

Allison M. Long. Career Choice of Young Adult Librarians in a Public Setting: A Narrative Analysis of Motivations with Implications for Recruitment. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in LS degree. April, 2010. 129 pages. Advisor: Sandra Hughes-Hassell.

This study examines the career motivations of young adult librarians working in public libraries. Qualitative interviews were conducted with three practicing young adult librarians whose life stories were written in narrative form and analyzed using the principles of Career Construction Theory. Comparisons across the life stories of the participants revealed that young adult librarians share many career motivations with librarians in other specializations. The research also identified career factors specific to young adult librarians, including a young age, fondness for young people, and influences from their personal adolescent experience. The implications of these factors in the recruitment and employment of young adult librarians are discussed.

Headings:

Young adults' librarians.

Young adults' library services.

Public libraries – Staff.

Librarians – Career.

CAREER CHOICE OF YOUNG ADULT LIBRARIANS IN A PUBLIC SETTING: A
NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATIONS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR
RECRUITMENT

by
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A Master's paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April 2010

Approved by

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Introduction

Young adult (YA) librarians provide resources and programming for youth between the ages of 12 and 18 years old in public libraries. In working with this population, YA librarians must acquire expertise in the needs and interests of young people, which generally requires that YA librarians be familiar with popular teen media and emerging technologies in order to provide appropriate services for this cutting-edge generation. Additionally, YA librarians should have an understanding of the physical, emotional, and social changes that occur during adolescence and be sensitive to these developmental needs (YALSA, 2010).

Currently, YA library services are not readily available in many parts of the country. Traditionally, many libraries have combined young adult services with children's services and hired one librarian to oversee all of the library's youth-related activities. However, evidence has been building for the past twenty years that shows that the developmental needs of adolescents are significantly different from those of younger children. In light of this evidence, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) has begun a movement for the expansion of specialized YA library services, developing a set of competencies for working with young adults in libraries (see Appendix F). This new view of library services for teens goes beyond simply collecting

young adult fiction and providing homework help; it calls for YA librarians to be central players in the process of positive youth development by providing intellectual, artistic, social, and emotional support and stimulation for young people (YALSA, 2010).

The depth of interaction and understanding that is now expected of YA librarians by the profession dictates that YA librarians be qualified not only in aspects of library science but also in communicating and relating to teenagers (YALSA, 2010). In fact, the personal connections that YA librarians build with their patrons may ultimately be the most important aspect of their jobs. In considering the construction of these intimate relationships, it might be said that it takes a special kind of person to work with a population that can be alternately sullen, overexcited, and disrespectful in a span of only a few hours. In order to successfully contribute to the positive growth of adolescents, YA librarians must understand the daily tribulations that affect teens and the emotional weight of their confusing, ever-changing worlds.

YA librarians must also be compassionate, patient people. They need to be able to reflect on their own adolescent experiences to help them avoid being judgmental or critical of teens' behavior. Certainly, YA librarians must have a strong service-orientation and be committed to providing holistic programmatic and informational services for adolescents (YALSA, 2010).

This research study seeks to identify the factors that affect the career choice of young adult librarian. It is hypothesized that, among other motivations that have been identified in the general population of librarians, the personal adolescent experiences of young adult librarians will prove to have had a significant impact on their decision to

work with teens in libraries. The career motivations of YA librarians have not yet been examined by the professional literature; the goal of this research is to illuminate these motivations so that they might be used to recruit new talent to this burgeoning field of librarianship.

Literature Review

To date, there have been no scientific studies conducted on the career motivations of young adult librarians; elucidation of these professionals' career paths has appeared only in personal anecdotes of young adult librarians' lives. However, several studies have been undertaken to understand the reasons that people choose to enter the general field of librarianship. There have also been a few studies examining the factors that influence people to become school library media specialists (SMLSs), a career that can resemble that of young adult librarian through the similarity of the clientele served.

In reviewing the literature on the occupational choice of young adult librarian, I will first examine the results of studies that reveal motivating factors and commonalities among librarians working in all fields. I will then briefly explore studies that have been conducted on the career motivations of SLMSs in hopes that the similarity of the clientele served by both SLMSs and young adult librarians might provide insight into motivations of librarians desiring to work with an age-specific group. Finally, I will discuss the essential role that young adult librarians play in providing developmentally-appropriate library services for teens and will explore the self-reported career motivations of young adult librarians that have been gleaned from the professional literature.

General Librarianship

Studies of the reasons why people have chosen librarianship as a career have been numerous. Almost all of these studies have been based on forced-choice surveys of library science graduate students or library practitioners. Due to the varied nature of the questions and response choices offered on these surveys, it is somewhat difficult to compare or contrast the results on a one-to-one basis. However, similar themes seem to run through the surveys' findings. The following is a review of some of the major themes that appear across a selection of past studies that focus on the occupational choice of librarianship.

A few factors that have shown to consistently influence a career in librarianship are an orientation towards service; love of books and reading; the influence of family members and librarians; and previous library work experience. Some people decide to become librarians at an early age, while a great many others enter the profession as a second career. Additionally, there are a few personal factors that appear to be shared by a large number of librarians, including hobbies and dispositions.

Service Orientation

In her 2007 book, *A Good Match: Library Career Opportunities for Graduates of Liberal Arts Colleges*, Rebecca Watson-Boone reports the findings of the College Alumni Librarians Study (CALs) that aimed to understand why graduates of certain liberal arts colleges decided to go into the field of library science. She describes librarianship as a service profession and contends that the reasons that people decide to work in service-oriented professions “include believing that being a member of such a

field allows them to ‘make a difference’ – to act and work in accord with their values and ethics” (p. 261). Indeed, the CALS survey found that “desire to work with/help people” and “fits values/ideals important to me” tied for the second overall reason respondents had for entering the profession, with 15% of respondents agreeing strongly with each phrase (p. 93).

Watson-Boone’s (2007) findings echo the results of several previous studies which report that many people choose librarianship for altruistic reasons. Respondents to Julian’s 1979 survey chose “understanding of and appreciation for helping people” as the most important characteristic for librarians to have (p. 28). Heim & Moen (1989) found in their Library and Information Science Students’ Attitudes, Demographics, and Aspirations (LISSADA) survey that 61% of respondents agreed “very much” with the description of library work as “service-oriented,” and that at least 45% saw the work of librarianship as “significant” to the functioning of society (p.45-46). In 1999, Gordon and Nesbeitt found that enjoyment of working with people was the second most common answer for the professional choice of librarianship. One can see from these comparisons that the significant service orientation of people who choose to become librarians has not wavered much in the past thirty years.

Love of Books and Reading

In the surveys mentioned above in which service orientation was the second most popular choice among respondents, the first most popular choice was “reading” or “love of books” (Gordon & Nesbeitt, 1999; Watson-Boone, 2007). This result would not surprise many information professionals, nor would it surprise much of the general

public, as librarians are traditionally thought of as bookish types. However, in surveys in which “reading” or “love of books” was offered as a response choice to questions about career decisions, the results were not always consistent across studies. Weihs (1999) reported that about 17% of respondents selected such an option, while only 2% in a survey conducted by Ard et al. (2006) made the same choice. Watson-Boone (2007) reported similar findings to Weihs; it is unclear why the responses to the Ard et al. study differed so drastically. However, it may be safe to conclude that, in general, many librarians greatly enjoy books and reading.

Influential People

The CALS study found that significant percentages of the alumni surveyed had at least one close family member – a parent or sibling – who was employed or had been previously employed in the service sector, holding positions in education, health work, libraries, or religious institutions. The study drew connections between these service-oriented relatives and the CALS alumni’s childhood and adult aspirations to follow in their service-oriented relatives’ footsteps. The most common responses to the question “what did you want to be when you grow up?” were a K-12 educator or health professional for respondents who also had a relative employed in those fields. The conclusion that the CALS researchers draw from this evidence is that the occupational choices of librarians may be heavily influenced by familial commitment to the service professions (Watson-Boone, 2007).

Perhaps the most significant influence on future librarians, however, is librarians themselves. Several studies have shown that about 35-40% of librarians and library

students were greatly influenced by a librarian to pursue a career in library science (Heim & Moen, 1989; Julian, 1979; McClenney, 1989). In the CALS survey, an impressive 77% of respondents stated that they had been greatly influenced in their career choice by some type of librarian, with 33% being influenced by a K-12 librarian they encountered during childhood, 18% by a librarian after college graduation, 16% by a librarian during college, and 10% influenced by a family member who is a librarian (Watson-Boone, 2007). The percentage of respondents who indicated that they were greatly influenced by K-12 librarians is striking and lends itself as strong supportive evidence for efforts to recruit future professionals beginning in middle or high school. From this evidence, Watson-Boone (2007) concludes that “the importance of public or school librarians during the K-12 years is indisputable” (p. 96).

Previous Library Work Experience

When considering the factors that influence people to become librarians, one might imagine that previous library work experience would greatly affect the decision. It seems to be the case that those who have held non-professional library jobs tend to cite their experience as a factor contributing to their career choice. For example, out of 52.7% of respondents in the Heim & Moen (1989) study who had ever worked in libraries in a pre-professional position, 88% said that their previous library work had positively influenced their career choice. Similarly, 55% of respondents to Ard et al.’s (2006) survey had worked in libraries prior to obtaining their MLS, and 31% of that group indicated that the experience had “strongly” influenced their career decision.

However, surveys have also shown that a great number of those interested in librarianship had never worked in a library before obtaining their MLS. Forty-six percent of public librarians polled by the Public Library Association's (PLA) Recruitment of Public Librarians Committee (2006) had no library experience prior to entering library school. Heim & Moen (1989) found that almost the same percentage of college graduates decided to pursue an MLS after working in libraries post-college graduation as those who did not work in libraries after college. Still, it seems to hold true that "when people have the opportunity to taste librarianship through a pre-professional job, many apparently find the field appealing" (Ard et al., 2006, p. 240).

Age of Interest and Career Changers

The age of first interest in librarianship as a career has been measured in several studies and has been reported according to either respondents' chronological age or by educational stages (i.e. "in high school" or "after college"). Several of the surveys reviewed found that the majority of respondents first became interested in librarianship as a career either during or after their undergraduate experience or within the age range of 20-30 years old (Ard et al, 2006; Julian, 1979; Watson-Boone, 2007). The PLA Recruitment of Public Librarians Committee (2006) found that over half of all public librarians surveyed obtained their MLS degrees between the ages of 22 and 26.

A few studies have shown that a significant number of people considered librarianship before graduating high school. Julian (1979) found that about 32% of respondents fell into this category, with about 20% reporting first becoming interested in the profession while in high school. The PLA Recruitment of Public Librarians

Committee (2006) study reported that the largest percentage of respondents became interested in librarianship before the age of 16. Additionally, 23% of CALS survey respondents decided to pursue librarianship before the age of 21 (Watson-Boone, 2007). It is important to note that while interest in librarianship at a young age is not the declarative norm, a sizable portion of library science students and practitioners did first consider the profession at such an age.

Evidence also abounds of people first considering librarianship at the other end of the age spectrum. McClenney (1989) found that close to 29% of library science students polled became interested in the field after being in the workforce for many years or raising a family; the average age of respondents in that study was 35. Seventeen percent of respondents in the LISSADA survey reported similar life circumstances (Heim & Moen, 1989). Before entering the library field, many librarians previously worked in areas of K-12 education, business, or office administration (Heim & Moen, 1989; Watson-Boone, 2007).

Indeed, there exists a trend of people entering the library field as their second or even third career. Bosseau & Martin (1995) describe librarianship as an “accidental profession,” meaning that it is a field “populated overwhelmingly by people who discovered it while detouring from some other planned career” (p. 198). The number one reason for entering the profession given by respondents to Julian’s (1979) study was “better job opportunities.” Thirty-eight percent of McClenney’s (1989) survey responders cited career change as their top motivating factor, and the same was true for 19% of those in Weihs’s (1999) study. Jones (2008) asserts that “the explanation that many professionals just ‘happened into’ library work is a common one” (p. 11).

Personal Factors

In addition to the influential factors and people listed above, there also seem to be personal factors that tend to attract people to librarianship as a career. The LISSADA survey found that, as children, future librarians tended to use the library for personal use much more often than did the rest of their families: 41% personally used the library one or more times a week, compared with 22% whose families would visit the library on a regular basis (Heim & Moen, 1989). These figures demonstrate librarians' early enjoyment of the services and atmosphere that libraries provide.

The LISSADA study also found that in the two months prior to completing the LISSADA survey, 93% of respondents had read at least one non-required reading book, with almost 30% having read six or more (Heim & Moen, 1989). Reading was listed as the most popular recreational activity among CALS alumni, while other pastimes enjoyed by the CALS librarians include attending and participating in the arts, travel, cooking, playing with computers, learning, and volunteering (Watson-Boone, 2007).

It should also be noted that a great majority of librarians received undergraduate degrees in some area of the humanities, with the most popular majors being English/English literature, history, and education (Julian, 1979; McClenney, 1989). Making the occupational choice to become a librarian may be a natural consequence of obtaining a degree in a field in which employment options outside of teaching or scholarship are rather limited.

In considering the librarian personality type, the results of multiple Myers-Briggs Personality Inventories have produced consistent results suggesting that

librarians tend to be introverted and ordered in their thinking with strong patterns of sensing, thinking, and judging (Scherdin 1994; Watson-Boone, 2007). This personality type is described by Scherdin (1994) as being a hard-working, fact-based professional who enjoys implementing practical solutions to problems.

Other commonly reported factors affecting the decision to become a librarian were intellectual opportunities, love of research, and a general liking of library work and libraries (Gordon & Nesbeitt, 1999; Heim & Moen, 1989; Watson-Boone, 2007).

Non-Factors

Two factors that respondents generally chose as significantly *not* affecting their career choice of librarian were compensation and social status. McClenney (1989) found that only 20% of respondents ever considered monetary benefit a reason for their choice of a career in librarianship. The Ard et al. (2006) study produced similar results, while Watson-Boone (2007) found that salary and positive image of librarians were the least important factors affecting career choice, with only 1-2% of respondents choosing either answer.

Certainly, few people go into librarianship expecting to achieve celebrity status. Heim & Moen (1989) found that “the factors most attractive to students [desiring to become librarians] were abstract humanistic qualities, while those least attractive were more materialistic” (p. 48). The perceived unimportance of high pay and notoriety among librarians may speak to their general orientation towards service work, in which providing aid to others is valued as a greater reward. It also speaks to the field’s relatively low pay and the general public’s negative perception of the library profession.

On this latter point, library science students in the LISSADA survey overwhelmingly agreed that non-librarians tend to have negative, inaccurate views about librarians (Heim & Moen, 1989). In light of these findings, Ard and her colleagues seem to be fairly accurate in stating that “the promise of an interesting job draws far more people into librarianship than compensation, clientele, or prestige” (2006, p. 241).

School Library Media Specialists

The purpose of the current project is to identify and explore the reasons that people have for choosing to work with young adults in public library settings, a field in which career motivations have not yet been explored. However, there have been a handful of studies undertaken to discover the reasons that people have for choosing an occupation that is closely related to public library youth services: the occupation of school library media specialist (SLMS). The main point of comparison between these two professional divisions of librarianship is the clientele served; SLMSs who work in middle and high schools serve the same age group as young adult librarians who work in public settings and must subsequently cater to the same developmental and informational needs. The fact that both YA librarians and SLMSs choose to work with young people implies that they may share some career motivations. While studies of SLMS career motivations have reported on the entire K-12 spectrum of SLMS services and have not specifically focused on services to adolescents, a brief review of existing SLMS occupational choice literature will provide a jumping-off point from which we may consider the factors influencing the choice to work with young adults in public libraries.

The earliest and most comprehensive survey of the career motivations for SLMSs was conducted by Sister Mary Lucille McCreedy in 1963 in her Columbia University dissertation *The Selection of School Librarianship as a Career*. McCreedy may have actually tried to be too comprehensive in her survey, as her multiple data sets for practicing school librarians, library science students pursuing school librarianship, library science students *not* pursuing school librarianship, and undergraduates “most likely” interested in pursuing school librarianship, provide an overwhelming amount of information that is easily jumbled and from which few overarching conclusions may be reached. However, the raw data from the McCreedy survey does provide a few significant points. For example, McCreedy found that the highest-ranking factors influencing SLMSs choice of career were enjoyment of books – particularly young people’s books – and a liking for young people. These influencing factors are unique to library work with children and adolescents.

Not surprisingly, more than half of the practicing SLMSs surveyed by McCreedy had come from a teaching background. One factor affecting career change from teacher to SLMS that is surprising, however, and may have been a product of the time in which McCreedy wrote her dissertation, is that 55% of the former teachers had had responsibility for the school library assigned to them by administrators. Additionally, only 13% of those assigned to the library were relieved of their other teaching duties. The reasons behind these forced assignments and the teacher-librarians’ satisfaction with these arrangements are not explored in the discussion of the study findings. It is significant to note, however, that a good portion of McCreedy’s respondents did not willingly choose to become SLMSs.

Although a large number of respondents to McCreedy's survey were former teachers, the study's findings discredit the commonly-held notion that many teachers become SLMSs because of classroom burnout. McCreedy found that only 13% of SLMSs believed that library work within a school is "less arduous" than teaching, and, in fact, most of the former teachers changed careers because they desired more intellectual and instructional challenge and variety (p. 278). McCreedy's findings have been corroborated by a more contemporary study by Shannon (2008), who found that only 16% of former teachers studying to be SLMSs switched careers to get out of the classroom.

Shannon's (2008) study integrated a forced-choice survey with library student focus groups in an effort to tease out more personalized reasoning for choosing school librarianship as a specialization, particularly among school media students who had not been previous teachers. Seventy-two percent of respondents had come from the teaching field, whereas 28% had never been teachers. The two groups shared a love of books, a desire to work with young people, and an interest in technology (a new development since McCreedy's (1963) era). Other factors that Shannon (2008) found to be unique in influencing SLMS students' career decisions were the high demand for school librarians due to an ever-present national shortage and the "family friendly" nature of a schedule that aligns well with that of children.

Shannon (2008) also found that among previous teachers and non-teachers alike, a school librarian was a large influence on career decisions. For previous teachers, the influence was generally a former colleague who generated either a positive ("I want to do that!") or negative ("I can do better than that!") reaction, while for non-teachers, the

influence was either a former supervisor (about a quarter had been school library assistants) or a school librarian from their youth whose influence was generally positive. One member of a focus group comprised of students who had not been teachers before getting their MLS made the following comment to this effect: “I just remember going to the library and someone always being nice there, and I thought that if every person had a good librarian that they would have this love for books that I didn’t develop, unfortunately, early enough” (p. 219). This desire to assist young people in their discovery of knowledge may be a career motivation that SLMSs share with young adult librarians.

The most recent and innovative study into the career motivations of school librarians was conducted by Stephanie Anne Jones in her 2008 University of Georgia dissertation *The Occupational Choice of School Library Media Specialists*. Instead of implementing a quantitative forced-choice survey, Jones (2008) conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with five school library media graduate students in order to “identify and explore the reasons that individuals choose to become school library media specialists” (p. 7). It is upon Jones’s methodology that this research study is based.

From her narrative analyses of the participants’ life stories, Jones (2008) found that most of the respondents shared a number of similar life experiences and personal characteristics. Most had parents who had attended college and who set high academic expectations for their children. Perhaps as a result of this upbringing, most of the respondents did well in and enjoyed school; at some point in their lives, they all eventually became avid readers and learned to love libraries, either from patronizing

them or working in them. All participants had also been persuaded to enter the career by a librarian. Additionally, the respondents seemed naturally predisposed to altruism and service-oriented work, and, when evaluated using Holland's RIASEC taxonomy of vocational personality (discussed further in *Methodology*), all of the participants showed strong inclinations toward the Investigative and Artistic types, results which can indicate a good match with the field of librarianship. It may prove to be the case that young adult librarians share many or all of these personal factors of career motivation with SLMSs.

The unique factors of the SLMS field that most significantly attracted Jones's respondents were financial stability, job security, and flexibility of the work schedule, the latter being important mostly for the three respondents who had school-aged children. Two of the respondents who had been former teachers discussed the issue of "emotional distance" in the context of their leaving the classroom for the school library. Both had had emotionally draining experiences the last years of their teaching with special needs children and felt that they could be more productive (and less stressed) in a different kind of learning environment.

It is interesting to compare Jones's (2008) qualitative findings with those of all the quantitative studies that have come before. The key point is not a significant difference in the results themselves – it seems that Jones came to almost the same conclusions as Shannon (2008) and McCreedy (1963), as well as the surveys designed to study librarians in general, discussed above. The key point, it seems, is that Jones was able to reach the same conclusions – which redundancy assumes to prove accurate – using a qualitative, narrative-based methodology. In addition to discovering

quantifiable variables that affect the occupational choice of SLMS, Jones elicited a deeper, more personal commentary from the study participants that is impossible to characterize using forced-choice surveys. Her research has put a human face on the career motivations of librarians and has bestowed to the next generation of researchers a valid methodology upon which to expand.

Young Adult Librarians

After reviewing studies that explore the career motivations of librarians in other specializations, one might imagine that young adult (YA) librarians would most likely share many of the same occupational influences. However, the unique interaction of the YA librarian with his or her teenage clientele would seem to require that YA librarians obtain a special set of skills and competencies in order to provide appropriate services to this specific age group. In examining the occupational choice of YA librarian, we must first consider the job that YA librarians undertake and the patrons that they serve. This section will begin with a review of teenagers' interactions with libraries and how YA librarians facilitate teen library use by catering to their age-specific needs, followed by a brief examination of the growth experienced in this professional field within the past 20 years. It will then explore the reasons that practicing YA librarians have expressed for choosing their occupation.

Young Adults and Libraries

The literature shows that young adults are a consistently underserved population of library users. A survey by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

conducted in 1995 found that only 58% of public libraries actually have a separate young adult collection; fifteen percent of libraries inter-shelve young adult books with the adult collection, and 16% inter-shelve YA books with children's books. In regards to staffing for YA services, only 52% of public libraries provide any kind of dedicated service for young adults, and half of those services are provided by "youth services" librarians who are responsible for both children and adolescents. Only eleven percent of libraries employ a dedicated "young adult librarian"; these institutions tend to be located in large, urban populations where the sheer number of young adult users dictates the creation of a specialized position (Chelton, 2005). In her discussion of these figures, Chelton (1997) comments that, with an average ratio of 618 users to 1 youth services librarian, "inadequate staff is a barrier to increasing services to . . . young adults" (p. 106). Libraries may be "inadequate" in serving young adults by either not employing staff to serve them or by employing staff that is not fully capable of serving them due to conflicting obligations.

Traditionally, teenagers have been viewed by many public librarians as an annoying disruption to the regular functioning of the library. Higgins (1994) comments that many librarians dislike their teenage patrons because the librarians perceive the patrons to be "scruffy," "noisy," and "rude" (p. 384). Sullivan (2001) notes that when discussing young adult services with his colleagues, he often hears them asking "What can be done *about* [young adults]?" instead of "What can be done *for* them?" (p. 75, emphasis mine). He postulates that public librarians suffer from "ephebiphobia" – the fear of teenagers (p. 75).

In turn, teenagers tend to dislike librarians; they feel that it is too quiet in libraries and that librarians are iron-fisted keepers of a sacred peace that is not to be disturbed (Higgins, 1994). In general, teenagers do not see libraries as places that welcome them. The adversarial relationship between teenagers and librarians is complicated and exacerbated by the fact that almost a quarter of all public library users are teenagers (Chelton, 1997). While a majority of teens use the public library for school work (Higgins, 1994), there are also teens who use the public library for free access to the internet, to check out books and media, and as a place to hang out after school (Agosto, 2007).

The results of teen focus groups have found that young adults desire change in the way that library services are provided to them (Jones, Gorman & Sullentrop, 2004). They would like extended library hours – night and weekends – to accommodate their busy school and extracurricular schedules. For teen collections, the focus group members expressed interest in new information technologies and media, including multiple computers with unfiltered internet access. They also suggested having a dedicated teen space within the library. Most of all, the focus group teens felt that there needs to be a change in librarians' attitudes toward adolescents. Teens would like to interact with staff who are respectful towards them and do not view them with suspicion just because they are young; they would like to be asked for their opinions and ideas. In other words, teens desire to be treated like valuable members of the community.

It is true that the typical operating procedure of libraries does not condone common adolescent behaviors and characteristics, such as defiance of rules and perpetual socialization. These behaviors, however, are not merely hallmarks of

disrespectful youth; rather, they speak to the underlying psychological and physical changes occurring in adolescents' lives as they navigate the rocky pass between childhood and adulthood (Jones, Gorman, & Sullentrop, 2004). The confusion incurred by these rapid changes may cause teens to withdraw or act out; however, adults who work with youth should recognize these behaviors as normal and should not harshly judge or punish teens for being themselves. As Sullivan (2001) pointedly observes, "teenagers aren't luggage: they don't need handling" (p. 75).

Developmental Needs of Young Adults

In the third edition of the seminal work on young adult library services, *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries*, Jones, Gorman, & Sullentrop (2004) outline four core needs of adolescents: independence, excitement, identity, and acceptance. As children age, they become less reliant on their parents for emotional and social support and increasingly obtain these comforts from their peers. Their worlds are blown open by the introduction of new ideas, feelings, and situations that stimulate and challenge them. The biological, cognitive, and social changes that occur during the teenage years leave adolescents wondering who they are, who they would like to be, and, perhaps most importantly, who cares about them. Anyone who works with young adults can recognize the intense need that adolescents have to feel that they are loved and accepted, despite their sometimes erratic behavior.

For the past 15 years, the Search Institute (2006) has studied the factors that produce healthy, productive teens, and has produced a list of 40 developmental assets that young adults need to become happy, secure adults. These 40 assets are "the positive

relationships, opportunities, skills and values that help young people grow up healthy” (Scales & Leffert, 2004, p. 1). Instead of focusing on the prevention of risky teen behavior like so many other youth programs, the developmental assets framework seeks to create positive youth development by encouraging the acquisition of these 40 assets in each young person. See Appendix E for a complete list of the Search Institute’s 40 developmental assets.

The assets are divided into two main groups: external assets, which are opportunities and relationships provided by adults; and internal assets, which are values and competencies that develop within the child. External assets are broken down into the categories of support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time, while internal assets cover areas of commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Research on more than 1.5 million American teenagers in grades 6-12 has shown that adolescents who have more developmental assets are not only less likely to participate in risky behaviors but are also more likely to engage in positive behaviors. The assets also work to build resiliency in youth and create a youth-positive community environment (Scales & Leffert, 2004).

However, the Search Institute’s research has also shown that most adolescents are not getting enough of the developmental assets they need; the average student surveyed demonstrated having less than half of the total assets (Scales & Leffert, 2004). This figure speaks to the negative views many communities take in regards to their youth, a group whom they feel do not need or deserve “special” services or treatment. The Search Institute’s research, however, shows that community participation in youth

development is not a suggestion applicable only to some neighborhoods – it is an imperative for all communities to help their youth become productive members of society.

YA Librarians: Positive Youth Development and Youth Advocacy

Patrick Jones (2002) suggests that YA librarians can play an instrumental role in developing teens' foundational assets. In fact, the YALSA Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth (YALSA, 2010) (see Appendix F) specifically states that YA librarians should “model commitment to building *assets* in youth in order to develop healthy, successful young adults” (p. 2, emphasis mine). By comparing the Search Institute's (2006) 40 developmental assets with the general work of young adult librarians, we can see several areas in which YA librarians are able to help adolescents acquire positive assets. For example, YA librarians can provide teens with adult relationships and role models outside of their parents and teachers. Programming for teens at the public library involves youth as resources, provides teens with a safe place to be, and encourages constructive use of time through creative activities and community youth programs. These programs combined with the relationships that teens have with YA librarians can promote teens' commitment to learning, encourage positive values – such as caring, social justice, and responsibility – and help them develop positive self identities. “Our real goal [as YA librarians],” Jones (2002) writes, “isn't to increase circulation, but to help kids thrive” (p. 46).

Studies have illustrated the clear benefits for teens associated with libraries' employment of specialized YA librarians. Higgins (1994) surveyed teenage users at two

different public libraries, one of which employed a designated teen services librarian, and one that did not. Teens at the library with the teen librarian reported being more satisfied than their counterparts with the following library services: programming; selection of popular reading materials; young adult booklists; and designated space within the library just for teens. They also felt more welcome at the library, implemented special library services more often (i.e. interlibrary loan), and were better informed about avenues of personal assistance open to them (like emergency hotlines). From this data, Higgins (1994) concludes that “library systems should utilize young adult librarians, since their presence encourages library usage by young adults” (p. 390).

Similarly, Alessio & Buron (2006) found that the provision of dedicated services for young adults in libraries saw more circulation of teen materials, an increase in attendance at teen programming, and a greater number of partnerships between the library and local schools and between the library and other youth organizations in the community. They authors note that “if teen materials circulate more, and if there are more programs and more teens attending those programs, and if [a] library has active partners in the community, then teens will be better served” (p. 50). If these aims are best met by a young adult specialist, as the researchers’ findings suggest, then it would seem logical that “hiring a dedicated age-level specialist . . . is the first step to engaging teens with a knowledgeable professional, dedicated to providing positive library service” (Alessio & Buron, 2006, p. 51).

Whatever services their individual programs provide, YA librarians everywhere are called to the critical mission of acting as advocates for youth. In a speech given at the YALSA President’s Program in 1996, Lisa Wemmet put forth the idea that due to

their developmentally-defined existence, “young adults are a permanent minority group” that require protection from societal prejudices (p. 169). As adults who interact with teens on a uniquely non-authoritarian level, YA librarians are in a prime position to advocate for the fair treatment of teenagers. Indeed, the YALSA (2010) competencies for young adult librarians dictate that the YA librarian “be an advocate for youth” both within and beyond the library setting (p. 4). The former editor of *School Library Journal*, Evan St. Lifer, writes in an editorial that “today’s libraries must invest themselves in the care and feeding of teens – both literally and figuratively” in order to fulfill its mission of making the community a better place (p. 11).

Growth in the YA Field

While libraries that do not employ young adult librarians today are still “more normal than not,” (Chelton, 2005), it is encouraging to note that interest in YA services within the professional community has exploded in the past 20 years. In 1998, Michael Cart, then-president of YALSA, stated that “a renaissance of public library service to young adults is currently underway” (p. 391). While there have been no further surveys conducted to measure the prevalence of YA programs in libraries across the country since the NCES study conducted in 1995 (Chelton, 1997), it has been shown that membership in YALSA grew 11% in 2005 (compared to only a 2.5% increase in ALA membership), leading Chelton (2005) to note that “teen services are apparently on the rise across the country” (p. 47).

In a 2006 interview for *School Library Journal*, Patrick Jones, a leader in the YA field, pointed out a number of changes that have occurred since the early 1990’s in

the way that library services are being provided for teens. Larger libraries are now thinking “teen, teen, teen” by creating dedicated teen spaces and collecting more heavily in new media formats, like audio books and music on CD, DVDs, and digital content. Teen library programs have also jumped on the user-generated bandwagon by providing teens with space and materials to express themselves creatively through a variety of mediums. Teens are increasingly involved in advisory activities within the teen library programs, and, in several instances, are in charge of programming not only for themselves but also for young children. Jones comments that “now people really get that serving teens isn’t just about books – it’s about looking holistically at all the ways we serve teens” (Gorman, 2006, p. 33).

Occupational Choice of YA Librarian

It has been demonstrated that those who choose to work with youth in libraries require a certain skill set not found in other branches of library work. In addition to being competent library professionals, YA librarians also need to be flexible, creative, socially conscious, and genuinely concerned with the well-being of young people. To date, there has been no scientific research on the reasons why people choose to work with young adults in public library settings. However, anecdotal evidence of personal experience with the profession abounds in the professional literature.

Some YA librarians happen serendipitously upon this “accidental profession” (Bosseau & Martin, 1995), like Mary Holmes, who stumbled into a position as a youth programs coordinator in Massachusetts after working for many years in teaching, production, and technology. She was unsure how her skills would fit into her new

profession, but soon she was confident that she had made the right decision. She writes in an editorial for *Public Libraries* (2007): “I had no idea that this would be such a hip, current, dynamic occupation. Being a young adult librarian demands that you seek change, that you know the latest gadgets and gizmos . . . and that you don’t shy away from the new” (p. 32). Certainly, YA librarians must stay on top of the latest technological advances and current media trends in order to meet teens’ demand for innovation (YALSA, 2010).

Similarly, Patrick Jones – now considered a guru of sorts in the YA field – didn’t even know that teen services existed when he attended library school. He says of his first interview for a young adult services position: “I totally bullshitted my way through” (Gorman, 2006, p. 32). It wasn’t until Jones was working at a public library in Georgia that he came into contact with teen patrons, for whom he designed a library instruction class to keep them from asking him the same questions over and over again. He says that he “found high school students to be mouthy, funny, and energetic” and decided that he wanted to focus on serving them better. Today, after co-authoring the preeminent text on young adult library services (*Connecting Young Adults and Libraries*; Jones, Gorman, & Sullentrop, 2004), Jones says that the most rewarding part of his job is witnessing the “ah-ha!” moment that occurs when a teen finds a book that “makes him or her – if only for the short term – a reader” (Sutherland, 2007, p. 5).

Bonnie Kunzel, a retired YA consultant and the New Jersey Librarian Association’s 2007 Librarians of the Year, agrees with Jones that “it is so extraordinarily rewarding to connect a teen with the right book,” although Kunzel admits that it is even more rewarding to work with teens “who [are] just being

introduced to the joys of reading” (Sutherland, 2007, p. 5). Sharing a passion for books with younger generations appears to be a common career motivator for YA librarians.

Several YA librarians have discussed the impact of their own childhood and adolescent experiences on their career decisions. In her 2004 speech, “The Leader in the Mirror: New Visions of Leadership for Young Adult Services,” Dawn Rutherford, a teen services librarian in Washington state, shares the positive interaction she had with libraries as a child and as a young adult growing up. She reports having “no negative memories” of her local library (p. 13). As a teenager, Rutherford served on the library’s youth advisory committee – an innovation for the time – and, in her second year of college, decided that librarianship was her true calling. She says that she asked herself, “What was it that I loved enough to want to pass on to others?” Her answer was “books, reading, libraries” (p. 14). Although she was discouraged by her professors (who thought she was “resigning” herself to a dull, low-paying, female-dominated profession), Rutherford pursued an MLS with the support of her parents, who had always told her that she could do whatever she wanted with her life. The strong influence of her own teenage experience with libraries coupled with the support of her family launched Rutherford into a profession that she has since helped to shape.

Similarly, Amy Alessio, a teen coordinator in Illinois and former fiscal officer for YALSA, has been an advocate for youth since she herself was a teenager. In an interview with *School Library Journal* (Sutherland, 2007), she describes how she used to write letters to the editor of the local newspaper about teens being arrested and discriminated against because of their age. In so many words, she called for constructive, community-based programs for positive youth development even before

research had shown the benefits of such programs. Perhaps Alessio's early commitment to the youth cause is responsible for her being a leader in the field of YA librarianship today.

Michael Garret Farrelly (2007), a youth services librarian in Chicago, was also influenced to join the profession by his own adolescent experience, though his story is not as sunny as those of Rutherford and Alessio. He explains that he chose to switch his academic specialization in library school to young adult services following the tragic shooting at Columbine High School. He reflects that he himself had been "the odd kid in school . . . one of those kids identified so glibly by the media as one of the Trench Coat Mafia" (p. 39). Farrelly recalls that, in his high school, the one person whom he felt most grateful for was the school librarian, because instead of telling him "how to be" – like so many other people in his life would do – she simply listened to him. Today, Farrelly emulates his high school librarian by being "the person who listens" to teens in hopes of preventing more violent outbursts born of desperation. Being the person who can help teens "find something new to read, do, think about, learn" is, to Farrelly, "what being a young adult librarian is all about." He suggests that it is a "common affliction for many librarians" to want to "save the world," one kid at a time (p. 39).

Indeed, many YA librarians view one of their main roles in the community as being confidants and mentors for young people. In her 2003 *VOYA* article, "Safe Haven," Professor Gail Bush argues that the "true mission" of youth services is to provide teens with a place in which they can feel safe to be themselves and explore new ideas (p. 438). She writes that while library and information services are an important

part of the YA librarian's job, librarians who work with youth should not "undersell the gift that we give our young friends who are struggling through adolescence" – the gift of a nurturing relationship with a trusted adult. Bush shares an anecdote about a student who asked her one day as they stood chatting in the library, "Don't you have anything *important* to do? Don't you have work?" Bush replied, "You are my work, and you are important" (p. 439).

In this vein, Jones (2002) posits that YA librarians "believe that [their] work makes kids' lives better" (p. 44) and that "libraries don't change lives; librarians do" (p. 47). Jones, Gorman, & Sullentrop (2004) state that YA librarians "want teens to come into libraries and leave with their problems solved and with good feelings" (p. 1). This strong desire to improve the lives of young patrons may prove to be a significant career motivator for those who choose to be YA librarians.

Even librarians who argue against libraries promoting themselves as "safe havens" for teens cannot deny the positive influence that many YA librarians have on the lives of their young patrons. Anthony Bernier (2003), former director of Teen Services at Oakland Public Library in California, writes that while libraries are in reality no safer than any other community institution, he has witnessed the bettering of many young people through their relationships with YA librarians. He shares that one of his staff members had "effectively adopted" a 16-year-old boy from foster care and notes that the staff member was "probably the only reliable adult support in the boy's life" (p. 199). Bernier also writes about how he himself helped a young female patron escape an abusive family situation, and that a young man from one of the author's past jobs still

contacts him to tell him how well he is doing due to the support that Bernier and the library program gave him.

It is evident from these personal anecdotes that many current YA librarians have strong, personal reasons for working with youth. Whether that reason is a desire to share knowledge, encourage positive life choices, or act as a safe harbor for teens, YA librarians have chosen their present occupations out of a passion for the clientele – not for financial gain, prestige, or the promise of an easy job. The research presented in this paper will attempt to better define the elements of that passion and to illuminate the reasoning behind this career choice.

Method

The purpose of this research is to identify the factors that influence people to choose the career of young adult librarian in a public library setting. In order to investigate this area, qualitative life-story interviews were conducted with three currently practicing YA librarians. In organizing and analyzing the data gathered from these interviews, I closely followed the methodology used by Jones (2008), who developed a research process based on the Career Construction Theory of Savickas (2002; 2005) in order to analyze the reasons that people choose to become school library media specialists. This section will begin with a brief overview of Career Construction Theory followed by a discussion of Jones's (2008) methods, and will end with the specific details of data collection and analysis used in the current project.

Career Construction Theory

Career Construction Theory is a developmental theory of vocational behavior, meaning that in this framework, a person's career decisions and aspirations are examined through the exploration of a person's entire life. Savickas (2002), the originator of this theory, describes career construction as "a reflection on the course on one's vocational behavior, not vocational behavior itself" (p. 152). He distinguishes between the *objective* aspect of career – the actual occupations that one holds – and the

subjective aspect of career, which denotes the meaning that occupations hold for individuals. The focus of career construction is on the subjective aspect of career, which “transforms individuals from actors of their career to subjects in their own career story. [Subjective career] tells one’s ‘own story,’ usually by emphasizing a sense of purpose that coherently explains the continuity and change in oneself across time” (Savickas 2002, p. 152).

This theory is based on the principle that “while making a living, people live a life,” a life that is inextricably entwined with the career decisions that people make (Savickas 2002, p. 159). Jones (2008) comments that the strength of Career Construction Theory is that “it focuses on the unique meaning that careers have for each individual” (p. 19). In extrapolating this meaning, Career Construction Theory relies upon three instruments that describe the *what*, *how*, and *why* of vocational behavior: vocational personality, career adaptability, and life theme.

Vocational Personality

Savickas (2005) describes vocational personality as “an individual’s career-related abilities, needs, values, and interests” (p. 47). In developing this aspect of Career Construction Theory, Savickas has incorporated and expanded upon the previous work of his mentor, John Holland. Holland (1985) developed a theory of vocational personality in which he characterizes people’s vocational personalities as being a combination of six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (commonly abbreviated RIASEC). According to Holland (1985), every person has a greater or lesser degree of each of these types within

their vocational personality. Vocational personality is described by a three-letter code that denotes the three strongest types that are apparent within a person. These types can be deduced by either quantitative means, such as an interest inventory, or qualitative means, through which RIASEC codes are extrapolated by talking with clients.

Briefly, the six RIASEC types may be summarized in the following manner (Jones, 2008):

- Realistic: Those who do things; includes skill trades, many technical occupations, and several service occupations
- Investigative: Those who think about things; includes scientific occupations, and several technical occupations
- Artistic: Those who create things; includes artistic, literary and musical occupations
- Social: Those who help others; includes social welfare occupations and education
- Enterprising: Those who persuade others; includes sales and managerial occupations
- Conventional: Those who organize; includes clerical occupations

These personality types, in turn, coincide with six related work environments in which those matching a certain personality type are most likely to find satisfaction. The goal of identifying one's vocational personality is to create an appropriate "person-environment fit" in designing one's career path (Holland, 1985). In considering vocational personality, Career Construction Theory uses these results to "generate hypotheses" about careers that seem to best fit a person, though it must be stated that

these hypotheses “are viewed as possibilities, not predictions” (Savickas, 2005 p. 47). Rather than dictate the types of careers in which a person is most inclined to succeed, vocational personality is used as one component in a holistic survey of a person’s career aptitudes and interests.

Career Adaptability

While vocational personality examines the content of occupations that a person may choose, career adaptability examines how a person chooses a career and deals with the expected and unexpected changes that occur within that career. Savickas (2005) describes the concept of career adaptability as “a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual’s readiness and resources for coping with current and imminent vocational developmental tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas” (p. 51). There are four mechanisms of career adaptability: *concern*, *control*, *curiosity*, and *confidence*. Savickas (2005) defines the normative behavior of a successfully adaptive individual in each dimension:

1. Becoming *concerned* about their future as a worker.
2. Increasing personal *control* over their vocational future.
3. Displaying *curiosity* by exploring possible selves and future scenarios.
4. Strengthening *confidence* to pursue their aspirations.

Jones (2008) notes that “the failure of an individual to adapt” by not displaying any one of these four dimensions of career adaptability “often results in career problems that necessitate career interventions,” such as interventions with a career construction counselor (p. 25). Figure 1 displays the four dimensions of career adaptability in

relation to career questions, problems, competencies, and interventions that people who are struggling with certain aspects of adaptation may encounter (Savickas, 2005).

The four dimensions of career adaptability occur throughout the cycle of one's career. Career Construction Theory breaks down the life cycle of one's career into the following developmental stages (Savickas, 2002):

- *Growth*, in which one's vocational personality forms during childhood and adolescence
- *Exploration*, in which one becomes curious about different careers that fit one's vocational personality
- *Establishment*, in which one begins a chosen a career
- *Management*, in which one maintains a chosen career
- *Disengagement*, in which one leaves a career, either to begin a new career or at the event of retirement

These career stages were first developed by Savickas's mentor, Donald E. Super, during the 1950's, a time in which it was common for men to stay in the same occupation for their entire lives (Jones, 2008). Today, these developmental stages may not be as readily applicable to the dynamic career lives of those participating in the global economy. However, these developmental stages may be applied in miniature to the "micro-cycle" of school-to-career transitions, changes in occupation, and other life-career imbalances (Savickas, 2005).

Figure 1 Career Adaptability Dimensions

Career Question	Career Problem	Adaptability Dimension	Attitudes and Beliefs	Competence	Coping Behaviors	Relationship Perspective	Career Intervention
Do I have a future?	Indifference	Concern	Planful	Planning	Aware Involved	Dependent	Orientation exercises
Who owns my future?	Indecision	Control	Decisive	Decision making	Preparatory Assertive Disciplined Willful	Independent	Decisional training
What do I want to do with my future?	Unrealism	Curiosity	Inquisitive	Exploring	Experimenting Risk-taking Inquiring	Interdependent	Information-seeking activities
Can I do it?	Inhibition	Confidence	Efficacious	Problem-solving	Persistent Striving Industrious	Equal	Self-esteem building

Life Theme

The final component of Career Construction Theory is the life theme. A person's life theme is discovered through analysis of his or her career story, which is gathered from the person's own direct narration of his or her life. Savickas (2005) states that "the essential meaning of career and the dynamics of its construction are revealed in self-defining stories about the tasks, transitions, and traumas an individual has faced" (p. 58). Examination of a client's life theme provides career counselors with the larger context from within which the client has chosen or become indecisive about his or her career path. "The life theme reveals how a person makes meaning through his life's work and why that work matters to the individual and to society" (Jones, 2008, p. 27).

Jones (2008) Methodology

In her doctoral research on the occupational choice of school library media specialist (SLMS), Jones (2008) used the theoretical framework of Career Construction Theory to analyze the career motivations and interests of five library science graduate students who were obtaining certification to become SLMSs. Jones chose to conduct qualitative interviews with her participants in order to simulate the collection methods used by career construction counselors in gathering information about clients' vocational personalities, career adaptation, and life themes.

To guide her interviews, Jones adapted the Life Story Interview developed by McAdams (1995) for sociological research. Within the structure of this interview protocol, Jones inserted questions from Savickas's Career Style Interview that deal with favorite school subjects, hobbies, and other direct personal interest questions that are

not included in the Life Story protocol. These interview questions are included in appendices C and D.

After interviewing her participants, Jones had the interview audio tapes transcribed and then set about creating “emplotted narratives” of her participants’ lives, using their direct words from the interviews to create a cohesive, first-person narration of their life stories. From these narratives, Jones was able to perform an analysis of each participant in relation to the three elements of Career Construction Theory: vocational personality, career adaptability, and life theme. Following the individual analyses, Jones compared the life stories of all of the participants in a discussion of similar themes that appeared in both the Career Construction elements of the participants’ narratives and in more general, overarching themes that she herself identified. The findings of Jones’s study are discussed in the literature review of this paper.

Methods Used in the Current Study

In researching the career motivations of young adult librarians, I closely followed Jones’s (2008) methods of data collection and analysis based on the principles of Career Construction Theory.

Participant Selection

For my research project, I decided that three participants would be sufficient for my qualitative purposes and for the limited time in which I had to complete this project. In recruiting participants for my study, I drafted a recruitment letter outlining the goals and methods used in the study and posted the letter on two of YALSA’s electronic

professional list-servs: YALSA-bk, a young adult book discussion list, and YAAC, the Young Adult Advisory Counsel list (see Appendix A). I chose this method hoping to sufficiently randomize my sample by allowing interested participants to contact me. I stipulated in my recruitment letter that participants should meet the following criteria:

- 1) that they be currently employed in working with young adults in public libraries, and
- 2) that they live in either North Carolina, southern Virginia, or northern South Carolina.

I included this second stipulation to ensure that I would be able to meet face-to-face with participants when interviewing them.

Unfortunately, I did not receive any replies to my list-serv postings, which I re-posted after a week of no response. I was forced to switch tactics and rely upon contacts that my thesis advisor has in the professional community. I sent the recruitment letter via private email to four of these contacts whom my advisor knew to be young adult librarians in some capacity. Two of these four contacts fit my selection criteria and agreed to be in my study.

One of the people who I contacted through this method was a youth services librarian who works with both children and young adults. Due to the dual nature of her clientele, I did not choose her to participate in the study. However, she graciously forwarded my recruitment letter to a North Carolina-based list-serv for public youth services librarians. From this action, I received over 20 replies of interest. In order to sift through the responses, I created a password-protected spreadsheet of the respondents' names, locations, and job titles in order to decide who would be my third subject.

I found that almost all of the people who responded to my email were in fact youth services librarians and did not exclusively work with young adults. This fact coupled with the distant locations of the few young-adult-specific librarians greatly narrowed my field of options. I finally chose the third participant based on her relative accessibility and the fact that her job is to work exclusively with young adults in a public library.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to beginning my research, I obtained approval of my methods from the university's Institutional Review Board. In order to ensure that participants were fully informed of the procedure, risks, and benefits of the study, I drafted a consent form which I emailed to each participant prior to our interview (see Appendix B). At the time of our meeting, I produced a paper copy of the consent form for both the participant and myself to sign.

The consent form included statements that gave participants the right to stop the interview at any time and to refuse to answer any questions asked. An option was also provided for participants to decline being audio recorded, a right that one participant chose to exercise.

In order to protect the privacy of participants, I asked the participants to choose their own pseudonyms to identify them in the analysis and discussion portions of my research. In the interest of confidentiality, I also removed any identifying names and locations more specific than states from their life stories. Neither of the participants who

agreed to be recorded is identified by name in the interview recordings, the digital files of which are safely stored on my personal, password-protected hard drive.

Data Collection

In conducting my qualitative research, I used the instrument of the personal interview to gather data. Like Jones (2008), I implemented the Life Story Interview developed by McAdams (1995) (see Appendix C). This protocol provides a framework of topics used to guide an interview which covers the entirety of a person's life. It relies upon open-ended questions about experiences that the person being interviewed views as significant in his or her life and examines the past, present, and future hopes of the individual. Following Jones's (2008) lead, I also incorporated relevant questions from Savickas's Career Style Interview (see Appendix D) to touch on areas of personal interest not covered by the Life Story Interview.

I met with each participant for one to one and half hours, in which time we were able to work through the entire interview protocol. During my first interview, I realized that the first question of the Life Story Interview – in which the interview subject is asked to take about twenty minutes to outline his or her life into chapters – made the participant confused and nervous, causing her to almost end the interview entirely. I skipped to the next section of questions and was eventually able to put the subject at ease. In reflecting on the interview protocol, I realized that the that the question about life chapters was designed to provide the interviewer with an overview of the life being examined and was not essential to my understanding of the participant's life, as I had a fairly solid understanding of her life events by the end of the interview. In my

subsequent interviews, I decided to skip the first question entirely to avoid a repeat of the first incident.

Data Analysis

After conducting interviews with each participant, I set about writing cohesive narratives of their life stories. During two of my interviews, I used a digital voice recorder to record the interviews for future analysis; the third participant declined to be recorded. In my creation of the life narratives, I diverged from Jones's (2008) methodology in that I did not transcribe the interviews, nor did I use the exact words of the participants in a first-person style of narration. Because one of my participants refused being recorded, I found that I would have to reconstruct that person's life story using only the copious notes that I took during the interview. I realized that it would be dishonest of me to try and use the first-person in writing that life story, so I decided to write a third-person summation instead, drawing on exact quotes that I had written in my interview notes. Although the other two participants agreed to be recorded, I chose to follow the same third-person summation format in creating their life stories as I did for the participant who declined being recorded. I did this in the interest of continuity as well as time. In composing the other two narratives, I drew from the audio recordings and my interview notes. I was also in contact with all three participants via email to ask follow-up questions and gain clarification on a few points.

Once the life narrative of each participant was complete, I sent my work to the participant via email for his or her approval. Two of the participants suggested that a few minor changes be made, one to remove a detail that might have been personally

identifying, and the other to clarify a scene that I had slightly misunderstood. After gaining the approval of the participants, I began analyzing the individual stories through the lens of Career Construction Theory to identify the salient elements of their career motivations.

In my career construction analysis, I attempted to approximate each participant's RIASEC code based on the guidelines outlined by Holland (1985). I also looked to Jones's (2008) analysis as an example of assigning codes. These codes were approximated from what the participants had revealed to me about their vocational and recreational interests during their life interviews; they are designed to describe each participant's vocational personality, the first element of Career Construction Theory.

In identifying the life theme of each participant, I did as Savickas (2005) recommends and "listen[ed] not for the facts" of the participants' lives, "but for the glue that holds the facts together" (p. 58). Jones (2008) describes the life theme as "what matters to a person" (p. 48). The last question in the Life Story Interview protocol asks participants to try to describe their life theme; in identifying the participants' life themes, I considered their answers to this question as well as the overarching themes that were apparent in our conversations.

Finally, I analyzed the participants' life stories using Savickas's (2005) career adaptability framework in order to understand how the participants have dealt with the occupational changes in their lives. In presenting this analysis, I used Jones's (2008) formatting in which the four dimensions of career adaptability – *concern*, *control*, *curiosity*, and *confidence* – are couched within the broader stages of career development, namely Growth (*Orientation*), *Exploration*, and Establishment

(Implementation). These three mini-cycle career stages were selected to reflect the process through which the participants came into their current occupation of young adult librarian.

After completing the analyses of the individual participants' life stories, I performed a comparative analysis of the three life stories in order to identify commonalities in their career construction. To achieve this comparison, I first compared each component of the career construction analysis: vocational personality, life theme, and career adaptability. I then took a step back to look at the broader themes apparent in the participants' life stories. From this perspective, I was able to identify other commonalities among the three individuals in relation to their backgrounds, life events, and personal interests and beliefs. The combination of these factors allowed me to draw conclusions about the career motivations of young adult librarians.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this research is the small sample size used for data collection. The nature of qualitative research dictates that only a few participants may be examined in any real depth if the researcher is to complete the project in a limited time frame. While the analysis of each individual participating in this research was thorough, it is difficult to say if the results of this study could be generalized to the larger population of young adult librarians.

The research results are also based on a single one to one and half hour interview with each participant. Although I was in contact with participants during the writing of their narratives in order to clarify and expand upon our interviews and asked

them to approve the content of their narratives once I was finished, more pertinent information may have been able to be collected through longer or multiple interviews. In the interest of time, however, only the single interview was conducted with each participant.

Another limitation is the sampling method used to identify the participants of this study. While efforts were made to achieve a more randomized sample, the lack of response to the recruitment letter significantly hampered such an outcome. Also, the specificity of the occupation being studied severely limited the size of the pool from which participants could have been selected. These factors coupled with geographical difficulties dictated that the final sample group was chosen largely on a convenience level.

Finally, researcher bias must be taken into account as a limitation of this research. I am a white middle-class woman in my early 20's who is interested in working with youth in libraries. As a child, I was quiet and bookish, and I struggled with anxiety and depression during my adolescence. I have always loved to read and fancy myself a creative writer; in fact, I have a BA in English with a creative writing concentration. My own life history closely matches those of the two female participants in this study. (I also own a pair of Chuck Taylor sneakers, a point of conversation in the analyses below). I first became interested in this topic of research after taking a graduate-level young adult literature class in which I discovered that many of my classmates shared my desire to try to make adolescence more manageable for young library patrons in reflection of their own difficult teen experiences. After I discovered that no research had yet been done on why people choose to work with young adults in

public libraries, I became motivated to be the first to examine these factors and present the results to the professional community.

Individual Analyses

In the following section, the narratives of each of the participants' life stories are presented, followed by individual analyses of the participants' career motivations according to the principles of Career Construction Theory.

Mary Green

Mary Green is a youthful woman in her early 30's. On the day that I interviewed her, she wore a dark-colored blazer with jeans and blue Chuck Taylors, suggesting to me that she presents herself as a professional who brings a sense of fun to her work. As the interview progressed, I found that Mary is a woman who still very much identifies with the child she once was, an attitude that has greatly influenced her career choice to work with young adults.

Mary was born and raised in a small town in rural North Carolina, the only child of two textile factory workers. Even as a young girl, Mary felt that she was different from the rest of the people in her town. She remembers that when she would shell peas on her grandmother's porch and hear the women talk about small-town life – whose distant family members were married to whom – she would think, “What are they talking about? Grown-ups are so weird!” As she grew older and became better able to follow the thread of her family's discussions, Mary realized that the things that mattered to her family were

not very important to her. While the ambitions of those around her seemed rooted to the small-town life they had always known, Mary knew that her own future laid elsewhere. When asked about her childhood, Mary describes herself as “a nerdy kid who read all the time.” As a child, she aspired to become a teacher, then a writer, and, for a period in fourth grade, she told everyone she wanted to be a game show host because she “was sick of the question.” Her favorite book was (and still is) *Harriet the Spy*. Mary loves how perceptive and independent Harriet is. She feels that Harriet illustrates her belief that “kids aren’t dumb” – they notice everything around them, and they are always thinking. Although she herself was never as intrusive as Harriet, Mary feels that, as a child, she knew more than adults gave her credit for, and she continues to bear this fact in mind as an adult working with youth.

Mary remembers the local library and her school library being very important to her during her youth. All the librarians she came into contact with encouraged her to continue reading and to do well in school. Her family also encouraged her to excel in school, of which she proved very capable. Mary says that even though she and her parents did not always see eye-to-eye, they always supported her to do what she wanted to do.

Mary’s parents also influenced her in other ways. From her mother – who became a part-time seamstress after Mary was born – Mary inherited a love of crafts; today, she enjoys knitting, sewing, and making jewelry. She says that she “just love[s] to make things.” She also loves to cook, a passion that she inherited from her father, who is also an avid gardener. Mary says that the one thing that her whole family has no trouble talking about is food. Mary finds the current trend of eating locally-grown, in-

season foods funny; she grew up eating in such a way. In fact, her father would grow so many vegetables in his garden that he would always be giving something away. Upon reflection, Mary notes that she has probably inherited her father's spirit of sharing ("give, give, give!"), which is demonstrated by her enjoyment of helping others.

Another significant family influence in Mary's life was Rachel, whom Mary thinks may have been her grandmother's cousin. However she was related to Mary, Rachel was "the only true nut in the family." Mary describes her as being "super eccentric" and not at all like the rest of the members of her family. She remembers Rachel always saying to Mary's parents, "Take that child to the library!" in her effort to expand Mary's horizons. Mary found in Rachel a model of what "completely different" looked like, a model to which she felt she could relate and which she desired to emulate.

In high school, Mary says she remained the "same nerdy kid" that she was as a child, only she became "super sad." She hated high school, but she says that now she sees that "quality people hate high school." It is a message that she tries to get across to the kids she works with: "Are you sad? OK, good. It will get better later." Mary believes that "all teen librarians were miserable teens and want to throw out a life-line" to those who are struggling through their adolescent years. Her life's theme, she says, is "assisting weirdoes."

Mary spent most of her teenage years "trying to fly under the radar." When asked which archetypal teenage clique she belonged to, she answers that she and her friends were not organized into a united group. She says that she was friends with the "people who were not good at high school" – other "frustrated weirdoes" like herself. If there had

been a punk rock element present in her school, Mary says that she would probably have fit into that category. As it was, though, she was one of the misfits.

In school, Mary's favorite subjects were English and art. She was a good writer and even won a few creative writing awards. She remembers liking art not just because she enjoyed the subject but also because of her art teacher, Ms. Watson. Mary remembers Ms. Watson's classroom being "an oasis" for all the school's misfits; the teacher took everyone in and treated every student with the same high level of respect, displaying an attitude toward teens that Mary did not witness in any of her other teachers. Mary says that Ms. Watson provided her with a "good model" of how to interact meaningfully with young adults.

Mary remembers thinking that her high school librarian was "cool," though she regrets that she never really knew her or developed a relationship with her. Being an avid reader, Mary would often "sneak in" to the library to read magazines during school. She remembers the librarian approaching her one day and handing her a big stack of discarded magazines for her to take home with her. Another fond memory Mary has of her high school library is a lock-in that her English teacher and the librarian organized. The students in Mary's class had been assigned a research project on an author of their choice (Mary chose to do her project on Poe). The class spent the night in the library, eating pizza and writing 100 bibliography note cards for their project. Mary remembers having a great time at this event, and, after developing her professional experience, she has come to recognize her high school librarian's creative outreach effort.

After high school, Mary was determined to leave her small hometown, even though her parents wished she would stay. Mary marks her entrance into college as a major turning point in her life. “Finally,” she says, “I met some cool people!” An English major at a state university, Mary was involved in a program in which she and students with similar interests all lived together in the same dorm, attended a lot of the same classes, and participated in the same clubs and extracurricular activities. Most of these activities were of an artistic nature; for example, the group published its own literary magazine and regularly put on plays. Mary remembers that people were always “doing creative stuff” around her, and in this environment, she thrived. Mary’s involvement with this group of people gave her more confidence in her “weirdo” self and showed her that she was not the only person who felt the way she did about the world. To this day, Mary stays in contact and remains good friends with most of the people she met through this program.

When she graduated from college, Mary wasn’t really sure what she would do with her English BA. During undergrad, she had worked in a video library which also collected children’s books. She had observed that the children’s librarians who worked there “always seemed to be having a good time.” She had enjoyed her library work, and after graduation, she started working for a library at a newspaper. Without any other plans for a future career, she made the “vague” decision to go back to school to get her MLS.

Mary’s first professional job after graduating from library school was in periodicals at the urban public library in which she currently works. She recalls that a hiring freeze was put into effect almost immediately after she was hired, and that

around the same time, both of the librarians who had been responsible for maintaining the young adult collection quit (there were no “teen services” yet at this branch). Mary remembers her library’s management basically saying to her, “Hey Mary, you like kids’ books, right?” Mary responded with an enthusiastic “Yes!” and that was how she began her close to 10-year career as a young adult librarian.

Mary loves her job. She says that “teens are sweet. Adults are broken down around here. I feel like I can help teens more than adults.” Most of the teens that Mary works with are African American and live in a moderately-sized city. Mary’s best friend as a child was an African American girl whom, Mary feels, never fully realized her potential and has stayed behind in their hometown. Mary partly attributes her drive to see her young patrons succeed in life to this relationship; she wants to give teens the support and resources that she wishes had been given to her childhood friend.

Mary likes how she is able to do “cool things” at her job that she already enjoys doing – like reading teen literature, keeping up with pop culture, and making crafts – and gets paid for doing them. She also likes to share her passions with the young people with whom she works. She runs a writer’s workshop and produces a literary magazine of teens’ original work. Twice a year, a nutritionist visits the library and cooks with the kids, an event that Mary and her patrons especially enjoy. Every Tuesday, the library has game night in which teens play a variety of video and board games. While Mary does not love this activity as much as other parts of her job, she recognizes the enjoyment that the teens get out of it, and she notes that game night is probably the way that most teens are introduced to the library’s young adult program – and to Mary.

“Sometimes,” she says, “you’ve just got to play a couple hundred games of Connect Four and say, ‘Hi, I’m the librarian.’”

Mary will soon be leaving her current library to fill a teen services position at another branch within the same library system. Even though she has been in the field for almost a decade, she has little aspiration to move into administration. “I don’t understand grown people,” she says, expressing her desire to continue working with young adults as long as she can. Mary has already been published in the professional literature and aims to expand on her previous work in the future. She hopes that she will not lose her enthusiasm for her work and become a “bitter or burned out” librarian. A child of small-town America, she also hopes to travel often while keeping North Carolina as her home base. She marks a European trip with her husband as a high point in her life, a sign that she has successfully made her life her own. It is this success that Mary hopes she can aid other young adults in achieving.

Commentary

Mary’s life story relates the personal and interpersonal factors that influenced her career decision to become a young adult librarian. According to career construction theory, her occupational choice was shaped by her vocational personality and life theme, and it was made a reality through the process of career adaptation. The following analysis breaks down these components of Mary’s career story as outlined by her life narrative.

Vocational Personality

Mary's vocational RIASEC code appears to be ASR and speaks to her vocational aptitudes and interests.

Artistic

Mary strongly resembles Holland's (1985) Artistic type. She has enjoyed writing since she was a little girl, and in high school, she was awarded honors for her creative works. Today, Mary continues to write and encourages her teen patrons to express themselves through writing. Her love of reading and degree in English further indicate her appreciation of the written word.

Social

Mary resembles the Social type in that she enjoys working with and helping people – particularly young people. She views herself as an understanding guide for youth, and she is interested in helping young people overcome the challenges in their lives.

Realistic

Mary also somewhat resembles the Realistic type because she enjoys making hand crafts and cooking, two activities that produce tangible results that may be used for practical purposes. Her slight bent towards the Realistic type may be a product of her small-town upbringing.

Life Theme

Mary's early life was guided by her personal feeling of being different from those around her. Once she left her hometown to attend college, she found that there were other people in the world who shared her passions and interests. Mary found a sense of belonging in a highly artistic community. After coming to this realization and gaining confidence in herself, Mary has since focused her energies, as she says, to "assisting weirdoes."

Mary still vividly remembers her childhood struggle to express herself in a way that was meaningful and unique to her. Since overcoming this obstacle and reaching a point of personal stability, Mary feels drawn to helping other young people overcome barriers to self-actualization. Because she strongly identifies with the teenager she once was, Mary feels most comfortable working with young people.

Career Adaptability

Mary seems to have a strong handle on career adaptability. Coming in to her first and only long-term career position – young adult librarian – Mary exhibited sufficient feelings of self-efficacy and motivation to direct her life into an occupation that meets her vocational interests.

Orientation

As a young person who had just graduated from college, Mary was unsure as to where her career aspirations laid. Because she had enjoyed working in a library during undergrad, she chose to continue working in a library setting once she joined the workforce, demonstrating her *curiosity* in the profession in general. However, she knew

that she could not advance in the field without a degree, a realization that illustrates her early *career concern*. Although she describes her decision to get her MLS and become a professional librarian as “vague,” Mary displayed significant *career control* in making the choice to return to school in order to improve her marketability as a librarian.

Exploration

After obtaining her master’s degree, Mary got a job in periodicals at a public library. She did not have a lot of *career curiosity* about becoming a young adult librarian until the position was offered to her.

Implementation

Mary’s 10 years as a young adult librarian speak to her *confidence* in her ability to perform well in her chosen career. She loves her job, is involved in the professional community, and cannot imagine doing anything different in the foreseeable future.

Mark Ritter

Mark Ritter is a man in his mid 20’s who seems to be very comfortable in his own skin. During our interview, he had no problem expressing to me his views on life and what he finds meaningful, which suggests to me that Mark’s candid nature may be one of his chief assets in working with young adults.

Mark Ritter is from a medium-sized town in North Carolina, a fact that is immediately given away by his distinctive brand of southern accent. The oldest of two children, Mark expresses a deep connection with his parents and his younger sister.

“Family is a real important component of my life,” he says. Mark describes his immediate family as “very emotional” – “it’s not anything for my Dad to tell me he loves me,” he says. “We’re very vocal.” Mark’s family has always been very supportive of him and allowed him to make his own life decisions.

Mark’s parents have been a very positive influence in his life; he calls them his “foundation.” Mark’s father began washing trucks for UPS in high school and worked his way up the chain until he became a manager, a position that he held for thirty years. From his father, Mark says that he learned by example how to be a positive person and not to let negative circumstances get him down. “Never play the victim” is one of Mark’s favorite mottos. Mark’s mother – who was a homemaker for most of Mark’s childhood – taught him to embrace who he is and to do what he feels is right for him. For example, when Mark told his mother that he was going to major in business in college, she had no problem telling him that she thought he was making a mistake. “Why don’t you do something you like?” she asked him. Mark took her advice and changed his major, finding that he was a much happier person when he was doing what he loved. Mark says that he tries to bring this attitude of respect for oneself and others to his work with young adults. “You have to respect [teens’] personhood,” he says, because if you don’t, they will pick up on it instantly. “They have a major B.S. reading.”

Mark was raised in the Baptist Church and still considers himself to be a “person of faith.” He says that his religion has a lot to do with who he is, and while he does not prescribe to a “dogmatic” view of Christianity, he does rely upon the teachings of Christ to guide his life. In discussing his faith, Mark recalls an early childhood memory in

which he fell off a dock at a lake and did not know how to swim. He remembers the event in slow motion: it was dark under the water, and Mark closed his eyes. Then, he heard a voice inside his head say, “Open your eyes.” When Mark opened his eyes, he saw his father’s arm reaching out to him from the dock into the blackness. Mark believes that the voice that spoke to him was God, and he takes this memory as a testament to his belief that there is a definite purpose to life.

As a child, Mark had ample interaction with books and reading. He remembers his mother reading to him every night before bed, and during his preschool years at a Montessori school, he recalls being read to every day. “Reading was a big deal,” Mark says, although he admits that the public library was not a “big institution” in his family. However, Mark remembers his school libraries fondly, especially the Accelerated Reader program, which he enjoyed participating in.

Mark’s favorite books as a child were “adventure boy books.” Two of his all-time favorite books are *The Lord of the Flies* and *The Hobbit*. Mark says that *The Lord of the Flies* made a “big impression” on him because of how savage the boys in the book are to one another, which he takes as a “powerful reminder “of how cruel children – and adults – can be. “We like to think that we’re better than our ancestors,” he says, but we only have “more blocks in the system” that keep us civilized. Mark loves *The Hobbit* because it illustrates the unpredictable nature of life. “You never know what’s coming,” Mark says. “Bilbo never saw Gandalf coming to his door, but the amazing thing is that Bilbo went on that adventure that showed up on his doorstep when he already had everything he ever wanted. I like that. I want to think that there’s adventure awaiting me.” Mark also likes the character of Gandalf, who represents to Mark the

powerful forces in the world that are “old, wise, and mysterious” but are still “your friends.”

As a teenager, Mark was “a nerd.” He says that he wanted to fit in but always seemed to be one step behind everyone else when it came to wearing the latest style or being “in” with the latest fad. “I was always a day late and a dollar short as far as cool went,” he says. Mark remembers really wanting everyone to like him when he was in middle school and early high school. Then, around his junior year in high school, something shifted in his outlook. Mark recalls finding an old t-shirt at a thrift store that pictured Mr. T. saying “I pity the fool!” As “ridiculous” as it sounds, he says, that shirt (which he duly bought) set off a light bulb in Mark’s head; he realized that he didn’t have to “play anybody else’s games anymore,” that he could be himself and do whatever he wanted to do. “If they don’t like me,” he said to himself, “then that’s their problem.”

Mark describes his teenage self as a “passionate” person who dove headlong into the things that he liked to do. He played trombone and was a drum major in his high school marching band, an experience that he says helped him develop his leadership skills. Mark was also heavily involved in his church youth group and was “very intense” about his faith. He says that his youth minister left a positive impact on his life by helping him to understand the importance of responsibility – “to own things” like thoughts, words, and deeds. Mark was also a boy scout and obtained the highest rank of Eagle.

Mark’s favorite subject in school was English because he loved reading and writing. He credits his English teacher (who was also his film teacher) for introducing

him to the world of film, which continues to be one of Mark's favorite hobbies. His least favorite subject was chemistry. "I hated it even worse than math," he says, "because at least I could understand math. Chemistry was like reading Greek, and I honestly think I could read Greek better than I could understand chemistry." Despite his distaste for certain subjects, Mark was a good student and graduated from high school tenth in his class.

After high school, Mark attended a state university and majored in English literature and film studies. He has fond memories of making "stupid, funny movies" with his friends during his undergrad years. Following college, Mark travelled to Slovakia for a year in order to help build Christian movements on college campuses. This ministry was Mark's first position working with youth. His trip to Slovakia was also the first time that Mark had been so far from his friends and family; he views this time in his life as a big turning point in his sense of independence and self-reliance. Though he would have liked to have extended his ministry in Slovakia, Mark could not afford to stay overseas.

When Mark returned to North Carolina, he began working in a group home for troubled youth. Mark lived with four young men who came from very unstable family backgrounds, and he tried through his every interaction with them to teach them how to handle their difficult emotions and become responsible and sociable. In reflecting on the eight months he spent working in the group home, Mark says, "I took this job on because I needed work, but what I gained from it was a lot of patience and experience. I learned how to interact with young adults – how to navigate through helping some young adults who have experienced a lot of pain and frustration in their lives. The sad

thing is that they were all good kids, but the world and their circumstances damaged them. My empathy for teenagers grew immensely.”

His experience working with youth at the group home made Mark a shoe-in for his teen services assistant position at a large urban library, a position that he stumbled upon when searching for jobs in the area where his then girlfriend (now wife) lived. While Mark admits that his “quest for employment was not a lofty moral quest, but a rather practical one,” he still loves working with youth in a library setting. “Libraries can be a place where a lot of growth and change can happen in young people’s lives,” he says. Mark is currently working on getting his MLS in hopes that he might continue working with youth in libraries.

Mark says that he likes young people and enjoys working with them. “These kids need people in their lives,” he says of his young patrons, and, while he would not go as far to say that he was “called” to library service, he admits that he is pretty good at what he does. However, he says that working with youth can be just as frustrating as it is rewarding. Mark speaks with disdain of the media culture that caters to young people today, a culture that promotes negative stereotypes – like rappers and gangsters – instead of contributing to positive youth development. He wishes that people would not be so apathetic to the plight of teenagers; Mark believes that teens should be “challenged to be better people” by the adults who care for them.

Mark comments that while he himself has had many positive male role models in his life, most of the young men that he currently works with have not had the same experience. Mark says that he hopes that he can be a positive influence in those teens’ lives through his work in libraries. Towards this aim, Mark used to run an outreach

reading group for “guys only” in which he visited seventh-grade classrooms and facilitated discussion about shared readings. Mark says that this activity was probably his favorite part of his job.

Unfortunately, during the time in which I was in contact with Mark, he lost his job at the library due to budget cuts. However, his philosophy on life tells him that “there’s a purpose for everything,” and he is trying to keep positive about the future. Mark is less concerned about his career than he is about continuing to be the best person he can be. Recently married, Mark says that he wants to be a father more than anything. While the news of his layoff caused Mark to contemplate discontinuing his graduate work, he has decided to keep pursuing his degree and to try to keep working with youth in libraries, though he feels that he would welcome any new adventures that come his way. “I don’t want to be the Bilbo who stays home,” Mark says. “I want to go.”

Commentary

Mark’s life story relates the personal and interpersonal factors that influenced his career decision to become a young adult librarian. According to career construction theory, his occupational choice was shaped by his vocational personality and life theme, and it was made a reality through the process of career adaptation. The following analysis breaks down these components of Mark’s career story as outlined by his life narrative.

Vocational Personality

Mark's vocational RIASEC code appears to be SAE and speaks to his vocational aptitudes and interests.

Social

Mark very much resembles Holland's (1985) Social type in that he genuinely enjoys helping people. Since graduating from college, all of the jobs that Mark has had – including his foreign ministry – have centered on improving the lives of others. During our interview, Mark made a striking comment concerning the important role that service plays in his life: "Living for yourself is a waste," he says.

Artistic

Mark also resembles the Artistic type. He has been a writer and an amateur filmmaker since he was in high school, and he majored in English literature and film studies in college. He also likes to write science fiction stories and draw in his spare time; he says that he tries to emulate people who are better than him. "I'm a real 'appreciator,'" Mark says of his enjoyment of the arts. "The problem is you don't get paid to appreciate much. I mean, I guess as a librarian, you do. That's a good point."

Enterprising

Mark also resembles the Enterprising type in that he enjoys adventure and tries to see himself as a leader. Other Enterprising characteristics that Mark exhibits are agreeableness, energy, optimism, and self-confidence (Holland, 1985).

Life Theme

The “glue” that has held Mark’s life together since he was a little boy has been a combination of his religious faith and the values instilled in him by his family. Mark attributes one of his earliest memories – falling off of a dock – with spiritual significance, and he speaks repeatedly of a “purpose” to life that, he believes, is controlled by a benevolent heavenly figure (who may or may not resemble J.R.R. Tolkien’s Gandalf in appearance and disposition). Mark’s unshakable optimism in the future can be attributed to the example set for him by his parents and to his strong belief in a higher power. His life theme may be described as living up to his own expectations of what a good person should be.

Mark’s life has been directed by his desire to do what he feels is right and good. Coming from a Christian background, he is inclined towards service to those less fortunate, informed, or capable than he. This inclination has influenced Mark to choose service-oriented jobs in the past, and it has most recently motivated him to begin a career in the service profession of youth librarianship.

Career Adaptability

This analysis will look at Mark’s decision to work with youth in libraries and to pursue his MLS. Although Mark’s recent loss of his library job would make for an interesting study, that unfortunate occurrence is not the main concern of this analysis.

Orientation

In general, Mark is not particularly *concerned* with the type of career that he ends up having; his focus in life is more on being a good husband and future father. However, in order for him to support his new family, Mark will need to have steady work, a fact with which he is very much *concerned*. In finding employment, Mark has shown a lack of *career control* in that he has taken whatever jobs were available at the time and place that he needed one instead of setting out on the job hunt with a goal in mind. This attitude led him to working at the group home for troubled youth.

Exploration

The experience that Mark gained in working with youth in the group home opened employment opportunities for him in the youth services sector. While Mark did not display much *career curiosity* going in to his teen services library position, once he began the job, he found that he really enjoyed the work and began considering making librarianship into his career.

Implementation

Mark demonstrated *career confidence* in young adult librarianship by making the commitment of working toward his MLS so that he might continue working with young adults in libraries. This decision also speaks to his growing sense of *career control* in that he is making a decision about his career future instead of just falling in to whatever job comes next.

Lucy Miles

Lucy Miles is a soft-spoken woman in her late 20's. Like Mary Green, Lucy wore blue jeans and dark red Chuck Taylors to our interview, giving me the impression that youth culture resonates with her on a personal level. In talking with Lucy, I came to find that my assumption was correct, that Lucy Miles deeply identifies with the struggles that young people face.

Lucy was born and raised in a suburb on the south side of Chicago. The younger of two girls, Lucy grew up in a family that was deeply religious. She comes from a Reform Calvinist background; her father is a philosophy professor at a small Christian college, and her mother has worked in publications at the same college. Religion played a large part in almost every aspect of Lucy's early life. In general, Lucy says that her parents have been supportive of her and her life decisions, though it has taken some time for both parties to come to an understanding of one another.

Lucy says that she was "fairly happy as a kid, though very introverted." She spent a lot of time alone, reading, or playing with one or two of her close friends. Lucy was a very creative child; she remembers creating elaborate imaginary worlds with the girl who lived across the street, worlds that were complete with casts of characters whose lives the two girls would act out as they ran around the neighborhood. Lucy and her friend also enjoyed writing stories and drawing pictures, and they even made a few of their own "magazines." When contemplating the "theme" of her life, Lucy says that from an early age, she has been interested in "reading, seeing, creating, and sharing stories."

Lucy describes her childhood self the same way she describes her adult self: “a fantasy nerd.” As a child, Lucy and her friends loved to trade books from fantasy series like *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Dark is Rising*. Lucy’s favorite fantasy author was Madeleine L’Engle, with whose characters – “smart, sensitive, geeky girls” – Lucy found she could deeply relate. To this day, Lucy enjoys reading fantasy. “I don’t understand people who like to read a lot of nonfiction,” she says. “I value escapism. I like to be transported.”

The small Christian school that Lucy attended did not employ a professional librarian. When the library was open, it was staffed by a teacher or a student’s mother; however, the library was closed a lot of the time, and when classes needed to use it, their teacher would have to unlock the door for them. Despite not really having a school library, Lucy enjoyed ample exposure to books. There were lots of books in her family’s house, and Lucy would often receive books as gifts from family members. She also visited the public library often, although she remembers being terrified of the children’s librarian because she was a very loud, outgoing person who frightened shy, quiet Lucy.

As she grew into a teenager, Lucy retained her quietness and creativity, but she also became aware of stronger emotions within her. In high school, Lucy was friends with “punk, burnout kids” who listened to “loud, angry music.” “The other kids all thought we were Satan,” she remembers. Many of Lucy’s friends were drug abusers, but from witnessing the detrimental effects that drugs had on her friends’ lives, Lucy never became a drug user herself. However, one thing that Lucy and all of her friends had in common was that they hated high school. Many of the kids at Lucy’s school were of

Dutch, Reform Calvinist decent and were all distantly related to one another. In this environment, Lucy felt like an outsider, especially when she began to question the rigid faith of her parents. “These people don’t understand me” was a common thought that ran through Lucy’s mind during her teen years.

Lucy’s feelings of being an outsider were exacerbated by an early diagnosis of clinical depression. Saying that adolescence was hard for Lucy would be a severe understatement. The lowest point came when, at age 14, Lucy tried to kill herself by taking all of her prescription medication at once. Speaking of this extremely difficult experience, Lucy says that her suicide attempt was “not methodical”; it was more of a spontaneous decision. “I was so tired,” she says. “I was just done.” Thankfully, Lucy survived and began seeing a therapist whom she says had a very positive influence on her life. Although she was on medication for depression until she was 22, Lucy says that it was counseling that really helped her cope with her illness. Through the therapy process, Lucy was able to explore her own internal storyline so that she could “feel better about life and the world.” Because she has survived such pain, Lucy believes that she is now well-equipped to help teenagers who are struggling. “A lot of my motivation for becoming a teen librarian,” she says, “was because adolescence was really, really rough for me.”

Another big issue in Lucy’s teen years was her discovery of her sexuality. Looking back, Lucy can see that her realization that she was gay actually turned out to be a very positive event in the long-run, although coming out to her deeply religious parents was difficult and would affect their relationship negatively for years to come. However, Lucy did not struggle with coming out to herself or to her friends, and she

had her first girlfriend in high school, which she says was “a very validating experience” for her.

In remembering her high school library, Lucy describes it as a “forbidding place.” The librarian was very much a “sit down and shut up” kind of person. The library wasn’t a big priority for the school, and Lucy thinks that the librarian and most of the teachers didn’t even know what kinds of materials the collection contained. For example, one day Lucy found a volume of Allen Ginsberg’s poetry in the library. “If they had known it was there,” she says, “I’m pretty sure it wouldn’t have been there anymore.” Lucy used the book for a paper she wrote on beat poets for her English class. Even though she hated school (especially math and science), Lucy was able to find some enjoyment in her English classes. She loved to read and write, and she decided that she would like to be a professional writer someday. She even published her own counter-culture zine, drawing on her childhood love of stories and art.

But English class was not enough to keep Lucy in school. She would skip class often and could usually be found hiding in the bathroom reading a book. She remembers one particular day during her sophomore year when she and a friend left school and spent the afternoon goofing off around town. Although she got Saturday detention for her skipping (one of many detentions she would serve), Lucy felt gratified by her action. Knowing that she could just walk out of the building at any time was very liberating for her. Lucy believes that the feelings she experienced on this day strongly influenced her eventual decision to drop out of high school and get her GED.

Lucy’s first job as a teenager was as a page in the children’s department in the local public library. Ironically, she ended up working for the same librarian who had

frightened her as a child, Ms. Shirley. With the advantage of maturity, Lucy was able to overcome her fear of Ms. Shirley and came to respect her. “She didn’t discriminate against the weirder teenagers,” Lucy says, “and she understood the bookish teenagers.” Lucy formed a bond with her boss; Ms. Shirley would recommend books to Lucy, and Lucy gave the librarian copies of her zine. While Lucy does not remember Ms. Shirley explicitly encouraging her to go into the library profession, she says that she had never considered librarianship as “an interesting career or as a career that interesting people did” until she came to be friends with Ms. Shirley. “It was a great first job,” Lucy says of the two years she spent working at the library.

Even though she had hated high school, Lucy desired to continue her education. She attended her father’s college for about two years (“it was free”), where she worked in the library doing copy cataloging. “I didn’t really understand what I was doing,” she says, and points out that the fact that students were doing cataloging illustrates just how small the school was. After she had saved enough money and “proved” to her parents what she was serious about her education, Lucy transferred to a small, liberal arts college in North Carolina. There, she was surrounded by people with whom she felt she could more readily identify than the people she had grown up with, and her artistic nature was encouraged by the school’s liberal arts environment. Lucy used the skills she had developed in producing her own zine to work on the school yearbook, and she graduated with honors in English after writing her thesis on children’s fantasy literature. Lucy also met her future wife in college; the two would eventually marry on the school’s campus, an event that Lucy marks as a high point in her life.

After college, Lucy had no idea what to do with her English degree. She got a job as a file clerk and found that she was often bored and without work to do. One day when she was browsing the internet at work, Lucy decided to look into which books were new and exciting in young adult literature, a genre that she had always loved. From her research, Lucy came away not only with “an epic list of things to read,” but also with the realization that she wanted to be a young adult librarian. She returned to school and got her MLS, following which her career ambition was fulfilled.

Lucy is currently employed at a small, suburban library where she is the only teen services librarian. The community that the library serves is “primarily white [and] wealthy,” and Lucy finds that she has a hard time getting older teens to participate in her programming because they are “very academically motivated” and are often busy with school work. Her regular patrons are mostly 10-13 year-old “tween” homeschoolers, which is fine with Lucy. Lucy believes that the public library is a place where kids can “find out things on [their] own” and “live through stories that make [them] feel better or get away from whatever is making [them] feel bad”; she hopes to be a positive influence in her patrons’ lives by “being the person who helps [them] discover.” “Even if I’m just playing Wii with 13-year-olds,” she says, “I’d like to think that it’s possible that there is one 13-year-old [for whom] this is the happiest thing in his life. And even if that’s not the case, that opportunity is there.”

As was mentioned above, Lucy believes that her career choice was significantly impacted by her own rocky adolescence. She hopes that she can offer a guiding hand to teens and tries to relate to them on their own level without being judgmental. For example, in discussing the *Twilight* phenomenon, Lucy compares teens’ vampire

obsession with her own love of the TV show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Even though she personally does not care for the *Twilight* saga, Lucy can understand the appeal that the books and movies hold for young people. She calls teens' fascination with the strange world created in fantasy "empowerment through a different realm," in which seemingly ordinary characters are faced with extraordinary circumstances.

When asked what lies ahead for her, Lucy says that she cannot imagine herself doing anything but working with young adults in libraries. "I'd just like to keep doing what I'm doing," she says. "This is the one thing that I've ever been good at and wanted to do." Even though recent budget cuts have threatened her job security, Lucy plans to keep working with young adults in public libraries as long as she can. Her greatest struggle, she says, has been for understanding of her own story, and she has dedicated her life to helping other young people make sense of their lives through the powers of literacy, free access to information, and social justice. She ardently believes that "you have the right to tell your story and be heard." In expressing her life's passion, Lucy quotes the poet Adrienne Rich:

My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
so much has been destroyed

I have to cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely,

with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.

Commentary

Lucy's life story relates the personal and interpersonal factors that influenced her career decision to become a young adult librarian. According to career construction theory, her occupational choice was shaped by her vocational personality and life theme, and it was made a reality through the process of career adaptation. The following analysis breaks down these components of Lucy's career story as outlined by her life narrative.

Vocational Personality

Lucy's vocational RIASEC code appears to be ASI and speaks to her vocational aptitudes and interests.

Artistic

Lucy very much resembles Holland's (1985) Artistic type. Since childhood, she has loved creating stories and expressing herself through a variety of artistic media. In high school, she produced her own zine, which is an art form in which visual and written material is collaged together and arranged in a small booklet. At one point in her life, Lucy thought that she might become a professional artist.

Additionally, Lucy abstracts her love of stories onto her life and the lives of others. She speaks of telling "your story" and being heard, a metaphor for expressing one's innermost self to others. The way that Lucy most readily expresses herself is through her writing.

Social

Lucy also resembles the Social type in that her mission in life is to help young people overcome their problems through her multi-faceted library work. She sees value in and enjoys working with others. Lucy's wife is a social worker, and Lucy says that social workers are "pretty much the same as librarians" in that they are trying to make people's lives better.

Investigative

To a lesser extent, Lucy resembles the Investigative type. Although she does not enjoy science or math, she is interested in exploring the internal workings of herself and others. Her personal experience with therapy allowed her to literally investigate her own motivations and feelings. Introspection is a key signifier of the Investigative type (Holland, 1985).

Life Theme

Lucy's life theme has been "a struggle for understanding," both of herself to herself and of herself to others. For a good part of her childhood, much of Lucy's world occurred within her own imagination. With the onset of her depression and the challenge of adolescence, Lucy was overwhelmed by negative emotions that caused her to almost end her life. She felt isolated in an environment in which few understood her pain. With the help of therapy and the support of loved ones, Lucy was able to overcome her biggest obstacles to self-actualization; she reached an understanding with

herself. While she still struggles with depression, Lucy is now more able to view her emotions objectively and stop the illness from taking over her life.

Apart from her struggle with depression, Lucy has also had to deal with being a lesbian in a world that still does not generally accept such an orientation. While Lucy has found love and support from her wife and friends, she has struggled to come to an understanding with her very religious parents, who refused to attend her wedding. However, Lucy says that now that her parents have gotten to know her partner and have seen the love that is so obvious between them, they have come to accept their daughter for who she is, a turn of heart for which Lucy is very grateful.

The seeming resolution of these two big issues in Lucy's life is not to say that her struggle for understanding is over. It could be said that everyone is always changing themselves and the way that they present themselves to others, a situation that requires constant reevaluation of self and introspection. Lucy is of a contemplative nature, and she has recognized that her gift of insight may be used as a tool to help others. She has turned the experiences of her own life into a powerful self-efficacy that she hopes to share with young people.

Career Adaptability

Lucy's life story shows that she has had relative success in her career adaptability. After realizing that she wanted to be a young adult librarian, she took the necessary steps to achieving the life that she imagined for herself and has been very satisfied with the result.

Orientation

After graduating from college, Lucy took a job as a file clerk, which turned out to be a very boring and unsatisfying job for her. Lucy exhibited *career concern* in that she knew that she did not want to be stuck in that type of job forever. She had enjoyed her high school job working in the children's department of a public library, and she also had cataloging experience from her first college. These previous jobs may have excited Lucy's *career curiosity* in professional librarianship as a career.

Exploration

The day that Lucy browsed the internet for popular young adult books, she showed *career curiosity* in entertaining the idea of becoming a teen librarian. When she made the decision to get her MLS in pursuit of this goal, she displayed *career control*.

Implementation

Lucy's success in obtaining her dream job and her satisfaction with her current career illustrate a high degree of *career confidence*. Although the job market for librarians in her area is a bit topsy-turvy at the moment, Lucy believes that her services are an indispensable part of the library's operation. Even if she were to be laid off, Lucy is dedicated to her field and would pursue another teen services position elsewhere.

Comparative Analysis

In comparing the life stories and career motivations of the study participants, I will first examine the similarities and differences that may be observed in the participants' narratives through the lens of the three aspects of Career Construction Theory: vocational personality, life theme, and career adaptability. I will then discuss common themes that appeared across the participants' narratives in relation to their career formation.

Career Construction Commonalities

Vocational Personality

According to Jones (2008), the vocational personality aspect of career construction theory “explains what types of work people prefer to do” (p. 137). In determining the vocational personalities of the study participants, I modeled Holland's (1985) RIASEC code framework to approximate each person's unique personality code, which speaks to the participant's vocational interests and aptitudes. Figure 2 shows the participants' RIASEC codes.

Figure 2 Participants' RIASEC Codes

<u>Participant</u>	<u>RIASEC Code</u>
Mary Green	ASR
Mark Ritter	SAE
Lucy Miles	ASI

The vocational personalities of all three study participants heavily favor the Artistic type. Mary and Lucy both had dreams as teenagers of becoming professional writers and were involved in the art scene in college. Mark is an amateur film maker and writer and is a great “appreciator” of the arts. All three participate in one or several kinds of recreational artistic expression and/or enjoyment.

The second strongest element in the participants' RIASEC code is the Social type. In my approximation, it seemed that Mark was more inclined toward the Social type than the Artistic because he has long been involved in Christian ministry and has held several service-oriented jobs. He also seems very concerned with using his life to make the world a better place for others. Mark shares this trait with Mary and Lucy in that both women also enjoy working with others and want to improve the life experience of teenagers.

The participants varied widely in the third letters of their RIASEC codes. Mary Green somewhat resembles the Realistic type due to her love of crafts and cooking, activities that produce tangible results. Mark Ritter leans towards the Enterprising type because he enjoys being a leader, as is evidenced by his position as a drum major in high school, his obtainment of the rank of Eagle Scout, and his promotion of Christian

ministry during his trip to Slovakia. Lucy Miles somewhat resembles the Investigative type in that she is a very introspective person and believes in the power of recognizing inner thoughts and feelings. The differences in the participants' vocational personalities can be accounted for by the varied backgrounds and life experiences that have shaped their personal and occupational interests.

In a study of librarian vocational personality types, David & Scherdin (1994) found that librarians consistently display dominance in the Artistic type, either as artists themselves or as appreciators of the arts. The results of the current study clearly support these findings. The *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* presents the RIASEC code for librarians as being SAI – Social, Artistic, Investigative (Gottredson & Holland, 1996, p. 210). However, it must be kept in mind that Holland's RIASEC codes are not designed to pigeon-hole people into professions; instead, the codes are used in their variety of permutations (i.e. SAI, ASI, IAS, etc.) to expose the client to occupational possibilities. In considering the current study's participants, we can see that Lucy Miles most readily fits the librarian RIASEC code, while all three participants display some combination of the Artistic and Social type, two of the main components of the RIASEC code for librarians.

Life Theme

Jones (2008) states in her analysis of life themes that “no two people live exactly the same life; therefore, no two life themes are exactly alike” (p. 141). This statement proved true in my own analysis of my study participants' life themes. However, unlike

Jones (2008), I was able to identify some significant commonalities among the life themes of my study participants.

Mary and Lucy share some life experiences and emotional history in that they were both shy, bookish children who grew into misunderstood adolescents. Both women found that they were much happier and comfortable with themselves once they left their restrictive home environments and went to college. After finding a sense of belonging themselves, the two women have now dedicated their professional lives to aiding young people through this difficult process of self-actualization. In her own words, each woman expresses her life theme:

- Mary: “assisting weirdoes”
- Lucy: “struggle for understanding”

Mark’s life theme is a bit different from Mary and Lucy’s. While Mark also described himself as a “nerd” in high school, he did not have the same feelings of deep alienation that Mary and Lucy experienced during this period in their lives. Mark’s lack of angst may be a result of his strong religious faith and his parents’ sensitive understanding of their son’s needs, which helped Mark realize at a young age his own self-worth and sense of confidence. Mark’s faith and values continue to drive his life; his life theme may be stated simply as “being a good person” in terms defined for him by the Church and his family.

All of the participants’ life themes, however, have heavily influenced them to choose a service-oriented career. In Mary and Lucy’s case, the motivation was more personal, while in Mark’s case, the motivation was more spiritual or universal.

Career Adaptability

The third component of Career Construction Theory, career adaptability, explains “how individuals make occupational choices” (Jones, 2008 p. 141). In this case, the analysis will focus on how each of the three study participants came to the occupational choice of young adult librarian. Like all occupational changes viewed through the lens of Career Construction Theory, this choice occurred in developmental stages for the participants. They first experienced *orientation* to a career change provoked by some circumstance in their lives that necessitated a new career path. After realizing an opportunity to do something new, each participant undertook some kind of *exploration* of the career. Finally, they all acted on the career choice of young adult librarian in the stage of *implementation*. The following analysis will compare this process of adaptation among the three individuals.

Orientation

The three participants were oriented to the career of young adult librarian in very different ways. Mary was working as a periodicals librarian at a public library when she was offered the position of young adult librarian. She had not previously considered using her MLS to work with youth in libraries, but she was intrigued by the opportunity because she had always loved young adult literature. Mark had just moved to a new city to be with his future wife and needed a job. He applied to be a teen services specialist at a local public library because he had previous experience working with youth. Lucy was working at an unsatisfying job as a file clerk after college. She

knew that she was not happy where she was and began considering other possibilities that were open to her.

Exploration

Mary and Mark did not have much of an exploration phase due to the circumstances through which they obtained their young adult librarian jobs. Mary was offered a position at the library where she already worked, and Mark applied for his teen services job out of a need for employment. Lucy, however, explored the idea of becoming a young adult librarian through her internet browsing of popular young adult titles. She became interested in the career before she had ever held a professional library position.

It should be said that Mark's phase of exploration may have begun after he obtained his first job working with young adults in libraries. Because of this job, he became interested in pursuing an MLS so that he might move from being a paraprofessional to a professional young adult librarian.

Implementation

Mark and Lucy both implemented their professional careers by deciding to return to school in order to get their MLS's. Mark is currently in the process of obtaining his degree. Lucy has completed her degree and now works as a professional young adult librarian. Mary already had her MLS when she serendipitously came into the position of being a young adult librarian. Once she began her work in this position,

she found that she very much enjoyed it and decided to continue along this career path. She has now held her position for almost ten years.

Common Themes

The following analysis will discuss similar themes that appeared across the participants' life stories.

Familial Support

All of the participants come from intact nuclear families, meaning that none of the participants' parents are divorced. Mark is very close to his immediate family and credits his parents with shaping his positive self-image and outlook on life. While Mary and Lucy both struggled to come to an understanding with their parents, whom they view as having different values than they do, both women made a point to explain that their parents have always been supportive of them in most ways. Mary's parents allowed her to leave her small hometown and explore the larger world, even though they would have preferred that she remain close to them. Lucy's parents were emotionally estranged from their daughter for many years due to their disapproval of her sexual orientation. However, in recent years, it seems that they have come to accept her for who she is, and they never moved to cut off contact with her or deny her their financial support. None of the participants reported feeling that they were ever abused or neglected by their families.

Positive School Experience

Both Mary and Mark excelled in high school and received academic notoriety. Mary won creative writing awards and always got good grades; Mark graduated tenth in his class. Lucy struggled through high school and eventually dropped out to get her GED. However, Lucy graduated college with honors, suggesting that her turbulent adolescent years may have had a significant impact on her ability to meet her full academic potential.

Love of Literature

All three participants describe themselves as life-long readers. From an early age, they all had ample exposure to books. Mary remembers the local public library being very important to her; it was a place that she would visit often. She also remembers having very positive experiences with her school libraries and librarians. Mark did not visit the public library much as a child, but he does remember using the school library and enjoying participating in the Accelerated Reader program. Lucy's school libraries were sub-standard, but she made up for the lack by visiting the public library often. She also received books as gifts and traded books with her friends.

All of the study participants are also amateur writers. Mary and Lucy began to write when they were children, and all three participants were writers in high school and college. Mary has won awards for her creative writing; Mark enjoys writing science fiction in his spare time; and Lucy has produced her own counter-culture zine.

In college, all three participants majored in English. It is significant to note the participants' collective disdain for the subjects of math and science and their love of

English and creative writing. This preference for literary subjects reflects the participants' artistic orientations.

Previous Library Employment

Both Mary and Lucy had worked in libraries prior to becoming professional librarians. Mary worked in a video/children's library during college and got a job at a newspaper library after she graduated. As a teenager, Lucy worked for two years as a page in the children's department of her local public library. Both women enjoyed their work in libraries. Mary decided to get her MLS while working at the newspaper library because she could not advance in the field without an advanced degree. Lucy does not directly credit her previous library work experience with influencing her to become a professional librarian, although she does say that she first became aware of the occupation as a valid career option during her time as a page. Mark did not have any library experience prior to his most recent job as a teen services librarian.

Service Orientation

All three study participants showed a definite orientation towards service careers in their vocational personalities. They are not out for fame, notoriety, or extreme financial success in their occupational lives; instead, they want to help people. From her father, Mary inherited a generous nature, an impulse that she describes as "give, give, give!" Mark's faith-based approach to life tells him that "living for yourself is a waste." And Lucy feels that helping young adults through the difficult time of adolescence as her life's calling.

Difficult Adolescence

Thus far, the common themes identified in the participants' life stories have been similar to findings of previous studies of librarians in general. The role of adolescence in shaping the young adult librarian's career motivations, however, has not yet been examined.

Mary and Lucy explicitly state that their own difficulties during adolescence significantly impacted their career decision to become young adult librarians. As a teenager, Mary felt like an outsider as an artistic "weirdo" in her small town environment. She describes herself as being "super sad" during adolescence. Mary was not part of any regular social group, although she says that if there had been a "punk rock" element present at her school, she would probably have been in with that crowd.

Similarly, Lucy also felt very much like an outsider in her small, Christian high school. Unlike Mary, Lucy actually was a part of the "punk rock" element at her school, a social group composed of what Mary would call "people who were not good at high school" – burnouts and outcasts. It may be safe to assume that if Mary and Lucy had gone to the same high school, they would have been friends.

Lucy's struggle with clinical depression and her attempt at suicide at the age of 14 left a lasting impact on her life outlook. The realization of her homosexuality also colored her teenage experience as a very transformative time in her life. "A lot of my motivation for becoming a teen librarian," Lucy says, "was because adolescence was really, really rough for me."

Although he did not share the difficulties apparent in Lucy or Mary's teenage experiences, Mark also categorizes his teenage self as "a nerd." In his early adolescence, Mark grappled with feelings of negative self-worth in that he wanted everyone to like him and would change himself in order to fit in. In the latter part of his adolescence, however, Mark overcame his desire to please others and gained more confidence in himself. This pattern of growth is rather typical in adolescent development. However, Mark is still able to sympathize with the problems faced by his teen patrons.

Desire to Work with Young People

Another career factor specific to young adult librarians is the desire to work with teenagers. All of the study participants show an obvious desire to work with this specific age group. Mary and Lucy are drawn to working with youth because of the difficulties that they personally experienced during this time in their lives; they wish to help teens through their struggles. Mary even explicitly stated that she does not understand "grown people." Mark is interested in working with youth in hopes that he can be a positive role model for teens in emulation of the positive role models that Mark himself had when he was a teenager. He wants to challenge teens to be "better people."

First Career

It is also significant to note that, unlike many people who become librarians as a second career, all three of the study participants have chosen young adult librarianship as their first career. Mary was a periodicals librarian for only a short time before

becoming a young adult librarian, and Mark and Lucy held only temporary jobs before pursuing a professional library career.

All of the participants became interested in librarianship shortly after graduating from college. Mary worked as a paraprofessional after graduating and decided to pursue a career in librarianship. Mark became interested in librarianship after college when he got a paraprofessional position working with young adults in a public library. Lucy decided to become a librarian after having an unsatisfying job post-graduation and realizing that her true passion lay in working with young adults and young adult literature.

Although age is not an indicator of who is best suited to be a young adult librarian, it is significant to note that along with choosing librarianship as their first career, all of the study participants are relatively young. Mary is in her early 30's, while Mark and Lucy are both in their 20's. This factor may speak to an interest of young people in working with teenagers, from whose age group they themselves are not yet far removed.

Discussion

In the previous section, the common factors that led three young adult librarians to their chosen careers were examined. In this section, the implications of these research findings for recruitment and employment of young adult librarians will be discussed.

According to the 2010-2011 edition of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, the employment prospects for librarians in the United States appear to be relatively stable. The field is expected to grow at the same rate as other professional careers within the next decade. However, the *Handbook* notes that many librarians are expected to retire in the next ten years, leaving a good number of library positions vacant. This “graying” of the library profession has been a topic of concern within the professional community for many years now. The fact that librarians are, on average, older than the rest of the country’s workforce has led many to call for a concentrated recruitment effort aimed at younger generations.

The findings of this research study would seem to suggest that young adult librarianship tends to attract younger people than do other specializations within the field. The LISSADA survey conducted by Heim & Moen (1989) supports this claim; that study found that library science students desiring to work with children and teenagers – whether in a school or public capacity – were the second youngest age group surveyed, with the average age being approximately 30 years old. Younger adults may be attracted

to work with teenagers because they themselves were teenagers not very long ago, a factor that may increase the ability of younger adults to relate with teens and vice-versa. However, it is not the intention of this research to suggest that *only* younger adults are suited to become young adult librarians. Many of the leaders who built the young adult library movement are seasoned career professionals. The findings may better indicate a propensity for young adult librarians to be “young at heart,” meaning that those most inclined to work with young adults are interested in new media and technology and are sensitive to the ever-changing dynamics of teen culture. That said, the assumption that younger adults have a greater tendency than older adults to be interested in current teen life and culture may prove to be true in many cases.

One aspect of the research findings that seems to readily tie younger adults to work with teenagers is the difficult adolescent experiences of some who choose to become young adult librarians. These difficulties have been illustrated in the life themes of two of the study participants, Mary and Lucy. In discussing the implications of life theme on career choice, Jones (2008) suggests that people may choose an occupation as “a solution to the problems of their youth” (p. 163). This “solution” was clearly demonstrated in the career motivations of the two female study participants. Both women experienced significant emotional distress during their own teen years; however, they were able to overcome their barriers to self-actualization after leaving high school and attending college, following which they became well-functioning adults. In the relatively short span of their lives, the women have developed life themes that relate to aiding others in their personal struggles for understanding. With the advantage of having the

passage into adulthood behind them, both Mary and Lucy feel that they can draw upon their own teen experiences to help those who come after them. Mary and Lucy strongly identify with their own adolescent selves; as a consequence, they are drawn to working with teenagers.

Mark, the third study participant, had an adolescent experience that was not as traumatizing as those of Mary and Lucy; however, one of his main motivations for becoming a young adult librarian was to put himself in a position in which he could provide supportive guidance to young people. This desire stems from Mark's positive experience with adult role models during his own adolescence, a situation that he realized not all young people are able to have. The career motivations of Mary, Mark, and Lucy all show that a person's own adolescence experience plays a large part in the choice to work with young adults.

Considering the early formation of the study participants' career inclinations, recruitment of prospective young adult librarians in high schools may prove to be a viable option for the field. Bosseau & Martin (1995) are emphatic in their suggestion that library recruitment efforts "attract to the profession younger people of the highest possible caliber" to replace the retiring workforce (p. 198). In accomplishing this task, they suggest the implementation of a library science mentoring program designed for high school-age youth that follows the structure of Future Educators of America, an extracurricular group which encourages young people to enter the teaching field following graduation. Bosseau & Martin (1995) envision the formation of "Future Information Professionals of America" as a club that exposes young people to the possibility of entering the field of library and information science, a career option that

most teenagers are not aware of or do not initially find appealing due to pervasive stereotypes of librarians as old, mean, and/or boring.

Although it can never be known what kind of effect such an extracurricular would have had on the career choices of any of the three study participants, it may be speculated that Mary, Lucy, and possibly other young adult librarians might have been members of such an organization during their high school years. Due to the current lack of teen services librarians across the country, many teenagers who exhibit an aptitude for librarianship may not even be aware that the field of young adult librarianship exists. Teens who do not have the benefit of a young adult program at their local public library could be introduced to the possibility of becoming young adult librarians via a school career club. The current absence of such a program in our country's schools does a disservice to the profession by not introducing the field to students for whom it may be an exciting, meaningful career.

Colleges and universities are also excellent places for recruitment activities to take place. The most common undergraduate majors for librarians are education, history, and English (the latter being the major of all three study participants) (Julian, 1979; McClenney, 1989). Library school recruiters have focused on recruiting humanities students in the past and should continue to do so in the future.

Additionally, the fact that all of the study participants strongly resembled Holland's (1985) Artistic personality type has implications for library recruitment in the artistic circles of writers, actors, and visual artists. Jones (2008) suggests that library educators work with the artistic departments of universities in sharing information about potential careers in librarianship with undergraduate arts students. The fact that young

adult librarians often provide what some may view as “nontraditional” library services (gaming events, writer’s workshops, poetry slams, etc.) may be attractive to “nontraditional” artist types who desire a stable career with creative outlets. I would add that recruitment of non-student artists through representation at local community art shows, poetry readings, and theater productions might also entice some creative minds to the field.

According to former ALA president John W. Berry, the onus for recruiting the next generation of librarians lies upon the current workforce. Berry (2002) has called on every librarian to be “an ambassador for the profession” by recruiting “at least two new librarians a year” (p.7). Indeed, research has shown that librarians can have a significant impact on a prospective librarian’s decision to pursue a career in the field (Heim & Moen, 1989; Jones, 2008; McClenney, 1989). However, none of the current study’s participants reported being directly influenced to the career by a librarian, though it is significant that all three study participants worked in non-professional library positions before deciding to become professional young adult librarians. Heim & Moen (1989) suggest that one of the best ways to recruit new talent to library services for youth is to encourage paraprofessional staff to pursue a professional career. The positive nature of the work environments that the study participants experienced as paraprofessionals influenced them to want to work in libraries professionally. This enjoyment of library work coupled with a desire to work with young adults led them to choose the career of young adult librarian.

Finally, as was discussed above, many people may not be aware of career opportunities in this quickly growing field of library service. Recruitment campaigns

specifically designed for young adult librarianship may increase national awareness, creating a populace that is more interested in the services provided by young adult librarians. While the number of teen services position is currently low, excitement about the positive effects that librarians in this specialized field can have on youth might be generated through nationally or state-organized informational campaigns, which may in turn lead to a call from communities for the expansion of teen library services. If communities' demand for teen library services increases, so, too, may the demand for young adult librarians increase. This situation would be beneficial for both young adult librarians and communities, but the impact would be most positive on the teens served by these quality information professionals.

Conclusion

This study has examined the lives of three practicing young adult librarians in order to explore their motivations for choosing the career of young adult librarian. The results of this study have shown that young adult librarians share many career factors with librarians who work in any specialization, including a love of books, an orientation towards service work, and positive pre-professional use of and work in libraries.

The research has also shown that young adult librarianship has a tendency to attract younger segments of the population who enter the field as their first careers. The study showed that the personal adolescent experiences of young adult librarians – whether positive or negative – had a significant influence on the librarians' career choice. The librarians interviewed all expressed a desire to work specifically with youth in an attempt to aid adolescents through this sometimes difficult life transition.

Young adult librarianship is not just about providing teens with age-appropriate resources and programming. According to the framework of the 40 Developmental Assets (Search Institute, 2006), it is the responsibility of all community members to encourage the growth of positive assets in the lives of youth. If public libraries are the pillars of the community that they aim to be, one of their priorities must be positive youth development. If libraries are to aid their communities in this task, it would greatly behoove them to employ young adult librarians who understand and respond to the unique challenge of working with teenagers. Caring professionals who work with youth

benefit not only the lives of the young people with whom they work, but also the lives of the communities in which they live.

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Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Email

Attention YALSA members:

I am a student at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, seeking a Master's degree in Library and Information Science. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled *Career Choice of Young Adult Library Services in Public Settings: A Narrative Analysis of Motivations with Implications for Recruitment*, which is being conducted under the advisement of Dr. Sandra Hughes-Hassell, SILS (UNC). The purpose of this study is to identify and explore the reasons that individuals have for working with young adults in public library settings.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you live in North Carolina, Southern Virginia, or Northern South Carolina (preferably close to the Raleigh-Durham area) and are currently employed in a public library setting in which your primary responsibilities include working with and providing services for adolescents.

Your participation will involve participating in an in-depth interview that will be conducted at a time and location that is mutually convenient. The interview questions will cover a range of topics, including significant life events and decisions, what you find meaningful in life, and influences on your life choices. The interview will last approximately 1½ hours and will be audiotaped. You also may be asked to participate in follow-up visits, phone conversations, and/or email exchanges as needed. The total time for these follow-up communications will be no more than 60 minutes.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. All the research data including any of your personal information will be kept confidential and will be held in a secure location. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

The findings from this project may provide information that will add to the knowledge base of recruitment for young adult library services. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you would like to participate in this study, or if you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to send me an e-mail at allisonl@email.unc.edu.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Allison Long
MSLS Candidate, 2010
School of Information and Library Science
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

allisonl@email.unc.edu

Dr. Sandra Hughes-Hassell
Associate Professor
Director of the School Library Media Program
School of Information & Library Science
100 Manning Hall, CB #3360
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919-843-5276
919-962-8071

Appendix B: Study Consent Form

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Consent to Participate in a Research Study Adult Subjects

IRB Study # 10-0225

Consent Form Version Date: 02/09/10

Title of Study: Career Choice of Young Adult Library Services in Public Settings:
A Narrative Analysis of Motivations with Implications for Recruitment

Principal Investigator: Allison Long

UNC-Chapel Hill Department: SILS

UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: n/a [(615) 585-5302]

Email Address: allisonl@email.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sandra Hughes-Hassell, smhughes@email.unc.edu, 919-843-5276

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary.

You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge that may help other people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researcher named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to identify and explore the factors that contribute to the occupational choice of working with young adults in public libraries.

You are being asked to be in the study because you are a public library employee whose primary responsibility is to work with and provide programming for adolescents. An examination of the factors that led you to this career will aid in the overall understanding of motivations for this occupational choice.

How many people will take part in this study?

You will be one of three people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

Your participation in the interview process will last approximately 90 to 120 minutes. Follow up phone calls, emails, or visits should not exceed a cumulative total of 60 minutes.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you take part in this research study, you will be asked questions about your life by the researcher using previously approved life history interview questions. The questions you will be asked cover a wide range of topics and are designed to reveal which events in your life have been most significant to you, how you have been able to cope with change, and what you find meaningful. The interview will be recorded using an audio recording device and the researcher will also make written notes. You may decide to consent to the interview and decline being recorded.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. While there may be no direct perceivable benefit to you from being in this study, the conclusions drawn from this study about what motivates people to choose to work with young adults in public libraries could be used to improve recruitment practices for this branch of library services in the future, which would lead to a better suited and more adept workforce.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved with being in this study?

The main risk of being in this study is that of emotional discomfort in revealing difficult experiences from your past. The researcher does not intend to probe sensitive areas; however, some participants may find that some questions will trigger memories that they would rather not share. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions posed by the researcher. If you assent to being audio recorded, you also have the right to ask that the machine be turned off at any point during the interview.

How will your privacy be protected?

The only person who will have access to study data will be the researcher. You will be asked before the interview begins to choose a first and last name to use as a pseudonym throughout the interview. Your real names will not be used on the interview transcripts or in the final research report. The key to the pseudonyms will be kept in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer and will be destroyed when the study is completed in April 2010. The researcher's interview notes will also refer to you only by your pseudonym. These field notes will be destroyed along with the interview transcripts one year after the study ends. Other identifying names and places mentioned throughout the interview will be changed by the researcher in the transcripts and in the final research report.

If you consent, an audio recording of this interview will be made. Audio recordings will be destroyed once the transcripts have been made.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study

What if you want to stop before your part in the study is complete?

You can withdraw from this study, decline to answer any question for any reason, or end the interview at any time, without penalty.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will receive a small gift of appreciation at the end of the study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

It will not cost you anything to be in this study.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, complaints or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research subject?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Title of Study: Career Choice of Young Adult Library Services in Public Settings:
 A Narrative Analysis of Motivations with Implications for Recruitment

Principal Investigator: Allison Long

Subject's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

 Signature of Research Subject

 Date

 Printed Name of Research Subject

 Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

 Date

 Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

Appendix C: Life Story Interview

The Life Story Interview

Dan P. McAdams,
Northwestern University
Revised 1995

Introductory Comments

This is an interview about the story of your life. We are asking you to play the role of storyteller about your own life -- to construct for us the story of your own past, present, and what you see as your own future. People's lives vary tremendously, and people make sense of their own lives in a tremendous variety of ways. As social scientists, our goal is to collect as many different life stories as we can in order to begin the process of making sense of how people make sense of their own lives. Therefore, we are collecting and analyzing life stories of "normal" adults from all walks of life, and we are looking for significant commonalities and significant differences in those life stories that people tell us.

In telling us a story about your own life, you do not need to tell us everything that has ever happened to you. A story is selective. It may focus on a few key events, a few key relationships, a few key themes which recur in the narrative. In telling your own life story, you should concentrate on material in your own life that you believe to be important in some fundamental way -- information about yourself and your life which says something significant about you and how you have come to be who you are. Your story should tell how you are similar to other people as well as how you are unique. Our purpose in these interviews is to catalogue people's life stories so that we may eventually arrive at some fundamental principles of life-storytelling as well as ways of categorizing and making sense of life stories constructed by healthy adults living at this time in history and in this place. We are not interested, therefore, in pathology, abnormal psychology, neurosis and psychosis. We are not trying to figure out what is wrong with you. Nor are we trying to help you figure out what is wrong with you. The interview should not be seen as a "therapy session." This interview is for research purposes only, and its sole purpose is the collection of data concerning people's life stories.

The interview is divided into a number of sections. In order to complete the interview within, say, an hour and a half or so, it is important that we not get bogged down in the early sections, especially the first one in which I will ask you to provide an overall outline of your story. The interview starts with general things and moves to the particular. Therefore, do not feel compelled to provide a lot of detail in the first section in which I ask for this outline. The detail will come later. I will guide you through the interview so that we can finish it in good time. I think that you will enjoy the interview. Most people do.

Questions?

I. Life Chapters

We would like you to begin by thinking about your life as a story. All stories have characters, scenes, plots, and so forth. There are high points and low points in the story, good times and bad times, heroes and villains, and so on. A long story may even have chapters. Think about your life story as having at least a few different chapters. What might those chapters be? I would like you to describe for me each of the main chapters of your life story. You may have as many or as few chapters as you like, but I would suggest dividing your story into at least 2 or 3 chapters and at most about 7. If you can, give each chapter a name and describe briefly the overall contents in each chapter. As a storyteller here, think of yourself as giving a plot summary for each chapter. This first part of the interview can expand forever, so I would like you to keep it relatively brief, say, within 20-25 minutes. Therefore, you don't want to tell me "the whole story" now. Just give me a sense of the story's outline -- the major chapters in your life.

[The interviewer may wish to ask for clarifications and elaborations at any point in this section, though there is a significant danger of interrupting too much. If the subject finishes in under 10 minutes, then he/she has not said enough, and the interviewer should probe for more detail. If the subject looks as if he/she is going to continue beyond half an hour, then the interviewer should try (gently) to speed things along somewhat. Yet, you don't want the subject to feel "rushed." (It is inevitable, therefore, that some subjects will run on too long.) This is the most open-ended part of the interview. It has the most projective potential. Thus, we are quite interested in how the subject organizes the response on his or her own. Be careful not to organize it for the subject.]

II. Critical Events

Now that you have given us an outline of the chapters in your story, we would like you to concentrate on a few key events that may stand out in bold print in the story. A key event should be a specific happening, a critical incident, a significant episode in your past set in a particular time and place. It is helpful to think of such an event as constituting a specific moment in your life story which stands out for some reason. Thus, a particular conversation you may have had with your mother when you were 12-years-old or a particular decision you made one afternoon last summer might qualify as a key event in your life story. These are particular moments set in a particular time and place, complete with particular characters, actions, thoughts, and feelings. An entire summer vacation -- be it very happy or very sad or very important in some way -- or a very difficult year in high school, on the other hand, would not qualify as key events because these take place over an extended period of time. (They are more like life chapters.)

I am going to ask you about **8** specific life events. For each event, describe in detail what happened, where you were, who was involved, what you did, and what you

were thinking and feeling in the event. Also, try to convey what impact this key event has had in your life story and what this event says about who you are or were as a person. Please be very specific here.

Questions?

Event #1: Peak Experience

A peak experience would be a high point in your life story -- perhaps the high point. It would be a moment or episode in the story in which you experienced extremely positive emotions, like joy, excitement, great happiness, uplifting, or even deep inner peace. Today, the episode would stand out in your memory as one of the best, highest, most wonderful scenes or moments in your life story. Please describe in some detail a peak experience, or something like it, that you have experienced some time in your past. Tell me exactly what happened, where it happened, who was involved, what you did, what you were thinking and feeling, what impact this experience may have had upon you, and what this experience says about who you were or who you are. [Interviewer should make sure that the subject addresses all of these questions, especially ones about impact and what the experience says about the person. Do not interrupt the description of the event. Rather ask for extra detail, if necessary, after the subject has finished initial description of the event.]

Event #2: Nadir Experience

A "nadir" is a low point. A nadir experience, therefore, is the opposite of a peak experience. It is a low point in your life story. Thinking back over your life, try to remember a specific experience in which you felt extremely negative emotions, such as despair, disillusionment, terror, guilt, etc. You should consider this experience to represent one of the "low points" in your life story. Even though this memory is unpleasant, I would still appreciate an attempt on your part to be as honest and detailed as you can be. Please remember to be specific. What happened? When? Who was involved? What did you do? What were you thinking and feeling? What impact has the event had on you? What does the event say about who you are or who you were?

Event #3: Turning Point

In looking back on one's life, it is often possible to identify certain key "turning points" -- episodes through which a person undergoes substantial change. Turning points can occur in many different spheres of a person's life -in relationships with other people, in work and school, in outside interests, etc. I am especially interested in a turning point in your understanding of yourself. Please identify a particular episode in your life story that you now see as a turning point. If you feel that your life story contains no turning points, then describe a particular episode in your life that comes closer than any other to qualifying as a turning point. [Note: If subject repeats an earlier event (e.g., peak experience, nadir) ask him or her to choose another one. Each of the 8 critical events in this section should be

independent. We want 8 separate events. If the subject already mentioned an event under the section of "Life Chapters," it may be necessary to go over it again here. This kind of redundancy is inevitable.]

Event #4: Earliest Memory

Think back now to your childhood, as far back as you can go. Please choose a relatively clear memory from your earliest years and describe it in some detail. The memory need not seem especially significant in your life today. Rather what makes it significant is that it is the first or one of the first memories you have, one of the first scenes in your life story. The memory should be detailed enough to qualify as an "event." This is to say that you should choose the earliest (childhood) memory for which you are able to identify what happened, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling. Give us the best guess of your age at the time of the event.

Event #5: Important Childhood Scene

Now describe another memory from childhood, from later childhood, that stands out in your mind as especially important or significant. It may be a positive or negative memory. What happened? Who was involved? What did you do? What were you thinking and feeling? What impact has the event had on you? What does it say about who you are or who you were? Why is it important?

Event #6: Important Adolescent Scene

Describe a specific event from your teen-aged years that stands out as being especially important or significant.

Event #7: Important Adult Scene

Describe a specific event from your adult years (age 21 and beyond) that stands out as being especially important or significant.

Event #8: One Other Important Scene

Describe one more event, from any point in your life, that stands out in your memory as being especially important or significant.

III. Life Challenge

Looking back over the various chapters and scenes in your life story, please describe the single greatest challenge that you have faced in your life. How have you faced, handled, or dealt with this challenge? Have other people assisted you in dealing with this challenge? How has this challenge had an impact on your life story?

IV. Influences on the Life Story: Positive and Negative

Positive

Looking back over your life story, please identify the single person, group of persons, or organization/institution that has or have had the greatest positive influence on your story. Please describe this person, group, or organization and the way in which he, she, it, or they have had a positive impact on your story.

Negative

Looking back over your life story, please identify the single person, group of persons, or organization/institution that has or have had the greatest negative influence on your story. Please describe this person, group, or organization and the way in which he, she, it, or they have had a negative impact on your story.

V. Stories and the Life Story

You have been telling me about the story of your life. In so doing, you have been trying to make your life into a story for me. I would like you now to think a little bit more about stories and how some particular stories might have influenced your own life story. From an early age, we all hear and watch stories. Our parents may read us stories when we are little; we hear people tell stories about everyday events; we watch stories on television and hear them on the radio; we see movies or plays; we learn about stories in schools, churches, synagogues, on the playground, in the neighborhood, with friends, family; we tell stories to each other in everyday life; some of us even write stories. I am interested in knowing what some of your favorite stories are and how they may have influenced how you think about your own life and your life story. I am going to ask you about three kinds of stories. In each case, try to identify a story you have heard in your life that fits the description, describe the story very briefly, and tell me if and how that story has had an effect on you.

Television, Movie, Performance: Stories Watched

Think back on TV shows you have seen, movies, or other forms of entertainment or stories from the media that you have experienced. Please identify one of your favorite stories from this domain -- for example, a favorite TV show or series, a favorite movie, play, etc. In a couple of sentences, tell me what the story is about. Tell me why you like the story so much. And tell me if and how the story has had an impact on your life.

Books, Magazines: Stories Read

Now think back over things you have read -- stories in books, magazines, newspapers, and so on. Please identify one of your favorite stories from this domain. Again, tell me a little bit about the story, why you like it, and what impact, if any, it has had on your life.

Family Stories, Friends: Stories Heard

Growing up, many of us hear stories in our families or from our friends that stick with us, stories that we remember. Family stories include things parents tell their children about "the old days," their family heritage, family legends, and so on. Children tell each other stories on the playground, in school, on the phone, and so on. Part of what makes life fun, even in adulthood, involves friends and family telling stories about themselves and about others. Try to identify one story like this that you remember, one that has stayed with you. Again, tell me a little bit about the story, why you like it or why you remember it, and what impact, if any, it has had on your life.

VI. Alternative Futures for the Life Story

Now that you have told me a little bit about your past, I would like you to consider the future. I would like you to imagine two different futures for your life story.

Positive Future

First, please describe a positive future. That is, please describe what you would like to happen in the future for your life story, including what goals and dreams you might accomplish or realize in the future. Please try to be realistic in doing this. In other words, I would like you to give me a picture of what you would realistically like to see happen in the future chapters and scenes of your life story.

Negative Future

Now, please describe a negative future. That is, please describe a highly undesirable future for yourself, one that you fear could happen to you but that you hope does not happen. Again, try to be pretty realistic. In other words, I would like you to give me a picture of a negative future for your life story that could possibly happen but that you hope will not happen.

[Note to interviewers: Try to get as much concrete detail as possible.]

VII. Personal Ideology

Now I would like to ask a few questions about your fundamental beliefs and values and about questions of meaning and spirituality in your life. Please give some thought to each of these questions.

- _.1. Consider for a moment the religious or spiritual dimensions of your life. Please describe in a nutshell your religious beliefs or the ways in which you approach life in a spiritual sense.
- _.2. Please describe how your religious or spiritual life, values, or beliefs have changed over time.

_.3. How do you approach political and social issues? Do you have a particular political point of view? Are there particular issues or causes about which you feel strongly? Describe them.

_.4. What is the most important value in human living? Explain.

2. 5. What else can you tell me that would help me understand your most fundamental beliefs and values about life and the world, the spiritual dimensions of your life, or your philosophy of life?

VIII. Life Theme

Looking back over your entire life story as a story with chapters and scenes, extending into the past as well as the imagined future, can you discern a central theme, message, or idea that runs throughout the story? What is the major theme of your life story? Explain.

IX. Other

What else should I know to understand your life story?

Note [from Jones (2008)]: From *The life story interview*, by D. P. McAdams, 1995, Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy, Foley Center.

<http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/instruments/interview/>

Appendix D: Career Style Interview

1. Whom did you admire when you were growing up? Whom did you respect?
 - a. For each model – what did you admire about this person?
 - b. Tell me about this person. What were they like?
 - c. How are you like this person and how are you different from this person?

2. Describe your favorite book.

3. Describe your favorite magazine (list 2 or 3). What do you enjoy reading in each magazine?

4. What do you like to do in your free time? What hobbies do you enjoy?
 - a. What do you enjoy about these hobbies?
 - b. Role that you play in these activities: partner, listener, performer, host, tourist, and member.

5. What are your three favorite subjects in junior high and high school? What subject do you hate?
 - a. Why did you love _____? _____? _____?
 - b. Why did you hate _____? _____? _____?
 - c. What grades did you earn?

6. What are your favorite sayings or mottos?

Note [from Jones (2008)]: Derived from “Career Style Assessment and Counseling,” by M. L. Savickas, 1998. In T. J. Sweeney (Ed.), *Adlerian counseling: A practitioner's approach* (4th ed., pp. 329-359). Philadelphia, PA: Accelerated Development.

Appendix E: 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents (ages 12-18)



40 Developmental Assets® for Adolescents (ages 12-18)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as Developmental Assets®—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.



External Assets	Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support. 2. Positive family communication—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents. 3. Other adult relationships—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. 4. Caring neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors. 5. Caring school climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment. 6. Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school. 	
	Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Community values youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 8. Youth as resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community. 9. Service to others—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 10. Safety—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood. 	
	Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Family boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts. 12. School Boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences. 13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. 14. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 15. Positive peer influence—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior. 16. High expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well. 	
	Constructive Use of Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Creative activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 18. Youth programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. 19. Religious community—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 20. Time at home—Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week. 	
	Internal Assets	Commitment to Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Achievement Motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school. 22. School Engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning. 23. Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 24. Bonding to school—Young person cares about her or his school. 25. Reading for Pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
		Positive Values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 26. Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people. 27. Equality and social justice—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 28. Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. 29. Honesty—Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy." 30. Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 31. Restraint—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
		Social Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Planning and decision making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 33. Interpersonal Competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 34. Cultural Competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. 35. Resistance skills—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 36. Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
		Positive Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 37. Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me." 38. Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem. 39. Sense of purpose—Young person reports that "my life has a purpose." 40. Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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Appendix F: YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth



YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best

Updated January 2010

Introduction

The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA) that supports library services to teens, developed these competencies for librarians who serve young adults. Individuals who demonstrate the knowledge and skills laid out in this document will be able to provide quality library service for and with teenagers. Institutions seeking to improve their overall service capacity and increase public value to their community are encouraged to adopt these competencies.

YALSA first developed these competencies in 1981, which were revised in 1998, 2003, and 2010. The competencies can be used as a tool to evaluate and improve service, a foundation for library school curriculum, a framework for staff training and a set of guiding principles for use when speaking out for the importance of services to teens in libraries.

Audiences for the competencies include:

- Library educators
- School and library administrators
- Graduate students
- Young adult specialists
- School librarians
- Library training coordinators
- Public library generalists
- Human resources directors
- Non-library youth advocates and service providers



YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best

Area I. Leadership and Professionalism

The librarian will be able to:

1. Develop and demonstrate leadership skills in identifying the unique needs of young adults and advocating for service excellence, including equitable funding and staffing levels relative to those provided for adults and children.
2. Develop and demonstrate a commitment to professionalism and ethical behavior.
3. Plan for personal and professional growth and career development.
4. Encourage young adults to become lifelong library users by helping them to discover what libraries offer, how to use library resources, and how libraries can assist them in actualizing their overall growth and development.
5. Develop and supervise formal youth participation, such as teen advisory groups, recruitment of teen volunteers, and opportunities for employment.
6. Model commitment to building assets in youth in order to develop healthy, successful young adults.
7. Implement mentoring methods to attract, develop, and train staff working with young adults.



YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best

Area II. Knowledge of Client Group.

The librarian will be able to:

1. Become familiar with the developmental needs of young adults in order to provide the most appropriate resources and services.
2. Keep up-to-date with popular culture and technological advances that interest young adults.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of, and a respect for, diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic values.
4. Identify and meet the needs of patrons with special needs.



YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best

Area III. Communication, Marketing & Outreach

The librarian will be able to:

1. Form appropriate professional relationships with young adults, providing them with the assets, inputs and resiliency factors that they need to develop into caring, competent adults.
2. Develop relationships and partnerships with young adults, administrators and other youth-serving professionals in the community by establishing regular communication and by taking advantage of opportunities to meet in person.
3. Be an advocate for young adults and effectively promote the role of the library in serving young adults, demonstrating that the provision of services to this group can help young adults build assets, achieve success, and in turn, create a stronger community.
4. Design, implement, and evaluate a strategic marketing plan for promoting young adult services in the library, schools, youth-serving agencies and the community at large.
5. Demonstrate the capacity to articulate relationships between young adult services and the parent institution's core goals and mission.
6. Establish an environment in the library wherein all staff serve young adults with courtesy and respect, and all staff are encouraged to promote programs and services for young adults.
7. Identify young adult interests and groups underserved or not yet served by the library, including at-risk teens, those with disabilities, non-English speakers, etc., as well as those with special or niche interests.
8. Promote young adult library services directly to young adults through school visits, library tours, etc., and through engaging their parents, educators and other youth-serving community partners.



YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best

Area IV. Administration.

The librarian will be able to:

1. Develop a strategic plan for library service with young adults based on their unique needs.
2. Design and conduct a community analysis and needs assessment.
3. Apply research findings towards the development and improvement of young adult library services.
4. Design activities to involve young adults in planning and decision-making.
5. Develop, justify, administer, and evaluate a budget for young adult services.
6. Develop physical facilities dedicated to the achievement of young adult service goals.
7. Develop written policies that mandate the rights of young adults to equitable library service.
8. Design, implement, and evaluate an ongoing program of professional development for all staff, to encourage and inspire continual excellence in service to young adults.
9. Identify and defend resources (staff, materials, facilities, funding) that will improve library service to young adults.
10. Document young adult programs and activities so as to contribute to institutional and professional memory.
11. Develop and manage services that utilize the skills, talents, and resources of young adults in the school or community.



YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best

Area V: Knowledge of Materials

The librarian will be able to:

1. Meet the informational and recreational needs of young adults through the development of an appropriate collection for all types of readers and non-readers.
2. Develop a collection development policy that supports and reflect the needs and interests of young adults and is consistent with the parent institution's mission and policies.
3. Demonstrate a knowledge and appreciation of literature for and by young adults in traditional and emerging formats.
4. Develop a collection of materials from a broad range of selection sources, and for a variety of reading skill levels, that encompasses all appropriate formats, including, but not limited to, media that reflect varied and emerging technologies, and materials in languages other than English.
5. Serve as a knowledgeable resource to schools in the community as well as parents and caregivers on materials for young adults.



YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best

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YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best

Area VI - Access to Information

The librarian will be able to:

1. Organize physical and virtual collections to maximize easy, equitable, and independent access to information by young adults.
2. Utilize current merchandising and promotional techniques to attract and invite young adults to use the collection.
3. Provide access to specialized information (i.e., community resources, work by local youth, etc.).
4. Formally and informally instruct young adults in basic research skills, including how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively.
5. Be an active partner in the development and implementation of technology and electronic resources to ensure young adults' access to knowledge and information.
6. Maintain awareness of ongoing technological advances and how they can improve access to information for young adults.



YALSA's Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best

Area VII. Services

The librarian will be able to:

1. Design, implement and evaluate programs and services within the framework of the library's strategic plan and based on the developmental needs of young adults and the public assets libraries represent, with young adult involvement whenever possible.
2. Identify and plan services with young adults in non-traditional settings, such as hospitals, home-school settings, alternative education, foster care programs, and detention facilities.
3. Provide a variety of informational and recreational services to meet the diverse needs and interests of young adults and to direct their own personal growth and development.
4. Continually identify trends and pop-culture interests of young people to inform, and direct their recreational collection and programming needs.
5. Instruct young adults in basic information gathering, research skills and information literacy skills - including those necessary to evaluate and use electronic information sources - to develop life-long learning habits.
6. Actively involve young adults in planning and implementing services and programs for their age group through advisory boards, task forces, and by less formal means (i.e., surveys, one-on-one discussion, focus groups, etc.)
7. Create an environment that embraces the flexible and changing nature of young adults' entertainment, technological and informational needs.