Anticipatory Organizational Socialization:

Graduating College Students' Messages, Information-Seeking,

Career Conceptualizations, and Expectations

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Communication Studies
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Anticipatory Organizational Socialization:

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Career Conceptualizations, and Expectations

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Date approved: _____

Acknowledgements

I would not have started, let alone finished, this dissertation if it were not for my committee of wonderful, talented, ridiculously intelligent, caring professors. I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr. Tracy Russo, my advisor, my committee chair, and my dear friend. It was the first class that I took with Dr. Russo over seven years ago that began this journey. Thank you for your passion for teaching, your kindness, your wit, your patience, your willingness to challenge me, and your friendship. I am so grateful that I signed up for your graduate class seven years ago. You are truly one of the great teachers.

Additionally, my heartfelt gratitude goes out to Dr. Suzy D'Enbeau and Dr. Alesia Woszidlo. Thank you for managing to be both my mentor and my friend. Your support, encouragement, laughter, expertise, and advice helped me complete my dissertation and allowed me to land a great job in a tough job market. You are remarkable, talented, humble, caring scholars. Thank you for all your help. I could not have done it without you.

A special thank you also goes out to Dr. Debbie Ford. Thank you for helping me to make the adjustment into graduate school, modeling compassionate teaching, and hiring me to be Assistant Basic Course Director. You have changed my life. Also, a special thank you goes to Dr. Misty Schieberle for coming to my rescue, and always being a true friend. I am so lucky to be surrounded by so many smart, powerful, amazing women.

Finally, I would like to thank all my family for their unwavering support and love throughout this process. Specifically, thank you Grandpa Stan Carver, for inspiring me to dive in and to live every day to the fullest. Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents, Chris and Connie Carver, who are remarkable teachers. Thank you for being an amazing source of support throughout this journey. I could not have asked for better parents. Thank you for keeping the faith and for demonstrating that love never fails.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Chris and Connie Carver,
who encouraged me to follow my passion.

Abstract

This qualitative study explored how traditional, graduating college students at a Midwestern public university described their anticipatory socialization processes regarding post-collegiate, organizational work. Specifically, the current study investigated participant reports of: 1) messages received; 2) information-seeking behaviors and tactics regarding work; 3) conceptualizations of the term *career* and the colloquialism *a real job*; and, 4) expectations about work in the current economic climate. Findings indicated that all participants communicated the message that the priority for post-collegiate work is the intrinsic value of work that is enjoyable, fun, and/or that work should be something they liked, loved, or were passionate about. This overarching concept of work was reported as the most prevalent message, work value, and work expectation in the study. In terms of information seeking, over half of the participants reported that their primary sources of information about work were college classes and the Internet. Participants stated that they expected to find a professional job soon after graduation, although this expectation remained unmet for the majority of participants. They attributed their unemployment largely to the economic downturn. Furthermore, their expectations for work and career as enjoyable or something that they liked or loved were also described as unmet. In addition, while participants reported anticipatory organizational socialization processes as teaching them about professional work, as suggested by previous research, they also unexpectedly framed these processes as contributing towards their own conclusions of what they did NOT want regarding professional work and career. Moreover, participant accounts reflect a gap between conflicting tacit and explicit socialization messages and expectations. The participants' expectation for work they love aligns with generational descriptions in the popular press that suggest that Millennials lack realistic work expectations and are having difficulty transitioning to work. Previous research has suggested that unmet expectations lead to rocky transitions and are detrimental to both the individuals themselves and the organizations they join (Greenhaus, Seidel, & Marinis, 1983; Wanous, Poland, Remack, & Davis, 1992; Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1991). This study contributes to scholarship that investigates anticipatory organizational socialization processes and seeks to further understand college graduates' transition from college to work.

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Chapter One

The Anticipatory Organizational Socialization of Graduating College Students

The majority of Americans believe that the most critical role of a college education is to prepare students for their future careers (Selingo, 2003). Contemporary college students share this belief, with 83 percent of college students in a 2008 national poll reporting that the most important purpose of a college education is career preparation (The College Board & Art and Science Group, 2008). A university degree is often expected to be an automatic ticket to professional employment, and many students are discouraged to find that this is not the case (Graham & McKenzie, 1995). The bulk of college students still expect to transition into their career after graduation. A 2009 study conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at the Higher Educational Research Institute at UCLA (2010) reported that 64.1 percent of graduating college seniors in 2009 expected to work a professional, full time job after graduation and 28.9 percent expected to attend graduate or professional school first and then begin their careers (Hurtado, Pryor, Tran, DeAngelo, & Blake, 2010). However, the anticipated linear transition from college to career is an outdated and unrealistic expectation for many current college graduates.

College graduates today face a troubled economy, further complicated by a highly competitive job market. The economic downturn has affected the opportunities of recent college graduates by reducing the number of jobs available and by lowering starting salaries. The United States economic recession since 2007 has been one of the longest since the Great Depression in the 1930s (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2010). One effect of the recession has been that employers are choosing to reduce the number of recent college graduates hired. In 2009 only 19.7 percent of college seniors had secured a job for after graduation, a significant drop from 2007 when more than 50 percent of college seniors had a job in hand at graduation (National Association of Colleges and Employers Student Survey, 2009). Additionally, college graduates are being hedged out of jobs by more experienced workers, and with unemployment rates at 10 percent, the resulting college hire rates have dropped by 22 percent (National Association of Colleges and Employers Spring Report, 2009). Clearly, the opportunity for a traditional career path is simply unavailable for many graduating college students.

This is especially problematic considering the rising enrollments of universities. For more and more young Americans, a critical step in the career process is obtaining a college degree.

Most American adolescents today view obtaining a college degree as a necessity and expect to attend college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006; De Bard, 2004). In fact, more students than ever are attending and graduating from college; 19.6 million students were enrolled in college in 2009 and one and a half million graduated with a bachelor's degree (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). In fact, over half of Americans view obtaining a bachelor's degree as necessary for achieving a successful career (Immerwahr, Johnson, Gasbarra, Ott, & Rochkind, 2009). Additionally, scholars Rosenbaum (2001), Schneider and Stevenson (1999), and Goyette (2008) indicate that a four-year college degree has been normalized and that society and schools promote a "college for all" mentality. Three main reasons have been used to explain the rise in the normalization of a bachelor's degree: a) many parents of the students have achieved college degrees and their expectations have risen, b) students career ambitions have risen and they are more likely to select careers that require a degree, and c) students view obtaining a bachelor's degree as part of the life course of young Americans (Goyette, 2008). The National Educational Longitudinal Study conducted in 1980, 1990, and 2002 found that students' expectations of higher education have risen rapidly and continue to do so. However, a college degree does not guarantee a smooth path to a career today.

The transition from college to career is an important, and often challenging, process (Holton, 2001; Polach, 2004). Many students may have difficulty negotiating this transition successfully; an increasing number are reporting feelings of depression and loss, or stress and anxiety as college graduation approaches (Wood, 2004; Perrone & Vickers, 2003). The shift from the structured environment of college to the more ambiguous environment of career is often difficult and frustrating for recent graduates (Graham & McKenzie,1995; Hettich, 2000; Holton, 1998). These graduates may feel paralyzed and have difficulty negotiating their role changes (Graham & McKenzie, 1995; Wood, 2004). Increases in stress and difficulty making a transition may be attributed to unrealistic expectations.

Recent college graduates have been reported to have unrealistic expectations about their careers, the professional workplace, and their roles (Alsop, 2008; NACE 2009 Student Survey; Perrone & Vickers, 2003). Before the economic downturn, many college students believed that since they had invested time, money and energy into obtaining a college degree, they should receive a return on their investment and thus had high expectations for their careers (Wood,

2004). This generation of students, in particular, has been accused of feeling entitled because of this investment and has been reported to have unusually high expectations about careers (Alsop, 2008). Inflated expectations, when not met, may lead to negative ramifications, including greater stress and difficulty in the transition experience (Perrone & Vickers, 2003). Unmet expectations experienced in organizations lead to higher levels of absenteeism, intentions to quit, and turnover (Wanous Poland, Remack, & Davis, 1992; Porter & Steers, 1973). The ramifications for organizational may be considerable. Turnover costs are estimated from a few thousand dollars to more than twice the person's salary, depending upon the content of the job, the industry and the availability of replacements (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). Unmet expectations may affect individuals on an interpersonal level with negative spillover effects from the stress of giving up known routines and interpersonal connections by leaving a job and can adversely affect home life (Boswell, Boudreau & Tichy, 2005).

Expectations about career are first learned through anticipatory socialization processes. Socialization involves the processes by which "people selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills, and knowledge—in short the culture— current in groups to which they are, or seek to become, a member" (Merton, Reader, & Kendall, 1957, p. 287). Scholars often employ stage models to investigate and describe how socialization processes unfold. Specifically, stage models often illustrate the unfolding through three phases: (1) an anticipatory socialization phase that occurs before an individual enters the working world, (2) an entry or encounter stage that occurs when an individual obtains a job and begins working in an organization, and (3) a metamorphosis stage in which processes such as roles are changed and renegotiated over time (e.g., Feldman, 1976; Jablin, 1987). Jablin (2000) describes the process of learning about work and work life before an individual enters the workforce as anticipatory work socialization.

Typically, the work socialization of college students is categorized as "anticipatory." However, this discounts the influence of college students work experiences. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics News Release in April 2010, more than half of all college students are employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.nr0.htm). College students tended to categorize their unskilled labor (e.g., waiting tables) differently than career work because they did not consider their jobs to be "real" jobs (Clair, 1996). The concept of a

real job may or may not be perceived the same way by graduates, especially when "real jobs" are more difficult to obtain in the current economic environment.

Stage models of socialization are often utilized to highlight different levels in the relationship progression from unknown outsider to inside member. Much of the socialization research in organizational communication has focused on the encounter and metamorphosis stages, investigating organizational efforts to socialize newcomers. The current study adds to the literature by exploring the individual's perspective in what traditionally has been labeled as anticipatory career socialization. Feldman (1976) argues that expectation generation is the key activity in anticipatory socialization and that the realism and congruence of these expectations are critical outcomes for graduates. He describes realism as the extent to which an individual has a full and accurate picture of career life, and he describes congruence as the alignment between individuals and their jobs, organizations, occupations, or careers.

College students receive and share messages about their future jobs, occupations, and careers long before they enter their careers. Previous research indicates that these communicative interactions occur between college students and their family members, professors within their educational institutions, the media, their friends, and people at their part time employment or volunteer organizations (Feij, 1998; Jablin, 2000; Jablin & Krone, 1987). Through their messages, family members, peers, and professors function as agents of socialization refining students' meanings of careers. Messages are powerful, especially when they come from valued sources such as parents or professors. These messages become particularly salient for traditional college students when they are about to graduate because they are put in a position where they must take action based upon what they have learned. New graduates experience rapidly-changing environments, but the messages they are receiving may be outdated, and misaligned with the new career landscape.

A number of forces affect the careers of college graduates today. Besides the economic downturn and increasing competition due to rising number of people with degrees, college graduates are experiencing the materialization of a new life stage of emerging adulthood, and changes in career conceptualizations. At graduation, individuals must leave their roles as undergraduate students and are often expected to make a full transition into adulthood. Most expect this transition to involve a new role as a professional employee. However, a smooth, linear, transition from college to career is not the reality for many current graduates. Instead, they

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may experience a delayed transition to adulthood.

Both popular press and academic journals have noted that the path to adulthood, and more specifically the path from college to career, has changed. A *New York Times* article on June 13, 2010 reported that a new pattern is emerging for people ages 20 to 34 because they are taking longer to finish their education and establish themselves in their careers (Cohen, 2010). Scholar Jeffery Arnett (2007) describes this phenomenon as a theory of "emerging adulthood," in which he argues that individuals in their late teens through their mid twenties are experiencing "a new period of the life course in industrialized societies, with distinctive developmental characteristics" (p. 68). Arnett (2007) explains that this new phase did not exist in the 1950s but is common now in industrialized nations as young individuals delay adulthood milestones such as starting a career, and instead experiment and more gradually make key decisions. Arnett (2004) also claims that a contributor to this new life stage of emerging adulthood is that college graduates have extraordinarily high expectations for their careers because they want to find work that pays well but is also satisfying and enjoyable and that this is often mismatched with reality. Mortimer and Larson (2002) found that the experience of emerging adults was illustrated by unmet expectations and delays in decisions and events. Emerging adulthood theory stands in contrast to the expectation that college students upon graduation will immediately transition into their careers.

Beyond current economic problems and the new emerging adulthood stage is a deep structure change reflecting that the concepts surrounding what a career is and what a career path looks like are in flux. The conceptualizations of the term *career* have shifted as the very nature of work has encountered dramatic changes due to technology and the economy. Technology has altered the location of where works takes place by reducing the limitation of distance and modifying how work is done, including the pace of work, and the ease of access to information. Furthermore, with the significant changes in the national and global economy, corporations no longer provide the preconditions for stable, lifetime employment (Kanter, 1989; Osterman, 1996), and new models of organizing have emerged, often with flatter structures and the need to adapt to changing markets. Many scholars now argue that the concept of career has become boundaryless, meaning that the traditional boundaries of separate employers, markets, networks and information no longer exist (Helge Becker & Haunschild, 2003; Arthur 1994; Arthur & Rousseau; 1996). These changes affect college graduates as they encounter an increase in career

choices, paths, and ambiguity, along with uncertain economic and career prospects.

The word *career* traditionally suggests a long-term orientation to work, exemplified by phrases such as *career path* or *career ladder* and the corresponding idea of advancement or progression over time. Traditionally, careers have been considered beneficial to society because they provided "stable constructions that are supposed to endure and outlive the ups and downs of the contingencies of organizational life" (Luhmann, 2000, p. 102). The concept of a stable career was helpful to organizations because it allowed for replacements by enabling an organization to hire another individual who was expected to have a defined set of skills and knowledge (Luhmann, 2000). However, this traditional model of career is becoming more rare due to rapidly changing economic markets, consumer demands, and technological innovations. For many college graduates, the transition to a career no longer has a ladder or even a path.

Complicating matters further is the stereotype that this generation has unrealistic and idealistic expectations toward work and careers. An example of this idealism about the realities of career before entering work can be found in a study conducted by Rawlins, Indivik and Johnson (2008) that researched expectations college juniors and seniors had about their first professional job after graduation. Two expectations highlighted in this article were the expectation of an average starting salary of $50,569 (in 2006) and a non-negotiable expectation from 30 percent of the students that a 40-hour work week was the maximum amount of time they were willing to work. Of course, whether these expectations are inflated or not depends upon the student's degree and the industry. However, in a Fall 2008 Salary Survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, liberal arts graduates were offered an average of $36,715, which is far below the expected $50,569. Additionally, a non-negotiable 40 hour work week may not be an option, especially in the beginning of a career where it often is expected that new employees will work hard to prove their worth. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's (2006) report regarding work hours, Americans surpass all other countries except Korea and Mexico in the average of hours worked per year[1]. In fact, there are indicators that to "get ahead" and rise through the ranks, a 70-hour work week may be expected (Hewlett & Buck Luce, 2009).

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[1] http://jobs.stateuniversity.com/pages/17/American-Workplace-HOW-MUCH-TIME-DO-AMERICANS-SPEND-AT-WORK.html

The current generation of college graduates, individuals born from approximately 1980 to 1995, has been labeled as *Millennials*. Millennials have been described in the popular press, and in academic studies, as both the best generation and the worst generation. This cohort has been accused of being problematic due to their idealistic conceptualizations and expectations regarding what it means to work and have a career. Millennials have been stereotyped as selfish, lazy, and out of touch with reality, as in Cam Marston's (2007) book entitled "Motivating the 'What's in it for me' Workforce?" She suggests that this new generation has a great sense of self-entitlement and is not interested in paying their dues. High expectations that are not managed before career entry may lead to high frustration, and if the popular press is correct in that Millennials are quitters, this could be costly to everyone involved. For example, in an article on the *Dallas News* (Feb 24, 2008) entitled "Millennials need to get real about work" the first line reads "Millennials. Can't live with 'em. Can't live without em'." The article cites the principal of an advertising agency saying that the Millennials he hired lacked real-world grounding and could not handle responsibility, accountability, and setbacks. The worst generation characteristics claimed by authors are that Millennials are quitters, are self absorbed, change jobs frequently, delay growing up, are spoiled, demand to be treated as special, and are sheltered (Alsop, 2008). Other writers argue that this generation is also the "next great generation" as they are altruistic, confident, optimistic, technology savvy, diverse, can multi-task, and desire to be rich and famous (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The stereotypes inform the discussion about Millennial college graduates' expectations and transitions into careers.

Generational research suggests that it is important to look at generations because shared events and experiences become a part of individuals' identity; influence their worldview, their communication, and their sensemaking processes. Thus, they affect their expectations and behaviors, allowing each cohort to form an overall, collective peer culture. Researchers Eyerman and Turner (1998) state that a generation is a "cohort of persons passing through time who share a common habitus, hexis,[2] and culture, a function of which is to provide them with a collective memory that serves to integrate the cohort over a finite period of time" (p. 93). This framing of a generation highlights the idea of a shared cultural context. For example, the Millennial

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[2] The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2010) states: "Aristotle describes ethical virtue as a '*hexis*' ("state" "condition" "disposition")—a tendency or disposition, induced by our habits, to have appropriate feelings (1105b25-6)". Accessed at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on July 13, 2010.

generation has experienced defining events during their adolescence such as the September 11th attacks, the breakup of the Soviet Union, the spread of HIV and AIDS, the Oklahoma City bombing, the Columbine High School massacre, and the development of the Internet. These shared cultural contexts and their corresponding sets of behaviors (e.g., communicating with friends via texting) shape their collective understanding and aspirations. Life experiences tend to shape who individuals are and with whom they identify (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). This new generation of workers shares events such as the 9/11 Attacks, the Columbine High School Massacre, the proliferation of the Internet and other forms of instant communication technologies. These defining events influence shared perceptions and thus expectations of what the world is like, and specifically will influence what members of this generation think the world of work will be like.

Millennials' transition from college to career has been described as turbulent by the popular press due to these inflated expectations and their significantly different conceptualizations of work when compared to previous generations (e.g., Alsop, 2008; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Unrealistic expectations and misaligned conceptualizations may lead to negative ramifications such as increased turnover for the organizations students join (Remack & Davis, 1992), and increased personal dissatisfaction in students' personal lives (Boswell, Boudreau, & Tichy, 2005).

This issue is especially problematic due to the sheer size of the Millennial population; there are currently 80 million Millennials who make up approximately 10 percent of the United States workforce (United States Bureau of the Census, 2000). By 2018 Millennials are projected to make up 50 percent of the working-age population (United States Bureau of the Census, 2000). This generation will be the majority age cohort in the workforce, and the future success of the United States economy and workforce will be influenced by the ability of Millennials to successfully transition to professional work. Because turnover rates tend to be higher in new employees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006; Employment Policy Foundation, 2005), increased turnover costs in this large population could further depress an already weakened American economy. With so much at stake, it is important to further explore the career messages, conceptualizations and expectations of current, traditionally aged college students.

The transition from college to career is challenging for many graduating college students. Students have been socialized to professional work and careers via their communicative

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interactions with others and through their information seeking. The messages they have received have helped shape their conceptualizations and expectations regarding careers. Yet, these messages, conceptualizations and expectations may be based upon outdated career ideologies, especially when considering the influences of the economic downturn, the underlying changes in the nature of work and career, the new stage of emerging adulthood, and the differences between generations. A misalignment is problematic because incongruent expectations are detrimental to both individuals and organizations. Therefore, the current study will further examine career socialization in graduating college students by investigating:

1.   The messages received, the source, the source credibility, and the perceived value of the messages;

2.   Information seeking behaviors and tactics;

3.   Conceptualizations of a *career* and a *real job*;

4.   Expectations in the current economic downturn.

Knowledge regarding graduating college students' professional work and career socialization messages, information seeking, conceptualizations and expectations would allow professors, employers, and parents to help students better negotiate the transition from college to career.

Project Overview

This chapter proposed a rationale for investigating anticipatory organizational socialization in graduating college students in the current economy. The second chapter provides a review of the relevant research literature regarding anticipatory organizational socialization and proposes four specific research questions that address graduating college students' messages, information seeking, conceptualizations, and expectations. The third chapter argues why qualitative methods were selected to investigate the research questions, and describes the data collection procedures and participant demographics. The fourth chapter demonstrates the results and interpretation of the data. Finally, the fifth chapter provides a summary of the key findings in the context of previous research and practice, and offers additional details regarding the project's limitations and future directions for this line of inquiry.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Individuals learn about professional work and careers through their communicative interactions with others. Beginning in childhood, individuals receive both implicit and explicit messages about work and careers from five major sources: parents, educational institutions, part-time work and volunteer experiences, friends, and the mass media (Feij, 1998; Jablin, 2000; Jablin & Krone, 1987). Messages from these sources contribute to individuals' conceptualizations and expectations. As Clair (1996) states, "the meaning and value of work is relative and communicatively created" (p. 253). Therefore, a communicative exploration of socialization messages will illuminate the means by which the conceptualizations and expectations are produced.

Socialization processes are not passive but are constitutive and made possible through our interactions with social agents (Giddens, 1979). Giddens (1979) describes the socialization process as one in which an individual recognizes and then negotiates "the roles he or she is called upon to play in society" (p. 119). Graduating college students are often expected to shed the role of student (unless progressing to graduate or professional school) and learn a new role as a full-time employee. However, socialization to professional work and career is not a static, one-time experience. Instead, professional work socialization processes are ongoing, life-long processes that begin in childhood and culminate at the end of an individual's career (Jablin, 2001).

More specifically, organizational scholars have defined socialization as "the process of learning the ropes, being indoctrinated and trained, the process of being taught what is important in an organization or some sub-unit thereof" (Schein, 1968, p. 2). Organizational communication scholars often view the socialization process as a developmental and longitudinal relationship between individuals and organizations (Bullis, 1993). These descriptions are oriented to a specific target, the organization, instead of the more general notions of work and career. Yet, socialization to work and career has been included in the organizational communication scholarship under pre-organizational entry in stage models.

Socialization Stage Models

Scholars have often employed stage models to help demonstrate how socialization processes unfold (Feldman, 1976; Schein, 1971;Van Maanen, 1975). Specifically, stage models

often illustrate the unfolding through three phases: (1) an anticipatory socialization phase that occurs before an individual enters the working world, (2) an entry or encounter stage that occurs when an individual obtains a job and begins working in an organization, and (3) a metamorphosis stage in which processes such as roles are changed and renegotiated over time (e.g., Feldman, 1976; Jablin, 1987). The encounter and metamorphosis stages highlight how socialization processes are mutually created between an individual and an organizational group (e.g., a specific company) and involve adjustment by both parties over time (Moreland & Levine, 2001). Stage models are often utilized to highlight different levels in the relationship progression from unknown outsider to inside member.

Much socialization research in organizational communication has focused upon the encounter and metamorphosis stages, investigating organizational efforts to socialize newcomers. Furthermore, few organizational communication scholars have investigated socialization processes since the mid 1990s. However, these processes need to be revisited due to dramatic changes in economic, professional work and career, and generational contexts. Additionally, most studies reflect the underlying assumption that socialization processes are largely positive, which may or may not align with individual experiences. The current study adds to the literature by exploring the perspective of graduating college students' anticipatory socialization processes within these changing contexts.

Jablin (2000) describes the process of learning about the world of work and work life before an individual enters the workforce as anticipatory socialization. Main activities in anticipatory socialization involve forming expectations about work by sending, receiving, and evaluating messages and then making decisions based upon these expectations. Specifically, one point in late adolescence that highlights the exchange of socialization messages occurs when traditional college students attempt to transition from college to career. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) have argued that socialization experiences are most intense during boundary crossings. The crossing from college to career is definitely a challenging time for many college graduates, especially when the transition occurs in an economic downturn.

Anticipatory socialization processes are ongoing and occur on multiple levels, including socialization to work, to a specific organization, to a profession, and to a career (e.g., Jablin, 2001). Anticipatory socialization to work and career is an umbrella term for processes that begin in childhood as individuals intentionally and unintentionally seek, receive, and interpret

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messages about what it means to work and what kinds of work are appropriate. Based upon these messages, individuals begin to form expectations and then modify those expectations over time. This overarching level is an ongoing process in which individuals learn about the meaning of work and continue to learn about work throughout their lifetimes.

The second level is anticipatory organizational socialization. This process is more focused and refers to the targeted messages that pertain to a specific job, a specific organization, or a specific job within a specific organization. Based on messages received from organizational literature (e.g., job advertisements), and interpersonal interactions (e.g., a job interview), individuals develop expectations about future employment in a particular organization and/or job (Bian, 1997; Granovetter, 1995). This phase often focuses upon the interaction between individuals and their adjustment to a particular organization. Bullis (1993) offers a critique of organizational communication studies at this level, arguing that they have too narrow a focus and dismissively privilege the perspective of the organization (e.g., what is advantageous for the organization) over that of the individual.

The third level is anticipatory professional socialization. This process involves the messages individuals receive about a particular profession (e.g., what it means to work as a journalist) before actually entering the profession. These messages come from people such as professors in educational institutions and from interactions with people currently in the profession who steer future newcomers toward professionalism in a particular role (e.g., socialization of sales people described in Dubinsky, Howell, Ingram & Bellenger, 1986). Professional messages create expectations regarding what it means to do work in a particular profession and therefore, generate expectations about that profession. As to how this relates to the term *career*, Hall (1987) suggests that a career is a long-term bundle of socialization experiences that occur over a lifetime. These layers are often present simultaneously and overlap, making them difficult to differentiate. However, this study focuses upon the socialization most salient to college students, socialization to professional work and career. Through their messages, family members, peers, and community members function as agents of socialization refining our meanings of work and career.

Anticipatory Organizational Socialization Sources

Messages about professional work and career shape the way individuals view work, and may or may not be valued by traditional college students who typically have little professional

experience. College students tend to categorize unskilled labor such as waiting tables, differently than professional work and frequently do not connect their labor experience to their future professional experience (Clair, 1996). Messages are powerful, especially when they come from valued sources such as parents or professors. Previous research regarding high school students' sources of anticipatory work socialization messages points to five key sources: 1) parents (especially when parents talk about work at home), 2) educational institutions, 3) part time or volunteer job experiences, 4) friends or peers, and 5) the media (Feij, 1998; Jablin, 2000; Jablin & Krone, 1987; Levine & Hoffner, 2006). These sources collectively help construct and refine students' expectations of the meaning of professional work.

Parents.

Parents' messages are influential in shaping their children's perceptions and expectations regarding work. Early research indicated that, "parents were the primary determiners of their [children's] occupational choices" (Leifer & Lesser, 1976, p. 38), and contemporary research affirms that parents continue to play a primary role in their children's work socialization processes (Jodl, Michael, Malanchuk, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2001; Otto, 2000). Parents influence their children's perceptions of work through their communicative interactions.

Parents' socialization processes cluster around three main routes: children participating in activities at home, children observing their parents working, and children listening to their parents talk about work. Beginning in childhood, children learn about work through task-oriented organizing activities, such as household chores (Blair, 1992; Jablin, 2000). These activities begin to illustrate important work concepts such division of labor and ways to negotiate relationships between a superior and a subordinate. Also, children may observe their parents working by being taken to work (e.g., take your daughter to work day), or by watching a parent working at home.

The most explicit messages may be sourced from parents discussing their jobs and having conversations about work in front of their children. Piotrkowsky and Stark (1987) reported that over a fourth of the children ages 10-17 in their study thought their fathers spoke "often" to them about their jobs, and over half thought that their mothers "often" spoke about work. By listening to their parents discuss their day, children learn about work and how to communicate at work. For example, a parent may describe how she interacts with supervisors, customers, and coworkers (Jablin, 1993). Stark (1992) suggests that what individuals learn at home may be one of the most significant sources of "on the job" training. In fact, in a recent study of high school students,

parents were perceived as providing more guidance than other sources regarding life issues such as occupation choice (Levine & Hoffner, 2006). Further research is needed to better understand how graduating college students perceive their parents' messages regarding professional work and career.

Educational institutions.

A second agent of work socialization is found in educational institutions. School is the first formal social structure, besides family, where individuals learn basic communication work skills such as negotiating power differences and working with others to accomplish tasks. Underlying this agency is an expectation for schools to help children become productive, working citizens (e.g., Gecas, 1981). For example, Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) suggest that it is:

> Through the school that the child is provided with his or her first structured social [opportunity] with which to encounter and realize the consequences of social and academic competence, competition and power relationships, which may be extremely important in career development (p. 49).

Furthermore, Jablin (2000) argues that schools (before university) do not provide specific information about career options but instead provide more general information about work requirements, such as how to negotiate a supervisor subordinate relationship. Consequently, before college, individuals may be socialized into work but often are not socialized into professions or careers.

Socialization processes become more targeted when college students must select a more specific course of study. Professors, especially in upper division courses, may provide information about work, but also specific information about jobs, occupations, and careers. For example, if a student is taking journalism classes, then the student may be learning information about the occupation and what kind of jobs might be available to someone with a journalism degree. Yet, this is not solely dependent upon professors since student effort factors into the socialization equation; college students' perceptions of work also are shaped by their willingness or reluctance to seek information from others. Taylor (1985) found that college students who spoke with professionals about their future career had greater occupational knowledge than those who did not. When students take courses within a particular major, they may learn how to talk utilizing a specific occupational rhetoric and may learn professional norms of how to behave in their chosen occupation (e.g., Nelson & Barley, 1997). Some majors lend themselves to a direct

path for jobs, professions, and careers (e.g., engineering majors), while others may be less narrowly focused (e.g., communication majors) and therefore offer less specific professional knowledge. Therefore, major selection may influence the content of messages reported by college students.

Part-time work.

Many college students have jobs in addition to their student responsibilities, yet their socialization experiences vary dramatically depending upon the type of job and the quality of their interactions with others. In fact, a recent study from the U.S. Department of Education suggests that approximately 70 to 80 percent of full time college students work while they are enrolled in college classes, with approximately 25 percent of students working full time (National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2006). Most students in this national study reported that their primary reason for working during college was to pay tuition, fees, and living expenses, while upper income students reported working for spending money or to gain job experience. The jobs typically worked by college students fall into six categories: retail, clerical, food service, cleaning, manual labor, and skilled labor; However, students may discount the messages about work received in these jobs because they do not see them as pertinent to their *real jobs* (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986).

Research regarding the role of part-time work in anticipatory socialization is contradictory and has been argued to be both irrelevant and beneficial. On one hand, college students' unskilled labor jobs may be perceived as disconnected to their future professional work. College students may value work socialization messages received while working unskilled labor jobs differently than messages about professional jobs because they do not perceive unskilled labor to be "real" jobs. Clair's (1996) study explored college students' perceptions of the colloquialism *a real job* and found that realness was often equated with: educational attainment (e.g., a job that requires a college degree), managerial level, and jobs that were economically focused (e.g., a salaried position) rather than seasonal or unskilled (Clair, 1996). Additionally, Clair (1996) suggested that students in her study held the underlying assumption that part-time work in college was not a long term occupational choice of the student, was temporary, and would end as soon as the student received a *real job*. Additionally, Levine and Hoffner (2006) found that high school students felt that part-time work did not provide much job

or career advice. Consequently, college students may not connect their socialization experiences in part-time work to their future professional jobs.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that part-time work in college may be a beneficial source of socialization messages and experiences. In positive part-time work experiences, students may develop beneficial attitudes, skills, and personal characteristics (Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Mortimer & Finch, 1996; Stern, Stone, Hopkins, & McMillion, 1990). Other positive advantages cited from part-time work involve learning the benefits of responsibility and hard work, and improving interpersonal skills (Levine & Hoffner, 2006). The quality of part-time work experiences varies; therefore. "all jobs do not provide young workers with identical experiences and as such are not likely to be equally facilitative of adolescents' development and socialization" (Greenberger, Steinberg & Ruggiero, 1982, p. 93). Depending upon the conditions of their work experiences and their perceptions of value, college students may or may not connect their unskilled, temporary jobs to their professional work after graduation. Instead, college students may have an easier time connecting internship experiences to their future work.

Internships.

Internships are growing in popularity, are often highly encouraged or even required by universities, and are perceived to mediate expectations and therefore reduce feelings of reality shock when an individual enters full time employment (Paulson & Baker, 1999). Approximately 75 percent of college students enrolled in a four-year degree program participate in some type of internship program or an assignment in which they work for an outside organization (Coco, 2000). Internships have been linked to positive outcomes such as greater confidence in career decision-making, (Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield & Joseph, 1995), the acquisition of new job relevant skills (Garavan & Murphy, 2001), a reduction in the reality shock of full-time employment (Paulson & Baker, 1999), improved ability to secure a job (Callanan & Benzing, 2004), and higher job satisfaction (Gault & Schlager, 2000). However, internship experiences as a source of socialization messages and the corresponding content of those messages need to be further explored.

Friends.

Another socialization agent is friends, who play two primary roles in work socialization: 1) they provide assistance with narrowing occupation selection, and 2) they provide specific

information regarding positive and negative messages about the reality of work. Montemayor and Van Komen (1980) found that friends strongly contribute to perceptions of acceptable professions and their desirability. If friends help shape perceptions regarding which occupations are appealing, then it makes sense that friends may select similar careers, which would affect the frequency and content of their communication exchanges. Additionally, friends share information about their current unskilled labor jobs. In Levine and Hoffner's (2006) study, high school friends repeatedly communicated information about the positive benefits of earning money and the negative aspects of working (e.g., work is repetitive and boring). Most of the messages exchanged represented work negatively, with a commonly repeated theme that work is neither fun nor enjoyable. Additionally, college students may have friends who graduate before them and relay messages about finding and participating in professional work. It is unclear if college students differ from high school students in their communication regarding part-time work. Therefore, it is appropriate to examine anticipatory socialization messages from friends.

Mass Media.

The final identified agent of socialization is mass media, especially television, which may alter students' perceptions of work (Levine & Hoffner, 2006 [or whoever]). Specifically, television shapes perceptions of occupations and job requirements. The depictions of work on TV are typically inaccurate because TV programs and movies often highlight the glamorous, exciting parts and exclude the mundane or routine portions of jobs. Media representations are especially influential when individuals do not have realistic information to compare the representation to (citation – Signorielli?). For example, if individuals do not know any lawyers or have little contact with lawyers, then they may assume that *Law and Order* provides an accurate occupational description.

Furthermore, television inflates assumptions about salaries and work hours. Signorielli's (1993) study of high school students found that those who were heavy television viewers were more likely to want high status jobs with large salaries, but they also wanted these jobs to be easy and provide a lot of leisure time. The study claimed that these high school students received the message that work is easy. Since television is a distorted mirror of reality, work on TV is frequently represented as a "caricature of the actual world of work" (Peterson & Peters, 1983, p. 81). Overall, depictions of professional work on television may inflate college students' expectations about professional work.

Overarching themes are present in all five sources' messages. Levine and Hoffner's (2006) foundational study identified four broad categories of work and career message content: 1) general requirements of work, 2) positive aspects of work, 3) negative aspects of work, and 4) advice and/or information about work. The researchers claimed that all of the sources' message content stressed themes of responsibility, hard work, and performance-related behaviors (e.g., the importance of meeting deadlines).

Another construct that deserves further exploration regarding anticipatory socialization messages is source credibility. Source credibility has been studied since Aristotle because of its key role in message effectiveness (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953; McCroskey, 1997; Self 1996). Messages cannot be received independently from their source (McCroskey, 1997). The source that delivers the message influences whether or not a message is well received because each message is filtered through the receiver's (in this case a student's) perceptions of the message source. Therefore, the perceptions of the source shape how messages are perceived and to what extent they are considered influential.

Source credibility is not just about the believability of a source but encompasses a wider span of traits. Specifically, McCroskey and Teven (1999) identified source credibility as incorporating three key constructs: 1) competence: expertise, intelligence, and authoritativeness, 2) goodwill: caring, understanding, empathy, and responsiveness, and 3) trustworthiness: character, honesty, and safety. Perceptions of credibility are grounded in the views of the receiver. While scholars have explored source credibility, they have not yet examined the influence of the three constructs of source credibility in regards to anticipatory socialization message content. Thus, the current study will explore the self-reports of graduating college students regarding the messages they receive about professional work and career, the sources of the messages, the credibility of the sources, the content of the messages, and the perceived value of the messages.

RQ 1(a): What messages do graduating college students report receiving regarding professional work and career?

RQ 1(b): Who are the sources of the messages?

Anticipatory socialization scholars do not assume that individuals are blank slates upon organizational entry but that people come to work with pre-existing conceptualizations and expectations (e.g., Jablin, 1984; Wanous, 1980). In graduating college students, anticipatory

work socialization messages help to create expectations about professional work. Socialization scholars argue that effective organizational socialization matters because it is linked to increases in job satisfaction, and job performance, and reduction in turnover (e.g., Louis, 1980). Effective anticipatory socialization to work will help an individual successfully transition from the role of college student to the role of full-time employee. Within organizational communication, there are minimal frameworks for exploring the anticipatory work socialization phase. However, findings from encounter socialization studies are useful to frame anticipatory socialization processes since they involve the same processes at a later stage of entering a specific organization. Effective encounter socialization often involves proactive behaviors by organizational newcomers. Applied to the anticipatory socialization phase, this study seeks to explore if and how college students use proactive behaviors such as information seeking.

An important component of encounter socialization processes is the role of individual agency. College students are not simply passive receptors of socialization messages; instead, they contribute to socialization processes. Specifically, new organizational members participate in role-taking and role-making. Role-taking is the process of learning others' expectations about their organizational performance (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Role-making is when an individual pursues their own expectations and makes a role their own (Graen, 1976). Therefore, individuals are both active message senders and receivers, and it is in the interaction between the source (e.g., parent) and the individual (e.g., college student) that meaning about work is created and negotiated. For example, parents may try to socialize their child to become an accounting major and to follow their footsteps to be a CPA, but the college student has agency and through communicative interactions may reject these messages and even alter the view of the parents.

Information-Seeking

One way students may actively play a role in their professional work socialization is through information-seeking. College students may seek out information to reduce their knowledge gaps regarding professional work. Students are often encouraged to actively seek out information about career choices, learn about their own attitudes, values, interests and skills, and discover available career opportunities (Herr & Johnson, 1989). Researchers typically describe information-seeking as a deliberate and conscious effort (Baxter & Wilmot, 1984; Berger & Bradac, 1982; Brown & Levinson, 1978). Yet, how much information-seeking college students actually perform regarding professional work and through which medium is uncertain.

Individuals use an array of information-seeking strategies to obtain information. According to Miller and Jablin's (1991) model of information-seeking tactics, information-seeking behaviors are shaped by perceptions of uncertainty. The foundation for the information-seeking tactics model is built upon Berger and Calabrese's (1975) interpersonal communication theory called Uncertainty Reduction Theory. Scholars Berger and Calabrese (1975) argue that uncertainty is uncomfortable and thus motivates people to reduce it through communication. Additionally, they found that "high levels of uncertainty cause increases in information-seeking behavior" (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, p. 103). Furthermore, information-seeking skills in the encounter socialization phase have been found to affect employee job satisfaction, productivity, and job tenure (Ashforth & Cummings, 1985). Applied to professional work and career anticipatory socialization processes, previous research suggests that increases in uncertainty about work, such as the current economic downturn or college graduation, would increase information-seeking behaviors in college students. This study will explore how and when graduating college students report seeking out information about professional work and careers.

Miller and Jablin's (1991) model of specific information-seeking tactics may be a helpful framework for describing and identifying the strategies utilized by students. This model details seven information-seeking tactics on a continuum beginning with explicit requests to covert requests including: overt questions, indirect questions, third party questions, testing, disguising conversations, observing, and surveillance. The tactics are not utilized in isolation, and their use is dependent upon other factors that contribute to how and when individuals seek out information. While perceptions of uncertainty are a key motivator to seeking out information, other components in Miller and Jablin's (1991) model influence how and when we seek out information. Miller and Jablin (1991) suggest that information-seeking behaviors take into consideration: 1) the social costs versus the rewards of seeking the information, 2) the source of the information, 3) the content of the information, 4) individual difference, and 5) contextual factors (e.g., the economy). Each of these components will be explained in depth below.

Before individuals seek out information from others, they often weigh the costs against the benefits. All communication involves social cost or social exchange (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Nord, 1980; Parks, 1977; Roloff, 1981). The benefits of an information-seeking communicative exchange may include gaining information related to the reduction of uncertainty, positive affect, social approval, and respect or prestige (Blau, 1964). The costs involve receiving the negation of

benefits such as receiving social rejection instead of social approval (Roloff, 1981). For example, a college student may want to find out information about a particular profession and therefore could conduct an informational interview with someone in the field, but the cost is that they may be turned down (rejected) or lose face in the interview. The perception of cost may lead a person to be more cautious and thus avoid negative relational costs. If costs are anticipated as high, then a person may choose to use a less overt tactic to discover the desired information (Jablin & Miller, 1991). In the example above, the student may just look on the Internet to avoid risking the potential cost of a negative interaction.

The relationship with the source of the information greatly influences the perceptions of the benefits and the costs of asking for information. Adolescents become more aware of the many sources of information about work, and through time they actively increase their sources, including seeking out differing opinions and perspectives (Brown, Darden, Shelton & Dipoto, 1999). However, previous studies may not accurately describe information-seeking behaviors of current college students. The increase in access to information via the Internet and the technology proficiency of most college students may greatly affect information-seeking behaviors and tactics due to the low social costs of the web medium.

Another concept utilized in information-seeking research, in the encounter socialization phase, is information adequacy. Information adequacy may be described as the as the degree to which individuals report a difference between information they want to receive and information they actually receive (Trombetta & Rogers, 1988). In the encounter phase, organizational newcomers often perceive that the amount of information they receive is insufficient (Jablin, 1984). However, it is unknown whether the perception of information insufficiency existed before they entered the organization or only after. Thus, we do not know if college students feel they are receiving an adequate amount of valuable information in regards to professional work and career.

Therefore, it becomes important to discover the information-seeking tactics that college students are utilizing. It would be beneficial for educators, parents, and students to learn if and how college students are seeking and using information about career. This gap in the literature leads to the second group of research questions:

RQ 2(a): Do graduating college students' at a Midwest public university report seeking out professional and career information?
RQ 2(b): What tactic(s) do they use to gain this information?

Conceptualizations: A Career

In the past it was assumed that obtaining a college degree would prepare an individual to begin a successful career. However, the concepts of what a career is and what a career looks like have shifted over time due to widespread changes in technology, industry, and the world economy. The first issue is the enmeshed nature of the words *work, job, occupation, profession* and *career*. The conceptual overlap of the terms work, job, and career complicate investigation of socialization processes. These terms are often used interchangeably in much of the socialization literature in Communication Studies, Vocational Studies, Psychology, and Sociology. The enmeshed nature of the words *work, job, profession*, *career* and *vocation* are even present in dictionary definitions that use one term to define another. For example, Heinle's Newbury House Dictionary of American English (2004) defines the words: 1) work**:** "to be employed," 2) job: "work that one is paid to do every day, permanent employment," 3) profession: *"*an occupation requiring a specific education, 4) career: "one's profession, occupation, job" and 5) vocation: one's livelihood, work," or "a call to serve God." Even in the academic literature, a clear delineation made among these terms is rare.

One exception to the blurring of terms in academic literature identifies the terms by their uses. Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz's (1997) study regarding viewpoints of work argues that the terms used should align with how individuals perceive their work. Their differentiation between the terms *job, career* and *calling* are as follows: 1) a *job* is when someone focuses primarily on the financial rewards and views their work as a necessity and does not receive any other reward from it, 2) a *career* is a personal investment in work and indicates advancement within an occupational structure, and 3) a *calling* is the perception of work as personally fulfilling and socially useful (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). This is one interpretation of the terms, but it remains clear that these terms have blurred boundaries.

The term *career* is particularly problematic due to its focus upon a long-term orientation and its underlying notion of stability. It is difficult to plan for the long term in such rapidly changing and erratic economic times. The long-term orientation may be exemplified by phrases such as career path or career ladder and the idea that advancement or progression is taking place.

However, this conceptualization of a clear trajectory is no longer a reality for many individuals. Many researchers now argue that the concept of career has become boundaryless, meaning that the traditional boundaries of separate employers, markets, networks and information no longer exist (Helge, Becker & Haunschild, 2003; Arthur 1994). The blurring of these categories may make the transition to career a daunting task for graduating college students.

To college students, the term *career* and its corresponding notion of stability may not be relevant when thinking about future work. College students face a difficult dilemma in selecting their future career goals as the increased pace of change and economic turmoil make it more difficult to prepare for the future. How is a college student supposed to decide on a career when the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) cannot define what constitutes a career change? The BLS fact sheet states that it does not keep statistics of the number of times Americans change careers because there is no consensus regarding what comprises a career change (http://www.bls.gov/NLS/nlsfaqs.html**).** However, the BLS in a 2009 report does state that the average person changes jobs approximately every five years (http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2009/summer/art02.pdf). It is difficult to know what jobs will be available in the future, thus complicating career decisions now. For example, the BLS suggests that jobs in the information-technology field are projected to swell 24% in the next seven years. Where they will go after the next seven years remains unknown, but what is known is that work and specifically careers, are changing.

The former linear career path may now look more like a career web. Historically, a career was conceptualized as "professional advancement within one or two firms" (Sullivan, 1999, p. 458). However, in the new economic playing field, ascending, linear career paths are not guaranteed and are more difficult to find (Sullivan, 1999). Career patterns have been transformed in the last few decades as the traditional hierarchical career patterns have become rare. Employees now become more concerned with creating career paths that allow for more movement and opportunities to increase their chances of being continuously employed. It is a shift from the security of employment to the security of employability (Gould & Levin 1998; Wooldridge 2000).

Replacing employment with employability alters the notion of career for both organization and employee and, for college students, complicates the process of creating future trajectories of work. A more contemporary approach to the concept of career suggests it is a

process of development along a path of experience and jobs (Baruch & Rosenstein, 1992). Due to the current economic condition, unpredictability has become the norm, and as Savickas (2000) states, "job security is history" (p. 56). The contemporary worker is responsible for personally generating transferable skills and adaptive strengths (Drucker, 1994; Savickas, 2000). New frameworks for careers have emerged including framing career as a portfolio of skills, career as a creation of a personal brand, and career as being an independent free agent (Gould & Levine, 1998; Kanter, 1995; Packer, 2000). These emerging frameworks all highlight individual workers and their development of knowledge and skills that transcend any one particular organization. With this new paradigm, the individual will need to make an argument for how he or she can use his or her knowledge to make a contribution to a specific organization (Gould & Levin, 1998). Therefore, organizations may now be expected to provide, instead of job security, a focus upon individual growth and learning opportunities to promote employability (Packer, 2000). If organizations fail to provide learning and growth opportunities, then they may risk losing key employees (Packer, 2000). As a result, graduating college students may find it challenging to envision a long term professional work trajectory while the concepts of employability and career remain in flux.

Another part of the term *career* that may be in transition is career as an indicator of social status. Careers are often associated with *real jobs*, or professional jobs, and so unskilled labor is typically not included in the term's usage. Goffman (1959) suggested that the term "career" is literally a marker of an individual's social status. In the past, a college degree was considered a privilege or a luxury, but is now perceived by many college students as a necessity. A 2006 study by the National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 2005, 68.6% of high school graduates enrolled in college within a year of high school graduation or GED completion. In contrast, in 1960, 45% of high school graduates and GED completion programs enrolled in college. Obviously, the numbers of college graduates have steadily been rising over the years and may alter the worth of a college degree and corresponding career opportunities.

Particular socialization messages may be perceived as more influential and helpful than others in teaching individuals about professional work and career. These significant messages have been studied and labeled "memorable messages." Knapp, Stohl, and Reardon (1981) describe a memorable message as a verbal message, remembered for a long period of time, received in early life, and is perceived as having a major influence on a person's life. Memorable

messages have been used to explore organizational socialization (e.g., Stohl, 1986) gender socialization (e.g., Dallimore, 2003), and college students' socialization to family and work (e.g., Medved, Brogan, McClanahan, Morris, & Shepherd, 2006).

Memorable messages about work communicate to individuals what is important and what is not. Knapp, Stohl, and Reardon's (1981) analysis identified that "memorable messages" or brief oral injunctions as an in-depth source of information about how we communicate and manage socialization processes. Moreover, memorable messages are important to study because they "provide individuals with a sense of shared reality" (Stohl, 1986, p. 248). Furthermore, Stohl (1986) suggests that memorable messages provide two key benefits: they provide sense-making structures and they provide a guide for desired behaviors. The messages are part of the socialization process because they embody cultural norms and provide rules to live by. The source of the message (e.g., a parent, professor, friend) also influences the significance of the message (Stohl, 1986). An example of a memorable message may be "Work smarter, not harder" (Stohl, 1986). College students receive many messages but some would qualify as a "memorable message" and others would not. Although memorable messages have been studied in college students, this label may not directly apply to the current study because college students are not able to be retrospective in regards to professional work because they have not yet experienced it. However, memorable maxims and colloquialisms often fall under the categorized of memorable messages and are a key part of the socialization process.

Conceptualizations: A "Real" Job

Memorable messages are similar to colloquialisms in that they are a part of everyday communication about work. Everyday communication "produces a meaning system that acts to socialize or control people by supporting one dominant meaning of work to the marginalization of other meanings (Clair, 1996, p. 253). The concept of professional work may be described with the colloquialism *a real job*. In 1996, Clair explored college students' perceptions of the colloquialism *a real job* and found that realness was often equated with: educational attainment (e.g., a job that requires a college degree), managerial level jobs, and jobs that were economically focused (e.g., a salaried position) rather than seasonal or unskilled (Clair, 1996). Over a decade has passed since data was collected regarding *a real job*, and in that time the U.S. has experienced drastic changes in the economy and technology. Therefore, revisiting college

students' descriptions of the colloquialism *a real job* would illuminate changes or stability in everyday meanings of professional work.

More broadly, the idea of career or professional work is ambiguous and encompasses underlying cultural, societal and educational norms regarding work. According to Princeton University's online lexical database of English, a profession defined as "an occupation requiring special education (especially in the liberal arts or sciences)"[3]. Upon graduation, college students have finished a degree that is expected to prepare them for a professional job. The term professional signals a socioeconomic status marker that implies a level of education, expertise and association (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). In Ashcraft and Allen's (2003) review of organizational communication texts, the profile of a professional was an individual who:

> acts with restrained civility and decorum; wears a convincing shell of calmness, objectivity, and impersonality; thinks in abstract, linear, strategic—in a word, ''rational''—terms; covers the body in conservative, mainstream attire; keeps bodied processes (e.g., emotionality, spontaneity, sexuality) in check; has promising, upwardly mobile career track; derives primary identity and fulfillment from occupation and work accomplishments; speaks standard English; and so on. (p. 27)

Graduating college seniors' notions of career and professional work may influence their expectations regarding work. Therefore, the ambiguity surrounding the term *career*, and the meanings surrounding the colloquialism *a real job* lead to the following research question:

RQ 3(a): How do graduating college students at a Midwestern, public university conceptualize the term *career*?
RQ 3(b): How do graduating college students at a Midwestern, public university perceive the colloquialism *a real job*?

Expectations of Professional Work

Anticipatory socialization messages and conceptualizations guide expectations about work and can be problematic for college students if their expectations are misaligned with reality. Anticipatory work socialization messages provide a framework for college students' expectations. Therefore, for anticipatory work socialization to be "effective," it would need to provide realistic expectations about work. One way to determine if expectations are realistic is by asking individuals what their expectations are before beginning professional work and then asking later after entry. Porter and Steers (1973) describe the constructs of met or unmet

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[3] http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=profession

expectations:

> The concept of met expectations may be viewed as the discrepancy between what a person encounters on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what he expected to encounter. Thus, since different employees can have quite different expectations with respect to payoffs or rewards in a given organizational or work situation, it would not be anticipated that a given variable (e.g., high pay, unfriendly work colleagues, etc.) would have a uniform impact on withdrawal decisions. We would predict, however, that when an individual's expectations—whatever they are—are not substantially met, his propensity to withdraw would increase (p. 152).

Their predictions were correct. Wanous et al.'s (1992) meta-analysis of met expectation research found statistically significant correlations between met expectations and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to leave, job survival and job performance. Additionally, other studies found that if expectations are met, individuals are more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction (Greenhaus, Seidel, & Marinis, 1983; Wanous, Poland, Remack, & Davis, 1992), higher job performance (Wanous et al., 1992), and higher levels of motivation at work (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1991). Consequently, college students' expectations about work should be examined, especially since the majority of these studies were conducted in the 1980s and 1990s.

One concern is that college graduates, like many new organizational members, often have inflated expectations regarding work (Wanous, 1980; 1992). An example of unrealistic expectations is found in the study conducted by Rawlins, Indivik and Johnson (2008) that investigated the expectations of upper level college students regarding their first job after graduation. Two highlighted expectations from this article were 1) the expectation of an average starting salary of $50, 569 and, 2) the expectation from 30 percent of the participants that a maximum 40-hour week was non- negotiable. However, whether these expectations are inflated depends upon the type of work. For example, according to the Fall 2008 Salary Survey, the average salary offer to all college graduates was $49,224 in 2008, but the average liberal arts graduates were offered an average of $36, 715. An expectation of a starting $50,000 salary and the reality of a $37, 000 salary would definitely create an unmet expectation. Additionally, a 40-hour workweek may also be unrealistic. A *Harvard Business Review* article in 2006 reported that 62% of high earning individuals work more than 50 hours a week, 35 percent work more than 60 hours a week, and 10 percent work more than 80 hours a week (Hewlett & Luce, 2006). This kind of reality shock is unpleasant and leads to more unmet expectations and the negative

ramifications associated with them.

However, previous work experience may be helpful in developing realistic expectations regarding a job and may help in job adjustment (Van Maanen, 1975). It is unclear whether this work experience needs to be a professional job or if unskilled labor counts. Also, internships may also help foster reasonable expectations by exposing students to the reality of professional work. Therefore, it is important to explore which messages, from which sources, may lead to more realistic work expectations.

Another influence that may lead to college students having more reasonable work expectations is the current economy and unemployment situation. The banking scandal and resulting recession, job loss and skyrocketing unemployment rates in America have altered the work landscape, especially for college graduates who are seeking their first professional jobs. Specifically, college graduates' expectations may have changed because of the reduced numbers of jobs available for new college graduates and the lowered starting salaries. The United States economy has been in an economic recession since 2007, and this downturn has been one of the longest since the Great Depression in the 1930s (National Bureau of Economic Research http://www.nber.org/cycles.html). Additionally, it is a growing concern that the U.S. educational system is not producing a workforce that will be able to compete on the international stage (National Research Council, 2006). For example, writer Thomas Friedman in his nationally bestselling book, *The World is Flat*, argues that the fundamental nature of work has changed in the last 15 years because for the first time in history, billions of people can now compete and collaborate because of increased access to information, tools, and raw data. The Bureau of Labor Statistics identified broad trends in labor between now and 2016, and two of the key trends were a slowing of growth in the labor force compared to previous decades and an aging workforce and population (Saunders, 2005; Franklin, 2007).

The changing economic environment and the increase in competition has most likely lowered college students' expectations about work, even if students have not yet entered professional work. A 2009 study conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at the University of California, Los Angeles, asked incoming college freshman about their habits, religious and political preferences, anticipated major, and life goals. In this study, incoming college freshman indicated that their decisions are being affected by the current economic recession with students more likely this year to have an unemployed parent than in previous

years. Students also were less likely to find a job that could help pay for college expenses (Zernike, 2010). Additionally, this study indicated that a change is occurring in what career areas students are considering, exemplified by a 12.1 percent decline in students who expected to pursue a career in business, bringing the number of business majors to the lowest percentage in 33 years (Zernike, 2010). The economic downturn may have squelched high expectations and changed the fields students are pursing. These changes provide yet another reason why it is important to explore messages about work in this shifted economic situation.

RQ 4: What are graduating Midwest public university students' expectations about their first job in the current economic environment?

Investigating graduating college students' anticipatory work socialization messages, including information-seeking, conceptualizations of the term career, and expectations regarding professional work and career, would help promote understanding and a reexamination of ongoing socialization processes. The next chapter focuses upon the methods selected to investigate these identified areas of socialization.

Chapter Three

Methods

The current study explored how graduating college students' at a Midwestern public university described their anticipatory organizational socialization processes. The role of the researcher, specifically in qualitative methods, is to first identify whether qualitative methods are appropriate and if they are, to determine which qualitative method best achieves the goals of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative approaches attempt to "explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 7). Qualitative approaches were selected in the current study because the researcher sought to investigate the manner in which graduating college students described their anticipatory organizational socialization messages, information-seeking, conceptualizations, and expectations in the transition from college to professional work and career. Since qualitative communication scholars typically focus upon "how" social experience is generated and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), a qualitative approach was deemed suitable for this type of inquiry.

Qualitative studies provide fertile descriptions and deep explanations of processes in specific contexts that help researchers move beyond initial findings (Miles & Huberman,1994). Researchers have investigated the expectations, information-seeking and conceptualizations of graduating college students from a quantitative perspective. Specifically, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducts an annual, national survey of 35,000 college students from 840 universities (including students from the university used in the current study) to explore what graduating college students expect when transitioning to work (e.g., salary expectations, job expectations, what channels they used to locate job information, etc.). However, their quantitative approach is not able to provide in-depth answers as to how and why students responded in the ways that they did, nor does it allow for information outside of the confines of the survey questions.

In contrast to quantitative approaches such as the NACE study, qualitative approaches allow researchers to discover how individuals in a specific context describe their experiences and what those experiences mean to them. Scholars such as Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) argue that words and narratives gathered through a qualitative approach can be used to add meaning to numbers and can serve to answer research questions more fully by investigating research problems through different channels. A qualitative study of graduating college students' anticipatory organizational socialization at a Midwestern public university adds another perspective to the cumulative research and may provide insight into broader trends. Additionally, a qualitative study allows for the investigation of sensemaking processes. Weick (1995, 2001) contributed a theoretical framework that reflects how individuals make sense of the world through their communication. Sensemaking is a process that occurs in communication that allows individuals to explain (or make sense of) the world through communicative interactions with others.

Procedures

Interview-Based Data Collection

A specific qualitative methodology that addresses how and why questions, in addition to communicative explanations and sensemaking, can be found in the process of interviewing. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) state: "Interviews are particularly well suited to understand the social actor's experience and perspective" (p. 173). Additionally, the authors suggest that interviewing allows a researcher "to gather information about things or processes that cannot be observed

effectively by other means" (p. 173). The perceptions and conceptualizations of graduating college students and the underlying hows and whys of their transition cannot be directly observed and therefore need to be articulated by the individual experiencing the phenomenon. Furthermore, interviews allow access to various cultural stories and scripts through which individuals describe their world (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). However, interviews are not necessarily accurate, nor are they neutral because they are mutually constructed by both the interviewee and the interviewer. Silverman (2005) explains:

> This approach claims that, by abandoning the attempt to treat respondents' accounts as potentially 'true' pictures of 'reality', we open up for analysis the culturally rich methods through which interviewers and interviewees, in concert, generate plausible accounts of the world (p. 154).

More specifically, in-depth interviews may be described as directed conversations (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; 1995). Since interviews are communicative interactions, together the interviewee and interviewer generate negotiated, contextually bound data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Therefore, the researcher believes that there is no "Truth" but multiple "truths" that are embedded in a specific time and place. The search for patterns of interaction within multiple "truths" leads to further investigations of social phenomenon such as anticipatory organizational socialization processes.

In this project, the researcher conducted 28 in-depth interviews to investigate how graduating college students from a large, Midwestern public university described their anticipatory organizational socialization processes as they transitioned out of their role as college students. In-depth interviews were utilized to better get at the participants' descriptions, explanations, conceptualizations and sense-making processes. Graduating college students are currently in the midst of the transition to professional work instead of reflecting upon it (past) or predicting it (future). Additionally, they are experiencing this transition in a specific time and place under changing societal contexts (e.g., economic downturn, technological innovation, competitive job market).

The knowledge gained from interviews was co-constructed by the researcher and the researched and are therefore partial and positioned (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The researcher was an instructor at the site of this study and had taught a class on Business Communication, which had a strong focus on anticipatory organizational socialization processes. The researcher had taught this class six times over a three-year period. Conversations

with students during this class and outside of class prompted the researcher to investigate this topic. Thirteen of the 28 participants were former students (eight from the Business Communication class). However, the researcher attempted to minimize social desirability bias in the data collection process by casually meeting participants at coffee shops, dressing casually, and by explicitly stating to the participant that there were no right or wrong answers but that she really wanted to know their thoughts and ideas. Additionally, the researcher asked the participants to help her better understand what was going on as they made the transition from college graduate to career, thus attempting to make the interview process a collaboration. This is in line with Lindlof and Taylor's (2003) suggestions that interviews be framed as a project with both the researcher and the researched working together as partners toward a common goal.

Participants

The 28 participants came from a snowball sample of students who had just graduated or were about to graduate from a Midwestern public university. The researcher contacted former students via email and additionally contacted four instructors teaching during the summer session to recruit participants. Interviews were held at the end of May and early June. The researcher ended the data collection at 28 interviews because saturation of ideas and responses was reached. All participants were full-time, traditionally aged college students with a median age of 22.3 years. Additionally, all participants were 2010 graduates: thirteen participants had graduated in May, 2010, nine were graduating in August, 2010, and six were graduating in December, 2010. Nine participants were male, and 19 participants were female. Regarding ethnicity, participants described themselves in the following ways: 24 as Caucasian or White, two as African American, one as Asian, one as Hispanic, and one as Middle Eastern. Majors were as follows: 12 in Communication Studies; one with an additional double major in Communication Studies and Business; six in Journalism; two in English, one with an additional double major in English and Chemistry; and one each in Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Sports Management, Elementary Education, Economics, and American Studies. All participants had worked a part-time job. Fifteen participants had completed or were currently participating in an internship. Seven of the 28 participants (25 percent) were first generation college graduates.

At the time of the interviews, seven participants reported having jobs in hand in their desired career field, and two more reported having full-time jobs that were professional jobs, but not in their desired career. Additionally, one participant had been accepted and was starting

medical school within two months of her interview. Overall, of these 11 who had established professional work, 10 were female and one was male; the only male had a job waiting for him in his family's business and did not seek out other employment. The remaining 17 participants stated that they were in the process or would soon be looking for professional work, with the exception of two participants who were in the process of applying to law school for fall 2011. Additionally, it is important to note that three participants disclosed that a parent had been laid off within the last year (Participants Michelle, Carrie and Nadia). See Appendix C for a detailed chart of each participant's demographic information.

The interview protocol was used as a guide and not as a constraint during the interview process, allowing for the clarification of comments. The interview protocol may be found in Appendix B. The interviews were conducted face-to-face (25 interviews) and via telephone (3 interviews) and ran from 45 minutes to 156 minutes, with the average interview taking approximately 70 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Informed consent was sought prior to the interviews, and participants were asked to permit the researcher to use their own words, although they were assured they would not be identified by name or in any way that revealed their identity. The transcripts from the interviews generated almost 1,000 pages of single-spaced text. Additionally, the researcher took field notes immediately following each interview.

Data Analysis Techniques

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) characterize qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145). The data analysis techniques in the current study are based upon emergent approaches, which suggest that meaning is constructed through communicative interactions (Miller, 2000). Overall, a variety of analysis tactics were utilized together as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) to increase the quality of meanings and interpretations derived from the data.

Analysis techniques.

The interview transcripts were both open coded and axial coded for each research question, allowing the researcher to identify a coding scheme for each question and simultaneously recognize the relationships across the coding schemes. During "open coding" a researcher searched for *patterns and themes,* creating preliminary conceptual categories by

grouping together words, phrases, or ideas that seemed to be similar (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

These preliminary categories were open to modification or replacement throughout the multiple

stages of analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that the researcher needs to look for

evidence of the same patterns and yet at the same time remain skeptical of those patterns and

look for disconfirming evidence as well so as to not jump to conclusions. Another tactic utilized

was *plausibility*, which is a check to make sure that the categories or explanations make sense or

seem to fit. The researcher utilized and questioned plausibility, or lack of plausibility,

throughout the analysis by asking whether or not categorizations made sense and revisited data

through additional techniques if there was incongruence. The next technique utilized was

clustering, which helped the researcher see "what goes with what" and allowed for the clumping

of categories through "iterative sorting" processes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Clustering

required the researcher "to examine how well the codes capture participants' implied and explicit

meanings" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 685). During clustering, categories were revised and collapsed,

and outliers that did not fit into the categories were noted. The researcher reconsidered the

relationships of outliers to other data to avoid premature closure of clusters in the coding.

Counting was another technique utilized, especially when similar words or phrases reoccurred in

the texts. Finally, the researcher *compared and contrasted* the analysis of the interview data to

previous scholarly findings regarding anticipatory organizational socialization. Throughout the

use of these techniques, the research moved back and forth between the data, coding,

explanations, and theory, constantly comparing and revisiting the different levels. These

techniques do not often occur in a linear progression but instead may occur simultaneously and

repeatedly. In the following section, the specific techniques utilized for each research question

are explained.

RQ 1(a): What messages do graduating college students report receiving regarding professional
work and career?
RQ 1(b): Who are the sources of the messages?

The unit of analysis for the first research question was "message" in the form of a maxim.

A maxim is defined as "a general truth, fundamental principle, or rule of conduct" or "a

proverbial saying" (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2010). Maxims, like other forms of

everyday communication, generate meanings and practices that socially construct our realities

and communicate what is valued and what is not (Clair, 1996). Maxims were selected as the unit

of analysis because of their ability to frame ideologies and because they have been utilized in other organizational socialization studies in the field of organizational communication (cites). Maxims have also been framed as memorable messages in organizational socialization research (e.g., Stohl, 1986; Barge, 2004; Dallimore, 2003; Medved, Brogan, McClanahan, Morris & Shepherd, 2006). However, in the current study, many of the maxims do not qualify as memorable messages because they lack the retrospective component and instead are prescriptive since the participants have not yet entered career work. Maxims were operationalized by four criterion, which include a phrase that is: 1) prescriptive, 2) addresses a societal truth or principle, 3) can be used to guide behaviors and 4) is commonly heard. An example of a maxim from this study is "Follow your passion and the money will follow." However, when Participant Omar said "You have to like your job. That's the biggest thing," it was not coded as a maxim because it did not meet the criterion.

Maxims are particularly important to investigate because they "not only condense the wisdom of the nations- they are also one of the most effective means of promoting this wisdom and causing it to develop" (Perleman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 165). Additionally, maxims are "like little splinters of potential narratives, or molds of old ones, which have continued to circulate on certain levels of the contemporary social edifice" and remind us to "never forget" (Lyotard, 1979/1984). Clair (1996) summarizes other maxim research by suggesting that a maxim is "powerful in its ability to offer a reified reality" (p. 232). Maxims were solicited in a manner similar to Barge and Schlueter's (2004) study. In their study, participants were asked to provide:

> a 'piece of advice' or some 'words of wisdom' you received. In fact, the message may have influenced how you behaved at work, the expectations you created for the organization, or the career decisions you made (p. 240).

In this study, maxims were prompted through the following interview questions:

1. What is the best piece of advice that you have received about being successful at work after (college) graduation?
2. Imagine that I am your best friend and I'm about to graduate from college. What advice would you give me about finding a professional job? What advice would you give me about being successful in my first job?

These questions were interspersed throughout the interview. Additionally, unsolicited maxims were also identified in other interview question responses. The maxims were analyzed with a

variety of techniques but overall consisted of a grounded coding process allowing for the emergence of a coding scheme instead of prefabricated categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The analysis techniques involved: identifying maxims and corresponding information (e.g., source), counting, clustering, piloting categorical coding schemes, revising the categories by comparing and contrasting processes, identifying and noting maxims that were outside of the categories, and deciding upon the final categorization scheme.

First, the researcher conducted multiple readings of the transcripts and field notes and began to create a matrix identifying each maxim, the content of the maxim, the source of the maxim, and the components of valuable maxims. Based upon this matrix, patterns were identified and an initial coding scheme was developed. Next, the researcher utilized an inductive strategy to cluster the messages, sources, credibility components and value components into categories. The researcher then eliminated repetitive categories, revised the categories, and addressed outliers that did not fall into categories. This analysis processes were informed by scholars Barge and Schlueter (2004), and Miles and Huberman (1994). An illustration of this analysis process in the first research question is located in the priority theme, which articulated what should be valued in work. This theme had many variations of the same maxim including: a) Do what you love and the money will follow; b) Do what you love and success will follow; c) Above all else, you have to love what you do; d) "Follow your passion; e) "Don't worry about the money, do what makes you happy; f) Discover what you love and find someone to pay you to do it; and e) It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you do what you love. The researcher determined that these maxims were all variations of one larger priority message through clustering processes. Further details regarding the analyses processes may be found within the Results chapter.

Similar data analysis techniques were utilized for coding data regarding the second, third and fourth research questions which investigated graduating college students' information-seeking, conceptualizations of the term *career* and the colloquialism *a real job*, and work expectations in the current economic environment. The interview protocol may be found in Appendix B and details most of the questions that were asked during the interviews. Below is a description of the data analysis techniques utilized for these questions.

The data analysis for the second, third, and fourth research questions began with the researcher carrying out repeated line-by-line readings of the transcripts and field notes and pulling out content that addressed the parameters of each question, which are detailed below. The responses for each research question were analyzed utilizing a grounded coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), unless a priori categories were already established in the literature. If foundational, a priori categories were available, the researcher then tested the categories to see if these categories were a useful framework to represent the data. These established categories were then modified by either adding new, emergent components or by eliminating unnecessary components, as determined through the analysis procedures. For each research question, preliminary themes and patterns were identified across the responses by asking questions such as: What ideas, statements or descriptions are repeated? What terms or phrases are recurring? What lies outside of these patterns? How do outliers relate to the patterns? Through constant comparison, the researcher looked for evidence that supported the patterns and themes and evidence that disputed the emerging patterns. Next, the researcher clustered the data by inductively grouping initial patterns and themes into categories, while constantly comparing and contrasting the categories. The categories were revised and outliers were considered before the categories were finalized.

RQ 2(a): Do graduating college students' at a Midwest public university report seeking out professional work and career information?

RQ 2(b): What tactic(s) do they use to gain information?

For the second research question, the researcher located and analyzed participant's responses that directly addressed at least one of the following: 1) responses to information-seeking question prompts, 2) information-seeking in general, or 3) incorporated the key components of information-seeking such as uncertainty reduction or the social costs of seeking out information (Miller & Jablin, 1991). The data clustered around two types of information-seeking behaviors: primarily proactive behaviors and primarily passive behaviors. The terms proactive and passive were selected after the clustering process. These terms were chosen because they have been utilized in the organizational scholarship to describe different strategies, and the researcher felt that they accurately described both the implicit and explicit data collected (Morrison, 1995; Comer 1991). Typically, proactive information-seeking behaviors are described as interactions initiated by the newcomer, while passive information-seeking behaviors suggest

that the acquired information is voluntarily provided by others (Morrison, 1995; Comer, 1991). The participants were coded as proactive information seekers if they: 1) described initiating more than one interaction, outside of college course assignments, to find out information about career and work, and if they 2) responded positively when asked if they had gone out of their way to find out specific career information. For example, Participant Scott, when asked if he had gone out of his way to find out specific information about being a lawyer, he answered: "Not specifically… I've gone and taken classes. I've gone out of my way to learn about law but not necessarily about being a lawyer." Later, in the interview transcripts, he mentioned talking to his cousin who is a lawyer about law but when the interviewer inquired, he stated that he had not instigated any other interactions in regards to finding information about his career choice. Thus, according to the coding scheme, Participant Scott is primarily passive. However, in contrast, Participant Rafael is coded as a proactive seeker because he has: emailed a contact, called a contact, met monthly with a mentor in his field, and met face-to-face with three people to discuss his future career. These interactions were self initiated and were not part of a class assignment, so Rafael is classified as proactive.

Additionally, the coding scheme regarding information-seeking tactics was developed based upon criteria as previously outlined by Miller and Jablin's (1991;1996) and Jablin's (2001) descriptions. Miller and Jablin's (1991) model is a foundational construct in the organizational socialization information-seeking literature. Their model has been utilized by other scholars as a framework (e.g.,Holder, 1996; Morrison, 1995; Teboul, 1995) and continues to serve as an important model of information-seeking in organizational socialization literature (Jablin & Putnam, 2001).

RQ 3(a): How do graduating college students at a Midwestern, public university conceptualize the term *career*?
RQ 3(b): How do graduating college students at a Midwestern, public university perceive the colloquialism, *a real job*?

The third research question's unit of analysis was a participant's response that included or described any of the following terms or phrases: *career, job, professional work,* and the phrase *a real job*. Additionally, the participants were asked about their career values, which were coded utilizing an established framework of work values grounded in previous scholarship. The coding categories of intrinsic, extrinsic, leisure, altruistic and social values have been used to compare findings across contexts (Herzog, 1982; Johnson, 2002; Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002; Ryan

& Deci, 2000; Twenge, Campbell Hoffman & Lance, 2010). These pre-established categories were utilized so similarities or dissimilarities to previous literature could be identified.

RQ 4: What are graduating Midwest public university students' expectations about their first job in the current economic environment?

Regarding the fourth research question, the researcher identified and analyzed participant responses that mentioned expectations regarding employment and the economy. To conduct the analysis for the fourth research question, the researcher identified and analyzed participant responses that addressed expectations regarding employment and the economy by searching for patterns and themes both within and across the participants' responses while also remaining skeptical of original categorizations and continuing the ongoing process of comparing and contrasting texts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, to further ground the study, the researcher compared participant responses with previous quantitative studies such as the NACE annual, national college student study where participants were asked about their expectations regarding salary, vacation time, estimated time to first promotion and anticipated organizational membership. Examples of these processes are further detailed in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Results and Interpretation

The current study seeks to investigate the anticipatory work socialization processes of graduating college students. Four research questions were posed to advance understanding of these processes. The questions explored graduating college students' anticipatory socialization messages, information-seeking, conceptualizations of the term *career* and the colloquialism a "real job," and expectations in the current economy. The researcher conducted 28 in-depth interviews which were transcribed and analyzed. The analysis of these interviews is reported in the order of each research question.

Professional Work and Career Maxims

RQ 1(a): What messages, in the form of maxims, do graduating college students report receiving regarding professional work and career?

RQ 1(b): Who are the sources of the messages?

The unit of analysis for the first research question was a "message" in the form of a maxim. A maxim is defined as "a general truth, fundamental principle, or rule of conduct" or "a proverbial saying" (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2010). The identifying features of maxims are a phrase that is: 1) prescriptive, 2) addresses a societal truth or principle, 3) can be used to guide behaviors and 4) is a common saying. An example of a maxim from this study is "Do what you love and the money will follow." This maxim communicates the societal principle that doing what you love is more important than money; it could serve as a guide for college graduates deciding upon job offers. Maxims are an important form of everyday communication that suggest what is important and what is not (Clair, 1996). Maxims are more than a command such as "work hard" or "be optimistic" and reflect a societal truth regarding values.

The researcher conducted a repeated line-by-line analysis of over 1000 pages of single-spaced interview texts and created a matrix of all messages that met the components of a maxim, including the source of each maxim. Additionally, the researcher identified the key points in each interview transcript that highlighted when a maxim was identified by the participant as very important or valuable. After the elimination of repeated maxims, a total of 53 different maxims were identified from the following sources: parents (26), mother (8), father (7), professor/teacher (13), friends (5), supervisor (3), aunt (1), sister (1), athletic coach (1), hair-dresser (1), informational interviewee (1), as well as sources more generally attributed to work experiences: (8), internship experiences (8), volunteer experiences (3) and college experiences (1). Some maxims were attributed to more than one source and not every maxim had an identified source; sometimes the participant said the maxim was self-taught, or was provided as advice for someone else, or the participant was unable to identify where or from whom they had learned the maxim.

As recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994), the 53 maxims were clustered into 21 categories, then the categories were collapsed and revised, the outliers were located and addressed in each category, and a final categorical scheme was identified with four main sections: 1) Priority maxims, 2) Proactive maxims 3) Support maxims, and 4) World of work and career maxims. Table 4.1 displays the results from the maxim categories.

Table 4.1 Maxims Matrix

PRIORITY	
	Do What You Love
Carrie	Do what you love and success will follow (informational interview)
Carrie	You have to love what you do (parents & friends)
Andrea	Find what you love and find someone to pay you to do it (parents & professors)
Jenn	Follow your passion. But if you don't know what that is, find something that pays the bills (parents)
Jenn	Find a job you love.
Lindsay	Above all else, do what you love (parents)
Brad	Do what you love and what puts food on the table (parents)
Anne	Find a job you love (parents)
John	Do what you love and success will follow (parents & professors)
Sarah	Follow your passion.
Rafael	Follow your passion. Do what you love. (parents & professors)
Omar	You have to like what you do. Do what you love.
Michelle	Don't worry about the money, do what makes you happy.
Michelle	Do what you love and success will follow.
Nadia	Do what you love and success will follow (mom)
Nadia	Do what you love or you'll be miserable. (professor)
Abbie	Do what you love and success will follow (mom).
Dana	Don't worry about money, do what you love (parents)
Dana	Follow your passion (professor)
Ava	Find what you love and find someone to pay you to do it. Follow your passion. (professor)
Ava	Follow your passion. (dad)
Kim	It doesn't matter what you do as long as you love what you do (parents)
Jacob	You've got to enjoy what you do (parents)
Jacob	Do what you love and success will follow you.
Chloe	If you don't love it, don't do it. (professors)
Ethan	Do whatever makes you happy and puts food on the table. (parents)
Noah	Follow your passion. (mom)
WORK	
	World of Work
Andrea	Work is serious business (supervisor)
Jenn	Money doesn't buy happiness, but it sure doesn't hurt. (parents)
Rafael	Work is not a walk in the park (professors)
Omar	Work is serious business.
Michelle	You've got to take what you can get where you can get it (teacher)
Nadia	You gotta do what you gotta do (parents)
Dana	Looking for work is a full time job (friends)
Mike	There is no free lunch (you have to work)
Ethan	You've got to take what you can get, where you can get it.
	Network
Esther	It's who you know, not what you know.
Barb	It's about who you know.
Anne	It's all about who you know.

Cara	It's not who you know, it's who knows you.
Rafael	It's about who you know, not what you know.
Omar	It's about who you know, not what you know.
Michelle	It's all about who you know (mom, teachers)
Chloe	It's all about who you know.
Ethan	It's all about who you know.
Noah	It's all about who you know.
PROACTIVE	
	Work Hard
Esther	You get out what you put in. (dad)
Esther	Go above and beyond.
Barb	Go above and beyond (supervisor)
Jenn	Exceed their expectations (supervisor internship)
Lindsay	Hard work pays off in the end.
Brad	You get out of it what you put in. (parents)
Cara	Do whatever it takes to do a good job (parents)
Nadia	The harder you work, the farther you'll go (work experience)
Nadia	Work hard. Play hard. (college)
Nadia	Set yourself apart.
Abbie	You have to put in a lot of effort if you want to get a return.
Ava	You have to put in, what you want to get out of it (mom)
Ava	Work hard. Play hard. (work experience)
Mike	Set yourself apart.
	Try It
Carrie	You won't know if you like it unless you try it (mom)
Dana	You'll never know unless you try it.
Ethan	Don't spend your life wondering what could have been.
	Take the Initiative
Jenn	You have to pay your dues.
Brad	You learn best through trial and error.
Sarah	Put yourself out there.
Rafael	Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone (volunteer experience)
Dana	You've got to take it and run with it (internship)
Dana	Jump in. Get your feet wet. (parents)
Dana	The best way to learn is through trial and error.
Ava	Think outside of the box. (supervisor)
Ethan	Take the leap.
	Expect the Unexpected
Rafael	Always expect the unexpected
Michelle	Expect the unexpected
Nadia	Change is the only constant.
Dana	Always expect the unexpected.
Noah	Expect the unexpected
	Do Your Best
Carrie	Always do your best (parents)
Amanda	Always do your best (family)
Anne	Always do your best (supervisor)
Cara	Do everything to the best of your ability

Nadia	Do the best that you can do (parents)
Kim	Always do your best.
Kim	Always do your best.
	Under Promise. Over Deliver.
Carrie	Under promise and over deliver (professor)
Andrea	Under promise and over deliver (internship supervisor)
	Ask Questions
Sarah	There's no such thing as a dumb question
Nadia	There's no such thing as a dumb question.
Dana	Never be afraid to ask a question. (parents)
Kim	If you don't know, ask. (Aunt)
Kim	Never be afraid to speak up. (supervisor internship)
Chloe	If you don't know, ask
	Make a Good First Impression
Jenn	You never get a second chance to make a first impression
Dana	Put your best foot forward (work experience)
Ava	You never get a second chance to make a first impression.
Jacob	First impressions count (dad)
Chloe	If you don't know, ask.
	Be on your Toes
Anne	Always be on your toes (supervisor at internship)
Anne	Always be on your "A" game (volunteer experience)
Michelle	You have to be on top of your game (internship supervisor)
Dana	Always be on your toes.
SUPPORT	
	Comfort
Esther	Keep the faith (mom)
Esther	Everything happens for a reason (mom)
Michelle	It will all work out in the end. Everything will fall into place. (best friend)
Nadia	Be here now. Let the future worry about itself. (professor)
	Don't Give Up
Anne	Never give up.
Cara	Don't settle for less than you're capable of. (friends)
Nadia	Never give up.
	Everybody Makes Mistakes
Anne	Everybody makes mistakes (work)
Nadia	If you make a mistake, it's not the end of the world
Dana	If it's not for you, it's not for you. (parents)

Priority maxims.

Interviewer: What's the best piece of advice you have received about work and career? Participant Jacob (male, Communication Studies major): Find a job that you're really passionate about. I remember . . . I had a professor tell me, "Find what you love, and find someone to pay you to do it." And she said, "That's the key to life." That was how much she emphasized that advice. And I really try to follow that.

The first category, priority maxims, was created to describe maxims that speak to what should be most valued in work and career. It is actually made up of just one umbrella maxim, which was the most commonly reported maxim across all interview transcripts. This one maxim, and variations of it, prioritizes work that the individual loves, enjoys, or feels passionate towards. Variations of this maxim include: a) "Do what you love and the money will follow," b) "Do what you love and success will follow," c) "Above all else, you have to love what you do," d) "Follow your passion," e) "Don't worry about the money, do what makes you happy," f) "Discover what you love and find someone to pay you to do it," and e) "It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you do what you love." This maxim was also represented in the negative form as "If you don't love it, don't do it" and "If you don't enjoy your work, you will be miserable."

Overall, 20 of the 28 participants mentioned a version of the maxim. Furthermore, these messages were attributed to only two sources: parents and/or professors. The one exception to the source findings was Participant Carrie, who stated the maxim "Do what you love and success will follow" as coming from an informational interview she conducted for a Business Communication class. The idea of prioritizing work one enjoys, loves, or are passionate about was highly valued by the participants not only because it was the most utilized maxim but also because eight of the participants stated it as the best advice they had received regarding work and career (participants Carrie, Andrea, Lindsay, Rafael, Michelle, Nadia, Jacob, and Chloe) and an additional participant combined it as best advice with another maxim (Scott).

Often, this pattern of maxim stressed prioritizing work the individual enjoyed, loved, or was passionate about because work was identified as a significant life activity. For example, Andrea stated:

> Um, my parents always told me that work was important… They told me that, you know, work is important, but it's also important to find something that you like to do and, um, just to "follow your passion." They were always really supportive of the interests of me and my brothers. Yeah, I guess, that work is a big part of life, so you should love what you do.

Later in the interview she came back to this concept of prioritizing liking what one does because of the time invested:

> But I've always heard that from my parents—that you should pursue what you like to do because you're going to be doing it for a long time (laugh).

As in the case with Andrea, the variations of this maxim were often repeated multiple times within interviews. Additionally, the maxim was explained in that what one enjoys doing should be ranked above money. Participant Dana stated:

> But always making sure that your career was something that you loved. They've (parents) never been people that pushed money. They told me "Don't worry about the money, do what makes me happy." You work for something that you love to do, not for the paycheck that you receive.

And later when asked about what she learned from professors:

> But also that whole pursuing something that you're really, truly passionate about and not wavering from that… I think the work that you produce will be of a higher quality if it's something that you really love doing.

Additionally Participant Michelle mentioned the maxim when asked about what her parents told her about work and also when she was later asked about advice she would give, highlighting again that what one does should focus on happiness before money.

> The number one thing that my dad always says is "Don't worry about the money." He said, "Do something that makes you happy." He still says that today. So that's the number one thing that I can think of that he always says.
> Interviewer: Anything else he says?
> Participant Michelle: Anything else that he really says kind of goes along the lines of that. You know, like "If you're unhappy in the job, look for something else." Like he always kinda says, "Don't worry about this or that. Just kind of focus . . ." I mean, he was like "Why would you ever want to go to a job that you hated every single day?"

And later, with Participant Michelle…

> Interviewer: What's the best piece of advice you've received about being successful after graduation?"
> Michelle: I guess that—I mean, the thing that I feel like I hear repeatedly in different ways is "Do something that you love and then become successful in that. Do something that you love and make it your own, and try to make it better." To me, that would be success, if I became really good at something I love.

In contrast, for three participants, the use of the maxim did not suggest that work should be valued above money. While some version of the maxim was stated, it was also followed by another statement or maxim that mediated the message, suggesting that the maxim is not the most important thing but instead is simply an important component. This is illustrated in the responses of participants Brad, Ethan, and Jenn to the question, "What have your parents told you about work and career?" Participant Brad (male, American Studies major) stated:

My parents told me to "follow my passion" but they also said that I've got to take care of myself… you know, "you gotta put food on the table."

Participant Ethan stated:

My dad… he's kinda just like "follow your passion," you know, do whatever makes you happy, but it also needs to put food on the table for yourself. I have to support myself.

Participant Jenn stated:

When it comes down to it…you need to support yourself and your family…you need to know you have job tomorrow. If you hate it… don't do it…" follow your passion," and if you can't, go with something that will make you financially secure.

Participant Jenn followed this statement with another maxim, which in this category was an outlier. The maxim was "Money doesn't buy happiness, but it sure doesn't hurt." The other outlier in this category was "Family always comes before your career," which participant Rafael attributed to his family and cultural upbringing. Both statements were identified as outliers because no other similar maxims were found, but they still fell under the category of priorities.

Eight of the participants listed the priority maxim as the best piece of advice they had received. Most of the participants who stated the maxim also said they were trying to follow the advice, although there were two exceptions, participant Nadia and Andrea, who both had just graduated at the time of the interview. Participant Nadia stated her reasons for not following the advice she thought was best:

It is the best piece of advice, but I have yet to follow it because I'm too scared to. "Do what you love, and success will follow." I mean, everyone says that, but they're already successful when they say that. And I'm just like, how do you know? Like, you're already successful. Like, I didn't see you go through this change. But, I mean, I feel that that saying is true. I'm just too scared to take the leap.
Interviewer: So tell me more. Why aren't you following it?
R: I'm scared to be poor (laugh). Yes (laugh)? I don't want to be poor (laugh). I'm scared of the struggle. I'm scared of the sacrifices I would have to make.

Furthermore, participant Carrie suggested that she has not tried to implement the advice yet but plans to in the future.

Interviewer: Do you think you're following that piece of advice to do what you love and then success will follow?
Carrie: Not yet, because I haven't really made any changes. But I think that I will at some point.
Interviewer: Why do you think not yet?

Carrie: Just because I haven't done anything. Like, I really have not done anything since I graduated, besides wait tables.

Proactive maxims.

The second category is proactive maxims. This set of maxims is made up of directives regarding work and career and can be broken up in two subcategories: "work hard" and "take risks." The "work hard" subcategory includes the following maxims: a) Always go above and beyond what is asked of you,; b) Exceed their expectations; c) Give 110%; d) Be the first one there and the last one to leave; e) Work hard. Play hard; f) Set yourself apart from the crowd; g) Always be on your toes; h) Always be on your "A" game; i) You have to be on top of your game; j) You get out of it what you put in; k) Hard work always pays off in the end; l) The harder you work, the farther you'll go; m) No matter what the outcome, always do your best; and n) Think outside of the box. In total, 18 out of 28 interviewees utilized at least one "work hard" maxim. Additionally, participants Barb, Anne, Sarah and Elaine stated that a "work hard" maxim was the best piece of advice they have received about work and career. The sources of these maxims were: parents (6), dad (1), mom (1), supervisor (3), professor (1), athletic coach (1), friends (1), and work experiences (3), internship experiences (3), and volunteer experiences (1).

Examples of these "work hard" maxims can be found in the following participant excerpts. Overall, participants received "work hard" messages from a broad variety of sources. In the following examples the sources are supervisor, professor, and mom. Yet, no matter the source, the "work hard" maxims all center around being proactive and putting effort into work and career. For example, participant Barb shared the maxim "always go above and beyond" as the best piece of advice and it is advice that she just recently learned in her new position. She explains:

> I would probably say to go above and beyond what you're asked to do… and make it so that you're doing a great amount for the company, even if you're not asked to do it.
> Interviewer: Who told you this advice?
> Barb: Um, well, I heard my boss. She kinda mentioned it to me and said that that's someone that they were looking for in the interview.
> Interviewer: Did you follow the advice?
> Barb: I'm going to try to, yes. I'm definitely going to do that (laugh).

Another "work hard" maxim is shared by Participant Cara who learned it in her Sales Strategy class:

Be the first one there and the last one to leave (laugh). And that's one of the things that allows you to make yourself irreplaceable, because that really sums it up, I think.

Finally, Participant Carrie said:

It probably goes back to what my mom told me: that you'll get out of anything what you put into it. I think that's really big. Yeah.
Interviewer: Do you think you follow that advice?
Carrie: I think I do, yeah. I think I do, most definitely.

Two outliers were identified in this subcategory. The first was "Be your own brand" and the second was "Sell yourself." Both maxims were mentioned only twice and both came from two participants (Cara and Nadia) who were Journalism majors. Both maxims were said to come from Journalism professors and were described as being part of the Journalism school mantra for students entering Public Relations and Advertising. Since the context seems to specifically apply to PR and Advertising work, the maxims were considered outside of the more general "work hard" maxims and were labeled outliers in the analysis.

The second subcategory of proactive maxims was "take risks" maxims. These maxims encourage individuals to take the initiative and step into the unknown. The following maxims are included in "risk taking": a) You won't know if you like it, unless you try it; b) Don't spend your life wondering what might have been; c) You've got to take it and run with it; d) Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone; e) Jump in. Get your feet wet; f) The best way to learn is through trial and error; g) Take the leap; h) Put yourself out in the running; i) If you don't know, ask; j) There's no such thing as a dumb question; and k) Always expect the unexpected. In sum, 10 out of 28 participants used at least one "take risks" maxim. The sources of the maxims are: parents (4), mom (1), aunt (1), supervisor (1) and internship experiences (3) and volunteer experiences (1).

Additionally, participants Dana and Kim described the maxim as the best piece of advice, and both said they try to follow the advice. Participant Dana suggested that jumping in and trying things out is important part of the learning process:

I would just say from both of my parents, in general, that no matter what I've done throughout my life, whether it be a sport, a hobby, "jump in, get your feet wet"; but if it's not for you, it's not for you…

Later, when asked for the best piece of advice, she again advocated for a proactive approach:

I would have to say, "If you don't know, ask." Just, you know, to not do something and have to ask for forgiveness or be reprimanded for it later, but to ask up front for direction and then proceed.

Participant Kim shared the same thought for the best piece of advice. Her maxim was sourced from her Aunt who said: "If you don't know, ask."

Both of the "work hard" and "take risks" maxims advocate that graduates should be proactive in their approach to work and career. However, there was one outlier maxim shared by participants Michelle and Ethan that countered this category and that was the maxim, "Take what you can get and don't complain." Yet, when it was used, Participant Ethan followed it with a proactive maxim, to "take the leap."

> Interviewer: Imagine I'm your best friend and I'm about to graduate from college. What advice would you give me about finding a job?
> Ethan: Take what you can get and don't complain about it. Like my buddy, the engineer -- his uncle works at an engineering firm or has an engineering firm, but it's in Phoenix, Arizona. And he doesn't know if he wants to travel. He doesn't know if he wants to move down there to start. I told him it's retarded for him not to. It's a good position, he's working for his uncle, he could become like government-certified in engineering through it, and it's for three months, maybe, in Phoenix, Arizona. He just is afraid to move down there, and I just thought that was . . . I guess just to take the initiative to try to move on; just take the leap.

This entry ends up reinforcing the proactive maxim category. Additionally, participant Michelle identified the "Take what you can get and don't complain" as a piece of bad advice that she had received in reference to the economy.

> Interviewer: Has anyone given you bad advice?
> Michelle: Not that I can think of. The only thing that really comes to mind is just, with what's going on, people are just kind of like, "Take what you can get and don't complain about it." Which to some extent, I agree with that, but I also don't, because like I said, it could be something where I was miserable in…

The "Take what you can get" maxim was not the only identified outlier in this category; two other maxims did not fall under the "work hard" or "take risks" categories. Both of these maxims are proactive, ethical prescriptions. The maxim stated by Participant Ava was "Two wrongs don't make a right, so take the high road" sourced from her Dad, and the maxim mentioned by Participant Rafael was "What is easy may not always be what is right" sourced by his volunteer experience. These maxims were considered outliers because each maxim was only mentioned once and by only one participant.

Support maxims.

The third category, Support maxims, is the smallest category of maxims. Support maxims were often used when the participant spoke of career and job uncertainty and were used as supportive communication devices. The maxims were: a) Keep the faith, b) Everything happens for a reason, c) Everything will fall into place in due time, d) Be here now. Let the future worry about itself, e) If you make a mistake, it's not the end of the world, f) If it's not for you, it's not for you, and g) "If something doesn't work out, something better will come along." Overall, five of the 28 participants used a support maxim and specifically, Participant Abbie used a support maxim as her best piece of advice. The sources of these messages were: parents (1), mom (2), best friend (2), professor (2), and work experiences (1), and college experiences (1). Even though this is the smallest category of maxims, the participants who did state support maxims had them woven throughout their interviews. For example, Esther said:

> Well yeah, because not finding a job is not the end of the world, as much as to me it's like life or death, it will work itself out**.** Maybe you need a month or two month break to really just recharge yourself. Maybe something else is in the works, or if something doesn't work out, maybe something better will come along. You never know. It's a matter of understanding that "everything does happen for a reason".

And later Esther spoke again about uncertainty.

> Interviewer: What does your mom tell you?
> Esther: She says to keep the faith.

Participant Abbie also repeated support maxims and cited her support maxim as the best piece of advice she has received.

> Interviewer: What is the best piece of advice you've received regarding work and career?
> Abbie: Maybe not at work, just in life. But it would definitely apply. I played in orchestra for 10 or 12 years, and this professor guy… conductor came in, and he said, "Be here now. Let the future worry about itself " … be in your moment, and that's what you have to focus on. And I really liked that. So if you're at work, be there…
> Interviewer: Do you think you follow that advice?
> Abbie: (sigh) Probably not as much as I should. I feel like everybody is always about what's happening next, even me. I feel like this last year I've followed it more because it was my last year in Lawrence and . . . I mean, it's bittersweet, both ways. That's what my friends and I tried to do: not think about it, not think about leaving type thing (laugh).

And later again Participant Abbie mentioned another Support maxim.

> Interviewer: What do you know now about work that you didn't know when you were a freshman?

Abbie: Um . . . that if you make a mistake, it's not the end of the world, even if you think it is at that point in time (laugh).

No outliers were identified in this category. Overall, the Support maxims served to reassure participants when negotiating uncertainty.

World of work maxims.

The final category involved maxims that addressed the world of work and career. This category was broken into three subcategories: 1) Work, 2) Networking, and 3) Working with others. The first subcategory contained the following maxims: a) Work is serious business; b) Work is not a walk in the park; c) There is no free lunch; d) Looking for work is a full time job; and e) Your work defines you. The sources of these messages were: parents (4), professor (2), supervisor (1), friends (1), and work experiences (1). Overall, eight of the 28 participants shared a work maxim. These messages often highlighted how the individual came to know that work was an important responsibility in life. Participant Mike told how he came to learn there was no "free lunch."

Mike: My parents, they made us work in the summer to get—like if we wanted an Xbox or we wanted games or stuff, we'd have to do school stuff; we'd have to like do homework problems or things like that. And they made us work in the summer to get things, like to go to Chuck E. Cheese or, you know, whatever. And so, from being younger, making us do stuff like that.
Interviewer: What did that teach you about work?
Mike: You have to work to get whatever you want. Nothing is going to be handed to you. There's no free . . . no free lunch, yeah (laugh).

Furthermore, Andrea learned from her high school job experience that work cannot be taken "lightly."

Interviewer: What did you learn about work from interacting with your supervisors in these jobs?
Andrea: Um, I learned that work is serious business. When I first started life-guarding, we had an issue: Sometimes people just wouldn't show up to a shift, which is a really big deal, you know? I mean, because people are gonna swim no matter what. And if you're short-staffed, you know, it's . . . it can be dangerous, yeah. So, um, I just learned that it wasn't something to be taken lightly. I mean, you can have fun at work, but it's still a job. So I guess I kind of got that from my supervisors.

Participant Rafael suggested that professors stressed that work was not like college and that the students would need to have a different level of accountability.

Rafael: I also would have to say that—well, yeah, they've said, "Work is not a walk in the park." Sometimes it is if you have that flexibility, but most of the time, being at work, it's not like going to class where you can show up if you want to or you could not. Like, there are repercussions if you skip work or if you lie about where you were at and stuff like that. Like, there are so many consequences and stuff that you have to be aware of when you make decisions like that in work, as opposed to being in class, where, you know, you can say that your grandma died like five times and nobody would question you.

The one outlier in this subcategory was the maxim "In work, change is the only constant," which was stated by Participant Nadia. While this maxim did address the nature of work, it did not collapse into the other maxims and addresses instead of the gravity of work, the changing nature of the world of work. This maxim was only mentioned once by one participant, so was deemed an outlier.

The second subcategory of the Nature of Work and Career maxims was Networking. This subcategory contained one maxim in two variations: a) It's about who you know, not what you know, and b) It's not who you know, it's who knows you. The maxim "It's about who you know, not what you know" or the more recent variation, "It's not who you know, it's who knows you," was stated by 10 of 28 participants. Sources of the maxim included: parents (1), mom (1), friend (1), teachers (1) and internship experience (1). However, most participants did not or could not identify the source. Participant Noah stated that this maxim was the best advice he had received. This maxim was the second most stated maxim across all the interview texts, while the first was already mentioned as the priority maxim. The participants reported that "who you know" is an important part of working, and more specifically getting a job. For example, when the interviewer asked Participant Omar (male, Communication Studies major) where he learned about jobs, he said:

Omar: Um, a lot of it is just kind of networking and kind of stuff like that. So, I mean, it's kind of like who you know, not what you know. If I like tutor a couple students, and they tell their friends about it or something, then I eventually meet more people who are into that thing and who maybe do that for a living…

Participant Ethan said that who you know also influences what you can do at work.

Ethan: I guess I've noticed that a lot, or been told, you know, "it's not about how much you know, it's about who you know and like how well they can influence what you're trying to get done."

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This maxim was also provided as the best piece of advice from Participant Noah who learned the maxim from a friend and from a class.

> Interviewer: What is the best piece of advice you've received about being successful at work after you graduate?
> Noah: Probably networking… you know, "It's not what you know, it's who you know."
> Interviewer: And who told you that advice?
> Noah: Well, first it was my friend, Kyle, who I mentioned earlier, who graduated with the same degree as I have. He was the first one to really tell me how networking works. And then most recently through my Business Communications class, which has helped me out a lot as far as giving me guidance for finding job and career information.

The final subcategory included maxims that addressed working with others. Maxims included in the subcategory were:) a) If you want something done right, do it yourself, b) Don't burn bridges, you never know when you may need to walk back over them, c) You can't just sweep problems under the rug, d) Treat others as you want to be treated, and e) Keep the personal out of the professional. Six of the 28 participants mentioned a maxim regarding working with others. Sources of the maxims were: mom (1), dad (2), professor (2), and work experiences (1). These maxims included messages that indicated how to work with others. For example, Participant Cara stated advice that she had received from professors about the workplace.

> Cara: They say that it's not who you know; it's who knows you and—it's all about who you know. They say it's about networking and how "you should never, never burn any bridges because you may need to walk back over them."

Additionally, Participant Omar also commented on what his professors had told him about work and career.

> Omar: I've had some angry old professors that are kind of like "Don't trust anybody. If you want it done right, do it yourself." Then I've had others who are kind of like, you know, "Follow your passion. Treat others as you would like to be treated." You know, karma comes around. It'll come back if you're nice to everyone or if you're a jerk.

Other maxims speak to how manage personal and professional boundaries with others. Esther describes what she learned.

> Esther: Like I can't tell myself enough to just really "Keep the personal out of the professional," because that can really come back to bite me. Like if me and a person are up for a job but I'm a person who has either had interoffice relations or has had issues with other people, then they're going to go with the other candidate. So just keep drama free, keep your personal life separate, and work is about work and everything is about everything…

There were no outliers found in this subcategory. Overall, the maxims in this category speak to the world of work and career and communicate values about what is important in work, networking, and working with others.

Information-seeking for Professional Work and Career

RQ 2(a): Do graduating college students at a Midwest public university report seeking out professional work and career information?
RQ 2(b):What tactic(s) do they use to gain information?

For the first portion of the second research question, the researcher conducted a line-by-line analysis of all the transcripts, locating all references within the interview transcripts that addressed if and when participants sought out information regarding professional work or career. Next, the selected portions of the texts were coded utilizing a grounded coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The participants reported information-seeking efforts clustered around two types of information-seeking behaviors: primarily proactive behaviors and primarily passive behaviors. Organizational scholars have used the terms *proactive* and *passive* to describe the types of information-seeking tactics used by organizational newcomers (Morrison, 1995; Comer 1991). Typically, proactive information-seeking behaviors are described as interactions initiated by the newcomer, while passive information-seeking behaviors suggest that the acquired information is voluntarily provided by others (Morrison, 1995; Comer, 1991).

In this study, the participants were coded as proactive information seekers if they: 1) described initiating more than one interaction, outside of college course assignments, to find out information about career and work, and if they 2) responded positively when asked if they had gone out of their way to find out specific career information. For example, Scott, when asked if he had gone out of his way to find out specific information about being a lawyer, he answered: "Not specifically… I've gone and taken classes. I've gone out of my way to learn about law but not necessarily about being a lawyer." Later, in the interview transcripts, he mentioned talking to his cousin who is a lawyer about law but when the interviewer inquired, he stated that he had not instigated any other interactions in regards to finding information about his career choice. Thus, according to the coding scheme, Scott is primarily passive. However, in contrast, Participant Rafael is coded as a proactive seeker because he has: emailed a contact, called a contact, met monthly with a mentor in his field, and met face-to-face with three people to discuss his future career. These interactions were self initiated and were not part of a class assignment,

so Rafael is classified as proactive.

All of the 28 participants mentioned conducting some kind of online search to explore professional work and career information. However, there are no social costs, nor "interaction" involved in conducting an online search; therefore general, online searches were not considered a proactive strategy. Instead, the participants needed to have an actual interaction (e.g., send an email) beyond conducting basic Internet searches to be considered "proactive."

Overall, 13 of the 28 participants were coded as proactive information seekers. When considering demographic information, five of the seven first-generation college students were proactive seekers. Seven of the 13 had jobs in hand or were accepted into graduate school for the fall. Additionally, nine of the 13 had completed internships. The proactive participants often mentioned their internships as a way to learn more career-related information. For example, Participant Mike illustrated this proactive approach to career information-seeking by working an unpaid internship for three years in his area of career interest, public service. While interning he observed people doing their jobs and frequently spoke with them about his own career path.

> Interviewer: Have you gone out of your way to find out specific information about going into public service?
> Mike: Well, I mean, I've interned there (Topeka capital) for three years. And I don't get paid for that, so that's as far out of the way as I can go (laugh)… the tough part about public service is there's not like a book. If you want to start a business, there's a book for that; if you want to be a doctor, there's a book for that; but to be like a staff member for a person who's running for office or to work for a nonprofit, I mean, there isn't, because it's not lucrative, it's not sexy, it's not something people go after, I guess.
> Interviewer: So, how did you learn about it?
> Mike: You just watch people who do it… and I talk to them all the time about my future career.

Participant Jenn also mentioned her internship experience and continued to seek out information regarding careers even after getting a professional job in her current career field.

> Interviewer: Do you think you have gone out of your way to find out specific information about mechanical engineering?
> Jenn: Yes, I do.
> Interviewer: How frequently do you search to find information about your career?
> Jenn: Constantly. I always try to befriend my professors. I would ask them if they ever worked anywhere… what was your impression… did you like the job… where have other students worked... constantly. Because I still don't know what I want to do… I have an idea, but it's always changing… I also have taken classes outside of engineering to explore what's out there. Um… I've had two internships, one was in Singapore, with major firms, and I met a lot of executives and influential people in the company and I've

talked to as many people as possible and I have tons of mentors who I've talked to about their career paths, what they did and like how they got to where… what they're doing now. Also online… I am constantly looking even though now I have a real job… I'm just always looking, you know, because like I'm still not sure exactly what I want to do in the future.

Another participant, Barb, who had just started a new position in her desired career, described her information-seeking in both class and outside of class.

Interviewer: Have you gone out of your way to find specific information about being a marketing person in a fine arts organization?
Barb: Um, well, I've done two informational interviews, but those were actually assignments for classes. But those really helped. I've also had two internships, and one was with the marketing at the Lied Center. I've talked to my boss at Lied Center quite a bit. I've talked with him and I've tried to interview different people in the field. And then the people I work with now in my job doing marketing in a fine arts organization, I've talked to them about career things.

In contrast, many participants did not seek out proactively seek out information but instead passively received it through class work or through their parents. Overall, 15 of the 28 participants were coded as passive. Some participants were blunt when asked about their information-seeking. The researcher paused after these answers to see if the participant would elaborate. The following three did not elaborate any further.

Participant Cara
Interviewer: Have you gone out of your way to find specific information about being a journalist?
Cara: No, not really.

Participant Jacob
Interviewer: Have you gone out of your way to find out specific information about becoming a general manager?
Jacob: No. I haven't really gone out of my way to learn about it.

Participant Ethan
Interviewer: Have you gone out of your way to find out information about getting into advertising?
Ethan: Nope.

Additionally, some participants spoke of their career goals but had not sought out any information about their desired career. For example, Participant Noah said that he wanted a career in advertising or marketing, neither one being his major. When the interviewer asked, "What would it be like to be in advertising or marketing?" Participant Noah said:

Um, I wish I could say I've job shadowed a little bit or looked into it more, but I can't say I have. I think it would be interesting to go out and find out like what the markets are out there and do marketing research . . . and find out like the latest trends. I think I'd really enjoy that.

Interviewer: Have you found out information about what it would be like to, say, do marketing research or follow trends or be in advertising?

Noah: I wish I could say I have, but I haven't.

Others hedged when asked about their information-seeking, and follow up questions revealed that they had not initiated more than one interaction for information-seeking.

Participant Scott:

Interviewer: Have you gone out of your way to find specific information about advertising in a nonprofit organization?

Scott: Um, no, not really. I mean, just the research I've done online and I've talked to people, but I haven't gone like completely out of my way to find out more.

Interviewer: And so who have you talked to?

Scott: Just my roommate… she has worked at nonprofits. And then obviously just like looking online at nonprofit websites and stuff like that.

And also Participant Anne who equates reading about law cases and attorneys online as going out of her way to find specific information, when asked, did not know if the sites were credible or not.

Interviewer: Have you gone out of your way now to find out specific information about being a criminal defense attorney?

Anne: Yeah. I've read cases online, and I've read about other attorneys.

Interviewer: Where do you go to find this information?

Anne: On Google.

Interviewer: Okay. How do you know if a site is credible or not when you're Googling it?

Anne: Um . . . I don't know, actually. I don't know (laugh).

A theme that emerged across both proactive and passive categories is that attending class, doing coursework, and, to a lesser extent, using a career center, are the primary information sources for many students, and (besides Internet searches that will be addressed in the next section) many students are not proactively seeking out information about career and professional work outside of the University. Above, in the proactive category, Participant Barb mentioned conducting two Informational Interviews for classes and noted that they were beneficial; this is a theme that is echoed throughout many participant texts.

For example, Participant Chloe stated:

Interviewer: Have you gone out of your way to find out specific information about being an elementary school teacher?

Chloe: Um, not really. Just, I guess, through classes. Then I'll kinda go on the Internet and I'm like, "Oh, I'd like to find more information about that." So I guess just a little bit through the Internet.

And also in the case of Participant Michelle:

Interviewer: Have you gone out of your way to find specific information about being an event planner?

Michelle: Um . . . not too far yet. I've talked to an event planner. Actually, I have a good example. In one of my COMS classes, actually this last fall, one of our assignments was to find somebody in a career path that we were interested in. We have a family friend. A girl that I danced with, her mom is actually a meeting planner back home in St. Paul. So I met with her and interviewed her. I've known her for about seven years now, and she was always close with my mom. It was so interesting to hear her kinda talk about her life in a different . . . you know, and her career.

And later in the interview when asked "which person or resource is the most valuable source of information regarding your future jobs and career," her reply was the event planner she interviewed for the class, although the participant later disclosed that she had only spoken with the event planner once, for the assignment.

Michelle: Specifically the lady that I told you that I interviewed last fall. She's been really important.

In the interview with Esther, guest speakers in class were mentioned as a strong source of information.

Interviewer: Where did you get this information about the different career options for your industry and what you can specifically do in them?

Esther: We learned a lot of that with the classes I've taken, whether facilities and even management, or sport marketing… we have a lot of guest speakers, that's a perk of the major, we have a lot of people come in from the athletic department and talk. So that's basically where you find out what you want to do.

And again, guest speakers are mentioned as a source, along with the idea that most of the information is learned through class.

Participant Cara

Interviewer: Where does the bulk of your information regarding working as a journalist come from?

Cara: From class. Pretty much every journalism class you'll get like four speakers throughout the year that are like working in Kansas City, like KU grads that just graduated, and they come and talk to you and answer your questions. I've actually met a lot of people in just like probably a handful of lectures.

Even applying for jobs can occur without leaving the University as Lindsay noted:

> Interviewer: When you were looking for a job, where did you go for information?
> Lindsay: The place I found most helpful was the University career center on their web site, CareerHawk.com.
> Interviewer: What was helpful about that?
> Lindsay: You can just post your resume on there and when you see a job that you're interested in, you can just hit submit and it sends it directly to them. So, it was really easy and just I do a couple a day and I just find the ones I wanted and it was really easy to get your resume out there and have people look at it.

The use of classes and university services as information sources appears to be easy for the user and has low social costs.

The second theme that emerged from both within and across the interview texts involves delaying information-seeking. Traditionally, college graduates were expected to begin looking for a professional job in their last year of coursework with the ideal of securing a position before graduation. However, some participants in this study reported purposely delaying the process. Two types of delays were reported in the interviews: 1) waiting until the participant has finished his or her college degree to begin searching, or 2) waiting until the individual has already finished his or her degree and feels he or she is ready to begin searching. In regards to the participants' graduation timelines, 13 of the participants had graduated a few weeks before the interviews were conducted, nine were scheduled to graduate about a month after the interviews, and six were scheduled to graduate six months after the interviews.

The first type of delay, not beginning career information-seeking until after graduation, is evident in Participant Noah who at the time of the interview was scheduled to graduate in six months.

> Noah: And I guess I've just learned recently about the hidden job market, how that's 75% of all the jobs, and so networking is probably going to be my #1 tool that I'm going to use. Um, what other tools? I'm definitely going to cruise the classifieds, I still will use monster.com, and I believe there's a social networking site for business professionals. I can't think of the name of the site.
> Interviewer: Is it called LinkedIn?
> Noah: Yeah, LinkedIn. Yeah. I'm definitely going to create an account on that once I graduate—or probably sooner, probably should sooner.

While the participant rephrased his ending remark by noting that he probably should create an account sooner than waiting until he graduates, the interviewer noted in her field notes that she

had involuntarily made an alarmed expression when the participant said he was going to create the account after he graduated. The interviewer believed that her facial expression had influenced the reformatting of that remark. Participant Michelle, who finished her degree a few weeks after the interview, had not yet begun to seek out internship information, and had not yet applied to a single job because she was waiting until she graduated so she could focus on school.

> Michelle: But my thing about it . . . I considered applying to a few jobs or I would say, "I have a goal for myself that by Spring Break I had applied to so many jobs." But then I realized that, in school, unfortunately, it was not very easy my last semester. It was very busy, and I told my mom, I was like, "I need to focus on school right now because I would absolutely hate to find maybe like a really awesome internship and apply to it and not get it because I didn't put all my energy and all my effort into it because I was also focusing on school and other things." I was just like, "I would rather wait it out until I'm completely done, so that can be like my focus 100%, instead of that *and* school."

Many of the participants spoke in future tense about information-seeking, about what they would be doing in the future. For example, Participant Rafael stated:

> I haven't tried it yet, but I would, you know, look into like the Career Builder and those online job sites.

Moving on to the second category, these participants had all graduated at the time of their interviews and were delaying career information-seeking until they felt ready. Participant Sarah had moved back in with her parents at the time of the interview and implied that she felt no sense of urgency to apply for positions in her career field.

> Interviewer: What information have you looked for in regards to your career?
> Sarah: Just information regarding like who are some of the like top agencies or firms in the Denver area and just stuff like that. Nothing too much quite yet because I'm still transitioning from college, I like to say, into the real world. So . . . I don't know.

Even proactive seekers such as Andrea, who had graduated three weeks before the interview, did not display a sense of urgency in finding a professional job.

> Interviewer: How much time do you think you spend per day now (job seeking)?
> Andrea: You know, a half an hour, something like that, just to kinda feel it out.

However, later in the interview Andrea stated that she felt like she should have professional job now that she has graduated.

> Andrea: So I guess I feel, um, just a little bit more on my own because I think that . . . I feel like after college, that's sort of the cut-off, that's when people are like, "Okay, you should go get a job now (laugh), like run along, go get a job." So, um, yeah, I don't know. I just, you know, I wanna get a job and also, you know, want my parents to be

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proud of me (laugh), I guess, you know, see that I've done something, you know, with all that school that they paid for.

While Andrea is seeking out information a half-hour a day, Participant Carrie reported not feeling ready and has not tried to apply for a career position because she just graduated. She is waiting tables to support herself and figures that she will apply when she's bored with her current job.

> Carrie: I come home from work and sit on Google and, like, try to go through careers and try to find things that I'd want to do, and none of it—I mean, not that I think waiting tables sounds appealing, but none of it seems worth making any big change at this point in time. But I realize I just graduated. I mean, I know I'm going to get bored with this waiting-tables thing. Like, it's gonna happen eventually.

Participant Carrie has also reported that while she really is not actively looking, her father has been seeking out information for her and sending it to her.

> Carrie: My dad will send me stuff from Career Builder like every day, but I don't . . .
> Interviewer: Your dad sent you staff from Career Builder?
> Carrie: Yeah, he tries… and I'm like, "Dad, that's not . . . well, he sent me a few things about, like, writing positions. I'm like, "I don't have a journalism degree, Dad." I mean, I'm pretty sure that's what they're going to look for. And I have not applied for a single thing.

However, Participant Carrie is not the only participant who mentioned a parent seeking out career information on their behalf. Scott reported that his mother had sought out career information for him, and Participant Emma reported that her mother had been researching career information and attempting to share it with her. Participant Ethan has not sought out career information and is solely relying on his brother to do it for him. He stated:

> Ethan: So I kinda like explained to my parents that I'm banking on my brother to get me a job in KC to start out because I just feel like he could pretty easily… my brother is already like in the process of finding me an internship.

Overall, just over half of the participants interviewed were passive in their information-seeking. Many of the participants reported their primary source of information came from coursework or attending class. Additionally, some participants are waiting to seek out career information until they are ready, and others may not seek out information at all and instead may have parents or other family members do it for them.

Information-seeking Tactics

      The second part of the second research question investigated the tactics that participants reported for gaining information about professional work and career. The researcher identified all references to information-seeking in each of the interview texts. This data came from the participants' reports regarding their own information-seeking tactics and from advice the participant provided regarding what tactics they would tell their best friend to use. A preliminary coding scheme was developed based upon Miller and Jablin's (1991) Model of Information-seeking Tactics of Organizational Newcomers. The Miller and Jablin (1991; 1996) model was originally comprised of seven tactics, but in further research conducted by Jablin (2001), the seven were reduced to five tactics. These are described by Jablin (2001) as:

1. Overt: Asking for information in a direct manner.

2. Indirect: Getting others to give information by hinting and use of non-interrogative questions. Use of jokes, verbal prompts, self-disclosure, and so on to ease information from the target without the person's awareness.

3. Third party: Asking someone else rather than the primary information target.

4. Testing: Breaking a rule, annoying the target, and so on and then observing the target's reaction.

5. Observing: Watching another's actions to model behavior or discern meanings associated with events or indiscriminately monitoring conversations and activities to which meaning can retrospectively be attributed.

A coding scheme for information-seeking tactics was developed for this project based upon Miller and Jablin's (1996) and Jablin's (2001) descriptions. Overall, four of the tactics were present throughout the transcripts. They were: Overt, Observing, Indirect, and Third party. It is logical that the Testing tactic would not be used because, prior to organizational entry, there is no specific "target" to test. All 28 participants described at least one information-seeking tactic during their interview. In particular, 27 of the 28 participants mentioned that the Internet should be used as an information-seeking tool. Since the Miller and Jablin (1991; 1996) model does not incorporate the Internet, the discussions of the Internet were separately coded, and their analysis will be described later in this chapter.

Table 4.2

Information-seeking Tactics and Internet Use

PARTICIPANT	INTERNET	TACTICS
Esther	Internet: Google and LinkedIn	Overt
Carrie	Internet: Google	Overt
Barb	Internet: websites, databases, Google	Overt
Andrea	Internet: Google searches, sent emails with questions	Observing, Overt
Jennifer	Internet: Wikipedia, Googled, ted.com	Overt
Amanda	Internet: company website, career center website, KC Nonprofit Connect, Kansascity.com	Observing, Overt
Lindsay	Internet: Career builder website, Career Center	Overt
Brad	Internet: Google, Company websites	Overt
Anne	Internet: Google, Law School websites, company websites	Observing, Overt, Third Party
Cara	Internet: LinkedIn, Google, company websites	Overt
John	Internet: Google. Company websites	Observing, Overt
Sarah	Internet: company websites	Overt
Rafael	Internet: Grad school websites, contacts	Overt
Omar	Internet: Google, directories	Overt
Michelle	Internet: Google, Company websites	Overt
Nadia	Internet: Company website, Google	Overt, Third Party
Scott	Internet: Law school websites, Law school ranking sites	Overt, Third Party
Abbie	Internet: Medical school websites	Overt
Dana	Internet: Searches	Overt, Third Party
Ava	Internet: Searches	Observing, Overt
Elaine	Internet: Searches	Observing, Overt
Mike	Internet: Blogs, forums	Observing
Kim	Internet: University websites, Career Center	Overt
Jacob	No Internet: Working for family business	Observing, Overt
Chloe	Internet: Searches	Observing, Overt
Ethan	Internet: Searches	Observing, Overt
Noah	Internet: Searches	Overt
Emma	Internet: Google	Overt

The most common information-seeking tactic was the Overt tactic with 27 of the 28 participants describing this tactic. Furthermore, 15 of the 28 participants mentioned only this tactic, which involves directly asking questions. The majority of the participants mentioned no qualms about directly asking for information. For example, Lindsay not only advocated asking questions but suggested that she would keep asking questions until she understood and received answers to her questions.

> Interviewer: "What will you do if you get a supervisor who is vague in their expectations for you?
> Lindsay: Probably just ask more questions and keep asking questions until I figure out and get my questions answered.

Participant Barb also advocated an overt tactic of asking questions, but specifically through the use of informational interviews.

> Interviewer: If I, as your best friend, needed more information about my career, where would you tell me to go?
> Barb: I would say do an informational interview and ask a person, in whatever field you want, direct questions about what they do. I would do several if you can.

Additionally, three participants indicated that if they did not receive the information they sought, they would just try their best. These participants did not mention the use of any other information-seeking tactics throughout the rest of their interviews.

> Interviewer: How will you find out your supervisor's expectations for you?
> Omar: Um, hopefully when I start my job, they'll be given to me, or I'll have to ask, I guess, just specifically "What do you want out of me? What are you expecting? What are your expectations?"
> Interviewer: What do you do if they're vague or ambiguous, and you don't know really what they are?
> Omar: Just do my best and hope that that's what he's expecting, I guess.

And finally, Participant Emma exemplifies what it means to be explicit in the use of an overt tactic in the following interaction:

> Interviewer: How will you find out your supervisor's expectations for you?
> Emma: Ask them.
> Interviewer: What if they're ambiguous in their answer?
> Emma: I'll say "Why are you being ambiguous (laugh) with your answer?"

Twenty-six of the 27 participants who described an overt tactic did not reference any type of social cost or caution in regards to utilizing an overt tactic. The one exception was Amanda, who warned that being overt may not be well received by a supervisor.

> Interviewer: Who should I talk to, my supervisor?
> Amanda: Um, I think I would say tentatively. I mean, ask questions for sure, but it's not their job to tell you exactly what your job is; you kinda need to do a little research on your own about that.
> Interviewer: So tell me more about that.
> Amanda: Well, I think, you know, you take your cues from people around you. Bosses don't tend to like it when they have to tell you everything and hold your hand.

Additionally, Participant Mike who was the only participant who did not speak of an overt strategy, advocated using a more roundabout strategy. He described the tactics he used during the first year of his internship.

Mike: … The first thing I did for my first year was try to be invisible but try to watch everything so that I could learn what other people do, learn people's names, figure out how people interact with each other… and then use what I found to, because everything is about relationships.

While only two participants addressed the potential costs or benefits of not using an overt strategy, there appeared to be some recognition that overt tactics may not always be the best. Some participants combined multiple strategies to find out information. Actually, 12 of the 28 combined the Overt tactic with at least one additional tactic. For example, Participant Ethan combined Observing and Overt tactics.

Interviewer: How will you find out your supervisor's expectations for you?
Ethan: I feel like I will learn those in the first month of employment through watching others, watching other people in the organization—how they act, how they do task—if I have to, asking him, "What are you looking for in this kind of work? What idea do you want me to go towards in this?" that kind of stuff. Just asking.
Interviewer: Observing and asking?
Ethan: Yeah. Observing and asking.

Andrea also combined Observing and Overt tactics.

Interviewer: Imagine that I'm your best friend. What advice would you give me to be successful at my first job?
Andrea: Um, I would say just, you know, listen to your managers and see how your peers work; ask questions if you have them; don't talk back (laugh). I guess just be ready to listen because you know, you're new; that's what you're there to do, you're there to learn. So I guess I would just say be really observant and ask lots of questions.

Participant Ava combined Observing, and Overt as well.

Interviewer: How did you learn those skills from your part time work at the Kansan?
Ava: I'm a big observer of others. So I would watch my managers and listen in on their conversations and see how they spoke to their clients… And so it's a lot of watching, observing and listening. And also I asked a lot of questions…

Participant Anne went one step further and combined Overt, Observing and Third Party Tactics.

Interviewer: How will you find out your supervisor's expectations?
Anne: Listening, watching, asking questions.
Interviewer: What if they are ambiguous?
Anne Ask other coworkers what is expected, how they handled situations. I learn a lot by example.

Observing was the second most common tactic, reported by 10 of the 28 participants.

The Third Party tactic was utilized by four of the 28, and the Indirect tactic was mentioned by only one. Overall, participants described the importance of listening, watching, and asking questions, with the occasional refrain, "if you do not know something, ask." This is in line with previous studies that have found that organizational newcomers most frequently utilize the overt approach (Comer, 1991; Morrison, 1995).

One issue regarding the Miller and Jablin model is that it does not address the use of the Internet, where social costs and uncertainty in information-seeking may play different roles. The researcher originally attempted to code the Internet Information-seeking descriptions utilizing Miller and Jablin's (1991; 1996) model. However, while some elements of the tactics fit into the coding scheme, overall, it was a poor fit and did not accurately represent the participants' descriptions. For example, a few participants mentioned reading about other peoples' career experiences on blogs, which could be categorized as the tactic of Observing. However, there is a difference in potential social costs between observing someone face-to-face and lurking in a chat room or reading a blog post. Also, a search on Google is not exactly an Overt strategy because Overt tactics are typically described as efficient, providing opportunities to clarify ambiguities, and assisting in relational development with the source, if executed successfully (Berger & Bradac, 1982). However, Internet searches may not clarify ambiguities, and a search alone cannot foster relational development because there is no interaction episode between individuals. Additionally, in the past, individuals may have been less likely to utilize overt tactics because it exposes their uncertainty and they are afraid that the source may not tolerate multiple requests, but there is no exposure or fear in conducting an Internet search (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Goody, 1978). Therefore, the researcher coded Internet Information-seeking through an independent grounded coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Twenty-seven of the 28 participants in the current study reported using the Internet to search for professional work and career information. Categories were tested, collapsed and revised, with three major categories emerging: 1) Internet Searches as a gateway to other career/professional work information-seeking sources, 2) The Internet as the main source of career and work information, and 3) The Internet as a not helpful source regarding career/professional work information.

The first category involves using the Internet as a means to other information sources. Many participants described using the Internet first to find people to call. For example, when Participant Sarah was asked about where to go to find out career information, she replied:

> Sarah: I mean, I guess the Internet, but I feel like that's like the starting point for your search and then you should work out from there. If you find something interesting from there, like go and check it out, call people.

Participant Michelle suggested that the Internet is her number one source of information because it is "easy and accessible," however, she said she uses the Internet to get a concrete start and then moves on to other sources.

> Interviewer: So, you said you looked on the web a lot?
> Michelle That's my number one source. I start there.
> Interviewer: Why?
> Michelle: It's easy and accessible. When I come home at the end of the day, I don't have time to go to the library or anything, and I sit on the Internet and Google something and just start from there. Then when I have a concrete start, you know, journalism kicks in: get the phone number, get the address, call, and go from there.

This idea of using the Internet as the gateway to other sources is echoed by Participants Ava, Dana, and Cara. In addition, other reasons, such as location, were cited as reasons to use the Internet in initial searches. Andrea highlighted the importance of the Internet in conducting her job search in another state.

> Interviewer: Why do you choose to use the Internet?
> Andrea I think it's just so fast and easy. And if I can't be there in person: like I said, a lot of the jobs I'm looking for are in Colorado, and I can't just hop over to Colorado every day: the Internet just makes it so easy and so fast… For specific questions, I would email someone, and for the most part, that seems to work.

Finally, Amanda suggested another reason to use the Internet first: that an individual should use the Internet first to search for information so that she does not waste the time of someone else.

> Interviewer: Why do you look online first?
> Amanda: It's easy. It's just at your fingertips. I can do it myself and kinda do my research first, before I go to someone and waste their time asking them something I could've found out on my own.

In the second category, participants described the Internet as an end source of information, instead of a means, to other sources. Participants suggested that the Internet is a good place to find any type of information. For example:

Interviewer: What kinds of career information is the web good for?
Brad: I think it's good for everything.
Interviewer: Everything?
Brad: Yeah.

When asked the same question, Participant Noah answered:

Noah: Um, you know, I think everything from salary down to, you know, just miscellaneous humor websites. I mean, what can't you find on the Web?! (implying one can find everything)

Additionally, going online is portrayed as the best source of information for a career seeker.

Interviewer: If I'm your best friend and I need more information about my career—where would you tell me to go?
Omar: Probably online again (laugh). Online is huge. If you didn't like your job and wanted to look for something else, I'd say maybe check online for somewhere else that's looking for a similar position, or maybe get a certificate of some sort to do something else to change what you want to do. But yeah, I can't think of a better place. Not a lot of people can specifically be like, "Oh, well, yeah, I can help you."

Moreover, the use of Internet as an information source goes beyond just career and professional work information, as illustrated by Participant Emma:

Emma: But yeah, I use Google all the time, like whenever I have a problem with anything. I'm like, I have this rash; I Google it.

Participant Elaine advocated this same idea with a caveat; one must filter through the abundance of information provided on the Internet.

Elaine: I think you can find anything on the Internet, really. Like I said, I think you have to just dig and try to find it. The more you do, I'm sure the more you'll get out of it… I think the Internet gives you kind of an overload of information and so there is a lot that you need to filter.

The final category was that the Internet as not helpful regarding career/professional work information. These three participants felt that the web was not particularly helpful in regards to their career and professional work. Participant Jacob stated that he did not use the Internet at all in regards to his career, in part because he was going to work for his family's business. Out of the other two participants, Participant Chloe described feeling overwhelmed:

Chloe: So you have to really take the time to sift through and see, I mean, if they're any good. So that takes a lot of time… you can spend hours and then realize that you found nothing…. The Internet you don't know who you are talking to… I use it but I would like to stay away from the Internet because I've found that it's not that helpful.
Interviewer: Why? Tell me more about that.

> Chloe: It's just overwhelming and… I don't know. There are so many different sites out
> there. It's just… I don't know. It's not helpful.

The final participant in this category was Jenn, who felt that Internet searches had not helped her

career.

> Jenn Networking will allow me to do what I want to do… Employer websites are pretty
> useless fluff and I don't really find Googling to be helpful in my career.
> Interviewer: Is there anything you found helpful on the web?
> Jenn: Not really. I guess I may use the web to find trends that are more important, and
> industry trends…

Overall, the results from this research question suggest that graduating college students at

a Midwestern public university may be gaining the majority of their information regarding career

and professional work through their classes or on the Internet. Second, these students report that

they are likely to use Overt, and possibly Observing, information-seeking tactics to gain

information. Finally, these students are using the Internet to conduct searches regarding their

careers and may view the Internet as a gateway to other information sources.

A *Real Job*

RQ 3(a): How do graduating college students at a Midwestern, public university conceptualize
the colloquialism, *a real job*?
RQ 3(b): How do graduating college students at a Midwestern, public university describe their
conceptualizations of a *career*?

The third research question's unit of analysis involved the participants'

conceptualizations of the colloquialism a "real job." Twenty-seven of the 28 participants claimed

familiarity with the phrase "a real job." The one outlier was Participant Jenn who stated that the

phrase was not relevant in the engineering field. Three themes were identified regarding the

conceptualization of a "real job": 1) A "real job" as a career, 2) A "real job" as a problematic and

irrelevant phrase, and 3) A "real job for me" as something participants like to do.

The term career, and the colloquialism "a real job" were often intertwined. Four

participants described "a real job" as a career. For example, Participant Michelle (female,

Communication Studies major) articulated that when she was using the term she meant a career.

> Michelle: You know, to even pick up a part-time job at a restaurant . . . but I'll say I don't
> consider that a real job. Which really isn't correct because I know people work in a
> restaurant as their career and as a real job. But I think when I mean "real job," I mean a
> career.

Participant Ethan also conceptualized "a real job" as a career and when pressed, he had a lot of difficulty defining the term career.

> Interviewer: What do you think is meant by the term "real job"?
> Ethan: A career.
> Interviewer: What does that mean? What does "career" mean?
> Ethan: A salary-based job, like . . . I guess a trade. Like, I wouldn't . . . you know, manager of McDonald's, I don't constitute that much of a career because pretty much any—a lot of people could do that. But like, you know, the business director of something, the . . . you know, just any . . . I guess any position that involves (sigh) I guess more salary-based, critical thinking maybe, more task than procedural stuff.

Additionally, Participant Emma defined a real job as:

> Emma: "like a career… that you could potentially see yourself having for like the rest of your life until you retire, I think."

Finally, Participant Jacob suggested that a "real job" involved career development.

> Jacob: I think people joke around with it a lot. Like now that we're seniors and people are applying for jobs, "we're looking for a real job," like all the other ones that we had weren't real- I mean they are real in a sense but their not your career developing jobs… they're a little extra money in your pocket jobs.

One participant did find the colloquialism helpful as a vehicle to communicate her parent's expectations, but overall felt that there is a slight difference between the phrase "real job" and the term career indicating that a "real job" pays the bills but a career is what you want to do.

> Nadia: It was helpful in the sense that I knew what was expected of me when it was said, "You know, you need to find a real job. You're going to college so you can get a real job."
> Interviewer: Is that why you go to college?
> Nadia: In the beginning, that's what I thought. Now I think, I mean, you're supposed to go to college to pursue the thing that you're passionate about and love in life, learn more about it, and be able to get a… either start your own career or just be able to continue doing what you love with your skill sets, and people will pay for your product or creativity."
> Interviewer: Do you think there's a difference between the term "real job" and "career?"
> Nadia: Slight difference. Real job, I think, can be anything job-related as long as it's providing financially for you, whereas a career is a journey that you take through the workforce into American society.
> Interviewer: What's at the end of the journey?
> Nadia: Where you wanted to end up, where you wanted to be.

Overall, the participants described society's conceptualization of a "real job" as having a "good "salary with benefits, working 9am to 5pm during the weekdays in business attire, full-time, in an office or cubicle, and as requiring a college degree. Two participants also contrasted a "real job" as white collar, while a job that was not "real" was depicted as blue collar. Additionally, a job that was not considered "real" was also referred to as a "doesn't-really-matter job" (Amanda) or a "college job" (Scott). Participant John agreed with the societal definition of a "real job."

> John: Well, I guess the schema involved with that would be like salary, being on salary. Not hourly… Salary, having benefits… not temp work…
> Interviewer: Tell me more about that.
> John: Like fleeting jobs like, you know, you work construction at a site for a week or something, and then you go and do like an administrative assistant job for a month or so. It's like, well, you should get a real job. Something that's going to provide for your family (laugh). And not scrape by.
> Interviewer: What would make a job real for you? Is it any different than those things?
> John: Pretty much everything I just said, yeah. The pay, the benefits, all the stuff that constitutes a real job, I guess, for me.

In contrast, the majority (20) of the participants did not agree with the societal conceptualization and contested it. The participants contested the phrase on two levels: 1) It was derogatory to those who worked jobs deemed "not real," and/or 2) All jobs are real jobs. The first group to problematize the phrase suggested that it undercut workers whose work was deemed "not real." Participant Carrie (female, Communication Studies major) stated that she had learned to monitor her use of the term "real job" around her coworkers when she was waiting tables.

> Carrie: I mean, I feel bad because I say that a lot around people that I work with that don't have—I mean, I've had to kinda learn to monitor that—a few of us have had to—because for some people, that is their real job. And why shouldn't it be a real job to them just because it's not to us?

Additionally, Sarah also agrees that the colloquialism may be disrespectful.

> Sarah: I don't know if it's necessarily a good phrase, because I feel like it almost has negative connotations because it's . . . I don't know, I guess cutting down *not* a real job. Because I even say it myself. I'm like, "Oh, I need to find a real job," like as if my internship isn't a real job.

Participant Cara disagreed with the phrase when her parents recently told her to get a "real job," even though she ended with the idea that a "real job" requires a college degree.

Cara: Well, I don't agree with that phrase. That's what my parents were telling me when I told them I wanted to go be a bartender in Australia for six months (laugh).

Interviewer: So they told you that wasn't a real job?

Cara: Right. And I said, "I have the rest of my life to have a real job." You know? I think I could gain a ton of work experience from anything like that—from waitressing, from . . . You know, like Dr. D'Enbeau, one of my other COM teachers, she said she worked on a cruise ship for a series of months after she graduated, and I was like, "That totally resonates with me because . . . I don't have to be qualified to do it." You know?

Interviewer: Yeah. What makes it real or what doesn't? How do you know if it's real or not?

Cara: I mean, any job is a real job, but I think that . . . something that you need a college degree for would be a real job.

However, the strongest reaction to the phrase, came from Participant Dana who explained that her mom had been a stay-at-home mom for 20 years and now, due to her parent's divorce, had to re-enter the workforce and take a job that many would not consider "real."

Dana: A "real job" is not defined in black and white; it means different things to different people, especially depending upon what your degree is and what career path you think you have laid out in front of you. Some people might only think that business jobs, accountants, and lawyers and doctors and things of that sort are real jobs. Some people may think that real jobs are only jobs held by those that have a college degree… Like, a lot of entrepreneurs, people that want to start their own companies, it's like, "Well, that's not a real job." They're like you can't do something and have fun and think that that's real work. Work should suck, and you should come home and be miserable every night. When really that's not the case and . . . I think that there are real jobs that you don't even get paychecks for… And I just think that the parents of my generation have kind of instilled upon us that you need to be able to support yourself and do well because life is unexpected. I think there are a lot of factors that go into that, whether it be divorce—I mean, speaking from own family, the divorce rate and my mom not having a college education, not having worked for 20 years to be a stay-at-home mom and is having to re-enter the workforce at 45 years old. I mean, that was humbling for her, humbling for me, like humbling for the whole family. So it's just like . . . do I think that she has a real job now? Yeah, because she can pay the bills with it. But would other people look at her and say, "Well, that's not a real job because you're not making X number of dollars" or "you don't get these certain benefits" or "it's not a career, it's just a job?"

The second group argued simply that all jobs are real. For example, Andrea reported:

Andrea: I really think any job is a real job. I guess, just, you know, when people throw that out there, I think they're thinking like, put on a suit, get on the subway, go work 9 to 5. But I mean, I think anything is a real job. I mean, I've worked with people lifeguarding, and that is their real job. Like for me, it's more of, I think, it's like a transitional thing, I'm looking for something else; but for some people, that's their real job. So I actually think anything could be a real job if you want it to be.

Lindsay went so far as to say that she didn't believe in the phrase implying that when a job is not "real" you do not put all your effort into it.

> Lindsay: I don't believe in that term. Because I think every job I have I try to do 100%. So I think it is a real job. But I have had people tell me that it's not a real job.

And Participant Anne summed up, "I mean, I feel like every job has a real-job aspect to it."

The interviewer followed the discussion of the colloquialism with the question, "what makes a job "real" for you?" Many participants reported that a job was real for them if it was simply a job that they wanted to do, not had to do. Take Andrea:

> Andrea: I think that a real job is just something that you want to do and you could see yourself doing 10 or 20 years down the road, no matter what it is... I mean, if that's lifeguarding or working at the daycare where I work. You know, I'm only working there for a little while, but, you know, a lot of people there really love it. All the management and everything, they're really passionate about it. So even though it's not my real job, it's their real job and they love it. For me, I just want to find something I like to do.

Others phrased that a job was "real" to them if they were intrinsically motivated and a job could be real even if it did not pay.

> Ava: My idea of a real job is doing something that I really care about and not just working for a paycheck but actually work where I actually really enjoy what I'm doing and whether it is a volunteering experience where I'm working really hard I'm just not getting paid or I'm doing something like I did at the *Business Journal* (internship), it's something I really believe in and enjoy.

One participant argued that as long as a job fits what an individual needs and is whatever they love, it is real.

> Chloe: The thing about it is, I think that there are a lot of real jobs in the world. It's whatever makes you happy (laugh). I don't know. I'm kinda going back on what I just said. I don't know. I think what society thinks is a real job is different from necessarily what I think a real job is because—I mean, there are so many things. You do need someone to work at a clothing store or work at a fast-food restaurant. So I guess whatever fits whatever you need to be doing and whatever you love.

Finally, Participant Omar concludes that as long as you make a living and enjoy your work, then it really does not matter what type of job you have.

> Omar: I don't know what you can classify as a real job. If you're making a decent living and you're doing something you want to do, like, I think that's … not a big deal… who cares.

A Career

The second part of the third research question investigated the participants'
conceptualizations of the term *career*. Traditionally, a career has been described as "a job or
occupation regarded as a long-term or lifelong activity" (Encarta World English Dictionary,
2009). This long-term orientation of having one career for life was explicitly reported, often
alongside advice that individuals better enjoy or even love their careers since they are going to be
doing it for the next 30 to 40 years. For example, Participant Ethan and Participant Noah both
articulated this concept:

> Ethan: Do what makes you happy, I guess. Do something that you can see yourself doing
> for 30 or 40 years. It's kinda hard to think about, but just something that you already
> love, something you already love.

> Noah: My mom always said that you have to choose a career that you actually enjoy, not
> something that's going to . . . She said to be wise in choosing your career because it's
> something you're going to have to do for the rest of your life, and you have to do
> something that really is for you.

The participants who adhered to this traditional career idea often reported feeling overwhelmed
with the pressure of deciding now what one life-long career they would pursue. As illustrated by
Participant Abbie who said:

> Abbie: Well, it's a huge thing to decide on what you're going to do for the rest of your
> life… I mean, a lot of people aren't doing what they want to be doing, a lot of people
> can't find jobs, some people are stressed out that they're 22 years old and starting their
> work life for the next 40-some years. I mean, that's kind of an overwhelming thought.

In contrast, contemporary conceptualizations of a career were also present in the
interviews. For example, one contemporary is the idea that an individual may have not one, but
multiple careers in their lifetimes. Participant Rafael explained that while he had received
messages about having one career in one organization from his parents, he no longer thought
their messages were relevant. This issue had become a point of debate for him and his parents.

> Rafael: They told me to—their definition of work was finding a place right when you
> were done with school and being there for 30+ years, basically 'til you retire. And
> obviously it's not like that now. I find myself . . . I still have that idea implanted in me,
> just because that's what they always told me, but now it's like I question it more because
> it's definitely not like that now. It is very hard to keep a job sometimes even just for ten
> years. It's very hard. Especially with the economy the way it is, it's just hard for
> somebody to maintain a presence at a particular workplace for that long. So I'm
> constantly, you know, talking with parents. I'll be like, "Well, you know, I don't think

that's the way it is anymore." And, you know, there's just that little debate that we have back and forth. But I'm starting to develop my own understanding of what a career is all about.

Participant Mike stated that what was acceptable regarding career job changes has shifted in terms of loyalty and stability when he compared himself to his parents.

> Mike: I think the most important thing to do is to always be looking for a job, no matter whether you have a job or not, because if you find something that comes along that's better, that's a good opportunity. And most experts, from like the Department of Labor and professors here, tell you that you're going to have 10 to 15 jobs over your lifetime anyway. So from that perspective, I don't feel like it's going to be quite as taboo over the next 20 years in the private sector if you have a resume that's like everywhere, that that's not going to be an issue, because people understand that you transition based on your situation a lot more, where my parents had—my mom worked for two companies her whole life. She's worked at the same company, but they've gotten bought out so many times over and over. And then my dad worked for only two or three companies. And so I think the stability that they've had, I don't think that'll be reflected in the next generation of the workforce.

One participant, Jenn fervently disagreed with the established career idea that she would have only one career in her lifetime.

> Jenn: Do I expect to have one career for any amount of time? Like what I am going to do for the next 50 years…NO! The question is, what am I going to do for next 2 years, the next 5 years and I have learned that it will not be the career I have now… this one will help me in the next career I will have…but I don't think it is necessarily important to whatever my next career will be. Like it will help me figure it out. It will help me get some connections…but I think it won't have any influence on what I will actually be doing… I think that the average person has 3 careers. Things change… So you don't know until after the fact how things are going to work out…that just makes me think, I'll try this…

Another participant articulated that he knew what career he wanted for now, but later had the possibility for change. Participant John articulates that he believes he has the possibility to change careers.

> John: Marketing right now, just because it's what I know and it's still early on. Like, social media is still early, it's still in the early adopter stage. So I feel like that could take off. And I know a lot of companies, actually, they pay their social media managers and directors a lot of money, in the six-figure range. Which is pretty extreme. Yeah, I would kinda like to be in on that whenever it really takes off, but I don't know. I don't really see myself working in marketing for the rest of my life.
> Interviewer: You don't?
> John: No.
> Interviewer: Why?

John: Just because there's a little voice in the back of my head that still is like, "You wanted to be a doctor when you were growing up. You can still do that."

Yet another participant Ethan even recognized and articulated that this idea of changing careers was a contemporary conceptualization and he suggested that it encompassed not only the ability to change positions, but also the ability to change organizations and locations.

Ethan: Currently I would say it's (most valuable career resource) my oldest brother, the one that's in business, just because he did the contemporary way of finding a job and finding careers, (which) is, you know, multiple jobs, like contemporary *now*. He's done like five different positions and traveled from Chicago to . . . just different positions around the U.S. for different companies, that each one has led him to a new spot.

Still others expressed no real urgency or even a need to figure out their career.

Interviewer: What career do you want to have?
Lindsay: I don't know yet.
Interviewer: Any ideas?
Lindsay: I really want to help people. And I enjoy making a difference in someone's day.
Interviewer: How do you think you will find out what you want to do?
Lindsay: Just explore different opportunities. You know, volunteer places…see if I like that. Then the job I have right now I am really interested in, so I think maybe it will be, you know, a fit for me.
Interviewer: Tell me about your job?
Lindsay: I got hired by Farmers Insurance as a claim representative…in the auto department. So it is entry level, and there is a lot of opportunity to move up and stuff and so the place seems really nice, and the people are really, really friendly. It feels homey.

Overall, it appears that both old and new conceptualizations of career are communicated to, and by the participants.

Career values.

Through a variety of questions, the participants were asked about their career values, essentially what was perceived as the most valuable to them regarding their careers. Career values, more broadly and commonly referred to as work values, have often been categorized into five values described below: Intrinsic values, Extrinsic values, Leisure values, Altruistic values, and Social values (Herzog, 1982; Johnson, 2002; Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Twenge, Campbell Hoffman & Lance, 2010).

1. Intrinsic: processes of work, often represented by intangibles such as interest in the actual work, learning opportunities, and opportunities to be creative.

2. Extrinsic: consequences of work, often illustrated by advancement opportunities, salary, security, and prestige.

3. Leisure: work that allows for vacation, free time, and little oversight.

4. Altruistic: work that helps others or contributes to society.

5. Social: work that emphasizes interpersonal relationships

Participants' responses that addressed work values were identified and coded into whichever category best represented their response. Next, the researcher looked for preliminary themes and patterns across the responses. Through constant comparison, the researcher looked for evidence that supported the patterns and themes and evidence that disputed the emerging patterns and clustered the data. Finally, the outliers were addressed, themes were checked for plausibility in regards to other findings and then were finalized. The following theme emerged: 1) Intrinsic values: Career as what I like/love/enjoy and Career as hobby, 2) Extrinsic values: Career as providing money, promotion, and praise, 3) Altruistic values: Career as contribution to others, 4) Leisure values: Career as providing time for travel and family, and 5) Social values: Career as the opportunity to have close relationships with coworkers and be social.

Intrinsic values.

Regarding intrinsic values, the first theme was most pervasive both within and across all of the texts and value categorizations. The theme is "Career as work that I like/love/enjoy," which has a direct link to the most common maxim reported in the first research question. This valued work that individuals love, enjoy, or are passionate about. Many of the maxims that were utilized in the results section of the first research question also fit in this theme. Overall, this theme was expressed in all 28 interviews in differing levels of intensity. For example, many participants highlighted that they *had* to find a career they liked so as to not dread going to work as illustrated by Participants John, Omar, and Elaine.

> John: I also learned that I want to find a career that I like going to everyday. I don't want to go to work and feel like, "Oh man, this is what I'm going to do the rest of my life."

> Omar: You have to like your job. That's the biggest thing. I just think it'd be really hard to get motivated to get up every morning… if I were working full-time, it'd be very hard to get up every morning and go to work if I didn't like what I was doing.

> Elaine: She (mom) told me just to find something that I love, that you don't want to get stuck in a job that you hate, having to get up to every morning and force yourself to go to.

A greater level of intensity regarding this theme was found in the value of enjoyment, or fun, in a career. This was expressed by Participant Sarah who stated that she wants to love what she is doing to the point where it will not even feel like work.

> Sarah: Hopefully, I'll find that this internship that I'm doing the day-to-day for will lead to something where it's what I actually really want to be doing and what I love to do and it won't feel like I'm working.
> Interviewer: So are you saying that work shouldn't feel like it's work?
> Sarah: Right. It should be fun.

Participants Jenn and Rafael also mentioned that their career work should be fun.

> Intervierwer: What things are you looking for in your career?
> Jenn: Doing something that I'm really excited to do… I don't mind putting my time into it. When it doesn't feel like work… when I took a class and it didn't seem like work, we got on TV, and it was fun.

> Rafael: Make sure you do something that you love to do and that you have fun. Because Reuben (professor) had always said, "If you do something that you're so unhappy with, you're going to be like that the rest of your life, and it's going to shape you into something else that you're not." And I think that's one of the things that I have made sure that when I work, or I find a job that I have, that I want to be able to have fun and do something that I really enjoy doing.

When asked what "fun" meant, Participant Rafael went back to what other participants had said about not dreading going to work, but wanting to go.

> Rafael: Fun for me would just be when you go to bed and you wake up in the morning, you're wanting to go to work, like you're not dreading when your alarm goes off. To me, that's fun. That's how I know when a job is going to be the job that I desire; it will be that I want to go to work everyday and do whatever it is I'm going to be doing.

Another level of the Career as what I like/love/enjoy theme, was represented by the idea that individuals should not just like their careers, they should make them happy, as illustrated by Participants Michelle and Barb.

> Michelle: … but we (friends) all talk about how, you know, we need to do what makes us happy and that's the first priority.

> Barb: I mean, they're (friends) are kind of confused themselves and in the same boat that I am, but we all talk about how, you know, we need to do what makes us happy and that's most important.

The second theme, which is really an extension of the first theme, is the conceptualization of a career as the extension of a hobby or leisure activity that the individual enjoys. At first

glance, this theme seems like it should be put in the Leisure values category; however, the Leisure value does not encompass work as play, but instead argues that work should allow time for play outside of work. This idea of career as a hobby or leisure activity most likely stems from advice such as "Follow your passion," which encourages individuals to pursue careers that foster enjoyment. For example, Participant Carrie lamented that she does not have a hobby that translates into a career.

> Carrie: It's like some people just know like, "I want to do hair," and so then they go do hair. And Lauren loves to cook, so she has her degree and now she's gonna go to culinary school. But I don't know if I have a hobby that you can turn into a career right now.

Participant Anne also drew on the idea of career as hobbies as she describes the semester she took off to find out what career she wanted to pursue.

> Anne: I felt really lost for a while, and I think that was a lot of the reason why I took a semester off from school, just to kinda find myself and find what I like to do and reevaluate my friendships and get into new ones and find my friends from home, you know? And it helped a lot being home, because I found hobbies that I enjoy doing now that I never would have done before.

A career as an extension of a hobby or leisure activity may also be found in the transcripts when the researcher asked a variation of the following question: "I am your best friend and I'm not sure what career I want to pursue, what advice would you give me?" Overwhelmingly, the advice began by the participant asking "what do you like to do?" implying that what the individual enjoyed doing is a good way to find a career. For example Nadia:

> Nadia: Well, I would say make a list of things that you like to do and then start forming ideas of how that could be turned into a job, a career, and then research those fields and paths based on your list.

This advice was also repeated by Participants Ava, Abbie, and John.

> Ava: I would ask you what types of things you like: Do you like the classes that you're taking? In your head, do you have a dream job? Is there something you really love doing?
> Abbie: I'd probably say make a list of things that you like to do or things that you're good at and… I don't know… You could take a career test type thing.
> John: I guess just have a conversation with your family, your friends, you know, and they would ask you like "What do you want to do? What do you like to do? What don't you want to do?

Esther even provided this same line of advice for herself.

> Esther: And so for me, it's like what do I like to do, that's where I need to start.

In a similar vein, Participant Nadia when asked what career she really wants answered that she had too many interests, which made career selection difficult.

> Nadia: I don't know. Like I said, I have too many interests.

Overall participants described that a career should be something that the individual likes, enjoys or makes them happy, or at the minimum, is something they do not dread. However, there was on outlier. In contrast to the other participants, Participant Noah described that a career was not necessarily about enjoyment.

> Noah: I know that my sister hated her internship, and they were very rude and mean to her there, but she had to stick with it. And so I guess that's kinda what I've learned about careers: Even though you don't enjoy it, you have to stick with it until you can have another job lined up, and it's important to just keep on doing what you're doing.

Yet, implicit in his statement is that it is okay to find another job that you like and then leave. In fact, later in the interview, Participant Noah said that it was important for him to find a career he enjoyed. The participant appeared to be suggesting the idea that even if a person does not like a job, he or she cannot quit without having another job, which is not contradictory to the theme of doing what one enjoys. Instead, it just delays it. Other intrinsic values that were mentioned included valuing: 1) Learning experiences at work (Participants Barb, Anne, and Dana) and 2) having a sense of accomplishment (Participants Brad, Mike, Amanda, and Noah).

Intrinsic and extrinsic values.

The most pervasive theme in the Extrinsic Values category is money in the form of salary or pay. However, one question asked by the interviewer often incorporated both the extrinsic value of money and the intrinsic value of happiness. This question was "How will you know if you are successful?" The answers ranged from entirely intrinsic, to both intrinsic and extrinsic, to entirely extrinsic. The first level's answers connected to the previous theme of liking, loving or enjoying their careers, and most participants at this level said they would be successful if they were happy, as demonstrated by Participants Barb, Lindsay, Brad, Anne and Cara.

> Barb: I'd say if I was happy.

> Lindsay: That I am happy and that I am wanting to wake up and go to work everyday. I am not really successful that I have to make this amount of money. If I am enjoying what I am doing then I am content. That's when I will know that I am successful.

> Brad: If I am happy… That's success to me. I want to remain happy.

Anne: If . . . if I can find a job that I'm happy with.

Cara: If I'm happy. I don't know. If I'm happy, I'm successful.

The second level involved the same intrinsic value, happy, with the extrinsic value of money. The key to success was represented by being happy and by having money. This theme was often represented by participants reporting that they would be successful if they were happy and if they had enough money to support themselves and/or their families. For example, Participants Sarah, Andrea, and Amanda all mention this combination of values.

> Sarah: I guess if I'm experiencing happiness, and if it's what I am truly loving, and if it's paying me enough to still support myself and being able to do what I want, I guess that's how I would know I'm successful.
>
> Andrea: … you know, I hope that I just make enough to get by and that I'm happy with what I'm doing.
>
> Amanda: Ten years from now, I mean, I want kids and a family, and I want to be able to, you know, take them on family vacations and do kinda the extra things in life that, like, I've always been able to do, I want to be able to provide for my own family. Financial stability is important… Also, it's more like intrinsically if I'm happy where I'm at. I want to be at a place in my life that I'm happy.
> Interviewer: What do you mean by "happy?"
> Amanda: For me, like, intrinsic rewards are huge, so if I personally am content with what I'm doing, it's not something that I… like a job that I wake up and want to go to work in the morning, not necessarily a job that I wake up and I'm like (sigh) I have to go to work. Like that's huge for me. I don't want to ever do that.

Additionally, Participant John went beyond just providing for this family and mentioned that he wants to be wealthy and be happy.

> John: Well, there's the obvious financial factor. Wealth, I guess. But also how satisfied I am in my job.
> I: And how will you know if you're satisfied?
> John: Yeah, if I'm happy with what I'm doing, if I don't dread going to work everyday.

Other participants combined multiple values, like Participant Nadia who combined the intrinsic value of happiness with two extrinsic values, money and status.

> Nadia: I'd be happy… I'm not going to lie: I do care about money. I do.
> Interviewer: Money- wise, what is success?
> Nadia: Being able to afford the things that… I don't want to have to want for anything to have regrets about anything. I don't want to have to feel ashamed of what I'm doing at my ten-year reunion or be embarrassed to say what I'm doing.

Additionally, Participant Noah combined Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Leisure values.

> Noah: I think the number one thing I want is a career that I enjoy. That's probably the most important for me. A career that's both meaningful to me and something that is enough so I can provide for my family salary-wise… If it allows me to live the life I want to live, if it allows me to, you know, provide for my family, allows me to travel, allows me to have my leisure time… something along those lines.

Extrinsic values.

The final level focused upon the importance of money solely as an extrinsic value.

However, some emphasized it more than others. For example, Participant John was asked about

what he would find most meaningful in his first professional job. He stated:

> John: The paycheck. The first paycheck coming in (laugh). The first real paycheck. And benefits… And not having—and some, like, self-sufficiency. Just because, you know, right now I'm living off my parents just because I don't have . . . I'm still in school. I don't have time to get a job. Financial independence (laugh).

Both Participants Dana and 10 mentioned the importance of maintaining the lifestyles they had

when they were living with their parents.

> Cara: Obviously money… paying my bills, my rent, having good credit and . . . if I can recreate my lifestyle that I live now and in high school and just like maintain and enhance, that would be really great (laugh). Like, I don't want to feel like, ugh, those were the days, when I lived with my parents and could spend money. You know what I mean?

> Dana: That I could still sustain the lifestyle that I had had previously with my parents.

Participants also mentioned pay when asked, "In 10 years from now, what do you think will be

most meaningful about your career?" Again, making money was considered a meaningful

activity by Participants Omar, Jacob, and Scott.

> Omar: Um, I'd like to be hopefully making around $80,000- 100,000 and be established and kinda settled down…

> Jacob: Probably financials… I want to be able to hunt and fish when I'm 45 whenever I want. You know, as I grow up… grow up that sounds great -I'm 22, but having a family, wife, and make sure my kids are cared for and financially set. I want them to have the same opportunities that I had when I was growing up… I want to be able to provide for them…

> Scott: I want to be making a respectable amount of money.
> Interviewer: What is a respectable amount of money?

Scott: (laugh) I think respectable is like somewhere between $60,000 and $70,000, after ten years of being in a profession, especially if you're at the same place. I will be successful if I'm where I wanted to be when I went into, let's say, into law school, if I'm making the money I feel I should be making, and if I've made the right progress, then I'd feel like I was successful.

Participant Emma said that it would be meaningful if she was paid for her writing.

Emma: You know, that would be nice if I could get like get some money from my writing or something.

While pay was the most widely reported Extrinsic value, another theme that emerged was the desire to be promoted. Four participants expressed that it was important or meaningful to be promoted. This value was most often expressed simply, as Participant Kim states:

Kim: I want to be promoted… maybe to a supervisor or something.

Another theme found in Extrinsic Values collected around receiving praise, or admiration. Some participants articulated that receiving praise or an award would be meaningful to them in their careers. Participant Chloe mentioned that it would be meaningful for her to win a teaching award.

Chloe: I mean, it would be great to win like, you know, an award—Kansas Teacher of the Year. I mean that would be wonderful. Being respected in the job, in my school, being that teacher that everyone can rely on and go to, well known in the teacher community.

Additionally, she mentioned that her career choice, being an elementary school teacher, would be meaningful because of the admiration she will receive from her students.

Chloe: But then again, just going into the classroom every day and knowing that you have those students that just look up to you and admire you and just want to be your best friend… hopefully.

Lindsay also feels that it is meaningful to receive praise at work.

Lindsay: You know getting praised by someone saying "you're doing a good job"…and a customer saying "thanks for the help."

Participant Noah states that he is intrinsically motivated and then names the extrinsic value of praise.

Noah: You know, I think the most typical answer would be to say like my first paycheck, but I don't think that would be it at all. I think I'm definitely intrinsically motivated, and so the mere fact of having a job and . . . I think I am quite motivated from . . . receiving approval and praise from my superiors.

Overall, Extrinsic Values were displayed through three main categories: pay, promotion, and praise or recognition.

Altruistic values.

For this category, there was one main theme, which consisted of the general concept of contributing to society. Within this theme were three categories. The first consisted of wanting to "help others" and "make a difference" generally speaking. The second addressed the desire to contribute so as to be recognized as invaluable, important, or admired by others. The third illustrated the desire to contribute, so as to feel good.

The first part of this theme involves the idea of helping others or making a difference. This idea was expressed in similar, basic ways by Participants Rafael, Elaine, and Amanda.

> Rafael: But I think now my idea of working will be to do something that I love doing, where it's helping people and making a difference, and now that's what I'm concerned about, is finding a job where I can do that—and also have fun.

> Elaine: It was that wanting to be able to help other people and working with people, because I know I didn't ever want to sit behind a desk all day and just do paperwork. I wanted to interact with people because I really like working with people. And so I knew that that was a job that would allow me to do that and I could also help people in the process of it.

> Amanda: I think that there are more rewards that you get from work rather than just monetary or prestige. There are a lot of intrinsic—that you can take intrinsic rewards from them, as well, if you'll let yourself see that side of it.
> Interviewer: What intrinsic rewards have you taken from your experiences?
> Amanda: For instance, working with (nonprofit organization), like those children, like you knew you were making a big difference in their lives. So, for me, like, that was huge, like I would rather do something like that at a lower pay scale than do something that I hate and don't really feel like I'm making much of a difference at, at a higher pay scale.

Contribution also manifested as the desire to be viewed as invaluable, important, or admired by others. As illustrated by Participants Cara, Barb, John, Mike, and Carrie.

> Cara: Hopefully just I'll feel satisfied with the work I've done and feel like I've contributed to that company a lot, that they need me, that they wouldn't have done it without me, and maybe actually have tangible evidence of that.
> Interviewer: What would be tangible evidence?
> Cara: Oh. Maybe like if it's advertising campaigns that I've contributed to, and be like proud of them. Or articles I've written or . . . Just things like that.

Barb: Um, well, professionally, I would like to have a pretty stable, established position, where, you know, I have kinda build a family relationship with my coworkers, built a respect, and then also done a lot of good for the company. I don't know what that would be necessarily yet, but just really made changes in the company that were really rewarding for everyone.

John: Well, obviously, the main goal is to get paid, at least in my profession. But I also want to do things that, I mean, not necessarily help other people, but . . . I mean, because I don't really know how you can help other people in an online marketing firm, but I want to do something that means something for the productivity of society (laugh) and contributes in some way.
Interviewer: And how do *you* hope to contribute to society?
John: I want to know that my work is actually doing something productive and not something that could be done without, you know? Like, marketing really helps get products or services out to the public and make them more aware. So I guess that's kind of rewarding, just because if not, then people wouldn't know about it. But I don't know. I guess that's the only way (laugh).

Mike: I want a job that I actually care about what I'm doing, not just be a pencil pusher. So if I have to take less money to find that, then I'd be willing to do that if I feel like what I contribute is viewed as important.

Carrie: I hope that I have a job, and I hope that I don't mind going to it. I hope I like it. I hope that I have some pride in it. I would hope that it, like, kind of helps people somehow, but it doesn't have to be, like, directly.
Interviewer: So it doesn't mean like—what do you mean it doesn't have to help them directly?
Carrie: Mmm . . . like it doesn't need to be like I give children food and water. Like, there doesn't need to be a direct thing. It's like part of the work that I do contributes to these things and people recognize the important work I've done.

Still other participants described their desire to contribute because it makes them feel good as illustrated by Participants Andrea and Sarah:

Andrea: I hope that I could just offer something to somebody else that maybe they couldn't get otherwise, you know, even if it's just a connection to somebody else who knows more than I do. I like helping people, and I like seeing them—you know, I like making people smile, so I hope that happens in the future… Well, like I said earlier, I just get a good feeling from helping other people. Money is not the most important thing in the world to me, so I would like to do something that makes me feel good (laugh), you know, if I'm not getting paid a lot of money. And I just think that there are so many good organizations that do so many good things, like I would love to help out.

Sarah: Personally, I think (nonprofits are) more fulfilling because you get to see the benefits of it, whereas like paid, yeah, you're getting paid to do it, but it's not necessarily for a good cause, I guess, whereas for nonprofits, it's more like fulfilling because you

know what you're doing is actually helping benefit other people, which is . . . it just makes me feel better about myself, and it helps you just realize that there are more important things out there rather than making the profit.

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2010), the word *altruism* means "unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others." Even though participants expressed that they wanted to help others or make a difference, the majority of participants did not describe "unselfish regard or devotion to the welfare of others." Instead, they described a tension of wanting to help others but also to be self-oriented. This tension made the categorization process difficult because it was debatable whether these passages should be categorized as extrinsic values, in regards to the participant valuing the status from helping, or remain categorized as altruistic values.

Leisure values.

Leisure values made up only a small portion of the participants' values. This value was displayed by two Participants, Cara and Noah, when they referenced having time off from work to travel. Participant Cara explained:

Cara: Hopefully be making a lot more than I did when I started (laugh) and, you know, with enough credibility to like be able to travel and . . . yeah, time to travel.

Additionally, Participants Elaine and Cara yet again, mentioned having flexibility in their work so they could attend to family responsibilities, as explained by Participant Elaine:

Elaine: That I'm happy and that I have a flexible enough schedule to where I can have a family later on and have enough money to support myself and my family no matter how large or small I want it.

Finally, Participant Carrie stressed that she wanted free time for other things in her life besides work.

Carrie: My hairdresser has this thing on her mirror, and it said—I'm gonna butcher this, so I might have to say it twice: "Work to live. Don't live to work." Or something like that. And I kinda like that. I wish that . . . like yes, you have to have a job because you have to pay for stuff. But I don't think that . . . I want to like what I do but I just think that there's gotta be more.
Interviewer: There's gotta more to life than work?
Carrie: Yeah.

Social values.

Social values were also a small portion of the reported values by participants. Social values focus upon interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Participant Barb utilized the metaphor of a family to describe the type of relationships she would like to have with her coworkers.

> Barb: That's actually one thing that I really value, and that's why I kinda also got into nonprofits, that's one of the reasons: because the people tend to be more laid back, or at least close with each other, and it's less of a corporate, you know, world. I mean, I know that in those businesses, as well, people can be very, very close. But nonprofit may be a little smaller, and so it's more tight-knit, like a family.
> Interviewer: Mmm hmm. So you're looking for that tight-knit kind of community?
> Barb: Mmm hmm (affirmative response)

Another participant, Andrea simply reported the desire to be social and interact with people at work.

> Andrea: Well, I know now more than ever, I guess, that I like working with people. At the jobs that I've had, I've been able to, you know, hang out with other people; I wasn't just alone by myself in a cubicle. So I like getting to know people and being social.

Participant Elaine also focused upon valuing the social aspect of work.

> Elaine: It was that wanting to be able to help other people and working with people, because I know I didn't ever want to sit behind a desk all day and just do paperwork. I wanted to interact with people because I really like working with people.

Career Socialization: I Know What I Don't Want

In addition to articulating what the participants wanted or valued in their careers, they were just as vocal about what they did not value. A theme of "Career as What I Don't Want" materialized. The following themes were identified: 1) I don't want to be bored, 2) I don't want to hate my job, and 3) I learned what I don't want from my own experiences.

Participant Esther reported that she does not want a career where she is bored.

> Interviewer: What things are most important to you when you think about your career?
> Esther: Not being bored going to work. I've worked 9-5 in an office over winter break or spring break and I hated it. Absolutely hated it. Staring at the clock… mind numbing work. And if I have to get a 9-5 after I'm done, then I'm going to have to do it, suck it up, make money, make my rent, but I want that… I want to go to a job where I have fun.

Participant Jenn echoes the concern of boring work.

> Interviewer: What do you think will be the most challenging parts of your first job after, now that you graduated?

Jenn: Not getting bored. As an entry level person, you're going to be doing entry level tasks…a lot of them will be menial and not have a lot of significance on the overall project and not getting disheartened by that…not letting that influence my view of what the next month will bring…so just following the initial stages of being an entry level person is going to be the toughest… paying my boring dues.

Participant Sarah also said that she likes to be entertained and that it is very challenging to be motivated when work is boring.

Sarah: I guess maybe sometimes it can get pretty boring if you do the same thing day-to-day. For me, I like to keep myself entertained. So hopefully, I can find a job like advertising or marketing where it's not usually the same thing day-to-day or sitting at a desk all the time. Because I think that that's the hardest part, is trying to keep yourself motivated to work when it's boring…

The second theme is the flip side of like/love/enjoy your job, which is not hating it.

Participant Carrie explained that she does not hate waiting tables and is afraid that if she gets a professional job she will hate it and feel like she failed.

Interviewer: What is your biggest concern about making the transition to work, to professional work?
Carrie: Not liking it.
Interviewer: Tell me more about that.
Carrie: I guess I feel like, in a way, if I just keep—I know I don't like waiting tables, but I don't hate it. So if I go do something else and I don't like it, and I have to come back to that, then I'm gonna feel like I failed. So, I guess, until I can find something that I know I'm not gonna hate—because when I put that apron away, I don't wanna get it back out. Like, I don't wanna have to go back to that. So I guess I'm scared of it not working.

Additionally, Participant Omar stated that he will not work a job he hates.

Omar: If I'm coming home from work not happy, and having a hard time getting up because I hate my job so much, it's not worth it. I will quit.

Participant Emma said it is difficult to find a job that's not horrible and that she would not hate.

Emma: But also, it's been difficult to try to find something, like a job, other than all of these horrible jobs that I've been like seeing people live, you know, and like the really creepy image that I have of like a cubicle environment, you know. It's been hard to find something that's like—I don't know—more similar to my interests that I would want to do, that I wouldn't hate and that exists out there. That is difficult for me to find.

The third and largest theme involved participants learning what they did not want through their own experiences. Often participants described their work experiences as teaching them what they

do not want. Participant Carrie described how working in the restaurant business had taught her that she does not want to be in that industry.

> Carrie: The customer is right and the employer is right. Like, I feel like sometimes you just can't win. In a way—I know I've been there for almost 3-1/2 years… but in a way, I still feel like I'm very replaceable—body-wise. But he's (supervisor)—I mean, he's pulled me in his office a few times and told me that I'm one of the best he's seen in all of his time of owning the restaurant, but . . . he's not—he's the first person to tell you when you're doing something wrong, but he'll never tell you when you're doing something right, so… I used to think that I wanted to own a restaurant or bar, and I still think that maybe, possibly someday I'd want to do that . . . But, oh man, working in restaurants makes me want to stay away from it. Like, I *don't* want to do that.

And later with her internship, she also discovered what she did not want to do.

> Carrie: (I interned) for an apartment complex in Manhattan… I felt like I sat around a lot. I didn't really think that they needed me to be there. I had a few projects that I did, like we handed out 1000 kazoos at a festival and we made bags and distributed them around town, but that only took like two weeks; the remainder of it, I was filing papers and answering phones. So I decided that I know I don't want to do that.

Other participants also discovered through work experiences what industries they did not want to work in. This lesson of learning that they do not want to work for an entire industry is illustrated by Participants John, Omar, and Elaine. Specifically, Participant John learned that he hated retail from his work experience and he never wants to work in that industry again.

> Interviewer: Did you work in high school, when you were in high school?
> John: I worked retail. My first job was at a grocery store called Food Lion. And then I worked at American Eagle for the remainder of my high school years.
> Interviewer: What did you learn about work from those experiences?
> John: That I hated it (laugh), especially retail. Oh man, retail is horrible.
> Interviewer: What makes it horrible?
> John: The times of the year, and then management, mainly. My managers were horrible. They were like slave drivers; that's the best I can compare it to. Like, low-wage, a lot of work, like way overworked. I mean, we had to do floor sets probably once or twice a month, and we'd have to stay overnight and all this stuff. Yeah.
> Interviewer: Wow. What did you learn from it?
> John: I did not want to do that (laugh). I didn't want to work in that industry ever again.

A similar experience occurred with Participant Omar who learned he did not want to be in the food industry.

> Omar: It showed me the value of money. I remember just like my first day working like six hours of intensive dishwashing . . . and carrying dishes and being just this little guy and getting like $25 or something (laugh). And it was just like, oh, that is so not worth it (laugh). I mean, I don't know how much being a dishwasher did, because that didn't last,

and I think I was too focused on thinking how much it sucked, more than like absorbing stuff (laugh), but . . . yeah.

Interviewer: So what did you learn?

Omar: I learned I don't want to be in the food industry (laugh).

And Participant Elaine swore off working with food after her work experience at age 14.

Interviewer: Tell me about your work experience.

Elaine: Well, I started working when I was 14. I worked at the pools in my hometown. I swear I never want to work with food again after that experience, just because it was gross (laugh). So I have never worked at a restaurant or anything like that because of that.

Besides learning about what industries they did not want to work in, some participants learned that status was important to them by experiencing low status jobs. **Amanda** learned what types of work she does not want to do, and specifically how she does not want to be treated, from her work experiences.

Interviewer: What did you learn about work from those experiences, from your experience as a server or bartender?

Amanda: I learned (laugh) that I didn't want to be doing that forever.

Interviewer: Why?

Amanda: I didn't like the work stress. It was a different kind of stress, as opposed to like more of a 9 to 5 type of job.

Interviewer: How is it different?

Amanda: The people you deal with treat you differently, and I definitely didn't like that. Because I come from a really well-educated family, for the most part, and I am an intelligent person; and people tend to treat people that are servers, regardless of knowing any background on them, a lot worse, which I don't like (laugh). I know I don't want that for my career.

In addition, Participant Ethan said that he did not want low status work.

Interviewer: What did you learn about work from working at the YMCA and washing cars at the dealership and working at Chili's as a server?

Ethan: Well, I feel like all my positions in those were always lower ranked; I was always around—I don't know. I guess I wouldn't say like inferior, but people that were just— that was going to be their career or they were going to be in the food industry for their life, and so I always kinda felt that—I don't know—it wasn't for me. Just intellectual-wise, I felt like if I didn't have like my friend there with me working at the restaurants, I would have hated it a lot more. Like, the people were just a lot older than me.

Interviewer: What do you think you learned?

Ethan:… I knew exactly that I didn't want to go into that kind of work. And I guess I also just . . . I know the type of like factory work, the busy work is not—I just don't really like busy work. I like projects. I like to see something through to the end and contribute major to it, instead of just serving a table of five and they leave.

The previous statement from participant Ethan mentioned wanting more intellectually-oriented work which was also expressed by Participant Anne. She learned that she wanted a more challenging job after her experience as a receptionist.

> Brad I was a receptionist at a cable wiring company before I worked for the law office.
> Interviewer: As a receptionist, was it a good experience?
> Brad: Um . . . it was boring. It really . . . it showed me that, um . . . I don't know. I mean, it was my first job, and so it was very easy and very slow-paced. And I'm a go-getter; I like to always be doing something. Being a receptionist, you answer the phone whenever the phone rings, and pour coffee, and I just kinda sat there and said, "This isn't for me." Like, I have a brain, I have skills. So, I mean, it helped me understand that there are jobs out there that need to be taken care of, but they didn't really interest me.

Many participants described the process of finding their career by a process of elimination. For example, Participant Cara had thought she knew the type of career that she wanted until she saw what the career was like. Participant Cara said she does not know what career she wants, but she has been able to discover career paths she does not want.

> Cara: I can like cross things off.
> Interviewer: Okay. What have you crossed off? Just an example?
> Cara: Probably I think I really wanted to work for an ad agency. And now I'm not so sure about that. Ethically, morally . . . it's really a lot of work, it's very long hours, it's very competitive, it's very low pay, and it's not interesting to me, I'm not making a difference in the world. I want to do something where I make a difference.
> Interviewer: How do you know all that about ad agencies? Where did you learn about that?
> Cara: Definitely from the journalism school. They really show you how the structure of it is. And I've gone on like walk-throughs at the agencies in Dallas, and I've talked to a lot of people that work there, and that's what I thought I wanted. And it is cool. When you walk in there, it's all exciting, there is a bar, there is like a Starbucks in there, it's like crazy nice, and these people are like literally . . . so exhausted. These people seem like they have . . . Their life is work. I mean, that's obvious. They're passionate about it and they're good at it, but that's their life. If they're on the Pepsi account, that's their life. And I don't want anything like that.

Internships were also invaluable teachers of what an individual does not want in a career. For example, Participant Michelle spoke about what she learned about work environment from her internship.

> Michelle: I will definitely not have an office job where you sit in a box. It's something that the internships definitely taught me.
> Interviewer: That's what you don't want?

Michelle: I do not want to sit in a box all day (laugh) and do the same thing over and over.

Additionally, Participant Dana took a Goldilocks approach in her three internships, trying out internships and discovering that she did not want a job there, until she found a career path that was just right.

Dana: I worked with Sea Ray, who was one of their major clients at the time, and got to do some video shoots and work on some promotional pieces for magazines. But with the economy, so went the boating industry. So that wasn't a venue that I obviously wanted to pursue, but I think I've learned something from all of them. Obviously, that company had all of its eggs in one basket with that major client, and when they went down the tube, the company did as well. Then, moving on to Momentum, I loved the agency. I thought that I would like working with 250 people in an office. But then when I realized that I knew names but didn't necessarily know faces or, you know, knew a client but didn't necessarily know who worked on that team or . . . They were a worldwide agency, so you could be talking to someone in New York and sending your work to London the next day, and you're . . . I never really felt connected enough there. So that's when I realized that was too big. So then the magazine, I really, I guess, learned more things about the business aspect, because once I was there for six or eight months, I started to realize that they were really losing money when they could be making money, simply because trades and deals were being made and clients were being sold short, so, I mean, negativity in terms of the way the business was being run. So I knew that that wasn't a place that I wanted to stay. I mean, I loved what I did, but I didn't feel good about the company I was working for. And then the company that I'm with now in my professional job, I really like their mantra of working with good people and being good to people. They treat their clients the same way that they want to be treated, and I think there's something to be said for that.

Not only did the participants learn what types of careers they do not want to go into, they also learned what types of people they did or did not want to work with. For example, Participant Kim:

Interviewer: When you were in high school and you worked at the egg farm and the coffee shop, what did you learn about the world of work from that experience?
Kim: I learned that it takes a lot of time and effort (laugh). I think the biggest thing I learned from the egg farm is that I never want to do manual labor as long as I live because it was awful.
Interviewer: What about the coffee shop? What did you learn about work from the coffee shop?
Kim: I think I learned mostly from the coffee shop about who I wanted to work with and not work with. I had a lot of issues with my bosses (laugh). My immediate supervisor was a really nice guy, but the owners did a lot of kinda shady things.
Interviewer: Can you give me an example?
Kim: (laugh). Well, okay. So we had a tip jar. And they kept all our tips.

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Interviewer: They didn't give you your tips?

Kim: No (laugh). And they were using them to like keep the place . . . like it was in the first year that it was open, so they were kind of using it to like keep afloat, I guess. Of course, they weren't like, you know, announcing that money in their income, which . . . is kind of fraud (laugh). We had a big kind of ordeal about it, and then it didn't . . . yeah…

Interviewer: So what did you learn about interacting with supervisors from that?

Kim: I learned, I guess, what I don't want to do (laugh) when I'm a supervisor… and that I don't want supervisors like that.

Volunteer experiences were also reported as providing insight into what a person does not want to do. Lindsay learned what she did not want to do from volunteering.

Interviewer: Did you ever do volunteer work?

Lindsay: I did Big brother Big sisters. I was …a teacher for little kids…

Interviewer: So what did you learn from that experience?

Lindsay: I don't know…it was fun. I really enjoyed working with the kids…it just wasn't for me. I learned that I did not want a career working with kids.

Overall, many participants reported that their initial work experiences taught them only that they did not want to do that type of work, or work in that particular industry. Others learned that they wanted a job where they could do what they loved and are happy that they do not have to work in a job they hate.

Interviewer: What have you learned about work from your all of your experiences? Like Global Café and working at Dairy Queen and at the packaging company and coffee shop and hostess for the Texas Roadhouse, what have you learned about the world of work?

Emma: I don't know. It just made me not want to be involved in like the working process. You know, at least it's over (laugh). I don't ever want to do that kind of work again and I probably won't have to because I have a degree. But I feel like some people have to do it for like all their lives and it's just kind of . . . It sucks for them.

Overall, all participants reported learning at least something about what they did not want or did not value at work. Many reported trying to narrow career fields by a process of elimination, essentially by ruling out what they do not want.

Delayed Adulthood

The final theme that emerged regarding the conceptualization of *career* was the idea that participants, as college graduates, were not ready to begin their careers after college graduation and needed more time to negotiate the transition. Scholar Jeffery Arnett (2007) has labeled this phenomenon as "Emerging Adulthood." Arnett (2007) describes it as a new phase now common in industrialized nations, where individuals take longer to reach adulthood milestones, such as beginning a career. He argues that young individuals now make key decisions more gradually

than previous generations. The delay in beginning a career can be seen in many of the transcripts. For example, Participant Carrie graduated in May and in June when the interviews took place had not applied for a single job. She explained that she is not ready to have her career figured out.

> Carrie: I'm not really—I think about it, and if I were to get a job that started June 1st, I don't know if I'd more excited or less excited. Because then it kinda feels like it's all figured out. And I don't know if I'm ready for it to be figured out, in a way. Because it kinda seems like once you start, you don't stop then.

Not being ready to have a career was also expressed by Participant Michelle (female, Communication Studies major) who mentioned that she just graduated and that she and her friends are not ready yet to move on.

> Michelle: But the thing about my friends and I, jobs and career are something we don't really like to bring up at the moment.
> Interviewer: Because?
> Michelle: I'd say because—well, and just because we graduated and that was, you know, a big deal and it's kind of an emotional thing, and maybe some of us just aren't ready to move on, and the fact that it is kind of hard. So I think it just kind of varies from each friend…

Lindsay reported that she is not in a hurry to figure out her career.

> Interviewer: Do you feel pressured to do certain things after you finish your degree or to do a certain career path?
> Lindsay: Not really. I changed my major four different times. I still maybe know it might not be what I want, so I am just not in a big hurry to figure it out. I have time.
> Interviewer: Does it bother you that you do not know?
> Lindsay: No.

Other participants cited not being prepared and not being mature enough or old enough to start a career yet, even though they had graduated or were about to graduate.

> Ethan: But mostly it's just because I'm not prepared. I don't know. I think I just need to be more mature and older, just wiser, I guess. Get removed from college a little bit before I start, you know, considering future career.

Still other participants had not given a lot of thought to their careers, as illustrated by Participant Emma, who said the interview had been helpful because it made her think about her career.

> Emma: Um . . . I think future career—I don't know. I'm thinking more about like teaching. This is very good. This (interview) has really helped me like think about, you know, what I want to do with my life (laugh).

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Another element in the theme of delayed adulthood is the difficulty described by participants who report resistance to the idea of post-college life.

> Interviewer: What has college taught you about post-college life?
> John: That you don't want to graduate. That you want to stay in college forever.
> I: Why?
> John: Well, I've just . . . everyone, I mean, every person I've ever talked to, and it has never failed, every person has always said, "Do not graduate. You're going to hate it." I've never met one person that has been like, "Yeah, you're going to love post-college life."

Participants also reported feeling lost in the transition. Andrea, who graduated in May, used a metaphor to describe her transition from college to career.

> Andrea: I was in a lake, you know, at home when I went to High School. And then college is like a river and I tried out a few different things, and now suddenly it's shooting me out into the ocean (laughter) and I'm out there floating around by myself in this huge ocean… and now I just feel like I'm in the middle of the ocean (laugh), you know, like where do I even start? Because there are just so many options—well, sometimes it seems like there are so many, and sometimes it seems like there are so few. Because I'm interested in a lot of things, but then again, there aren't that many jobs sometimes… I don't have somebody telling me, "Okay, do this now, wow do this." I mean, I get a lot of support from my professors and my family, and everybody is really nice, and I have people to read my cover letters and give me good critiques and everything. But still, it's just a lot harsher than (laugh), you know, I thought it would be.

The third research questions addressed the conceptualizations of the colloquialism "a real job" and of the term career. Overall, the participants conceptualized the phrase a "real job" as either similar, or equal to, the term career. Additionally, the majority of the participants did not approve of the use of the colloquialism and regarded it as irrelevant or disrespectful because it discounted their own work or the work of others. Most respondents personally defined a "real job" for themselves as work they liked or enjoyed. Regarding the term career, participants reported both traditional conceptualizations and contemporary conceptualizations. The most prevalent career values reported were the Intrinsic value of liking, loving, or enjoying their career, and the Extrinsic value of pay. Additionally, the Altruistic value of contributing to society was highlighted. Only a few participants reported Social or Leisure values. In addition to participants describing what they did want in their careers, many articulated just as much information about what they did not want. A theme of "Career as What I Don't Want" materialized including participant reports of not wanting to be bored, not wanting to hate their careers, and knowing what they do not want based upon their own experiences. Finally,

the last theme that emerged regarding the conceptualization of *career* was the idea that some participants are not yet ready to begin a career at graduation and require more time to negotiate the transition. Overall, it is clear that cultural scripts regarding what a career is and a "real job" are in flux.

Expectations about a First Professional Job

RQ 4: What are graduating Midwest public university students' expectations about their first job in the current economic environment?

To conduct the analysis for the fourth research question, the researcher identified and analyzed participant responses that addressed expectations regarding employment and the economy by searching for patterns and themes both within and across the participants' responses while also remaining skeptical of original categorizations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The following expectation themes were discovered: 1) The expectation that the next step after college graduation is obtaining a professional job and how this expectation was not met for most of the participants, 2) The expectation that a professional job is difficult get due to the economic downturn, and 3) The expectations of participants in regards to salary, benefits, promotion timelines, and anticipated organizational memberships.

The first theme that emerged was the expectation that after college graduation, the next step was a "real" job. All of the 28 participants either explicitly or implicitly indicated that they expected to (eventually) get a job in their desired career or continue their education in graduate or professional school and then get a career job. For example, Andrea, who was working as a lifeguard, dismissed her work as a lifeguard and instead spoke of the pressure of getting a job.

> Andrea: You know, I'm like a recent grad, you know… then I should go straight into a job instead of just kind of floating around. So I do feel some pressure, and then I just think that's what people expect you to do, you know after you go to college. Like, you should probably get a job (laugh)… Because my parents want me to like what I'm doing; they don't want to force me into something that I would hate. But, um, I guess it's just a big expectation that after you finish, you know, undergrad, if you do that, you know, it's like a real job or grad school, you know (laugh)… I feel like after college, that's sort of the cut-off, that's when people are like, "Okay, you should go get a job now (laugh), like run along, go get a job."

Participants described an expectation of "get a job" as coming not only from "people" but also specific sources such as parents and professors.

> Interviewer: Where does this pressure come from do you think?

Cara: Definitely my parents just being like—their mentality is if you can get this job… get the best of the best no matter what the field is or where you're working; no matter what, get the best job. And then a lot of our professors, they're constantly emailing us; ten times a week they used to email us about like all these interviews that were happening on campus, but it would be like for this tractor motor supply company. And then they get mad at you if you don't sign up, but I'm like, "I don't want to work for them." You know what I mean? They have this mentality of like, "Get a job, no matter what. You're so lucky to get it. Apply, apply, apply. You'll be so lucky."

This participant described feeling pressured to get any job. Participants also described this expectation of getting a professional job as a cultural norm.

Ethan: … just knowing that it's the next step, just knowing that it's the next step in life. After college, it's get a real job, get married and stuff. It's kinda just the steps of life that culture says you're supposed to take, and it's kinda the next step. So I guess that's what I'm excited about.

Many participants spoke indirectly of the implicit norm that they were supposed to get a professional job; however, Sarah did articulate its unspoken nature.

Sarah: It was obviously understood in my family that you were expected to go to college and you were expected to get a good job and have a profession at some point, so it was… I think it was more unspoken than spoken.

An example of how having a professional position after graduation was implicitly stated, is illustrated in Participant John when he was asked, "So after you graduate, what are going to do?" he replied:

John: Well, I'm trying to get back on at the marketing firm. MMG is actually what it is.
Interviewer: Where you did your internship?
John: Yeah. I'm trying to do an internship with them again that will hopefully translate into a job… I've had a great collegiate career, and now I'm ready to move on at this stage in my life.

However, while all participants expected to obtain a job or go on to graduate or professional schools, some described the expectation as clearly unmet because they did not have professional jobs after graduation.

Michelle: I never would have imagined two or three years ago not having a job on graduation day. It was not something that I even thought was possible. You know, everyone was getting a job or soon there afterward, and now I'm struggling even to pick up—I'm trying to also pick up like a restaurant job or a retail job in the meantime while I'm looking for a real job, and it's even hard to find that. It's really unbelievable. We keep on hearing that it's getting better, but the majority of my friends are in the same boat. I am shocked at how few of my friends actually ended up in some sort of job right

now after graduation. It just really amazes me… You know, as freshman, I was like, "Oh yeah, we'll all have jobs." I think that's how I and all my friends were… definitely.

This unmet expectation is also present in Sarah who expressed that she had worked hard to build a strong resume only to find herself graduated, living with her parents, and jobless.

> Interviewer: What did your friends tell you about work?
> Sarah: Well, I mean, a lot of my friends don't have jobs yet, so we're still kind of in that limbo place, back living at home without a job, but it's . . . A lot of my friends know—like I said, they know what they want, and they're going to do anything they can to get there… I think that they are also scared for it, because when I talk to them about even applying for jobs or whatever, they're like, "I have all this on my resume. How am I not getting hired?" And then we always hear the stories of like our friends: They're like people who have parents who are high-up executives in companies, who are like finding jobs for their children who might not be as well qualified as we are, but we don't have those opportunities. So I hear more of like those stories, about how . . . it's like "What do I need to do to get a job?!?"

Some participants went so far as to question the value of obtaining a college degree. The violated expectation that a college degree should be a ticket to a professional job was articulated by Carrie:

> Carrie: Because right now I'm like, "What did I just do the last four years?" because it feels like it got me nowhere…

And later Participant Carrie, who worked as a waitress during the time of the interview, described being asked by customers what she is going to do now that she has graduated.

> Carrie: Everyone keeps asking me "What's next?" and I just wanna be like, "What's next for you?" I don't know. I mean, that's the pressure. I know it's a very innocent question, but when you're asked it, like, six times a day . . .
> Interviewer: How does it make you feel when someone asks you, you know, "What's next?"
> Carrie: It kinda feels like they're calling you out, in a way. It's like, oh, you just went to a university for four years, and you don't know what you're gonna do? Hmm, there's some irony there. I don't really feel like they're trying to be evil about it, but . . .
> Interviewer: Do you feel like you should know?
> Carrie: Yeah, sometimes. Yeah. I mean, I feel like I should.
> Interviewer: Why?
> Carrie: Because that's "what's next," quote unquote (laugh). I know I said earlier that I have, like, 20 friends and none of us really know what—two of them have jobs: Jessie and then another guy. But, I mean, I feel like the people that don't have jobs at least have a direction or something that they wanna go into. They at least have "what's next."

In support for this expectation, Amanda reported that she feels her friends expect to get a great job right after college graduation but she knows that it is not likely.

> Amanda: A lot of my friends didn't have to work when they were younger, and weren't told that they needed to. So they viewed it more as—when they entered the workforce, it was more like an entitlement type of thing. Like, they expected to just get, you know, a great job right out of college and not have to pay their dues, which, obviously, that's not how things go.

Additionally, Participants Andrea, Omar, and Abbie mentioned education inflation; the idea that a bachelor's degree is not worth is much as it used to be because more people have them.

> Andrea: But I guess just with sort of education inflation (laugh), like now I feel like a Bachelor's is like the old high school diploma, sort of. Like, now it seems like almost everybody has a Bachelor's. I know it's not true, but it sort of feels that way… it kinda gets watered down.
> Omar: I mean, you can't just assume that everyone is going to want you to work for them immediately after graduation— I mean there are a lot of people with degrees now… just because you have the education for it, or you are certified of having a degree, it doesn't mean that people are going to be begging to have you.
> Abbie: With the amount of people that graduate college now, which is great, but it makes it harder, it makes it more . . . not as . . . I don't even know what the word is. Like not as great. Like "Oh, you have a Bachelor's. Well, that's good, but this person has a Master's" or whatever, because it's more commonplace to have a degree.

Overall, participants described the expectation that a college degree would help them obtain a professional job after gradation. One mediating circumstance that often determined whether or not their expectations were described as met or unmet was the economy.

The majority of participants reported that finding a professional job was difficult. The difficulty was most often attributed to the economic downturn. When asked, "Do you think it's easy to get a good job right after college graduation?", 20 of their responses were an overwhelming "no."

For example, here are the responses of Participants Anne, Barb, Lindsay, Andrea, Emma and Noah:

> Anne: No.
> Interviewer: Why?
> Anne: The job market is still not that great. My mom's uncle was telling me that he read something that less than 5% of the graduating class of 2010 will have jobs out of college. I just kinda gasped. I was like, "Less than 5%?" I was thinking maybe 10, 20, but he's like "Less than 5." And all my friends who are in law school, finishing law school, can't

find jobs and have had awesome grades, awesome internships, awesome job experiences, and can't quite find that job.

Barb: Um, no. I would think not (laugh). A lot of people don't have internships or jobs right now. Some do, but . . . I applied to several different places, and, you know, I had a few interviews, but I think it was pretty difficult for most students, especially now in the economy.

Lindsay: Not really…its made it harder for me to find a job…but that's about it.

Andrea: No, I don't (laugh). No. I've applied to, I mean, sent in, like, serious cover letters and resumes and stuff to probably eight to ten different places, and so far, none of them have panned out, and I feel like that's just the way it goes these days. I think that everyone is having a hard time—well, just about everyone—is having a hard time finding jobs, no matter if you're my age or my parents' age. I think that everybody has a really difficult time finding a job, just because of the bad market right now… I've just heard that recent college grads just have to work doubly hard since jobs are so scarce.

Emma: Um, no, I don't think so. A lot of my friends don't have a job, have a job they don't like, or have been searching forever and just found something, you know?

Noah: Absolutely not (laugh).
Interviewer: Why?
Noah: Because none of my friends have (laugh). Well, very few of my friends have, you know. And if they have gotten those jobs, it's because of the work they've put in in college. They've got the internships, they've joined the groups, they've joined the marketing clubs and those types of things, and they've really put themselves in a good position, which I feel like I haven't done as good of a job putting myself in a good position as they have.
Interviewer: Do you think that's because you work, too, and go to school?
Noah: I think that was definitely part of it. You know, I'm paying my way through college, so I'm just trying to . . . I don't know. You know, my #1 priority was always just paying for college, and I didn't focus enough attention on what I'm going to do after college. I always feel like . . . I always, you know, put it off . . . and thought, oh, that's years down the road. But then all of a sudden, here I am, you know. It all caught up to me, I guess.

Some of the participants suggested that individuals were going to have to start at the bottom and perhaps would likely have difficulty finding a "good" job.

Elaine: I think from seeing how my friends have been doing, I don't think so. I think you're going to just have to find, at least in the field that you want, and you're going to have to start at the bottom, at the very bottom, and just try and work your way up. And even then I know a lot of companies are only looking for specific people, and so if you don't have specific attributes, then it's going to be even harder for you to find one.

Sarah: No, I don't. I think—I mean, maybe yeah, you might get a job, but is it your dream job? No, probably not. I think you have to work and prove yourself when you're young in order to be able to get that good job that you want and you love and it's not really a job because it's what you want to be doing.

Jenn: It depends what you mean by good. Yes, and no, I think it is fairly easy to get a job…but that's a hard question, you can get a job if you want a job…but if you want to work at something that you really want to do that's harder..
Interviewer: So are you suggesting a difference between a job and a career?
Jenn: Yes, I think it is really easy to get a job…it is harder to get a career job.

Abbie: Especially in this economy, sometimes people just have to take a job that they can find. They may not want to do it, it may be beneath them, but sometimes you just have to do it and you have to stick it out. Something better will come along eventually, ideally (laugh).

One strategy to combat the difficulty of finding a professional job is to continue going to school via graduate or professional school. Several participants mentioned this strategy.

Interviewer: Do you think the economic downturn has influenced what choices you'll make?
Cara: Oh definitely.
Interviewer: How so?
Cara: It's just so much more competitive. You know, for every job that I'm interviewing for, there's probably 11 other people that are more or less qualified than me, more competition than there ever was. I mean, it's making me consider grad school much more than I would have otherwise.
Interviewer: Because why?
Cara: Oh, just because I don't know . . . if my parents are willing to pay for me to go to grad school . . . I might as well do it. And then if the economy is so bad, and it's that hard to find a job, I might as well just get it over with now and wait for the economy to go back.

Nadia: It's hard. I mean, a lot of my friends haven't found jobs. A lot of them are just staying in school, just because the economy is so bad, to go get their Master's degree, hoping that by the time they're done with their Master's, the economy would have turned around.

Interviewer: What about your friends? What do they tell you about work?
Lindsay: Um…just we don't ever talk about work.
Interviewer: You don't really talk about it?
Lindsay: No, not really. Because when I am with my friends…stuff we don't want to talk about it…because it is stressful, you know trying to find a job and stuff…so
Interviewer: Do your friends have jobs right now?
Lindsay: Um, most of them are going to grad school. The ones that aren't do not have jobs.

While participants reported that the economic downturn had it made it difficult to find a professional job, all but one participant said that the economic downturn had not altered their career aspirations. Participants were asked, "Has the economic downturn changed what you want to do in your career?" Participants Dana, Emma, Mike, and Ethan answered a clear "no."

> Dana: No, not at all. Initially when I started looking in the business track, it was due to my parents' divorce, and I wanted to make sure that, you know, I was able to support myself. But I've learned that no matter what field you're in, if you work hard enough, you'll be fine.

> Emma: Um, no. I don't think so. Not for me. I think I would have been pretty much in the same boat either way.

> Mike: No, because public-service people are poor, anyway, so it's just kind of expectation, I guess.

> Ethan: No. For some reason, I'm not too concerned of like being financially well off in the future. I just feel like—I mean, my creative . . . whatever I do, I'm going to be all right. Just for some reason, I have that feeling.

Others felt that while the economy has not changed their career aspirations, it may have affected their job prospects.

> Chloe: No, but it's made me realize that, man, I really might not get a job. And my friends always say "Oh, you for sure will get a job, no problem because you're going to be a teacher. Everyone needs teachers." But no, that's not the case at all.

> Elaine: It hasn't really changed my path. I know that it will be a little bit more difficult with the healthcare issues that are going on and changing right now… I think I should be good as long as I learn how everything is going.

A few participants commented on lowering their expectations and being willing to take almost any professional job.

> John: Not for my career, but mainly for like . . . I'll pretty much do (laugh), to an extent, anything for a job.
> Interviewer: Okay. Tell me more about that.
> John: Like, it may not be what I like, but it's a job and it pays. I mean, that's kind of all that a lot of people are doing right now. Like, right out of college, they'll do something that they might not necessarily love, but it pays the bills and whatnot.
> Interviewer: So has it changed what you want to do?
> John: No. I'm just more willing to accept certain jobs that I wouldn't normally accept.

Andrea claimed that while the economy did not change her career aspirations, it did lower her expectations as she tries to keep her "hopes, not too high."

> Andrea: Oh yeah (laugh). Well, I guess, I don't know about my career aspirations, but I guess I'm a lot more prepared now, I think, to be more open to any opportunity that comes my way than maybe like the generation before, or even my parents, you know. Like, I think that, you know, however many years ago, like when you had a degree, you had a job, like, waiting for you. So now I'm more open to kind of like branching out and taking any opportunity that would come my way. Even though it might not be my dream job, you know, I might meet other people or it might lead to something else. So I'm much more open-minded to accepting, like, anything that comes my way, really. And I'm also prepared to not get, you know, like a great job right away. So I guess maybe my expectations—like, I don't know. I'm trying to keep my hopes, like, not too high.

Participant Noah mentioned that while it hasn't changed his career aspirations, it has put more pressure on his shoulders and given him a lot of anxiety. Participant Nadia argued that the economic downturn has changed not what she wants to do but her strategy of reaching her career goals.

> Nadia: I wouldn't say it has changed what I want, but how I'm going to go after it has changed. My parents paid for my college education, and after four years, they were like, "Okay, you're on your own. That's it." So I'm not able to, say, keep searching for something I really want to do, you know, or to stay at Gap forever and live a Bohemian lifestyle. I have new responsibilities now, and I just have to take those and . . . I know it's going to be a long process to probably get what I want—to save enough money for grad school and to learn how to take out loans and all that, then finally go to grad school and start looking for a job all over again afterwards. I think the timeline, maybe, has changed, but the what, not so much.

One participant took a job she knew was not in line with her career aspirations because it was a sure thing in a rocky economy with the stipulation that it was only for a year.

> Amanda: That was pretty much the only place that the economy did scare me. It wasn't that it scared me personally, but everyone, you know, was saying, you know, "People are having such a hard time getting jobs, and there aren't a lot of jobs out there." I've really never had a problem getting a job. I think every job I've ever interviewed for I've gotten, so . . . I really wasn't scared, but I kinda let myself be influenced by my parents and some of my friends and just decided to go ahead and take a sure thing with someone that I knew I really liked working for and then go from there. I gave him a one-year commitment, and then we'll reevaluate.

The one outlier in this category is Participant Jenn who said that the economic downturn has increased the number of job offers she has received.

Jenn: Not to appear conceited…I actually got a ton of offers, a ton of interviews…companies I didn't even apply to, like seeking me out. It showed me I can really do whatever I wanted. And that made it harder. It showed that I didn't have limits in where I interned, and that made it harder.

Interviewer: Why was it harder?

Jenn: Now I had to be the one to narrow my choices, rather than someone else. Now it's my choice, my personal preference.

This outlier may be attributed to the specific field that Participant Jenn specialized in, her internship experiences, and the current demand for mechanical engineering skills.

To gage if the participant expectations' were accurate or not, the following questions were asked.

How much do you think your annual salary will be for your first job?
How much do you think you will be making five years after graduation?
How much paid vacation time do you expect to receive at your first job?
How long do you think it will take you to be promoted?
How many organizations do you think you will have worked for after 10 years?

Table 4.3 displays the results from this set of questions.

Table 4.3

Participant Professional Work Expectations

Participant	Annual Salary	5 Year Salary	Paid Vacation	Promoted	Organizations
Esther	30-35	50-60	Not much	2-3 years	5
Carrie	35	50	2 weeks	6 months	1 or 2
Barb	28-32	40-45	1-2 weeks	2 years	1 or 2
Andrea	20- 23	20	2 weeks	2 years	3 or 4
Jenn	50	100	5 weeks	1-2 years	2 or 3
Amanda	30-34	50	4-5 weeks	1-2 years	3 or 4
Lindsay	35	50	2 weeks	within 1 year	2 (prefers 1)
Brad	don't know	don't know	2 weeks	no idea	4
Anne	don't know	don't know	3-5 days	6 months	3 or 4
Cara	30-40	45	2-3 weeks	no idea	5 or 6
John	30	60	2 weeks	1- 1.5 years	2
Sarah	30-35	30	1 week	1.5- 2 years	5
Rafael	25- 30	50	2 weeks	2-3 years	2 (prefers 1)
Omar	35-45	60	1-2 weeks	6-7 months	4 or 5
Michelle	30-40	75	2-3 weeks	within 1 year	5 or 6
Nadia	25	50-60	2 weeks	3 months	5
Scott	40	50	2 weeks	5 years	1
Abbie	(MD) 130	150-160	30 weeks	N/A	3 or 4
Dana	25	30-35	none	3 months	2
Ava	1,200 (Peace Corps)	30	skip	1 year	5
Elaine	don't know	don't know	don't know	N/A	1 (family business)
Mike	40-50	60-70	1 week	2 years	5 or 6
Kim	40	50	2 weeks	1 year	2
Jacob	60	over 100	unlimited	5 years	1 (family business)
Chloe	25	35	summers off	N/A	prefer 1
Ethan	30	75-80	5 days	2 years	3
Noah	30	37-40	3-4 weeks	2 years	7
Emma	don't know	don't know	don't know	don't know	don't know

Note. Annual Salary= expectation of first annual salary; 5 Year Salary= expectation of annual salary five years after graduation; Paid vacation= expectation of paid vacation during the first year of work; Promoted= expectation of time it will take for the individual to be promoted; and Organizations= expectation of the number of organizations the individual will work for in the next 10 years.

The participants estimated their annual salary from the lowest at $1200 for a Peace Corps volunteer to the highest at $130,000 for a medical doctor. However, excluding the outliers of Participant Abbie, who is attending medical school, and Participant Ava, who is joining the Peace Corps, the salaries ranged from $20,000 to $60,000, with the average salary expectation as $34,400. As for the five-year expected salary, with the exclusion of the medical doctor, the average was $53,000. Anticipated paid vacation ranged greatly depending upon the career field (e.g., an elementary teacher receives summers off). Expected time for a promotion ranged

anywhere from 3 months to 5 years. The average number of organizations that all participants expect to work for in the next 10 years is three organizations.

Overall, the participants in this study expected to get a professional job right after they graduated, and a majority of them felt that this expectation was not being met. Furthermore, they reported that it was hard to find a professional job, and the main reason cited for this difficulty was the economic downturn. In spite of the downturn, almost all participants reported that the economy did not influence their career aspirations; however, they stated that it may have altered the path or the timeline in which they anticipated reaching their goals.

Chapter Five
Discussion

The transition from college to career is an expected and increasingly challenging process for many college graduates (Holton, 2001; Polach, 2004). The current economic recession, the competitive job market, and the increasing numbers of individuals with bachelor's degrees have made finding a professional job and beginning a career increasingly difficult for many. However, graduating college students develop conceptualizations and expectations of their transition to career, and professional work in general, before they graduate. These conceptualizations and expectations are shaped through anticipatory socialization processes, which occur through students' information-seeking and communicative interactions with others. Both popular press and academic scholarship have reported that college graduates, and this generation of graduates specifically, tend to have unrealistic expectations regarding professional work (Alsop, 2008; Erickson, 2009; Hill, 2002; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Ng, Sweitzer & Lyons, 2010). Furthermore, previous scholarship has indicated that unrealistic expectations are detrimental to both individuals and organizations (Perrone & Vickers, 2003; Wanous, Poland, Remack & Davis, 1992; Porter & Steers, 1973). Therefore, this study sought to promote further understanding regarding these anticipatory socialization processes.

The current study explored how graduating college students at a Midwestern public university described their anticipatory organizational socialization processes. Specifically, the researcher investigated: 1) professional work and career related maxims, 2) professional work and career information-seeking behaviors and tactics, 3) conceptualizations of the term *career*

and the colloquialism *a real job*, and 4) expectations about obtaining a professional job in the current economic climate. A qualitative approach was selected to investigate how these anticipatory organizational socialization processes unfolded. Qualitative communication scholars typically focus upon "how" social experience is generated and given meaning, so a qualitative approach was suitable for this type of exploration (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Twenty-eight in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students who had just graduated or were about to graduate from a Midwestern, state university. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed and produced 1,117 pages of single spaced texts. These texts produced thick descriptions of processes.

The interview transcripts were both open coded and axial coded for each research question, allowing the researcher to identify a coding scheme for each question and simultaneously recognize the relationships across the coding schemes. Data analysis techniques such as identifying patterns and themes, locating outliers, checking the plausibility of categorizes or explanations, clustering, counting, and comparing and contrasting were utilized in the analysis of the texts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher conducted a repeated line-by-line analysis utilizing these techniques and moved back and forth between the data, coding, explanations, and theory, constantly comparing, revisiting and refining the levels of analysis to reach her findings.

The key findings center around two main contributions:

A) While participants reported anticipatory organizational socialization processes as teaching them about professional work as suggested by previous research, they also unexpectedly framed these processes as contributing towards their own conclusions of what they did NOT want regarding professional work and career;

B) Participant accounts reflect a gap between conflicting tacit and explicit socialization messages and expectations.

The first significant finding was that participants described their anticipatory organizational socialization processes as contributing towards their own conceptualizations of what they do NOT want regarding professional work and career, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) describe organizational socialization as a process in which people "learn the ropes" of a particular organizational role (p. 211). The participants' descriptions of anticipatory

organizational socialization processes suggest that these students have been learning how to perform organizational roles in college, in part-time work, in internships, and in volunteer experiences. However, what contrasts previous findings is an indication that the participants, in addition to learning how to perform organizational roles such as part-time employee, have also actively decided what roles they do not want to perform. Through socialization processes and experiences, the participants identified:

- The industries they did not want to work in.
- The types of organizations they did not want to work for.
- The kinds of work environments they did not want to be in.
- The sorts of organizational roles did not want to perform.
- The ways they did not want to be treated by others in the workplace.

Taken as a whole, participants described their socialization processes as leading them to conclusions about what they do not desire in their professional work and careers. These conclusions have been shaped through their communicative interactions in work experiences, internships, volunteer experiences, and through observing others, such as parents and friends. Weick's (1995, 2001) theoretical framework of sensemaking posits that individuals make sense of the world through their communication. Weick (1995) argues, "How can I know what I think until I see what I say" (p. 2)? Sensemaking is an ongoing process that allows individuals to retrospectively explain (or make sense of) the world around them (Weick, 1995). Through sensemaking processes, individuals attempt to reduce uncertainty; therefore, when college graduates attempt to explain their previous socialization experiences and the experiences of those they know, they are, in essence, making sense of their professional work and career conceptualizations. For Weick, there is not one *accurate* way to make sense of a given scenario Instead, sense is made when individuals find a reasonable frame through which to view their experiences. The agency for determining what is reasonable belongs to the individual rather than with sources of socialization messages. One key anticipatory organizational socialization sensemaking pattern utilized by the majority of participants in this study was framing their expectations and hopes of professional work and career by what the individual did not want.

In addition to what they did not want, participants also reported messages about professional work from sources such as parents, siblings, friends and professors. These

messages, in the form of maxims, were in many cases inconsistent with their individual conclusions regarding work and career. A maxim is defined as "a general truth, fundamental principle, or rule of conduct" or "a proverbial saying" (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2010). In the organizational socialization scholarship, a maxim has often been labeled as a memorable message. Stohl's (1986) study described memorable messages as "a 'piece of advice' or some 'words of wisdom' that a person would receive and remember. Memorable messages are important to examine because they shape our expectations about work and communicate values about work and career. In contrast to memorable messages, the maxims reported in the current study were prescriptive in nature. However, the consistency across participants does suggest that like memorable messages, maxims may be a communicative event that provides a shared sense of reality (Stohl, 1986). The most pervasive maxim in and across all interview texts was one that prioritized work that the individual loves, enjoys, or feels passionate towards. Six variations of this maxim were reported, all similar versions of the maxim "Do what you love and the money will follow."

Overall, the findings show that the majority of participants both desire and expect to like, love, enjoy, be happy and/or have fun at their professional jobs. This emerged as the number one priority again and again, both within individual interviews and across all of the interviews. Other values, such as the extrinsic value of money, were mentioned as important but not nearly as much, nor as emphatically, as finding work they love. This expectation was present in the maxims, in the conceptualizations of a *career* and a *real job*, in the expectations, and even in how participants measured career accomplishment and success. More than half of the participants reported that they will be successful if in the future if they are happy.

These findings reflect a much greater emphasis on enjoying work than seen in previous studies. Levine and Hoffner's (2006) study of work and career messages in high school students identified this priority maxim in their Advice/information category, which contained the subtheme of "Choose a job you like/enjoy." They reported that only 9.4% of respondents received this information from parents, 1.6% from their job, 4.7% from friends, and 3.1% from the media. The current study suggests that the "choose a job you like/enjoy" message is much more prominent, which may reflect the influence of college graduates' experiences. Additionally, while the current findings suggest that the meaning of a *real job* has not changed when compared with Clair's (1996) study (e.g., a real job is salaried, not hourly), the majority of the participants

in the current study differed from Clair's participants in that they problematized the use of the maxim and regarded it as irrelevant or disrespectful because it discounted the work of others who consider the work their *real job*.

In addition to maxims, the participants' descriptions of their information-seeking behaviors and tactics were explored. Previous research has suggested that when an individual experiences high levels of uncertainty, such as during the transition from college to career, they will increase their information-seeking to reduce this uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Berger & Bradac, 1982). This concept is represented in Berger and Calabrese's (1975) interpersonal communication theory of Uncertainty Reduction, which suggests that uncertainty is uncomfortable and therefore motivates individuals to seek out information. Additionally, Herr and Johnson (1989) argue that planning for a career requires students to actively seek out information about choices, learn about their own attitudes, values, interests and skills, and discover available career opportunities. Yet, over half of the participants in this study did not actively seek out information and many of the participants reported that their primary source of information came from coursework or attending class. In previous research, information-seeking has been typically described as a deliberate and conscious effort (Baxter & Wilmot, 1984; Berger & Bradac, 1982; Brown & Levinson, 1978). In contrast to previous studies, findings from this study suggest that many graduating college students are not deliberately seeking out information about professional work and career. Furthermore, there were indications that some of the participants were waiting to seek out career information until they felt ready, and others were not seeking out information at all and instead may be relying on parents or other family members do it for them. Overall, the results from this research question suggest that graduating college students at a Midwestern public university may be gaining the majority of their information regarding career and professional work through their classes or by doing basic searches on the Internet.

One gap in the Miller and Jablin (1991;1996) model is that it does not address the use of the Internet regarding information-seeking tactics. College graduates today are more proficient on computers than previous generations and are very likely to use computers in their information-seeking regarding work and professional career. Since 27 of the 28 participants in the current study used the Internet to locate professional work and career information, it is important to address the tactics involved in using the channel of the Internet. Most of the Miller

and Jablin (1991) tactics could be transferred to the Internet (e.g., the Observing tactic could be represented by lurking on Internet chat rooms). However, the previous claim that all information-seeking involves some sort of social cost no longer seems valid when the Internet is included. According to the Miller and Jablin model (1991; 1996), individuals may be less likely to utilize overt tactics because it exposes their uncertainty and they are afraid that the source may not tolerate multiple requests (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Goody, 1978). However, when the Internet is the "source," there may be no social risk or costs involved in seeking out information due to the ability to be anonymous.

Without the costs, and the ease of access to the Internet for this population, a new tactic should be considered that incorporates this "no risk," anonymous approach of gaining information: a covert tactic. A covert tactic allows an individual to access information with no social risk or social costs due to anonymity. With face-to-face channels, a tactic such as observing still has potential social risk or cost because an individual could be caught eavesdropping or staring. However, the Internet provides a channel where a person may choose to be anonymous and does not require individuals to expose their uncertainty. Adding the covert tactic to the Miller and Jablin (1991) information-seeking tactics model allows for the new context of the Internet.

This study's initial information-seeking findings raise questions about the relationship between uncertainty and information-seeking in this population. Further research is needed to better understand Internet information-seeking processes, including how information is perceived or valued when the source is also anonymous.

Conflicting explicit and tacit messages.

The second major finding of this study addressed how participants reported trying to negotiate the gap between conflicting explicit socialization messages such as the maxims and tacit socialization messages from their observations of and interactions with friends, family, and the media about work in the contemporary environment. The explicit messages of "finding work you love" clashed with participant comments about the economy and the difficulty of finding a professional job.

Generally, the participants in this study expected to get a professional job right after they graduated, but the majority of them had not met this expectation. Only eight of the 28 participants had a professional job or had been accepted into graduate school in their desired

career area. Furthermore, they reported that it was hard to find a professional job, and the main reason they cited for this difficulty was the economic downturn. The economic downturn has dramatically affected the opportunities of recent college graduates to get a job; only 24% of May 2010 graduates reported having a job in hand at graduation (NACE, 2010). The United States has been in an economic recession since 2007, and although unemployment rates have slightly improved since last year, the unemployment rate is still over nine percent nationally (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2010). In spite of the difficulty they noted in seeking a professional job, all of the participants continued to articulate the expectation that they needed a job they liked, enjoyed, or even loved.

Graduating college students have often been accused of harboring high expectations in regards to professional work; however, these expectations have often been defined through extrinsic markers such as anticipated first-year salary, vacation time, and work hours (e.g., NACE annual student survey; Rawlins, Indivik, & Johnson, 2008). Recent college graduates have been critiqued through a generational lens by popular press books such as Howe and Strauss's (2000) *Millennials Rising*, Alsop's (2008) *The Trophy Kids Grow Up: How the Millennial Generation is Shaking up the Workplace*, and Marston's (2007) *Motivating the "What's in it for me?" Workforce*. These books argue that this generation has high expectations regarding everything, seeking work that pays well, is meaningful, and even makes them famous. In contrast to these popular press reports, participants in this study did not have unrealistic expectations regarding first-year annual salary and vacation time, when compared to national averages. For example, the average anticipated first-year salary of the 26 participants (excluding two outliers) was reported as $34,400, while in a Fall 2008 Salary Survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, liberal arts graduates were offered an average annual salary of $36,715. Significantly, expectations regarding salary may be more realistic than previously reported due to the effects of the economic downturn and high unemployment rates. Yet, this qualitative analysis in the current study suggests that the most significant unrealistic expectations lie within the intrinsic value of having a job they like, enjoy, love, and/or makes them happy.

The majority of participants reported not just wanting, but needing to love and/or be passionate about their work, and needing to find work that makes them happy. One example of this expectation was described by Participant Nadia, who stated that her parents had

communicated that "…you're supposed to go to college to pursue the thing that you're passionate about and love in life, learn more about it, and be able to get a… either start your own career or just be able to continue doing what you love with your skill sets, and people will pay for your product or creativity." She was offered and took a "real job" immediately after graduation, and in spite of her friends telling her she is lucky to have her job, her expectations were clearly unmet. She said,

> I'm kind of a romantic because I feel like, you know, when you grow up, you're supposed to be able to do what you want to do. And you're not. You can't—there's no way one can live like that unless you're extremely rich or extremely talented, or you do a lot of years of stuff that you don't want to do until you have the opportunity to jet off and finally get to be able to do what you want to do.

Additionally, due to her unmet expectations, she articulated her great dissatisfaction and later, discussed her intent to leave. She had been working at her organization for three weeks when the interview took place. "I tell myself I don't want to be any longer than a year… So, I think at the six-month mark, I'll start looking for another job or start applying to grad school."

Furthermore, the love for a job is often expected to come immediately, as suggested by Participant Nadia, who was thinking about exiting her organization only three weeks after she had begun. The participants' interviews suggested a love-it-or-leave-it mentality towards work. This means that participants may not wait long enough to personalize their roles through the socialization process of role-making. Role-making is when an individual pursues their own expectations and makes a role their own (Graen, 1976). The participants in this study described an expectation for immediate fulfillment and did not report being willing for delayed gratification within work. Instead, the immediacy of having work that is fun or enjoyable was preeminent in their comments. This finding does align with previous studies that indicate that young workers desire immediate payoffs from work (Jurkiewicz, 2000; Maccoby, 1995; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000) and with research that indicates that young workers stress "working to live" versus "living to work" (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak, 2000).

The message of having to love one's job was also expressed in the negative form of not wanting to hate or dread work. Fear of hating a job may persuade students to not even apply for positions. For example, Participant Carrie, who had graduated at the time of the interview shared that she was afraid of hating her job and afraid of rejection so she had not applied for a single job. This idea of refusing to take or do work they might dislike ties into popular press reports

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warning organizations about Millennials inflated expectations. The expectation that work needs to be something "that you're passionate about and love" sets a very high expectation for a first professional job.

However, if an individual's expectations are not met upon organizational entry, it can be problematic for both the individual and their organization, Scholars Perrone and Vickers (2003) describe that unmet expectations may be harmful by causing an individual to experience greater stress and difficulty in their transition experiences. Within organizations, employees with unmet expectations experience higher levels of absenteeism, intentions to quit, and turnover (Wanous Poland, Remack, & Davis, 1992; Porter & Steers, 1973). Additionally, turnover is costly to organization, with prices ranging from a few thousand dollars to double an individual's salary for replacement, depending upon the job and the industry (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). If an individual does decide to quit, leaving a job may increase stress by severing interpersonal relationships at work and disrupting routines, and this stress may even cause negative spillover effects at home (Bosswell, Boudrea & Tichy, 2005). If the patterns from this small sample, which do support the popular press claims of Millennials having unrealistic expectations and a high propensity to quit, are at least partially indicative of broader generational patterns, then the ramifications of unrealistic expectations, and therefore unmet expectations, could be staggering, especially when considering the approximately 80 million Millennials who currently make up approximately 10 percent of the United States workforce and by 2018 are projected to make up 50 percent of the working age population (United States Bureau of the Census, 2000). Further research is needed in this area.

What is clear is that the participants in the current study are experiencing a clash of tacit and explicit messages. On one hand they have embraced the message that they need work that they like, enjoy, love, is fun and/or makes them happy, which they stated over and over again as a priority. Yet, on the other hand, they often reported: hating most of their work experiences, observing their friends and parents dislike their work, attempting (often unsuccessfully) to find a professional job in a highly competitive market, watching their friends struggle to find jobs, and continuing to hear media reports about high unemployment and the scarcity of good jobs. Additionally, three participants in this study watched a parent be laid off within the past year. The gap between their expectations of a job they love and the reality of the current economic situation is great. Not surprisingly, the participants reported difficulty in negotiating the

transition from college to career. The role of communication in anticipatory organizational socialization is powerful and can serve to mediate or expand this rift between expectations and reality.

Implications for Practice

The current study offers two considerations for practice. First, the current study suggests that many graduating college students at a Midwestern, state university are not seeking out information regarding professional work and careers. Instead, it appears that they may be heavily relying upon their coursework and Google searches to find information, with little concern for the credibility of the content. While more research is needed to verify or dispute these preliminary patterns, the initial findings may be a signal to professors to ask about or address information-seeking behaviors and tactics. This may be especially important in liberal arts majors, such as Communication Studies, that have no explicit career trajectories for students. In the current study, participants without jobs often described feeling like they were supposed to have a clear answer of "what's next" and expressed feeling overwhelmed and anxious, yet paradoxically they were not actively searching for what was next. They used maxims such as "Follow your passion" as guides but did not know how to implement them. For example, "do something you love" becomes difficult to translate into getting your first professional job when you have very little specific job knowledge about what a job might actually entail. Part of the reason that many graduating students reported having their expectations unmet may be influenced by their lack of information and experience regarding professional work and career. Professors may be able to encourage proactive information-seeking behaviors via relevant resources such as internships, guest speakers, student professional associations, and the use of university career centers.

Second, since expectations are shaped by messages and communicative interactions, it is important to be aware of the tacit and explicit messages we communicate. Socialization sources such as parents, friends, and professors should be careful with their use of maxims and other messages and be aware of what they may communicate in current contexts. Messages are interpreted in specific time and place (e.g., a real job), and it is important to consider how maxims and other messages may change with time and may be experienced differently.

Additionally, it is critical to remember the power of communicative interactions within socialization processes.

Limitations and Future Research

This study contributed to understanding of anticipatory organizational socialization among students graduating from college in identifying the role of negative experiences and messages and the tension between positive messages and negative experiences. Expanding the investigation to include a larger and more diversified sample would be fruitful in confirming or disputing initial findings and would promote a greater understanding of patterns of anticipatory organizational socialization processes across heterogeneous populations. By and large, this particular sample was limited in that they reported the socioeconomic privilege of having safety nets (e.g., parents). If they could not find professional work, the most common remark was that they would move back in with their parents. These safety nets affect the conversations about professional work and career. Investigating populations who do not having these resources may unearth very different messages, information-seeking behaviors, conceptualizations, and expectations.

Additional analyses should be conducted, including a critical analysis of the role gender plays in anticipatory organizational socialization messages. Participants in the current study often could not articulate, or the line of questioning did not evoke participants to identify the specific sources of the messages that were reported in the interviews. The next step in this line of research should involve investigating where the messages such as "work should be fun" are sourced. Importantly, since the most common source of maxims identified were their parents and because previous research indicates that parents are the most influential source of information (Levine & Hoffner, 2006), it would be beneficial to interview the parents and investigate their perception of messages, conceptualizations, and expectations regarding their children.

This study was also limited by capturing only the perceptions of the graduating student through self-reports. Future research should attempt to capture the everyday dialogues regarding professional work and career, perhaps through capturing the professional work dialogue of actual communication interactions during job interviews or career fairs. Additionally, future research should include interviews with parents, professors, supervisors, and friends of graduating

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students to provide a more holistic view of anticipatory organizational socialization messages, sources, information-seeking and expectations.

Summary

This qualitative study explored how traditional, graduating college students at a Midwestern public university described their anticipatory socialization processes regarding post-collegiate, organizational work. Specifically, the current study investigated: 1) the messages the participants reported receiving; 2) the participants' perceptions of their information-seeking behaviors and tactics regarding work; 3) the participants' conceptualizations of the term *career* and the colloquialism *a real job*; and, 4) the participants' expectations about work in the current economic climate. Findings indicated that all participants communicated the message that the priority for post-collegiate work is the intrinsic value of work that is enjoyable, fun, and/or that work should be something they liked, loved, or were passionate about. This concept of work as enjoyment, love and/or passion was reported as the most prevalent message, as well as the most prevalent work value and work expectation articulated in the study. In terms of information-seeking, over half of the participants reported that their primary sources of information about work were college classes and the Internet, which provides some insight regarding their post collegiate work expectations. In addition, while participants reported anticipatory organizational socialization processes as teaching them about professional work, as suggested by previous research, they also unexpectedly framed these processes as contributing towards their own conclusions of what they did NOT want regarding professional work and career. Moreover, participant accounts reflect a gap between conflicting tacit and explicit socialization messages and expectations. This gap supports generational descriptions in the popular press, which suggest that Millennials lack realistic work expectations and are having difficulty transitioning to work. The results of this study highlight the importance of communicative interactions and how individuals describe and make sense of their socialization messages and experiences, especially in changing contexts such as an economic downturn.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval

       5/24/10

                        HSCL Abbie756

Leilani Carver
2722 Coralberry Ct.
Lawrence, KS 66047

The Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL) has received your response to its expedited review of your research project

18756 Carver/Russo (COMS) College Seniors' Anticipatory Socialization Processes Regarding
      Professional Work

and approved this project under the expedited procedure provided in 45 CFR 46.110 (f) (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

The Office for Human Research Protections requires that your consent form must include the note of HSCL approval and expiration date, which has been entered on the consent form(s) sent back to you with this approval.

1. At designated intervals until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the HSCL office.
2. Any significant change in the experimental procedure as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to
    altering the project.
3. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take
    the online tutorial at http://www.rcr.ku.edu/hscl/hsp_tutorial/000.shtml.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the Committee immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents
    for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy of
    the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.
6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform HSCL when this project is terminated. You must also provide HSCL with an annual status report to maintain HSCL approval. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from HSCL one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Jan Butin
Associate Coordinator
Human Subjects Committee Lawrence
cc: Tracy Russo

Appendix B

Interview protocol: Anticipatory professional work socialization

I.   Introduction:
Hi, my name is Leilani Carver and I am a PhD student who is interested in exploring how college seniors learn about the world of work and what expectations they have about work after graduation. Please read the Informed Consent Statement and then decide if you would like to participate. Your participation will involve signing a consent form, and then participating in an approximately one hour interview. You should not experience any discomfort with this process and you may skip a question if you feel uncomfortable answering it.

II.   Students voluntarily sign the Informed Consent Statement.

III.   Interview Questions

OVERVIEW:
First, we are going to begin with some basic demographic questions. Then we will talk about your:
o **Past work experiences and what you learned about work from them**
o **How you currently feel about your future career and work and your expectations, and**
o **Where you see yourself in your career in the future.**

DEMOGRAHICS:
o When do you anticipate graduating from KU?
o How old are you?
o What's your ethnicity?
o Did your father attend college? Did he graduate?
o Did your mother attend college? Did she graduate?
o (If no to both) Will you be the first person in your family to graduate from college?
o What is your hometown?
o What's your major?
o Why did you select that major?

PAST: Previous Work Experience and Messages
Now, let's talk about your past experiences with work.

o When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
     Why?
o Tell me about your previous work experience beginning in high school.
     What jobs have you had?
      Was it a good experience? Why or why not?
      What did you learn about work from this experience?
     What did you learn about work from interacting with your
          supervisors?
      How did your previous job(s) relate to what you now want to do?

- Tell me your previous volunteer or unpaid work experience.

- Tell me about a time during (name most recent work experience) where you learned an important lesson about work?
- What was the hardest part about work?

- What did your parents tell you about work?
- What did your teachers/profs tell you about work?
    - What info was helpful? Pos or neg?
- What did/do your friends tell you about work?

- Is there anything about your past work experience that you wished I had asked you that I didn't?

PRESENT:
Now let's talk about your current experiences and expectations about work after you graduate (professional work).

- What career do you want to have once you graduate?
    - (What do you want to be when you grow up?)
    - Why?
    - What made you decide that?
    - What would it be like to be a _____?
    - Where did you learn about being a _____?
    - How do you know what to expect?
    - Have you gone out of your way to find out specific information about __?
    - Has the economic downturn changed your answer?

- So, after you graduate, what are you actually going to do? What's next?
    - (Possible follow up questions…)
    - Why?
    - What made you decide that?
    - Where (or from what resource) did you learn about this job?
    - Is it easy to get a good job right after college graduation?
    - How long do you think it will take you to find a professional job after graduation?
    - Are you currently working? If yes… where? What do you do?
        - Does your job relate to what you want to do in the future?
    - Have you completed an internship? If so, where? In what field?
    - What did you learn about work from your internship?

- Have you heard the phrase "get a real job?"
    - Has anyone ever told you to "get a real job"?
    - What make a job "real" for you?
    - What do you think other people mean when they say a "real job?"

o   When you need information about your first job after graduation, where do/did you go?
    Why?
    Was the information you need easy to find?
    What information have you looked for?
    Where can you find the information you need?
    Have you looked on the web? If so, where?
        What info is the web good for?

o   Who do you talk to most frequently about your future jobs and career?

o   What is the best piece of advice that you have received about being successful at work after you graduate from college?
    Who told you this advice?
    Did you follow the advice? Why or why not?
    Who else gives you good advice about professional work?
    Has anyone or any resource given you bad advice? What did they say?
    What resource do you think provides the most valuable source of
        information about your future jobs or career?
    What person is the most valuable source of information about your
        future jobs or career? What makes that person the best? (credible)

o   Is there anything that you wished I had asked you about your current views of work and career that I didn't?

FUTURE:
Now, let's talk about your future career and jobs.

o   What do you think will be the most challenging part of your first job after college graduation?
    Why?
    How will you deal with these challenges?
    What will you do if you don't like your job?
    How will your first professional job be different than the job you have
    now?
o   What kind of relationship do you hope to have with your supervisor?
    How will you find out your supervisor's expectations?
    What if the expectations are ambiguous? What will you do?
    Do you expect to be friends with your supervisor?

o   What do you think will be the most rewarding part of your first job?
    Why?

o   What makes work meaningful for you?
    What things are most important to you when you think about your
        career?

Would you be willing to accept a job (after graduation) that is not ideal, but is a good starting point for your career?

- o Now, I would like to ask you about your expectations:
    - How much do you think your annual salary will be for your first job?
    - How much do you think you will be making five years after graduation?
    - How much paid vacation time do you expect to receive at your first job?
    - How long do you think it will take you to be promoted?
    - How many organizations do you think you will have worked for after 10 years?

- o What resources or people have influenced you to develop these expectations?

- o What is your biggest concern about making the transition to work after you graduate?
    - Why?

- o Do you feel pressure to choose a certain career path or do certain things after you graduate?
    - Who does this pressure come from?
    - Why do you think that you feel pressured?

- o How confident do you feel about your career choice?
    - Do you feel that college has prepared you to be successful in this career?
    - What has college taught you about the world of work (or your career)?
    - What things are you looking for in your long term career?
- o What do you know now about professional work now that you did not know when you were a Freshman?

- o Imagine that I'm your best friend and I'm about to graduate from college. What advice would you give me about finding a professional (a real) job?
    - What advice would you give me about being successful in my first job?
    - If I, as your best friend, needed more information about my career, where would you tell me to go?
        - What person? What websites? What things at KU?
    - How will I know if the career information I find is accurate and credible?

- o When you go to your 10-year college reunion, what do you want to have accomplished in your career?
    - How will you know if you have become successful or not?
    - What do you think will be most meaningful about your career at this point?

- o Is there anything that you wished I had asked you that I didn't?

IV.   Member Check: May I contact you later to receive your feedback about my interpretation of the findings from all the interviews? The purpose of contacting you would be to

increase the accuracy of my findings and be sure that I understood what you had to say. You can openly provide feedback, make comments and let me know if the findings do or do not reflect your experience.

V. **Thank you for participating in this study.**

Appendix C

Participant Demographics Chart

Name	M/F	Grad Month	Age	Ethnicity	Father College	Mother College	1st Gen	Home town	Major	Internship	Career Job?
Esther	F	Dec	22	Af Am	Grad	Grad	No	Boston, MA	Sport Mgmt	Yes	No
Carrie	F	May	22	Cauc	Grad	Some	No	Salina, KS	Comm	Yes	Yes
Barb	F	May	22	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Minneapolis, MN	Strat Comm Journ	Yes-unrelated	No
Andrea	F	May	21	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Overland Park, KS	Comm	No	No
Jenn	F	May	22	Cauc	No	No	Yes	Overland Park, KS	Engin	Yes- two	Yes
Amanda	F	May	26	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Overland Park, KS	Comm	No	Yes, but not in career
Lindsay	F	May	21	Cauc	No	No	Yes	Ashton, KS	Economics	No	Yes
Brad	M	May	24	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Lawrence, KS	Am Studies		
Anne	F	Dec	22	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Dallas, TX	Comm	No	Applying to Grad School
Cara	F	Aug	22	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Dallas, TX	Journ	No	No
John	M	Dec	23	Asian	Grad	Some	No	Fayetteville NC	Comm	Yes	No
Sarah	F	May	22	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Sentinel, CO	Journ Strat Comm	Yes-current (after grad)	No
Rafael	M	Aug	24	Hispanic	No	Some	Yes	Topeka, KS	Comm	No	No
Omar	M	Dec	22	Middle Eastern	Some	Some	Yes	Paola, KS	Comm	No	No
Michelle	F	Aug	22	Cauc	No	No	Yes	Bloomington, MN	Comm	Yes	No
Nadia	F	May	22	Af Am	Grad	Grad	No	Frisco, TX	English & Journ	Yes	Yes
Scott	M	Aug	22	Cauc	Some	Grad	No	Olathe, KS	History	No	Yes, but not in career
Abbie	F	May	21	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Overland Park, KS	Chemisty & English	No	Med School
Dana	F	May	22	Cauc	Grad	Some	No	Chesterfield, MO	Journ Strat Comm	Yes	Yes
Ava	F	May	23	Cauc	Some	Grad	No	Augusta, KS	Journ Strat Comm	Yes-three	Yes
Elaine	F	Aug	22	Cauc	No	Some	Yes	Shawnee, KS	Comm	No	No
Mike	M	Aug	21	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Olathe, KS	Comm & Bus	Yes	No
Kim	F	Aug	23	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Great Bend, KS	Civil Engineer	Yes	Yes. Hired at Internship.
Jacob	M	Aug	22	Cauc	Some	No	Yes	Dodge City, KS	Comm	Yes-summers	Family Business
Chole	F	Aug	22	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Wichita, KS	Elemem Education	Yes-student teaching	No
Ethan	M	Dec	22	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Hutchingson, KS	Comm	Internship -unrelated	No
Noah	M	Dec	23	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Overland Park, KS	Comm	No	No
Emma	F	May	22	Cauc	Grad	Grad	No	Olathe, KS	English	No	No