inquiry. Initially, the student expressed her desire to immerse herself in employment positions held by other family members:

> What I want to do is I want to do some of the things that my mom and my big sister wants to do, like my big sister wants to make clothes or she wants to be a vet. And my mom, she makes clothes. . . and my dad works in construction, and he got my mom and big sister a job there. So he said that when I'm older he's gonna get me a job there.

However, once the investigator prompted the student to reflect on her own interests, Arianna announced her predilection for cosmetology because it seemed interesting, "cool", and fun. She was well aware that this vocation involved applying make-up to clients. Nevertheless, the interviewee did not depict a clear vision for her future, and she acknowledged that changing her mind was an option: "When I go to college, they're going to give me a list, and, like, oh well, this job does this. And I might want to do something different."

Research question #2. Regarding factors and significant others that influenced students' career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy in attaining employment goals, Arianna provided ample discourse. Her reliance on family input, most notably regarding her older sister, was evident: "I actually speak to my big sister because she is going to college pretty soon and her ideas seem fun for jobs." In a subsequent discussion about cosmetology, Arianna stated, "my sister would help me memorize stuff, like what goes where and practice techniques on them (clients) and put make-up on them to make sure I get it right." Notwithstanding, the student referred to her mother's encouragement: "My mom is always telling me how smart I am," as

well as her father's support: "My dad asks me if I want to work in the company when I grow up or do I want to do something else." As evidenced, the social network Arianna depicted has had a profound influence on her ideations about future career options. Additionally, the family support she perceived allowed her to address the topic of career aspirations with a carefree attitude.

Research question #3. The third research question zeroed-in on participants' reported understanding of pathways to achieve career goals and factors that affected the decision-making process. As a first inquiry of awareness, the investigator questioned Arianna about her knowledge of college/training after high school. The student described the limited information she had acquired: "I know you can pick your classes, and they give you a list of which ones, and (pause) that's it." Her candid, simple response indicated an obvious void in her knowledge bank regarding the college experience. Arianna had no notion of the distinction between a college education and vocational training, as apparent in her comment, "I think that I will look for different colleges, good colleges, and I will go there for the amount of time that I need to, then I will go home and sign-up for a beauty school." While she clearly had pondered her career aspirations and developed a potential plan of education beyond high school, Arianna was misinformed or uninformed about post-secondary schooling.

When the researcher began questioning the participant about her perception of the relationship between current academic learning and future employment, Arianna demonstrated distinct insight: "What we are learning in class is stuff you need for different jobs, like problem strategies." As a deeper probe, the investigator asked the interviewee about any perceived connection between her grades and job attainment. Arianna immediately affirmed,

> Yes, because my grades, if I am applying for a job they will have to look at my resume, . . . like when you write your name and have you ever been in jail, what place would you

like to be working in. And it gives the stuff you have done, like a police record if you have one.

While she seemed overly concerned with the disclosure of illegal conduct, Arianna could attest to the importance of current academic success to ensure vocational success, and she had a basic notion of the job application process.

Regarding factors affecting her career decisions, in addition to familial influence and the aforementioned prerogative to change her mind as she got older, Arianna described the impact of the media: "One time I was watching a whole bunch of movies, and I thought that one job was cool, being a spy or FBI, but then I didn't want to do that anymore." She also acknowledged that effort and financial prudence could impact "dream" job/career attainment: "It depends on working hard to get it. And before it, I'd have to get a different job, like a store cashier, so I can have enough money to buy a shop and make it and hire employees."

Research question #4. The fourth question pertained to participants' perception of self-efficacy in achieving their career aspirations. Arianna demonstrated confidence in her ability to be successful as well as self-doubt. She affirmed that she planned to go to college, but when the researcher questioned her about whether or not she expected to be successful in college, Arianna replied, "I really don't know." However, in terms of job acquisition, the student recognized her responsibility to ensure a positive outcome:

> I'm in control, cuz whatever I do, it will go on the resume. And if I do something bad, then nobody will want to hire me because they would think I would ruin the shop or steal from the cash register or something like that.

Once again, Arianna refered to the critical nature of a resume and her need to avoid any law infractions, indicative of mature forethought and taking ownership of her future. Moreover,

Arianna affirmed her belief that she would attain her job of preference, achieve her goals with hard work, and have the financial stability to live comfortably. As she averred, "while I'm in college and after, I will be working with my dad, and I will be saving so I can buy the shop, a house, and all the make-up." Clearly, Arianna was hopeful that her vision would reach fruition. While the student commented several times about saving money throughout the interview session, she did not make reference to her current impoverished economic status, nor did she indicate that a lack of monetary resources could be a factor to stifle her "dream".

Within-case analysis. Arianna was able to articulate a vision for the future, albeit splintered between an allegiance to the jobs/careers of family members and an independent stance of her own predilection. And yet, she realized future life experiences, such as time spent in college, could expose her to other career options she would consider. Additionally, Arianna had a basic understanding of the job application process including the telltale implications of a resume. The interviewee lacked the necessary information to have even a general understanding of job descriptions, yet she felt confident that she would learn more about the job market from her older sister and her own college experiences. Moreover, she described her strong ties to immediate family members who served as her support network, and in whom she asserted a deeply entrenched trust.

Arianna's background knowledge regarding post-secondary education was limited, as she conceived of finishing college and then enrolling in cosmetology school, constituting a very atypical pathway. Nevertheless, she was somewhat savvy in her understanding of how her school grades could potentiate her job/career outcome. She also exhibited maturity in her understanding of a strong work ethic to ensure a positive outcome, and she displayed responsibility in her avowal of financial prudence. While Arianna expressed some self-doubt regarding her ability to

be successful in college, her comprehensive perspective on her future was positive, mitigating any apprehension.

Cross-grade analysis (research question #5)**.** A cross-grade analysis purported to discern the similarities and differences in responses between the fourth- and fifth-grade interviewees. The code categories, or themes at the micro level, provided the framework for this examination. For the category of Career Aspirations, student responses were largely the same. That is, participants in both grades were able to describe their vision for the future and specify their career interests and preferred job choices. They could also discuss their reasoning for those decisions by sharing personal information about their lives. However, one, fourth grader offered a unique comment when he expressed his interest in a career involving potential celebrity.

In the category of background Knowledge of Jobs/Careers, grade responses depicted clear contrast. Only one, fifth grader could provide detailed information about his preferred career, thereby demonstrating his understanding of the job description. Nevertheless, participants in both grades could describe their rudimentary knowledge/understanding of their selections. In addition, a sole fifth grader referenced the critical nature of having computer knowledge as a prerequisite skill for job acquisition as well as performance. The fourth-grade students made no mention of technology during their interviews. A similarity in response was evident as one participant from each grade discussed needing to earn money. These comments did not directly relate to job salary, but rather to saving funds in order to move forward with starting up a business.

The third category, Support Network, also revealed some commonalities and some discrepancies in grade responses. All the interviewees across both grades reported having communicated with someone about their career interests and preferences. In addition,

participants in both grades made references to significant others in their lives who offered support and encouragement, provided vocational information, or served as role models for students as they were forming their aspirations. However, only one fifth-grade student disclosed a desire to pursue the same jobs that her parents held. Moreover, both fifth graders and one, fourth-grade student contemplated emulating the jobs of significant others, excluding parents. Overall, both grades reported having a supportive social network, largely family-based, on which they could rely.

The category of Schooling/Education depicted likenesses and differences in participant comments between the grades. One, fifth grader explicitly delineated his plan for college upon high school completion, whereas the fourth graders could not provide specific information about college. Moreover, one student from each grade was able to discuss, although minimally, the type and/or amount of education/training needed in order to attain his/her preferred job. Likewise, one interviewee in each grade could describe the necessary steps to achieve career goals. Participant responses were congruent for all students across both grades in two areas, regarding their affirmation of having education/training plans and in their references to the importance of getting good grades. However, both fifth graders and only one, fourth grader revealed their academic status, attested to the relationship between grades and eventual employment, and referenced future academic goals.

Comparisons and contrasts were also evident between grades relating to the category of Influential Factors in Decision Making. All the fourth- and fifth-grade students stated that a number of factors affected their career decisions, such as academic achievement, having the appropriate materials to start a business, and the competitive nature of the job market. However, only the fourth graders emphasized the need to practice job-related skills in order to attain career

goals. Additionally, both fourth graders and one, fifth grader referred to the media as a factor impacting their career decision. Regarding changing one's mind about a job/career choice, one student from each grade affirmed this possibility, and one interviewee in each grade acknowledged that a significant other in their lives did or would assist them in the decision-making process regarding career choice.

Analysis of the Self-Efficacy category revealed that both grades concurred in one area only, their belief in a positive outcome for post-secondary education/training. Both fifth graders and one, fourth grader announced their confidence in attaining their vocational goals and achieving career success. They also avowed having ultimate control over whether or not they realize their vision. However, only one participant in each grade believed he/she possessed some job-related skills and felt self-assured that he/she would have the ability to perform future job/career tasks. Despite the narrow margin of age/grade difference between the students in fourth and fifth grades, their responses did not reflect concurrent thought processes except regarding the Positive Outlook category. Participants in both grades described their career choices as fun, anticipated achieving a lifestyle of financial security, and remained hopeful for a successful future.

Cross-gender analysis (research question #6). A cross-gender analysis aimed to compare and contrast interviewee responses by gender. The coding categories (themes at the micro level) served to guide this examination. In the category of Career Aspirations, participants demonstrated the greatest similarity in type of response. Boys and girls could explain their vision for the future regarding their career aspirations. In a like manner, students of both genders were able to delineate a tentative, skeletal plan of action for their goals. Interviewees in both groups were eager to share their vocational interests and job preferences as well as their thought

processes for opting for those choices. Gender responses depicted congruency in all areas relating to career aspirations except regarding jobs/careers that related to celebrity. Only boys expressed determination to enter a profession that had the potential for fame.

For the Job/Career Knowledge category, participant responses by gender did not largely coincide. Both boys and girls could describe resources they would use to obtain information about different jobs/careers, such as researching the internet or asking people who were employed in a particular occupation. The remaining student responses displayed incongruence by gender. For example, only boys could provide detailed background information about preferred careers, and only boys referenced technology. However, both genders referred to earning money as a critical factor in goal achievement. Overall, boys appeared to have more background knowledge about jobs/careers than girls.

Findings from the Support Network category indicated that both boys and girls had spoken to family members and/or friends about their career ideations at some point. Moreover, all the interviewees reported having solicited feedback from significant others in their lives regarding their career interests and preferences. However, only girls revealed an interest in pursuing their parents' occupations. In addition, only girls described aspirations of significant others that could impact their own aspirations. Nevertheless, both boys and girls expressed that the jobs/careers of significant others, not parents, appealed to them. It appeared that girls referred to and were influenced by significant others, mostly family members, more than boys.

Areas of comparison and contrast were evident in the Schooling/Education category. All the boys and girls discussed a plan for their post-secondary education/training. Moreover, all the participants of both genders made a reference to the importance of getting good grades for future academic success. Boys and girls disclosed similar types of responses for all the remaining areas

in this category. That is, students of both genders had some notion of the amount of schooling they would need to attain their job choices, and they were aware of the steps they would need to take in order to develop their careers. In addition, boys and girls addressed their academic status and made a reference to achievement in elementary school as a foundation for future career success. Moreover, they indicated their long-term academic aspirations. However, only boys could describe, with some accuracy and detail, what it meant to attend college and how it operated. Boys and girls did not demonstrate appreciable conflicting thought patterns relating to education.

The category of Influential Factors and Decisions depicted more areas of congruence than disparity between boys and girls responses. All the interviewees of both genders could delineate some factors that affected their career decisions, such as other occupational interests that could arise and whether or not they would be accepted into college. Boys and girls mentioned having learned about their jobs of interest by watching television. Moreover, students of both genders emphasized the need to practice job-related skills in order to attain desired employment, and both boys and girls acknowledged that their career choice decision was influenced by a significant other. However, only girls conceded that they might change their minds about their vocational interests and preferences as they got older and learned about other options.

Participant responses in the Self-Efficacy category demonstrated a combination of similarities and differences between boys and girls. Students of both genders avowed their belief that they would be successful in their post-secondary educational endeavors. Regarding job/career attainment, boys and girls believed they would achieve their goals. Likewise, interviewees of both genders were confident that they would have positive outcomes with their job performance. Moreover, boys and girls affirmed their belief in having control over whether

or not they would achieve their vocational goals. However, only boys were self-assured about having job-related skills, and about their expectation to be able to perform their future jobs. All the student responses from both boys and girls reflected a positive outlook for their future financial security, and they unanimously envisioned a future of prosperity and happiness.

Researcher's field observations. Initially, the most salient feature of the interview process was the interviewees' reaction to having been selected from the pool of candidates to share their thoughts and feelings with the investigator. All four students expressed surprise and delight at being singled-out for this task, as if they were honored. They beamed with pride when the researcher invited them to participate in this phase of the study, not with an air of haughtiness, but as if the researcher's validation engendered a sense of self-importance unfamiliar to them. The experience of being "in the spotlight" appeared to be gratifying for the children as evidenced by their smiles and eagerness to engage in conversation. Interestingly, in subsequent days following the one-on-one interviews, other students who were not participating in this investigation approached the researcher to request an interview. Clearly, the interviewees had shared their experience with their peers, which prompted considerable interest among students.

Even when the researcher had the one-on-one opportunity to delve deeper into students' thoughts processes to explore their awareness/understanding regarding jobs/careers, a paucity of knowledge/information was evident. The interviewees could only provide rudimentary details about their career interests. Moreover, they often shared misinformation and perceptual inaccuracies. With the exception of one interviewee, the participants were also ignorant as to post-secondary educational/training pathways. They understood that college involved schooling beyond high school, but that was the extent of their awareness.

In spite of the investigator's attempt to probe into students' perceptions of satisfying financial need/desires, the children never made a reference to their circumstance of economic disadvantage. That is, upon questioning participants about what they thought they would need to reach their career goals, how they would get what they needed, and whether they thought they would be able to purchase what they needed to have a comfortable living, none of the interviewees alluded to a lack of resources or funding. Likewise, no reference was ever made to having less opportunity to pursue their "vision" because their living conditions implied deprivation and might stymie their endeavors. Overall, they expected to achieve their goals and did not foresee any obstacles related to socioeconomic status that would hinder their mission. However, understandably, these children were only familiar with the lifestyle they experienced first hand, so they were not truly aware of what it meant or would be like to have greater affluence. Therefore, they were not cognizant of their disadvantage.

When the researcher explored student's affect regarding their prospects for the future, she encountered overwhelming optimism. The interviewees all shared their excitement about attaining their "dream" jobs. Even the children who described less than lofty career plans seemed to be enthused about their vocational goals. They all anticipated a lifestyle of financial stability, and never disclosed a need to have more family income than what they were used to, nor did they express a desire to be "rich." Moreover, the participants envisioned a "good" life. That is, they did not focus on any negative forces that could preclude them from just being happy. Clearly, this was at least in part due to the naivete of their developmental age group, and, therefore, not atypical. Nevertheless, a lifestyle of economic deprivation can intrinsically imply less than favorable living circumstances. Despite possibly having experienced the negative outcomes often associated with living in a culture of poverty, all the students were resolute in

their hope for a prosperous future.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

A discussion of the findings necessitates a four-prong consideration. Since the four instruments used to gather data aimed to provide corroborating evidence of student responses, the effectiveness of this triangulation was scrutinized. In addition, from the categories, or themes at the micro level, macro themes emerged to reflect societal implications. Suggestions for improved practice in education were warranted for greater efficacy in career development programming. Moreover, researcher observations as well as implications for future research were discussed.

Triangulation of Evidence

Examining the evidence from participant responses across all four instruments of measurement demonstrated close alignment. The researcher compared the findings as they applied to each of the research questions relating to career aspirations/knowledge and self-efficacy, though not every instrument addressed every question, and not every instrument item directly matched items found on the other measures. Therefore, conclusions were presented for student responses involving similar prompts across instruments. The first question purported to ascertain participants' career aspirations and background knowledge of career options. The Information, Curiosity/Exploration, Interests, and Time Perspective subscales on the Childhood Career Development Scale (CCDS) corresponded to this inquiry. Responses indicated that 77% of the participant pool strongly agreed or agreed with the Information statements involving wanting or needing job/career information. A majority of focus-group students (92%) also expressed a desire to learn more about occupations. On the Curiosity/Explorations subscale, 64%

of participants expressed their enthusiasm for learning about and exploring new things. Moreover, students' thoughts about future jobs/careers pertained to the Time Perspective subscale. Here, 85% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the notions of having thought about the future. These ideations also corresponded to having a vision for the future, to which 89% of focus-group students and 100% of individual interviewees attested. The Interests subscale on the CCDS referred to participants' knowledge of things they liked and what they liked to do. Here, 92% of students affirmed their awareness. A similar response pattern was evident with focus groups and interviewees, who also reported being knowledgeable about their interests, 94% and 100% respectively. However, prompts for these two groups related specifically to jobs/careers. Overall, student responses relating to research question #1 indicated that between 64% and 100% of participants were able to demonstrate aspiration-related interests and needs.

Research question #2 aimed to ascertain what factors and significant others influenced students' career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy. The Key Figures subscale on the CCDS referred to people that students knew, admired, or had occupations in which they were interested. A total of 74% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with statements about key people in their lives. Focus-group students (100%) also disclosed the importance of significant others who had an impact on their career aspirations. Moreover, the one-on-one interview participants (100%) concurred with the significance of having a support network.

For research question #3, the investigator attempted to garner information about students' understanding of pathways to job attainment and the decision-making factors involved. On the CCDS, the Planning subscale corresponded most appropriately to this inquiry. The overwhelming majority of students (87%) strongly agreed or agreed on the importance of

planning out one's work as elementary school children as well as planning for one's future. Likewise, a significant percentage of focus group participants (97%) and individual interviewees (100%) affirmed their future plans for post-secondary education/training. However, regarding specific career plans for the future, only 16% of focus-group members could delineate the steps they would take for job attainment. All the one-on-one interviewees were able to provide a detailed description of their future plans. Once again, student responses demonstrated similarity across measurements when examined in broad terms since direct alignment of responses was not always possible.

The focus of the fourth research question was to determine how students perceived their self-efficacy in attaining their career aspirations. A comparison of all study instruments was appropriate since all four measures included questions/prompts pertaining to self-concept. The CCDS included two relevant subscales, Locus of Control and Self-Concept. The Locus of Control statements referred to students' perception of having control over their words and actions. Responses of "strongly agree" and "agree" were reported for 77% of participants. When the individual interviewees were asked about their sense of being in charge of job/career goal attainment, 75% affirmed having personal control. The Self-Concept subscale contained statements about participants' knowledge of the kind of person they perceived themselves to be. Nearly all the students (90%) strongly agreed or agreed that they were self-aware as to what they are like as individuals. The responses from the focus groups indicated that 92% of participants expressed confidence in their ability to perform well on the job. These responses referred to the jobs/careers they hoped to attain when they entered the world of work as adults. However, only 50% of the individual interviewees demonstrated self-efficacy relating to job performance.

Student responses regarding perceptions of self-efficacy were not closely aligned.

Themes at the Macro Level

Allowing the study participants' "voice" to serve as the focal point of analysis enabled the researcher to disavow any *a priori* thematic framework in favor of themes that emerged as salient throughout the data gathering process. While this investigation involved a bounded system at a localized, micro level of research, extrapolating the data derived from student discourse to a societal context was warranted to gain a comprehensive perspective at the macro level of understanding. Given the participants' limited reported knowledge/understanding of the career development process, inequity in education was the first theme worthy of consideration. Students' continual references to significant others who impacted their career ideations spotlighted the construct of social capital as the second theme, critical for further discussion. A third theme involved student resilience coupled with optimism that prevailed throughout the data collection phase and was prominent as an influential factor regarding children's career aspirations and perceptions of self-efficacy.

Resilience. Resilience emerged as a prominent theme throughout the data collection process of the present research. Study participants portrayed optimism and determination to realize their career aspirations, regardless of the loftiness or mundanity of their vocational goals. This positive attitude and perceived strength despite life's challenges may result from the close ties and reciprocal support system among family members, often inherent in cultures of poverty (Vandsburger, Harrigan, & Biggerstaff, 2008). Hoy and Hoy (2009) contend that students' capacity to be resilient may vary, but those who thrive in spite of adversity often depict specific characteristics, such as optimism, and easy going nature, and having strong social supports.

Horning and Rouse (2002) also affirm the critical nature of interventions such as community supports and appropriate parenting to foster resilience in children of economic disadvantage. Having strong social capital appears to be a key ingredient in the development of resilience. As previously noted, all the study participants attested to strong family ties and supports. Moreover, they seemed unfettered by their condition of poverty and resolute in their optimism and survival skills. The children were not tentative about dealing with the future because, as they explained, they trusted that their caretakers "got their back", tantamount to being enveloped in a blanket of security. Consequently, when prompted about self-efficacy in achieving their academic vision or "dream" jobs, students affirmed their confidence in their abilities to reach prosperity. Moreover, they did not foresee obstacles that would impede attainment. Their responses to questions relating to careers and perceptions of self-efficacy never made reference to their condition of disadvantage as a hindrance in the pursuit of their aspirations. The students were so steadfast in their expectations for the future that the investigator reflected on whether or not the participants were aware that they were living in poverty.

Additionally, as the verbal exchange during the focus-group and interview sessions allowed the children to share their individual, personal hopes and dreams, they unanimously depicted enthusiasm when discussing their prospects for the future. Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, and Hambacher (2007) propose that resilience in children who overcome adversity involves having a sense of a bright future as it relates to the development of aspirations, optimism and hope about their future. Yosso (2005) touts the value of aspirational capital, the ability to keep hopes and dreams alive even when dealing with barriers to attainment. Even when the researcher posed questions about students' background knowledge regarding careers and post-secondary education, the participants offered their perceptions with conviction and confidence despite their

lack of knowledge. This was evident in the case of the student that intended to pursue three different careers in just a few years. Moreover, a level of tenacity was apparent in another student's declaration that if she couldn't get one job she would try another and then another. Participants' reference to having to keep trying was a testament to the core of resilience that pervaded their survivalist perspective. As Dutro (2009) describes, children share everyday revelations in school about their life experiences that include their struggles and their resilience, and these disclosures provide insights for educators to better support students.

The theme of resilience relates well to the research literature review pertaining to self-efficacy. During the verbal exchange throughout the focus-group and interview sessions, students expressed their belief in attaining their goals. They also demonstrated a positive outlook for the future. Moreover, they believed they would be happy and financially secure. Resilience implies an ability to prosper despite adversity or obstacles that impede progress. The students' perceptions that they would succeed in their career endeavors were a testament to their intrinsic resilience.

Social capital. The construct of social capital for students refers the resources within their social network that have an impact on their lives by providing opportunities and obstacles (Belcher, Peckuonis, & Deforge, 2011). For elementary school children, family capital is of primary importance since they have not yet established personal independence and greater reliance on community or society. Family capital does not exclusively relate to financial support. Instead, this resource focuses on relationships among family members and how the family unit is able to realize a social network to enhance each member's life chances to prosper. Children of economic disadvantage may lack adequate supports to benefit their development. Evans (2004) indicates that children of economic disadvantage experience greater family upheaval, violence,

and separation from their parents, and have fewer support networks than more affluent children. Moreover, while the immediate family hub may satisfy children's affective needs, access to broader social networks, such as the work environment may be lacking. In neighborhoods of poverty, children rarely interact with people who are steadily employed. Consequently, joblessness becomes a way of life, and the development of job-related skills is adversely affected (Wilson, 2012).

This outcome makes it difficult for students to benefit from community-based capital. That is, the impoverished local environment may have little to offer children to foster the career development process. Building a social network of people to nourish personal growth and attainment implies having access to and interaction with a resource pool that adds value to one's current status/condition. The focus-group students and interviewees in the current investigation described their almost exclusive dependence on family members for job/career knowledge and guidance, understandable given their ages. However, they also referred to establishments in their immediate local community as primary resources for employment or information about employment. Their sphere of influence was delimited by the constraints of living circumstances. The children could not easily or readily connect to a broader environment. Therefore, the process of forging social capital was stymied by the lack of opportunity to reach out beyond the boundaries of the immediate vicinity. Survival in poor communities often depends on close ties to relatives and friends also living in poverty. However, this support structure often does not extend outside the impoverished environment, thereby depriving residents of sources of information about job opportunities elsewhere and ways to attain them (Portes, 1998). Evans (2004) affirms that neighborhoods of poverty have less social capital than more affluent neighborhoods. This, in turn, impacts students' aspirations, allowing for a narrow vision of

possibilities. Here, too, the children's "voice" demonstrated the limited scope of social capital available to have a positive impact on their vision for the future.

Having appropriate and diverse role models for employment also impacts students' career development. As exemplified in this investigation, the children described and sometimes emulated the employment positions of family members, but, with few exceptions, these jobs provided low wages and involved little or no post-secondary education/training. Consequently, students were only familiar with occupations in their immediate family hub, circumscribing their knowledge bank regarding career options. The significant others in children's lives provided encouragement and emotional support to influence students' vocational aspirations, but this did not help to expand students' knowledge about job/career options with which they were unfamiliar. This limitation curtailed participants' exposure to a wider range of employment options that could potentiate greater economic prosperity than what families living in poverty typically experience. Belcher, Peckuonis, and DeForge (2011) concur that families living in poverty often have close bonds within the family and the immediate environment, but lack social connections to outside capital.

The theme of social capital relates well to the literature review on poverty. As previously reported, social capital within an environment of economic disadvantage can be very restricted. That is, children rely on a tight-knit, social network involving largely family members. Their experiences of interaction are limited since family and residents in the local community also live in poverty. The students have minimal contact with influential others outside their immediate neighborhood. Therefore, social capital for children living in poverty may be circumscribed because they lack access to a larger social network.

Implications for Educational Practices

Limited equity in education. Discourse on equity in education often examines culturally relevant pedagogy as it relates to students' racial/ethnic diversity (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). However, the social construct of class also warrants attention in the milieu of education. As Williams-Boyd (2010) contends that poverty and deprivation are the true sources of poor student academic performance rather than race, ethnicity or gender. Therefore, an appropriate inquiry in education involves determining how well schools provide opportunities for children of economic disadvantage to access knowledge and experiences otherwise unavailable to them, as in the career development process. Cambron-McCabe (2000) purports that some of the greatest inequities in education involve access to knowledge. She further states that it is morally wrong when school practices offer less access to knowledge to students of poverty. Gay (2004) endorses culturally responsive teaching as a means to eradicate inequity in education by using the lived experiences of minority groups as filters for teaching the skills and knowledge deemed necessary by educators. Therefore, while the upper elementary school curriculum may include Social Studies units that include some level of career explorations, the relevance of this instruction for children living in poverty may be elusive due to factors intrinsic to cultural poverty. Understanding these cultural factors enables teachers to discern how to differentiate instruction to maximize student learning. This notion of cultural awareness is supported by Payne (2005) who urges educators to provide learning opportunities that will increase the likelihood of student success. As evident in the current investigation, students living in poverty demonstrated limited background knowledge about jobs/careers. Their life experiences thus far had not exposed them to an array of occupations requiring different levels of education/training and expertise. Additionally, these children revealed a limited understanding of job descriptions

and performance duties and negligible awareness of income expectations for vocational options. Throughout the data-gathering phase of this study, student responses clearly demonstrated a lack of background knowledge as well as misinformation, which could stifle aspirations. Langston (2007) contends that class position is destiny and the deciding factor in educational and vocational attainment. She further asserts that people living in poverty are denied the privilege of choosing careers because for them work is a means of survival.

The increased emphasis on standardized testing over the past decade has often influenced educators to focus greater attention on core academics, such as Reading and Math, to the detriment of other curricula, such as Social Studies, now being "left behind" in daily instructional programming (Fletcher, 2006). Consequently, career development has often been relegated to a curricular status of negligible importance. Adequate instruction to assist every child in exploring and identifying career choices and to learn about pursuing pathways to career attainment may be lacking (Riley & Coleman, 2011). Moreover, the career development of children of economic disadvantage may largely occur in the school setting by filling in the gaps of knowledge, rather than from outside sources. However, the Social Studies curriculum that can proactively address the specific instructional needs of these students, by providing opportunities to learn about employment options outside the parameters of their socioeconomic subgroup, may not be a program of preference. Moreover, opportunities to interface with professionals who could share their employment experiences may not occur due to the de-emphasis on non-priority academic units of study. The students in the current study offered a unanimous "voice" in which they emphatically attested to the paucity of instruction and information they received during their elementary school years regarding career development. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) tout the importance of giving "voice" to marginalized minorities to gain an empathic understanding of

their life stories. The shared discourse that emerged from the focus-group and interview sessions revealed aspects of participants' lived experiences related to their vision for the future. These disclosures, in turn, demonstrated the need to bridge the gap between students' limited knowledge base and a wider exposure to employment options via an academic venue.

The theme of inequity relates well to the literature review studies relating to career development and poverty. That is, the research on children and careers demonstrated that there was little focus on exploring the world of work in elementary school, and even less emphasis on children of economic disadvantage. The results from the current study involving focus groups and individual interviews supported extant research in that study participants affirmed that they had had no prior instruction on career development. Moreover, the children stated that they had not received any special programs to learn more about jobs/careers or to provide them with opportunities to experience the workplace outside local impoverished neighborhood. While the students did not explicitly describe perceptions of inequity or poverty, their responses implied that they lacked the resources and experiences to have access to career-related knowledge due to their life conditions of poverty.

Culturally responsive teaching. Perhaps one of the most critical ways educators can assist students with career development is through culturally responsive teaching. While curriculum may be developed at the district level, instructional delivery occurs at the building and classroom levels. Therefore, the locus of control to differentiate instruction that addresses students' needs initiates with the school administrator's directive and is implemented by the classroom teacher. Culturally responsive teaching involves the cultural context and experiences of students and their communities (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). Ladson-Billings (2006) concurs that teachers who implement culturally relevant pedagogy attend to the social context of students

while engaging in instruction that prepares students for postsecondary education and the world of work. For the current study, this entails listening to participants' "voice" to discern gaps in knowledge and understanding in order to provide effective career development instruction. Howard (1999) suggests that effective teachers of diverse students must have an understanding of how socioeconomic realities impact students and their academic attainment. Teachers with an understanding of socioeconomic class diversity acknowledge the limitations that living in poverty may impose in order to gain a better understanding of how to assist students. Milner (2006) proposes that teachers adapt their instructional practices to align to the context of their working environment and students. In the career development process involving children of economic disadvantage, developing lessons that focus on a wide variety of vocational options, educational opportunities, and pathways to career attainment would enrich children's aspirations and expand their vision for the future (Weinger, 2000). Within the classroom, then, teachers proactively consider instructional strategies to address the knowledge gaps of their students and provide opportunities to enhance learning. Moreover, at the district level, a stronger imperative to address instruction regarding jobs/careers is of paramount importance. Endorsement of career development initiatives at the school board, superintendency, and cabinet levels would give license to building administrators to integrate this endeavor as an ongoing process that begins in the primary years and continues throughout the schooling experience. This approach could allow students to develop a formidable level of knowledge and understanding to serve as a sound foundation for decision-making as adults (Magnuson & Starr, 2000).

School assemblies that provide information about a variety of jobs/career may enrich the learning process, as well as presentations by community members with first-hand knowledge/experience about specific professions. Blackhurst and Auger (2008) endorse

guidance lessons to clarify students' misconceptions about jobs and enhance their awareness of employment options in addition to inviting speakers to the classroom and visiting the workplace. Children of economic disadvantage may not be able to relate to the information being disseminated. As Payne (2005) indicates, in cultures of poverty, the employment focus is on making enough money to survive, and choosing a career is not an option. Therefore, a greater impact may be derived from field trips to work sites, as these events can make an indelible impression on children who otherwise would have no access to this first-hand experience. Bagin, Gallagher, and Moore (2008) advocate field trips to community businesses as a valuable learning experience for students and as a means to promote school programs. For the children, reading about a career as a laboratory technician or a pilot comes alive if given the opportunity to visit a lab or a cockpit. These events enable children of economic disadvantage to view the working environment, learn about job duties, interact with the people employed in a particular vocation/profession, engage in hands-on opportunities with equipment and materials, and pose questions stimulated by their curiosity, thereby evoking their "voice." Students are not privy to a wide variety of job/career choices if they have no knowledge that those options exist or what they involve.

In a similar fashion, exposing students to a variety of educational/training institutions could lay the foundation for aspirations otherwise not considered. Children living in poverty could benefit from visits to local colleges or technical institutes to expand their perspective and understanding of post-secondary educational opportunities for learning. Exposure through direct contact with these facilities can have a powerful impact on students and the vocational vision they begin to formulate in the elementary years. Teachers and counselors can proactively prepare opportunities that allow students access to "see" a world unfamiliar to them. These connections

would enable students to make informed decisions regarding career aspirations.

Yet another consideration for teachers implementing culturally responsive instruction pertains to material resources to extend the learning process. Understandably, families living in poverty often cannot afford to purchase educational materials to bolster the academic experience (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Moreover, school districts may or may not experience the financial prosperity to allow for non-essential, instructional purchases. The onus of responsibility lies with school leaders and teachers to creatively leverage existing school resources (Theoharis, 2009). This may be especially critical concerning access to technology, such as the internet, as well as the equipment itself, such as computers and ipads. Conceição and Edyburn (2005) attest to the unlimited potential that technology contributes to learning. For children living in poverty, access to educational opportunities outside their immediate community may be unattainable. Through inexpensive and often no-cost multimedia and interactive learning resources, students can access information to supplement and extend what they are learning in the classroom (McLeod, 2011). Militello (2011) further asserts that the issue of accessing technology can be viewed as another example of the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots", such that having Internet service in schools is a matter of educational equity. When resources are available in school but not likely to be found in students' homes, teachers can be instrumental in bridging that void by creating before- and after-school opportunities for students to access materials/technology. Adequate accessibility would include a sufficient number of computers and appropriate software to allow for effective career exploration. The meeting times and places for students to avail themselves of these resources and opportunities must also be suitable to students' living circumstances so as not to preclude any child from inclusion.

School leadership and staff development. Administrators set the tone for the direction

of professional development in their buildings as it relates to the school mission (Reeves, 2009). Beachum and McCray (2010) advocate active inquiry as an ongoing exercise for school leaders involving reflecting on and critiquing school and district practices relating to curriculum equity and funding allocations. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) agree that education administrators must critically assess school structures and norms to discern inequities in the academic enterprise. Therefore, the school principal has the responsibility to model equity-related behaviors and the authority to promote equity-related practices that meet the learning needs of the student population. This could include initiatives such as prioritizing curricular endeavors, budgeting for student-relevant programs, and providing opportunities to access technology and the broader community. School administrators who advocate equity and cultural relevance in education acknowledge the daunting challenge of educating diverse student populations and attempt to build connections between the school and institutions in the larger community (McCray & Beachum, 2011). This is especially critical when schools operate under budgetary restrictions that do not support non-essential purchases or costly extended learning opportunities.

School leaders committed to social justice in education and attuned to the specific needs of their student population create professional development opportunities that will enable the school vision to reach fruition. One of the key tenets of leadership, according to Theoharis (2009), is to improve the core learning content for all students. Therefore, principals must ensure that teachers stay abreast of instructional strategies/practices that are most effective for student learning. Diversity awareness training could serve as a foundation for understanding differences among student subgroups. Subsequent staff preparation could involve developing practical classroom strategies to engage students in learning. This phase of teacher development might

involve tapping into research-based approaches to instruction as well as reciprocal collegial exchange of lesson effectiveness (Fullan, 2001). Building leadership capacity among the teaching staff can be a compelling tool to fortify professional development. That is, teachers who demonstrate a greater expertise for understanding the instructional needs of students of economic disadvantage can be invited to share their knowledge with fellow staff members (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). This practice, in turn, lays the foundation for a professional learning community in which teachers have occasion to talk about their teaching practice and student learning as well as to share ideas to initiate new practices (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2006). The professional development of teachers is especially critical when working with students of economic disadvantage and requires teachers to utilize a repertoire of unique instructional tools. Therefore, it behooves school leaders to address the specific learning needs of teachers in order to be more effective with children living in poverty.

Parental and community involvement. The endeavor to implement a career development program in schools need not be the sole responsibility of school administrators and teachers. Machtinger (2007) poses that while the role of parents and community in schools is crucial, how to best utilize these resources is not always clear. Engaging parents and the community as resources can be invaluable to extend student learning. Relying on collaboration with entities outside the milieu of education can be a foreign concept for educators. Home-school interaction, for example, may be relegated to a non-priority status in the schooling experience. That is, teacher and parents may communicate only when necessary to address concerns regarding academic progress or behavior. Theoharis (2009) highlights the critical charge of principals to involve families in schools in innovative ways. He maintains that by listening to parents, school administrators engender a relationship of mutual respect with traditionally

marginalized families. However, Payne (2005) proposes that for families living in poverty, parental involvement in the academic enterprise must include insistence, expectations, and support at home rather than direct interaction in the school. Nevertheless, developing parent-teacher partnerships implies a collaborative undertaking of higher order to advance the educational enterprise (Bagin, Gallagher, & Moore, 2008). Parents can offer personal experience and expertise regarding employment and possibly serve to connect the classroom to the reality of the employment site. They can provide first-hand descriptions of the work-a-day world to advance children's awareness of job duties and working conditions. Additionally, teachers/counselors could prepare workshops to inform parents about how they can assist their children in developing career aspirations. Moreover, establishing relationships with parents develops trust between the home and school, allowing both stakeholders to forge a common focus – student success. Since parent educational involvement is associated with children's academic prosperity, educators are encouraged to continue to kindle this connection (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Establishing alliances with community institutions can also result in favorable student achievement outcomes. Hoy and Hoy (2009) endorse an imperative for educators to integrate resources and services from the community as a means to strengthen school programs and student learning. According to Fullan (2001) schools alone cannot effectively tackle the challenge of ensuring academic success for every student. He insists on the notion of outside collaboration, that is, ongoing contact between schools and the environment to develop networks and partnerships. Ford (2006) also advocates school-community partnerships and insists that schools alone cannot adequately handle all the concerns and needs of school districts in urban, low socioeconomic areas. Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, and Kleiner (2000)

emphasize the reciprocal benefits derived from school-community connections. That is, educators acknowledge the value of outside community institutions, such as libraries, museums, and businesses to enhance students' learning experiences, and these organizations perceive the value in connecting to schools to improve the community. Having associations outside the school could contribute to the career development process by introducing students to the workplace as well as educational institutions through on-site visitations, critical for children living in poverty who cannot access non-local establishments. Outside partners may provide needed funding to support academic initiatives through field trips, instructional materials, and technology. Therefore, creating support networks can provide opportunities for students to experience learning outside the classroom to help develop career aspirations from a more extensive knowledge base. Moreover, critical to the success of this enterprise is a commitment to early and ongoing career development intervention. As Hoffman and McDaniels (1991) insist, the strength and continuity of career development programs depends on the collaborative participation and contribution of school administrators, teacher, parents, community resource personnel, students, and representatives from business and industry.

Researcher's Observations

The investigator observed several key features of the researcher-participant interaction process that were pervasive and merit highlighting. First, study participants did not seem to be aware of their economic disadvantage, explicitly or implicitly. Not one student ever made mention of being poor, not having money, or perceiving deprivation of any kind throughout the focus-group sessions or individual interviews involving direct dialogue among the children or with the researcher. As discussions about career aspirations ensued, students responded without hesitation and with a firm commitment to their expectations for the future. In spite of

experiencing less than optimal living condition in which needs and wants may not be met, the participants did not perceive themselves to be disadvantaged.

Student responses also indicated that they didn't know WHAT they did not know, not did they know THAT they did not know. That is, the children, with few exceptions, were able to discuss their vision based on limited background knowledge and familiarity with employment bounded largely by the immediate community and confined to jobs of family members and local merchants. Consequently, their knowledge was circumscribed by their experiences in their world. Since the participants had had negligible personal contact with workers sustaining professional employment, significant others attaining post-secondary education, or interaction in more affluent communities, they could only express their views based on what they knew. Moreover, the students were not aware that the delimitations of their lifestyle precluded them from a broader knowledge base and a wider range of employment-related information. Therefore, they did not know that there was more to know. As a consequence, most student aspirations reflected lower-level employment positions, perpetuated family employment patterns, or demonstrated totally unrealistic understanding of job performance.

Additionally, the dynamics involved in the focus-group interchange was invaluable to the study objective of ascertaining students' "voice". Not only did students have the opportunity to express their thoughts with a group of peers, but also they could receive feedback, reflect on comments made, and respond again. In addition, a very supportive climate emerged even though the researcher made no prior stipulation regarding mutual respect. Students demonstrated that they felt very comfortable sharing their ideas in a peer-nurtured environment. The children listened to each other and offered positive remarks. This engendered an added dimension, in that some participants, inspired by the career aspirations of others, modified their personal vision in

order to emulate the employment preferences described by peers. Moreover, some students evolved through a cycle in which they reported their aspirations, made changes to reflect new ideas they adopted from classmates, then returned to their original ideations. This outcome of the focus-group process indicated the prevalence of volatility in students' career ideations. The focus-group data provided valuable insight, overtly or inadvertently, regarding participants' vision for the future.

The researcher acknowledges that as a school leader she faces the dilemma of balancing the need for a greater focus on career development instruction with the overarching imperative to develop proficient literacy and numeracy skills in students. Finding time in the carefully structured class schedules to address career explorations is a daunting task. Realistically, blocks of time allotted to Reading and Math would have to be reduced. This initiative, in turn, would potentially create "angst" among teachers who already feel the pressure of ensuring that all students meet proficiency levels on standardized tests. Integrating the career development content within the language arts curriculum may be a viable approach to a renewed focus on career development for elementary students of economic disadvantage. After-school programs could also provide opportunities for children to explore vocational interests when the daily instructional schedule does not allow changes.

A final comment on study limitations is warranted. Since this investigation did not involve a random sample of participants, results are not generalizable to other populations. The largely qualitative inquiry demonstrated credibility as it related to one specific research site and a purposefully selected student population. The case study approach provided an ideal forum for the children's "voice" to emerge. Study finding offered a descriptive portrait of the thought processes and feeling of participants regarding their career aspirations. The telltale "voice"

allowed the researcher to gain a first-hand understanding of how children of economic disadvantage envision their prospects for the future.

Implications for Future Research

Extant literature involving career development largely focuses on students in middle or high school as they are nearing the ages of employment. However, ideations about future job/career paths germinate in the elementary years. While students in this age-group do not yet face the challenge of final decision-making, the preliminary aspirations they develop may set the direction they consider for career attainment. Children living in poverty may experience a narrow knowledge base and have limited job-related information from which to develop aspirations. Therefore, a renewed approach to career development research on children should spotlight the thought processes that emerge in younger students and examine more critically the specific aspects of economic disadvantage, such as lack of resources and access to non-local institutions, that may impact career aspirations and students' self-efficacy in job attainment.

Undoubtedly, the developmental stage of the participants in the current study may have influenced their responses to some extent. Consequently, some findings may be attributable to participants' youth status rather than or in addition to their poverty status. That is, for example, a nine- or ten-year-old child typically might not yet be knowledgeable about the extended educational pathway required to become a pediatrician. Therefore, future research could involve same-age samples from different socioeconomic levels. This inquiry could elucidate any differences that may be evident between students of economic disadvantage and children of greater affluence in terms of career aspirations and self-efficacy.

Moreover, additional qualitative investigations are warranted in order to elicit children's "voice" for gaining a first-hand perspective on their thought processes through verbal exchange.

Data collection involving survey/questionnaire responses only touch the surface of how and what students are thinking in terms of their future aspirations. Through open-ended questioning investigators enable children to express exactly what they want to say, in addition to the researcher's preconceived parameters. By conducting focus groups and one-on-one interviews, the researcher could derive data that revealed a more complete picture of how students thought about future career aspirations in addition to what they thought. The investigator was witness to students' hesitations as they spoke, their reactions to peers' responses, their tone when they spoke of family members, their expressions of confusion, the excitement in their voices when they shared their career interests. The direct interaction between the researcher and the children added a dimension of depth in understanding and insight that was critical to the study results and discussion. Additionally, focus-group interaction proved to be extremely telltale in terms of how students think and express their ideas in a group setting where they could influence each others' responses. The emergent dynamics from this approach provided extremely beneficial data for compiling a comprehensive portrait of participants along with individual student interviews. While the researcher's questions served to gather specific information in a scripted fashion, the insights that emerged as a result of the interplay among group members contributed to the value of the investigation by offering unbridled testament to the reality of career ideations from the perspective of children living in poverty. Therefore, it behooves researchers working with students to engage in a verbal exchange that allows them to "speak their minds." This approach to data collection appears to be underutilized when dealing with elementary students, yet elicits extremely revealing data that extends beyond the original parameters intended by the investigator. To get at the heart of what children think and feel, it is of paramount importance to provide an opportunity for them to be heard. This is especially critical for marginalized

subgroups, such as children of economic disadvantage. Weinger (2000) crystallizes the importance of listening to children's "voice":

> As adults we frequently ask children what they want to be when they grow up. Finding their answers cute and changing all the time, we often dismiss and devalue the significance of their responses. In fact children are attempting to define themselves, and their responses are reflective both of their inner need 'to be somebody' and of their recognition of the social consequences attached to occupations. Their responses show their view of their future, how their life will play out, what socio-economic class they will be in, and the opportunities that will be available to them throughout their lives. Once we hear what children are truly saying we are in a better position to respond to their unasked questions and needs (p. 33).

References

Antrop-Gonzalez, R., & Velez, W. (2005). Teaching and learning in urban schools. In F. E. Obiakor & F. D. Beachum (Eds.), *Urban education for the 21st century* (pp. 59-82). Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.

Auger, R. W., Blackhurst, A. E., & Wahl, K. H. (2005). The development of elementary-aged children's career aspirations and expectations. *Professional School Counseling, 8,* 322-329.

Bagin, D., Gallagher, D. R., & Moore, E. H. (2008). *The school and community relations.* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84,* 191-215. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191

Bandura, A. (2002). Social cognitive theory in cultural context. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 51,* 269-290. doi: 10.1111/1464-0597.00092

Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (2001). Self-efficacy beliefs as shapers of children's aspirations and career trajectories. *Child Development, 72,* 187-206. doi: 10.1111/1467-8624.00273

Beachum, F. D., & McCray, C. R. (2010). Cracking the code: Illuminating the promises and pitfalls of social justice in educational leadership. *International Journal of Urban Educational Leadership, 4,* 206-221.

Belcher, J. R., Peckuonis, E. V., & DeForge, B. R. (2011). Family capital: Implications for interventions with families. *Journal of Family Social Work, 14,* 68-85. doi: 10.1080/ 10522158.2010.542113

Blackhurst, A. E., & Auger, R. W. (2008). Precursors to the gender gap in college enrollment:

Children's aspirations and expectations for their futures. *Professional School Counseling, 11,* 149-158. doi: 10.5330/PSC.n.2010-11.149

Bondy, E., Ross, D. D., Gallingane, C., & Hambacher, E. (2007). Creating environments of success and resilience: Culturally responsive classroom management and more. *Urban Education, 42,* 326-348. doi: 10.1177/0042085907303406

Bradley, R. H., & Corwyn, R. F. (2002). Socioeconomic status and child development. *Annual Review of Psychology, 53,* 371-399. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135233

Bradley, R. H., Corwyn, R. F., McAdoo, H. P., & Coll, C. G. (2001). The home environments of children in the United States part 1: Variations by age, ethnicity, and poverty status. *Child Development, 72,* 1844-1867. doi: 10.1111/1467-8624.t01-1-00382

Bradshaw, T. K. (2007). Theories of poverty and anti-poverty programs in community development. *Journal of the Community Development Society, 38,* 7-25. doi: 10.1080/15575330709490182

Bryant, M. T. (2004). *The portable dissertation advisor.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Cambron-McCabe, N. (2000). Schooling as an ethical endeavor. In P. Senge, N. Cambron-McCabe, T. Lucas, B. Smith, J. Dutton, & A. Kleiner (Eds.), *Schools that learn* (pp. 276-286). New York: Doubleday.

Cambron-McCabe, N., & McCarthy, M. M. (2005). Educating school leaders for social justice. *Educational Policy, 19,* 201-222. doi: 10.1177/0895904804271609

Canale, J. R., & Dunlap, L. L. (1987, April). *Factors influencing career aspirations of primary and secondary grade students.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Arlington. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED288164.pdf

Cellini, S. R., McKernan, S. M., & Ratcliffe, C (2008). The dynamics of poverty in the United States: A review of data, methods, and findings. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 27,* 577-605. doi: 10.1002/pam.20337

Chiapa, C., Garrido, J. L., & Prina, S. (2012). The effect of social programs and exposure to professionals on the educational aspirations of the poor. *Economics of Education Review, 31,* 778-798. Retrieved from htpp://faculty.weatherhead.case.edu/prina/pdfs/cgp_eer_2012.pdf

Conceição, S., & Edyburn, D. (2005). New technological horizons for urban learners. In F. E. Obiakor & F. D. Beachum (Eds.), *Urban education for the 21st century* (pp. 199-217). Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.

Cook, T. D., Church, M. B., Ajanaku, S., Shadish, W. R., Kim, J., & Cohen, R. (1996). The development of occupational aspirations and expectations among inner-city boys. *Child Development, 67,* 3368-3385. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.1996.tb01918.x

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Curley, A. M. (2005). Theories of urban poverty and implications for public housing policy. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 32,* 97-119. Retrieved from http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/marilynm/Theorizing_Black_America_Syllabus_files/Theories_of_Urban_Poverty.pdf

DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher, 33,* 26-31. doi:10.3102/0013189X033005026

DeCuir-Gunby, J. T., Marshall, P. L., & McCulloch, A. W. (2011). Developing and using a

codebook for the analysis of interview data: An example from a professional development research project. *Field Methods, 23,* 136-155. doi: 10.1177/1525822X10388468

Dewey, C. (2011, August). El nuevo normal: Latinos transform Pennsylvania Steel Country. *The Atlantic.* Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/08/el-nuevo-…

Duncan, G. J., Yeung, W. J., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Smith, J. R. (1998). How much does childhood poverty affect the life chances of children? *American Sociological Review, 63,* 406-423. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2657556

Dutro, E. (2009). Children's testimony and the necessity of critical witness in urban classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 48,* 231-238. doi: 10.1080/00405840902997519

Evans, G. W. (2004). The environment of childhood poverty. *American Psychologist, 59,* 77-92. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.59.2.77

Evans, G. W., Gonnella, C., Marcynyszyn, L. A., Gentile, L., & Salpekar, N. (2005). The role of chaos in poverty and children's socioemotional adjustment. *Psychological Science, 16,* 560-565. doi: 10.1111/j.0956-7976.2005.01575.x

Ferreira, J. A., Santos, E. J. R., Fonseca, A. C., & Haase, R. F. (2007). Early predictors of career development: A 10-year follow-up study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 70,* 61-77. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2006.04.006

Fletcher, D. C. (2006). No curriculum left behind: The effects of the no child left behind legislation on career and technical education. *Career and Technical Education Research, 31,* 157-174. doi: 10.5328/CTER31.3.157

Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case study. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook*

of qualitative research (pp. 301-316). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Ford, B. A. (2006). Culturally responsive school-community partnerships. In J. Landsman & C. W. Lewis (Eds.), *White teachers/diverse classrooms* (pp. 286-300). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Fulcher, M. (2011). Individual differences in children's occupational aspirations as a function of parental traditionality. *Sex Roles, 64,* 117-131. doi: 10.1007/s11199-010-9854-7

Fulcher, M. (2013). Perceived efficacy script. Retrieved from https://imp6.cc.lehigh.edu/horde/imp/view.php?popup_view=1&ma…

Fullan, M. (2001). *Change forces: The sequel*. Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1996). *What's worth fighting for in your school?* New York: Teachers College Press.

Gallavan, N. P. (2003). Decision making, self-efficacy, and the place of career education in elementary school social studies. *The Social Studies,* 15-19.

Gay, G. (2004). Beyond *Brown*: Promoting equality through multicultural education. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 19,* 193-216. Retrieved from http://www.achievementseminars.com/seminar_series_2008_2009/readings/Gay_Promoting%20equality.pdf

Gillies, R. M., McMahon, M. L., & Carroll, J. (1998). Evaluating a career education intervention in the upper elementary school. *Journal of Career Development, 24,* 267-287. doi: 10.1177/089484539802400401

Glatthorn, A. A., & Joyner, R. L. (2005). *Wtiting the winning thesis or dissertation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers.* New York: Addison Wesley Longman,

Inc.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 8,* 597-607. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf

Gollnick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C. (2002). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Gottfredson, L. S. (1981). Circumscription and compromise: A developmental theory of occupational aspirations. *Journal of Counseling Psychology Monograph, 28,* 545-579. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.28.6.545

Guion, L. A., Diehl, D. C., & McDonald, D. (2011). *Triangulation: Establishing the validity of qualitative research.* Retrieved from University of Florida IFAS Extension website: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy394

Hartung, P. J., Porfeli, E. J., & Vondracek, F. W. (2005). Child vocational development: A review and reconsideration. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 66,* 385-419. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2004.05.006

Hartung, P. J., Porfeli, E. J., & Vondracek, F. W. (2008). Career adaptability in childhood. *The Career Development Quarterly, 57,* 63-75. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-0045.2008.tb00166.x

Haveman, R., & Wolfe, B. (1995). The determinants of children's attainment: A review of methods and findings. *Journal of Economic Literature, 33,* 1829-1878. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2729315

Helwig, A. A. (1998). Occupational aspirations of a longitudinal sample from second to sixth grade. *Journal of Career Development, 24,* 247-265. doi: 10.1023/A:1025085830778

Hoffman, L. R., & McDaniels, C. (1991). Career development in the elementary schools: A

perspective for the 1990s. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 25,* 163-171.

Holland, J. L. (1985). *Making vocational choices: A psychology of careers.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments.* Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

Horning, L. E., & Rouse, K. A. (2002). Resilience in preschoolers and toddlers from low-income families. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 29,* 155-159. doi: 10.1023/A: 1014580408103

Howard, G. (1999). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Howard, K. A., Carlstrom, A. H., Katz, A. D., Chew, A. Y., Ray, G. C., Laine, L., & Caulum, D. (2011). Career aspirations of youth: Untangling race/ethnicity, SES, and gender. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 79,* 98-109. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2010.12.002

Howard, K. A., & Walsh, M. E. (2011). Children's conceptions of career choice and attainment: Model development. *Journal of Career Development, 38,* 256-271. doi: 10.1177/ 0894845310365851

Hoy, A. W., & Hoy, W. K. (2009). *Instructional leadership.* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Ji, P. Y., Lapan, R. T., & Tate, K. (2004). Vocational interests and career efficacy expectations in relation to occupational sex-typing beliefs for eighth grade students. *Journal of Career Development, 31,* 143-154. doi: 10.1177/089484530403100205

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). "Yes, but how do we do it?" In J. Landsman & C. W. Lewis (Eds.), *White teachers/diverse classrooms* (pp. 29-42). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Langston, D. (2007). Tired of playing monopoly? In M. L. Andersen & P. Hill-Collins (Eds.),

Race, class, & gender (pp. 118-127). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Lapan, R. T., Adams, A., Turner, S., & Hinkelman, J. M. (2000). Seventh graders' vocational interest and efficacy expectation patterns. *Journal of Career Development, 26,* 215-229. doi: 10.1177/089484530002600305

Lapan, R. T., Hinkelman, J. M., Adams, A., & Turner, S. (1999). Understanding rural adolescents' interests, values, and efficacy expectations. *Journal of Career Development, 26,* 107-124. doi: 10.1177/089484539902600202

Larson, C. L., & Murtadha, K. (2002). Leadership for social justice. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 101,* 134-161. doi: 10.1111/j.1744-7984.2002.tb00007.x

Lee, J. S., & Bowen, N. K. (2006). Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational Research Journal, 43,* 193-218. doi: 10.3102/00028312043002193

Lehning, A. J., Vu, C. M., & Pintak, I. (2007). Theories of poverty: Findings from textbooks on human behavior and the social environment. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 16,* 5-19. doi: 10.1300/J137v16n01_02

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45,* 79-122. doi: 10.1006/jvbe.1994.1027

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2000). Contextual supports and barriers to career choice: A social cognitive analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47,* 36-49. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.47.1.36

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Larkin, K. C. (1986). Self-efficacy in the prediction of academic

performance and perceived career options. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 33,* 265-269. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.33.3.265

Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2000). The neighborhoods they live in: The effects of neighborhood residence on child and adolescent outcomes. *Psychological Bulletin, 126,* 309-337. doi: 10.1037//0033-2909.126.2.309

Machtinger, H. (2007). What do we know about high poverty schools? Summary of the high poverty schools conference at UNC-Chapel Hill. *The High School Journal, 90,* 1-8. doi: 10.1353/hsj.2007.0012

MacQueen, K. M., McLellan, E., Kay, K., & Milstein, B. (1998). Codebook development for team-based qualitative analysis. *Cultural Anthropology Methods, 10,* 31-36. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/library_software_answr_codebook.pdf

Magnuson, C. S., & Starr, M. F. (2000). How early is too early to begin life career planning? The importance of the elementary school years. *Journal of Career Development, 27,* 89-101. doi: 10.1177/089484530002700203

Marjoribanks, K. (2002). Family contexts, individual characteristics, proximal settings, and adolescents' aspirations. *Psychological Reports, 91,* 769-779. doi:10.2466/PR0.91.7. 769-779

McCray, C. R., & Beachum, F. D. (2011). Culturally relevant leadership for the enhancement of teaching and learning in urban schools. In T. Townsend & J. MacBeath (Eds.), *International handbook of leadership for learning* (pp. 487-501). New York: Springer.

McLeod, S. (2011). Are we irrelevant to the digital, global world in which we now live? *University Council for Educational Administration Review, 52,* 1-5. Retrieved from http://ucea.org/storage/review/Summer2011Review_lowres.pdf

McLeod, J. D., & Shanahan, M. J. (1993). Poverty, parenting, and children's mental health. *American Sociological Review, 58,* 351-366. Retrieved from http://www/jstor.org/stable/2095905

McMillan, J. H. (2012). *Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer.* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Meier, D. (2002). *The power of their ideas.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Militello, M. (2011). Learning to play a player piano. *University Council for Educational Administration Review, 52,* 15-17.

Milner, H. R. (2006). But good intentions are not enough. In J. Landsman & C. W. Lewis (Eds.), *White teachers/diverse classrooms* (pp. 79-90). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Payne, R. K. (2005). *A framework for understanding poverty.* Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.

Peterson, G. W., Stivers, M. E., & Peters, D. F. (1986). Family versus nonfamily significant others for the career decisions of low-income youth. *Family Relations, 35,* 417-424.

Phipps, B. J. (1995). Career dreams of preadolescent students. *Journal of Career Development, 22,* 19-32. doi: 10.1177/089484539502200102

Porfeli, E. J., Hartung, P. J., & Vondracek, F. W. (2008). Children's vocational development: A research rationale. *The Career Development Quarterly, 57,* 25-37. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-0045.2008.tb00163x

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology, 24,* 1-24. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.1

Ragucci, D. M., & Gulbro, R. D. (2004). Bethlehem steel: Downfall of a giant. *Proceedings of the International Academy for Case Studies, 11,* 85-93. Retrieved from http://www.sbaer.uca.edu/research/allied/2004/casestudy/pdf/26.pdf

Rankin, B. H., & Quane, J. M. (2000). Neighborhood poverty and the social isolation of inner-city African American families. *Social Forces, 79,* 139-164. doi: 10.2307/2675567

Reeves, D. B. (2009). *Leading change in your school.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Publications.

Riley, R. W., & Coleman, A. L. (2011). Turning the page on the equity debate in education. *American Educator, 35,* 26-30. Retrieved from http://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/spring2011/Riley.pdf

Rosenbaum, J. E., Reynolds, L., & Deluca, S. (2002). How do places matter? The geography of opportunity, self-efficacy and a look inside the black box of residential mobility. *Housing Studies, 17,* 71-82. doi: 10.1080/0267303012010590 1

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Inc.

Schultheiss, D. E. P. (2005). Elementary career intervention programs: Social action initiatives. *Journal of Career Development, 31,* 185-194. doi: 10.1177/089484530503100303

Schultheiss, D. E. P., Palma, T. V., & Manzi, A. J. (2005). Career development in middle childhood: A qualitative inquiry. *The Career Development Quarterly, 53,* 246-262. doi; 10.1002/j.2161-0045.2005.tb00994.x

Schultheiss, D. E. P., & Stead, G. (2013). Childhood career development scale. Retrieved from https://imp6.cc.lehigh.edu/horde/imp/view.php?ctype=application/…

Seligman, L., & Weinstock, L. (1991). The career development of 10 year olds. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 25,* 172-182.

Sellers, N., Satcher, J., & Comas, R. (1999). Children's occupational aspirations: Comparisons by gender, gender role identity, and socioeconomic status. *Professional School*

Counseling, 2, 313-317. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/213279779/fulltestPDF?accountid=12536#

Senge, P., Cambron-McCabe, N., Lucas, T., Smith, B., Dutton, J., & Kleiner, A. (2000). Fostering communities that learn. In P. Senge, N. Cambron-McCabe, T. Lucas, B. Smith, J. Dutton, & A. Kleiner (Eds.), *Schools that learn* (pp. 459-465). New York: Doubleday.

Sheehan, K., & Rall, K. (2011). Rediscovering hope: Building school cultures of hope for children of poverty. *The Phi Delta Kappan, 93,* 44-47.

Super, D. E. (1980). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 16,* 282-298. doi: 10.1016/0001-8791(80)90056-1

Taft, C. (2013). Wishing upon a star: Christmas tourism and urban renewal in Bethlehem, PA. *Journal of Planning History, 12,* 154-178. doi: 10.1177/1538513212471007

Theoharis, G. (2009). *The school leaders of our children.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Tracey, T. J. G. (2002). Development of interests and competency beliefs: A 1-year longitudinal study of fifth- to eighth-grade students using the ICA-R and structural equation modeling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 49,* 148-163. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.49.2.148

Tracey, T. J. G., & Ward, C. C. (1998). The structure of children's interests and competence perceptions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 45,* 290-303. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.45.3.290

Trice, A. D., & Hughes, M. A. (1995). The origins of children's career aspirations: IV. Testing hypotheses from four theories. *Career Development Quarterly, 43,* 307-322. doi: 10.1002/j2161-0045.1995.tb00436.x

U.S. Census Bureau. (2001). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2001* (121st ed.).

Washington, DC: Author.

Vandsburger, E., Harrigan, M., & Biggerstaff, M. (2008). In spite of all, we make it: Themes of stress and resiliency as told by women in families living in poverty. *Journal of Family Social Work, 11,* 17-35. doi: 10.1080/10522150802007303

Wagmiller, R. L., Lennon, M. C, Kuang, L., Alberti, P. M., & Aber, J. L. (2006). The dynamics of economic disadvantage and children's life chances. *American Sociological Review, 71,* 847-866. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472430

Wahl, K. H., & Blackhurst, A. (2000). Factors affecting the occupational and educational aspirations of children and adolescents. *Professional School Counseling, 3,* 367-374.

Wallen, N. E. & Fraenkel, J. R. (2001). *Educational research: A guide to the process.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Watson, M., & McMahon, M. (2005). Children's career development: A research review from a learning perspective. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 67,* 119-132. doi: 10.1016/j. jvb.2004.08.011

Watson, M., & McMahon, M. (2008). Children's career development: Metaphorical images of theory, research, and practice. *The Career Development Quarterly, 57,* 75-83. doi: 10. 1002/j.2161-0045.2008.tb00167x

Weinger, S. (1998). Children living in poverty: Their perception of career opportunities. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 79,* 320-330. doi: 10.1606/1044-3894.993

Weinger, S. (2000). Opportunities for career success: Views of poor and middle-class children. *Children and Youth Services Review, 22,* 13-35. doi: 10.1016/S0190-7409(99)00071-7

Weiser, D. A., & Riggio, H. R. (2010). Family background and academic achievement: Does self-efficacy mediate outcomes? *Social Psychology Education, 13,* 367-383. doi: 10.1007/s11218-010-9115-1

Williams-Boyd, P. (2010). Breaking bonds, actualizing possibility: Schools as community hubs of social justice. *Forum on Public Policy, 26,* 1-22. Retrieved from http://forumonpublic policy.com/vol2010.no4/archive.vol2010.no4/williams.boyd.pdf

Wilson, W. J. (2012). *The truly disadvantaged.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Wolf, J. P. (2007). Sociological theories of poverty in urban America. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 16,* 41-56. doi: 10.1300/J137v16n01_04

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research.* Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

York-Barr, J., Sommers, W. A., Ghere, G. S., & Montie, J. (2006). *Reflective practice to improve schools.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8,* 69-91. doi: 10.1080/ 1361332052000341006

Appendix A

SCORING KEY: CHILDHOOD CAREER DEVELOPMENT SCALE

Donna E. Palladino Schultheiss
Department of Counseling, Administration, Supervision, and Adult Learning
Cleveland State University
2121 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115
d.schultheiss@csuohio.edu

And

Graham B. Stead
Department of Psychology
University of Port Elizabeth – Vista Camput
Pvt. Bag X613, Port Elizabeth 6000
South Africa
Graham.Stead@nmmu.ac.za

Instructions: The items are scored on a Likert-type scale as follows: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Unsure = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1. There are NO reversed scored items. For each scale, add the scores for each item.

Scales	**Items**
Information (6):	1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.
Curiosity/Exploration (7):	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
Interests (6):	14, 15, 16, 17, 26, 41.
LOC (7):	18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.
Key Figures (5):	25, 27, 28, 29, 30.
Time Perspective (4):	31, 33, 34, 52.
Planning (11):	32, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51.
Self-Concept (6):	35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40.

CHILDHOOD CAREER DEVELOPMENT SCALE (U.S. VERSION)

Donna E. Schultheiss, Ph. D., and Graham B. Stead, Ph. D.

INSTRUCTIONS

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE

There are 52 questions on this questionnaire. Please answer **ALL** of them. Answer the questions by Circling one of the responses on the right hand side of the page. You may circle only **ONE** response.

The abbreviations are explained below.

SA - STRONGLY AGREE (I AGREE A LOT)
A - AGREE
U - UNCERTAIN (I AM NOT SURE)
D - DISAGREE
SD - STRONGLY DISAGREE (I DO NOT AGREE AT ALL).

Please do the following examples:

a. I like chocolate ice-cream	SA	A	U	D	SD
b. I like spinach	SA	A	U	D	SD
c. It will rain two weeks from today	SA	A	U	D	SD

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

SA = Stongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Uncertain; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

1.	I wonder about different jobs	SA	A	U	D	SD
2.	I wonder about the things I learn in school	SA	A	U	D	SD
3.	I am curious about the things I learn in school	SA	A	U	D	SD
4.	My family says that I am curious about things	SA	A	U	D	SD
5.	My friends say that I am a curious person	SA	A	U	D	SD
6.	I like to explore my world by visiting libraries	SA	A	U	D	SD
7.	I read books to learn new things	SA	A	U	D	SD
8.	I try to find out more about what I learn at school	SA	A	U	D	SD
9.	I want to get more information about jobs	SA	A	U	D	SD
10.	It is important for me to get information about jobs	SA	A	U	D	SD
11.	A person needs information about different jobs in order to choose a job	SA	A	U	D	SD
12.	I need more information to choose my favorite job	SA	A	U	D	SD
13.	I would like more information on the types of jobs there are where I live	SA	A	U	D	SD
14.	I know what games I like to play	SA	A	U	D	SD
15.	I know what subjects I like in school	SA	A	U	D	SD
16.	I know what kinds of books I like to read	SA	A	U	D	SD
17.	I know what sports I like to play	SA	A	U	D	SD
18.	I have control over how well I do on my schoolwork	SA	A	U	D	SD
19.	I have control over the things I do	SA	A	U	D	SD
20.	I have control over how much I study for tests	SA	A	U	D	SD

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Uncertain; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

21.	I have control over how I act with my friends	SA	A	U	D	SD
22.	I have control over what I say to people	SA	A	U	D	SD
23.	I have control over how hard I work	SA	A	U	D	SD
24.	I have control over how much effort I put into my work	SA	A	U	D	SD
25.	I want to do the same job as someone I look up to	SA	A	U	D	SD
26.	I know people who are important to me	SA	A	U	D	SD
27.	I know people who I want to be like	SA	A	U	D	SD
28.	I know people who have my favorite job	SA	A	U	D	SD
29.	I know people who have very interesting jobs	SA	A	U	D	SD
30.	I know people I look up to	SA	A	U	D	SD
31.	I think about the job I might have after I finish school	SA	A	U	D	SD
32.	Practicing now will help me to do things better in the future	SA	A	U	D	SD
33.	I think a lot about what I will be when I grow up	SA	A	U	D	SD
34.	I think about where I will work when I'm grown up	SA	A	U	D	SD
35.	I know what kind of friend I am	SA	A	U	D	SD
36.	I know what type of person I am	SA	A	U	D	SD
37.	I know what I am like	SA	A	U	D	SD
38.	I know what kind of worker I am	SA	A	U	D	SD
39.	I know what kind of student I am	SA	A	U	D	SD
40.	I know what I am like as a person	SA	A	U	D	SD

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Uncertain; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

41.	I know what I am good at	SA	A	U	D	SD
42.	It is important to plan for the future	SA	A	U	D	
43.	It is important for me to plan things out before I do them	SA	A	U	D	SD
44.	It is important for me to have a plan when I do a project	SA	A	U	D	SD
45.	It is important for me to plan how I will get my work done	SA	A	U	D	SD
46.	It is important for me to plan what I will do before I do it	SA	A	U	D	SD
47.	It is important for me to plan when I do school projects	SA	A	U	D	SD
48.	I know planning is important	SA	A	U	D	SD
49.	It is important to plan out my work	SA	A	U	D	SD
50.	It is important to have a plan when I do things	SA	A	U	D	SD
51.	It is important to plan now for my future job	SA	A	U	D	SD
52.	It is important to plan now for what I will be when I grow up	SA	A	U	D	SD

Please check that you have answered all of the items.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

1. Do you ever think about the future and what you will do when you grow up?

   Follow-up questions:

   - If yes, what are your thoughts?
   - If no, why don't you?

2. Do you ever talk to other people about your future?

   Follow-up questions:

   - If yes, who do you talk to and why that person?
   - If no, who would you talk to?

3. Do you think you know a lot about different jobs/careers?

   Follow-up questions:

   - Can you share some things you know?
   - How could you get more information about jobs/careers?

4. What job/career do you think you would like to have?

   Follow-up questions:

   - Why do you think you would like that job/career?
   - How much schooling do you think you need for that job?
   - Do you plan to get that training/education?

5. Have you ever talked about different jobs/careers in school?

   Follow-up questions:

   - If yes, can you share something you learned?
   - If no, what would you like to learn about?

6. What kind of job do you think you would be good at?

   Follow-up questions:

   - Why do you think so?
   - Do you have any experience/skills related to this job?

7. What kind of job to you really think you will have?

   Follow-up questions:

   - Why do you think so?
   - Do you think that would make you happy? Why/why not?

Appendix C

Individual Interview Questions

1. Tell me about what you want to be when you grow up?

   Follow-up questions:

   - Why are you interested in that job/career?
   - When did you decide that you wanted to have that job/career?

2. Tell me about people you have spoken to or will speak to about your future career?

   Follow-up questions:

   - Do you think they can give you the job/career information you need? Why/why not?
   - Will other people help you decide what you want to be? Who would that be?

3. Tell me what you think you will have to do to get that job/career?

   Follow-up questions:

   - What do you know about college or training after high school?
   - What are your plans for college or training?
   - Do you think you will be successful in college or further training? Why/why not?

4. How well are you doing in school?

   Follow-up questions:

   - Do you think what you are learning in school helps you to understand about jobs/careers? Why/why not?
   - Do you think you grades have anything to do with getting a job? How?

5. Do you think you will be able to get the job/career you want? Why/why not?

   Follow-up questions:

- What does this depend on?
- Are you in control of whether or not you get the job/career you want?
- What factors help determine/decide the job/career you will have?

6. What do you think you will need to get the job/career you want?

   Follow-up questions:

   - Do you or your family have these things?
   - Can you or your family get these things?

7. Are you hopeful that you will have a successful future?

   Follow-up questions:

   - Do you believe you can achieve your goals?
   - Do you believe you will have the job/career you want?
   - Do you believe you will live where you want?
   - Do you believe you will be able to buy the things you need/want?

Appendix D

Pre-Established Codebook, September, 2013

Code	Description	Example
Vision for the future	Student discusses his/her personal vision for the future.	
Communication with others	Student discusses talking to other people about his/her future.	
Significant others	Student refers to important people in his/her life.	
Plans for the future	Student comments about his/her personal plans for the future.	
Future plans and low SES	Student makes reference to his/her economic disadvantage when discussing future plans.	
Interest in jobs/careers	Student discusses his/her personal job/career interests.	
Job/career interests and low SES	Student makes reference to his/her economic disadvantage when discussing job/career interests.	
Knowledge about jobs/careers	Student discusses his/her background knowledge of jobs/careers.	
Information about jobs/careers	Student discusses how he/she can get information about jobs/careers.	
Job/career preferences	Student discusses his/her personal choices for future jobs/careers.	
Reasons for preferences	Student discusses why he/she would like those jobs/careers.	
Education/training needed	Student discusses how much education he/she would need to attain those jobs/ careers.	
Knowledge of college/training	Student discusses his/her knowledge of what college is and how to get there or what other training is available.	
Knowledge of career paths	Student discusses steps he/she needs to take to develop a career.	
Education/training plans	Student discusses educational/training plans he/she may hold for the future.	
Education/training and low SES	Student makes reference to his/her economic disadvantage when discussing future education.	
Success in college/training	Student discusses his/her confidence in successfully completing college/training.	

Career development in school	Student discusses whether career development is a topic ever discussed/ studied in school.
Desire to learn	Student expresses a desire to learn more about jobs/careers in school.
Job-related experience	Student discusses experience performing job-related tasks/duties.
Job-related skills	Student discusses job-related skills he/she has acquired.
Ability to get a job	Student discusses his/her confidence in successfully acquiring a job.
Ability to do a job	Student discusses his/her confidence in successfully performing job tasks.
Decisions about jobs/careers	Student discusses how he/she will make decisions related to jobs/career selection.
Factors affecting decisions	Student discusses factors that affect decision making regarding jobs/careers.
Decision-making and low SES	Student makes reference to his/her economic disadvantage when discussing decision-making related to jobs/careers.
Belief in career success	Student discusses his/her belief in future career success.
Job/career success and low SES	Student makes reference to his/her economic disadvantage when discussing future career success.
Current academic status	Student discusses his/her current grades in school.
Current academic goals	Student discusses his/her academic goals for the current school year.
Future academic goals	Student discusses his/her academic goals beyond elementary school.
Academic goals and low SES	Student makes reference to his/her economic disadvantage when discussing academic goals.
Belief in academic success	Student discusses his/her belief in future academic success.
School grades	Student discusses the role of school grades currently and in the future.
Grades and jobs/careers	Student discusses the relationship between academic grades and job/career attainment.
Belief in goal attainment	Student discusses his/her belief in attaining future goals.
Job-related financial security	Student discusses his/her belief that a future job/career will provide financial security.

Financial security and low SES	Student makes reference to his/her economic disadvantage when discussing future financial security.
Job/career related to celebrity	Student makes reference to a job involving celebrity in sports or entertainment.
Technology research	Student makes reference to using technology to find out about jobs/careers.
Hope for the future	Student expresses optimism about his/her future prosperity.
Hope and low SES	Student makes reference to his/her economic disadvantage when discussing hope for the future.
"You need to practice."	Student makes reference to having to practice job skills before attainment.
"I saw it on TV."	Student makes reference to seeing certain jobs/ professions on television.
"I change my mind."	Student makes reference to changing his/her mind about career aspirations.
"I think it's fun."	Student makes reference to liking a particular job because it seems enjoyable/entertaining.
Repeated responses	Student repeats the same response as another student.
Repeated career choice	Student repeats the same career choice as another student.

Appendix E

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS OF STUDENTS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOLLOWING STUDY:

Career Aspirations and Perceptions of Self-Efficacy of Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Students of Economic Disadvantage

Dear Parents:

I am inviting your children to share their ideas and interests about their career goals to better understand how I can help them prepare for the future. By learning more about your children's thoughts and feelings about jobs they hope to have as adults, I will be able to improve how we present Social Studies lessons about career exploration.

Your children's participation is voluntary. Please read all the information below, and feel free to ask any questions before you make a decision about your children's participation. If you decide to allow your children to take part in this project, I will ask you to sign this permission form. The children will also need to sign a form stating that they agree to participate.

The project is part of my doctoral studies at Lehigh University. I will explore children's career development with 3 measures:

1. Students in 4th and 5th grades will complete 2 surveys in class during the Social Studies lesson. Students will **NOT** put their names on these surveys. All the questions are related to career development.

2. Some students, selected randomly in each class, will participate in a group discussion. Each discussion session will take place during the Social Studies class for about 45 minutes. The children will talk about their understanding of different careers, their job interests, and their hopes/plans for their futures.

3. One boy and one girl chosen from each class will be interviewed to find out how much they know about jobs/careers and what they expect to be when they grow up. These interviews will also take place in school during the Social Studies lesson for 45 minutes.

The group discussions and interviews will be audiotaped. I will not share any information collected during these sessions that will identify your children. The final report that I prepare after the project is finished will **NOT** include any information that will make it possible to identify your children.

All the information I collect from the surveys, discussion groups, and interviews will be stored in a secure place and I will be the only person who will have access to the information. All the information will be destroyed after the final report is completed.

There are no risks to having your children participate in this study. This project will give them a chance to express their interests and share ideas about their career development. And, their participation will help me to understand your children's vision for their future in the workplace.

As a thank you for their participation, children selected for group discussions will receive a $5 gift card, and children selected for interviews will receive a $10 gift card once these sessions are completed.

Your children's participation in this project is voluntary. Your decision to allow them to participate or not will not affect their current or future academic grades or relations with any personnel at Marvine Elementary School or Lehigh University. If your children participate, they may refuse to answer any questions or quit the project at any time.

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **please** contact me at 610-865-0012 or khg207@lehigh.edu. You may also contact my project advisor, Dr. Floyd Beachum at Lehigh University (610) 758-5955 or through email, fdb209@lehigh.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone besides me, **please** contact Susan Disidore or Troy Boni at (610) 758-3021 (email: inors@lehigh.edu) of Lehigh University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

Thank you for considering my invitation for your children's participation.

Sincerely,

Karen Gomez
Principal
Marvine Elementary School

You will receive a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I understand that by signing I agree to have my child participate in this project about children's career development. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered. I consent to having my child participate in the study and to be audio-taped.

Name (print): _____ Date:_____

Signature: _____ Date:_____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date:_____

Appendix F

CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PADRES DE LOS ESTUDIANTES INVITADOS A

PARTICIPAR EN EL SIGUIENTE PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACION:

Intereses de Carreras y Creencia en Abilidades Propias de Estudiantes de Desventaja Económica de los Grados Cuatro y Cinco

Estimados Padres:

Les invito a sus hijos a compartir sus ideas e intereses sobre sus metas sobre las carreras para entender mejor cómo puedo ayudarles a preparar para sus futuros. Al aprender más sobre los pensamientos y sentimientos de sus hijos sobre los trabajos que esperan tener como adultos, podré mejorar cómo presentamos las lecciones de Estudios Sociales sobre las carreras.

La participación de sus hijos es voluntaria. Por favor, lean toda la informacón abajo y hagan todas las preguntas que quieran antes de decidir sobre la participación de sus hijos. Si deciden permitir que sus hijos participan en este proyecto, les pediré que firmen este permiso. Sus hijos también tendrán que firmar un documento indicando que están de acuerdo con participar.

El proyecto forma parte de mis estudios doctorales en la Universidad de Lehigh. Voy a explorar el desarrollo de las carreras de los niños a través de 3 medidas:

1. Los estudiantes de los grados 4 y 5 van a completar 2 encuestas en clase durante la lección de Estudios Sociales. Los estudiantes **NO** pondrán sus nombres en estas encuestas. Todas las preguntas se relacionan con el desarrollo de las carreras.

2. Algunos de los estudiantes, seleccionados al azar de cada clase, participarán en charlas de grupo. Cada sesión de charla tendrá lugar durante la clase de Estudios Sociales por 45 minutos. Los niños hablarán sobre su entendimiento de distintas carreras, sus trabajos de interés, y sus esperanzas/planes para sus futuros.

3. Voy a entrevistar a un niño y una niña de cada clase para averiguar lo que saben sobre los trabajos/carreras y lo que esperan ser cuando crezcan. Estas entrevistas tendrán lugar durante la lección de Estudios Sociales por 45 minutos.

Voy a grabar las charlas en grupo y las entrevistas. No voy a compartir ninguna información recogida durante estas sesiones que pueda identificar a sus hijos. El informe final que preparo después de terminar el proyecto **NO** va a incluir ninguna información que hará possible identificar a sus hijos.

Toda la información que recojo de las encuestas, charlas en grupo, y entrevistas se guardará en un lugar seguro, y yo seré la única persona con acceso a esta información. Toda la información estará destruída después de terminar el informe final.

No hay riesgos en cuanto a la participación de sus hijos. El proyecto les dará la oportunidad de expresar sus intereses y compartir sus ideas sobre el desarrollo de las carreras. Su participación me ayudará a comprender la visión que sus hijos tienen para sus futuros en el trabajo.

Para darles gracias por su participación, los niños seleccionados para las charlas en grupo recibirán una tarjeta regalo con valor de $5, y los niños seleccionados para las entrevistas recibirán una tarjeta regalo con valor de $10 después de terminar con las sesiones.

La participación de sus hijos en este proyecto es voluntaria. Su decisión de permitirles participar o no, no afectará sus notas académicas ni sus relaciones actuales o en el futuro con las personas que trabajan en la Escuela Elemental Marvine o en la Universidad de Lehigh. Si sus hijos participan, podrán negarse a contestar a cualquier pregunta o dejar el proyecto en cualquier momento.

Pueden hacer cualquier pregunta ahora. Si tienen alguna pregunta más tarde, **por favor**, pónganse en contacto conmigo al (610-865-0012) o khg207@lehigh.edu. También pueden ponerse en contacto con el supervisor del proyecto Dr. Floyd Beachum en la Universidad de Lehigh al (610) 758-5955, o a través del correo electrónico fdb209@lehigh.edu.

Si tienen alguna pregunta o preocupación referente al estudio y quieren hablar con alguién no conectado con el proyecto, **por favor**, pónganse en contacto con Susan Disidore o Troy Boni al (610) 758-3021 (correo electrónico: inors@lehigh.edu) de la Universidad de Lehigh, Oficina de Investigaciones y Programas Patrocinados. Se mantendrá todos los documentos y toda comunicación en confianza.

Gracias por considerar mi invitación para la participación de sus hijos.

Atentamente,

Sra. Gomez
Principal
Escuela Elemental Marvine

Usted recibirá una copia de esta información para mantener en sus archivos.

Afirmación de Consentimiento

He leído la información arriba. He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y que me contestan a mis preguntas. Doy mi consentimiento para que mi hijo/a participa en este estudio y para grabar su voz.

Firma: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma de la Investigadora: _____ Fecha: _____

Appendix G

ASSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN

THE FOLLOWING STUDY:

Career Aspirations and Perceptions of Self-Efficacy of Fourth- and Fifth-Grade

Students of Economic Disadvantage

Dear Students:

You are invited to participate in a project I am working on about children's career development. I want to find out what ideas you have and what are your feelings regarding jobs/careers for your future. I will be asking you questions about what you know about different jobs and careers, your goals, and what you hope to be when you are grown up.

If you agree to participate, I will not share any of your information or answers with anyone, and you will not put your name on any papers. I will be the only person to look at your answers, and there is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions. This is not a test, and your participation does not affect your grades. I want to find out what you think, understand, and believe about your future careers.

You may ask questions or leave the project at any time. Your participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below. Thank you for helping me with my project.

Mrs. Gomez
Principal

Statement of Assent

I have read the information above. I understand that by signing I agree to participate in this project about career development. I know I can ask questions or leave the project at any time. I understand that by signing I agree to participate in this project about career development and to be audio-taped.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H

CONSENTIMIENTO DE LOS ESTUDIANTES INVITADOS A PARTICIPAR

EN EL SIGUIENTE PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACION:

Intereses de Carreras y Creencia en Abilidades Propias de Estudiantes de Desventaja Económica

de los Grados Cuatro y Cinco

Estimados Estudiantes:

Les invito a participar en un proyecto que se trata del desarrollo de las carreras de los niños. Hago este estudio para averiguar qué ideas ustedes tienen y cuáles son sus sentimientos sobre los trabajos/las carreras para su futuro. Les voy a preguntar sobre lo que ya saben de distintos trabajos y carreras, sus metas, y qué quieren ser cuando sean adultos.

Si están de acuerdo con participar, no voy a compartir ninguna información ni ninguna de sus respuestas con nadie, y ustedes no van a poner su nombre en ningún papel. Yo soy la única persona que va a mirar sus respuestas, y no hay ninguna respuesta correcta or incorrecta. Esto no es un examen, y su participación no afectará a sus notas académicas. Solamente quiero averiguar lo que piensan, comprenden, y creen sobre sus carreras futuras.

Pueden hacer preguntas o dejar el proyecto en cualquier momento. Su participación es voluntaria. Si están de acuerdo con participar, por favor firmen sus nombres abajo. Gracias por ayudarme con mi proyecto.

Sra. Gomez
Principal

Afirmación de Consentimiento

He leído la información arriba. Entiendo que al firmar estoy de acuerto con participar en este proyecto sobre el desarrollo de las carreras y con grabar mi voz. Sé que puedo hacer preguntas o dejar el proyecto en cualquier momento.

Nombre: _____ Fecha: _____

Nombre de la Investigadora: _____ Fecha: _____

Appendix I

VITA

Karen Gomez

5665 Wedge Lane

Allentown, PA 18106

e-mail: karengomez3@yahoo.com

PERSONAL DATA

Birthplace:	Newark, NJ
Birth date:	January 17, 1953
Marital Status:	Widowed; three children ages 27, 29, and 35; one grandson age 5

EDUCATION

University of Salamanca: Salamanca, Spain

Liberal Arts studies of Spanish culture and language 1971 – 1974

Cedar Crest College: Allentown, PA

B.A. Spanish Language (Summa Cum Laude) 1975

Cedar Crest College: Allentown, PA

Teaching Certification, Spanish K-12 1981

Kutztown University: Kutztown, PA

M. Ed. Counseling in Higher Education 1988

DeSales University: Center Valley, PA

English as a Second Language (ESL) certification 2005

East Stroudsburg University: East Stroudsburg, PA

M. Ed. Education Administration	2007
Principal Certification	2007

Lehigh University: Bethlehem, PA

Doctoral Program, Education Leadership	2008 – 2014

OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND

Academia Loyola: Valladolid, Spain

ESL Teacher	1975 – 1977

University of Malaga (extension): Spanish Morocco

ESL Teacher	1978

Hispanic American Organization: Allentown, PA

GED/ESL Teacher	1981 – 1983

Bethlehem Area School District: Bethlehem, PA

Elementary ESL Teacher – Fountain Hill E.S.	1993 – 2007
Assistant Principal – Donegan E.S.	2007
Principal – Marvine E.S.	2008 - present