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## The Career Decision Making Experiences of College Students in the Visual Arts

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

THE CAREER DECISION MAKING EXPERIENCES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

IN THE VISUAL ARTS

BY

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This project is dedicated to the memory of my aunt, Dr. Martha Moore-Russell - a devoted psychologist, mentor, and artist in her own right.

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## ABSTRACT

Over the past several decades, job opportunities in the arts have decreased, while the number of college students pursuing majors in the arts has increased. In addition to the difficulty artists' face, college students encounter major developmental changes which impact their career decisions. While much research has been dedicated to college student development and career decision making, little is known about these elements as they relate to college students who major in the arts. The discrepancy between the number of jobs in the arts, and the number of college students pursuing the arts, has important implications for career services. The lack of information about college students in the arts can hinder career development professionals' ability to provide the most relevant services to these students. The present study focuses on college students in the visual arts. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the career decision making experiences of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts.

The phenomenological perspective provided a framework for data collection and analysis. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants who were pursuing college majors in the visual arts. At the time of the interviews four participants were entering the major and four were preparing to graduate. These two groups were selected in order to gain understanding about the perspective of students at different points in their college experience. Through data analysis, nine common themes were identified and grouped according specific experiences, difficulties and challenges, and perceived benefits associated with their career decision making. The nine themes are: 1) Childhood artistic/creative development; 2) Teachers and mentors; 3) Being part of a creative community; 4) Considering a career path without art; 5) Parental influence; 6) Support/resources; 7) Congruence with identity; 8) Motivated by challenges; and 9) Making a contribution. The common experience expressed by participants was that their decision to pursue a major and career in the visual arts was challenging, but also very rewarding.

This study provides important information about the career decision making experiences and needs of college students in the visual arts. Additionally, differences between students entering the major and those preparing to graduate provide information about their experience at different stages of their development. The findings of this study have implications for future

research, and the design and implementation of career services for college students in the visual arts.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the qualitative research study, “The career decision making experiences of college students in the visual arts.” The present study will build on a pilot case study of the experiences of a college student pursuing a major in visual art (Cooley, 2005). This chapter includes an introduction, statement of the problem, the significance of this study, purpose of the study, and the research question.

The phenomenological perspective provided a framework for this study, as I wanted to explore the career decision making experiences of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts (Patton, 2002). While much research has been dedicated to college student development and career decision making, little is known about these elements as they relate to college students who major in the arts. Over the past several decades, job opportunities in the arts have decreased, while the number of college students pursuing majors in the arts has increased. The discrepancy between the number of jobs in the arts and the number of college students pursuing the arts has important implications for career services. Furthermore, the lack of information about college students in the arts can hinder career development professionals’ ability to provide the most relevant services to these students.

In the present study, I chose to focus on individuals who major in the visual arts. Relevant literature in college student development, career decision making, personality, and the nature of artists’ lives and work, is reviewed to provide a conceptual foundation for this study. Data was collected using in-depth interviews with eight participants. At the time of the interviews, 4 participants were entering a major in the visual arts and 4 were preparing to graduate. I chose these two groups of students in order to obtain the perspective of students at different points in their college experience. Sensitizing concepts were used to guide data analysis, through which themes were identified in effort to inform a future quantitative research.

### Statement of the Problem

The lack of research on college students in the arts leads to limitations in our understanding of their career decision making experiences and related needs. In turn, this leads to a potential lack of appropriate career resources and services designed to meet these unique needs.

Furthermore, the lack of qualitative studies on this topic makes it more difficult to design quantitative studies that address relevant research questions.

### Research Question

The following is the primary research question guiding this qualitative exploration: What are experiences that contribute to the career decision making of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts?

### *Social Significance*

Over the past several decades, artists have experienced unemployment rates almost twice those of other professionals (Shaw, 2004). In order to meet regular household expenses, artists often hold multiple jobs throughout their careers, either by “moonlighting” or by switching among many short-term jobs (Alper & Wassall, 2002). Additionally, the subjective nature of what is appreciated in the arts makes it consistently difficult to find work (Eikleberry, 1999; Ormont, 2001). Furthermore, while the number of job opportunities in the arts has decreased, the number of college students pursuing majors in the arts has increased (Luftig, Donovan, Farnbaugh, Kennedy, Filicko, & Wyszomirski, 2003). In addition to the difficulty artists’ face, college students encounter major developmental changes during their young adult years, which impact their career decisions. This has direct implications for the social impact of the difficult career decisions that college students in the arts make, and the affect these decisions have on their quality of life.

### *Professional Significance*

The most obvious professional issue related to college students in the arts is that research efforts to understand their career decision making are virtually nonexistent (Luftig et al., 2003)). This lack of information about their career directly impedes the nature and quality of services provided by career development professionals. Research shows that the career planning needs of artists are often very different than those addressed by standard counseling or career advisement (Piiro, 1998; Eikleberry, 1999). Characteristics of the artistic personality, such as introversion and introspection, play a role in the career decisions of artists (Holland, 1997; Piiro, 1998). This has important implications for providing the most beneficial career counseling services to college students in the arts. Exploring the career decision making experiences of college students in the visual arts, will lead to understanding of their unique experiences, and may contribute to the improvement of career resources and services available to these individuals.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This section will provide a review of literature in psychosocial theories of human development relevant to college student development, career decision making, personality, and the nature of artists in relation to the present study.

#### **Psychosocial Theories of Human Development**

Many psychosocial theories view individual development as a process that involves accomplishing a series of developmental tasks. Over the life span, individuals are confronted by a series of developmental challenges to their current identity or developmental status, related to age progression and environmental influences (Whitaker & Slimak, 1999). The sequences in which tasks are presented often coincide with biological and psychological maturity, or cultural influences such as rites of passage to adulthood and related societal expectations. The pattern in which these tasks are presented may vary by sex and culture, and may not be resolved in the order they are presented. Resolution of each task can significantly affect the succeeding tasks and the rate of the individual's psychosocial development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Erikson's theory (1950) has made substantial contributions to the understanding of psychosocial development. His theory of ego psychology emerged from Freudian psychology, which focused on early development. While Freud's theory addressed only the early developmental stages, Erikson's work in ego psychology focuses on both early and later development. Erikson believed that humans develop in psychosocial stages and that the experience we have in these stages is important to the outcome. As the stages unfold, he believed that they build on each other in order to prepare the individual for the next one. Due to this belief of one stage paving the way for another across the life span, Erikson dismissed Freud's notion that our basic personality is developed within the first 5 years of life (Erikson, 1950; 1968; 1982).

#### **College Student Development**

This section will review Erikson's influence on student development theories, Chickering's model of student development and Astin's college impact model.

### *Erikson's Contribution*

Three elements of Erikson's theory have been most influential on psychological theories of college student development. The first is the epigenetic principal, which implies that development is sequential, age-related, biological, and psychological (Erikson, 1950; 1982; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In addition, this concept implies that an individual's personal environment forms his or her character and the extent of development. The second significant contribution to student development theory is Erikson's concept of developmental tasks or crises. The eight stages of psychosocial development occur when biological and psychological changes interact with societal and cultural demands on a person, which results in a "crisis." This "crisis" does not imply an emergency, but rather an opportunity for a decision. Erikson conceptualized developmental change as something determined by the nature of the response from the individual. The individual's response to the "crisis" requires consideration because each stage determines developmental progression, regression, or stasis (Erikson, 1950; 1982). Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development are presented in Table 1.

The stage that is most relevant to college student development is stage five, "identity versus identity confusion." Identity development plays a central role in most psychosocial theories of change among college students. This stage outlines the dominant developmental tasks for young adults in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Table 1  
Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Stage	Age	Characteristics
Trust versus mistrust	Birth-1 year	If significant others (specifically mother) provide basic physical and emotional needs, (e.g., holding, attending to) an infant will develop a sense of trust. If basic needs are not met, mistrust toward the world, especially toward interpersonal relationships will result.
Autonomy versus shame and doubt	1- 3	Explore and experiment, make mistakes, and test limits with parents support and guidance. Parents who promote dependency, inhibit child's autonomy and capacity to deal with the world

Table 1 Continued

Initiative versus guilt	3 – 6	Task is to achieve a sense of competence and initiative. Children given freedom to choose activities that are meaningful to them will develop a positive view of self. If not permitted to make decisions for themselves, they will develop feelings of guilt over taking initiative.
Industry versus inferiority	6 – 11	Task is to achieve a sense of industry; ability to set and meet personal goals. Child needs to experience a growing understanding of the world, develop appropriate gender identity, and learn basic skills for school success. Failure to meet this task results in feelings of inadequacy
Identity versus identity confusion	12 – 18	Time for transition from childhood to adulthood; test limits, break dependent ties, establish new identity. Failure to achieve a sense of identity results in role confusion.
Intimacy versus isolation	18 – 35	Form intimate relationships. Failure to achieve intimacy can lead to feelings of isolation.
Generativity versus stagnation	35 – 60	Need to reach beyond yourself and family and become involved in helping the next generation. Time of adjusting between one's dreams and realities of actual accomplishments. Failure to achieve a sense of productivity often leads to psychological stagnation.
Integrity versus despair	60 +	Ego integrity results from looking back on life with few regrets and feeling personally worthwhile. Failure to achieve ego integrity can lead to feelings of despair, hopelessness, guilt, resentment, and self-rejection.

Adapted from Erikson, 1950; 1968; 1982

### Student Development Theory

This section will explore the background of student development theory and describe Chickering's model of student development and Astin's theory of student involvement.

#### *Overview*

Much of the research on student development theory emerged in the early 1960s. Derived from theories of human development, student development theory includes a specific focus on developmental changes that occur during late adolescence to early adulthood. Furthermore, the focus of student development theory is on the relationship between development and intellectual, social, environmental, and relational influences. (Cheatham & Berg-Cross, 1992). There are two types of models of college student development, developmental and college impact models.

### *Chickering's Model of Student Development*

Developmental theory models describe the various dimensions of student development and the phases of individual growth along each dimension. These are mostly based on theories of psychological stages, which individual's pass through in a hierarchical and invariant order. Building on Erikson's (1950) theory, Chickering has had the greatest influence on the study of college student development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). He proposed that student development is an intentional process that facilitates abilities such as clear values, integrity, communication skills, critical thinking and synthesis, a sense of tolerance and interdependence, empathy, understanding and cooperation, as well as a capacity for intimacy (Chickering, 1993; Whitaker & Slimak, 1999). One of the most important postulates of Chickering's theory is that students are not homogeneous; they are developmentally different from one another. Until a revision in 1993, the theory did not specifically address heterogeneity with regard to ethnic, gender, or cultural differences related to completion of developmental tasks (Chickering, 1993; Cheatham & Berg-Cross, 1992). Chickering is cited as stating that he later realized the importance of gender and diversity with regard to development (Chickering, 1993).

Chickering identified human development as the unifying purpose of higher education, which induces a greater awareness of an individual's place in society. He viewed colleges as developmental communities, where basic personal identity development is facilitated through programming interventions (Chickering, 1993) The purpose of such interventions is to facilitate growth through what Chickering proposed to be the predictable developmental challenges encountered by students. These challenges are reflected in the seven vectors Chickering identified as phases of college student development (Chickering, 1993). These include developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity. An early criticism of the vectors was that Chickering did not address the underlying processes that relate to change in each vector. The foundation of Erikson's psychosocial stages, as previously outlined, is helpful for providing this dimension (Cheatham & Berg-Cross, 1992).

### *Seven Vectors of Student Development*

*Developing competence.* This includes intellectual areas, physical and manual skills, and interpersonal relationships. The individual develops a sense of his or her own capabilities to cope with what comes along and to achieve what he or she sets out to do. Intellectual competence is

specifically important because it influences development in the other vectors. Chickering has stated that interpersonal competence did not initially receive as much attention as it should have, and is specifically important in the development of minorities and women (Chickering, 1993; Whitaker & Slimak, 1999).

*Managing emotions.* The precollege years bring emotions that have biological and social origins, specifically involving sexuality. During college, control from parents and society during childhood is examined, understood, and the student replaces this power with internally constructed behavioral standards and controls. The task during this phase is to develop passion and commitment as well as a capacity to implement this passion and commitment throughout life.

*Developing autonomy.* This phase requires both emotional and instrumental independence and the ability to recognize one's interdependence. The individual disengages from parents and the need for their approval and reassurance. Simultaneously, he or she begins to recognize the importance of other people. The individual begins to understand both personal independence and interdependence and relationships develop based on respect and helpfulness. Chickering later emphasized the importance of interdependence and that the name of the phase could even be changed to emphasize its importance (Chickering, 1993).

*Establishing identity.* A solid sense of self is the foundation of identity, and it encounters many changes throughout a lifetime. Chickering defined this as a pivotal vector, one that is dependent upon the individual's growth in the vectors of competence, emotions, and autonomy. Development in this vector facilitates change along the three remaining vectors. The clarification of one's physical characteristics and personal appearance, as well as clarification of appropriate sexual roles and behaviors, are important psychosocial events during this phase. The issues confronted during this stage of growth are not limited to college students or to this phase of life; these issues are confronted in other phases of life as well (Whitaker & Slimak, 1999).

*Freeing interpersonal relationships.* An increased ability to interact with others accompanies the individual's emerging personal identity. These interactions represent an increase in tolerance and respect for people of different backgrounds, with diverse values, and appearances. In addition, the quality of relationships with close friends evolves, as does personal relationships involving intimacy. Instead of simply tolerating unpleasant differences among people, the individual also develops a sense of openness and acceptance of diversity. The growth

of cultural diversity after the initial publication of the vectors, led Chickering to revisit the importance of tolerance. Furthermore, he implied that the capacity for intimacy is even more complex than when the theory was initially created (Chickering, 1993).

*Developing purpose.* The emerging competencies, identity, and interpersonal relationships, require the individual to have a sense of direction and purpose. The individual moves past “who am I?” and into “who am I going to be?” With regard to his or her life, instead of asking “where am I?” he or she begins to ponder “where am I going?” (Whitaker & Slimak, 1999). This movement leads to the integration of vocational and recreational interests, plans, and aspirations and allows the individual to make life-style choices for the future (Chickering, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini 1991).

*Developing integrity.* The individual clarifies personal beliefs that are internally consistent and serve as a tentative behavioral guide. Instead of relying on rules as absolutes, the individual considers the relativity of such rules and their purposes. In addition, the individual reviews the values that were earlier accepted from authority. Some of these values are rejected, while others maintained, personalized and internalized (Chickering, 1993; Cheatham & Berg-Cross, 1992).

### *College Student Growth*

Chickering’s intention to integrate knowledge and practice led to the identification of six areas in which higher education both positively and negatively influences student growth along the seven vectors. The following are the six elements that Chickering identified as having a potential impact on student growth:

- 1) Clarity and consistency of objectives related to the institution’s role and impact;
- 2) Institutional size (larger institutions provides more opportunities for participation);
- 3) Choice and flexibility in curriculum, teaching and evaluation, student participation in learning, and learning-oriented evaluation;
- 4) Residence hall arrangements which foster interpersonal relationships, including close friendships. Peer groups that develop can promote or inhibit personal development, depending on the diversity, attitudes, and values of the residents;
- 5) Positive and frequent interaction with faculty and administration who are psychologically accessible adults; and

- 6) Friends and the overall student culture complements a positive academic environment. Congruence between student and institutional values is important for positive developmental growth (Chickering, 1993)

### *Astin's Theory of Student Involvement*

Astin's theory is reflective of the college impact models, which focus more on the environmental origins of change and less on the intra-individual development. Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement is one explains how students develop and learn through being involved. The theory places importance on behaviors such as attachment, commitment, devotion, engagement, and participation. It involves Freudian notion of cathexis, the investment of psychological energy, as well as learning theory. In addition, Astin's theory views higher education as one of talent development, and encourages educators to focus on student behaviors as signs of development (Whitaker & Slimak, 1992). There following are the five main elements of Astin's theory:

- 1) Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various situations;
- 2) Involvement occurs along a continuum and different students will invest varying amounts of energy in different situations;
- 3) Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features;
- 4) The amount of student development and personal learning associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement; and
- 5) The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement (Astin, 1984; Whitaker & Slimak, 1992).

### College Student Success

This section will provide an overview of the current statistics related to college student enrollment and graduation.

### *Enrollment and Graduation Statistics*

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) contains data collected from almost 10,000 postsecondary institutions, with regard to college student enrollment and degree completion (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Currently, the total undergraduate

enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions has generally increased over the past three decades. Over the next ten years, women's enrollment is expected to increase at a faster rate than men's, and full-time undergraduate enrollment is projected to increase at a faster rate than part-time enrollment (U.S. Department, 2005). Data from recipients of first time bachelor's degrees in 1999–2000, who had not taken longer than a 6 month break from college, took approximately 55 months from first enrollment to degree completion. Those graduates who attended multiple institutions took longer to complete a degree; this was found among graduates of both public and private institutions. Graduates of public institutions averaged about 6 months longer to complete a degree than graduates of private institutions (57 vs. 51 months) (U.S. Department, 2005).

Shorter time to degree completion was found to be associated with parents' education level. As parents' education increases, students' average time to degree completion decreases. In addition, as age and length of time between high school graduation and college entry increases, time to degree completion also increases. In public institutions, higher grade-point averages were associated with a shorter time to degree completion among graduates. Over time, males have consistently taken longer to finish a bachelor's degree than females (U.S. Department, 2005).

#### College Students and Career Decision Making

This section will provide an overview of career decision making through relevant components of Super's model of vocational development, Holland's theory of types, and Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) theory. Super's model was selected because of its developmental background, Holland's theory for the distinction of the Artistic personality type, and CIP theory because of the comprehensive approach to career decision making.

##### *Super's Model of Vocational Development*

Super's perspective of vocational development is one of the most influential models in career development. Developmental psychology contributed a large amount to Super's early work, in which he emphasized life stages and vocational tasks (Super, 1980; 1990). Self-concept theory is the other main component of Super's work; therefore the "self" is inherently a key component of the model. Super proposed that a person's self-concept is a culmination of the interactions between the person and the environment, and that these interactions are organized by the person (Super, 1980; 1990). These interactions contribute to the development of vocational self-concept, a key concept in the model. An objective self-concept, also known as vocational

identity, refers to traits that may be assessed through interest inventories and compared with others. A subjective self-concept or occupational self-concept involves the personal meaning an individual attributes to his or her traits; this develops over time (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996).

According to Super's model, choosing an occupation represents the implementation of self-concept. This is a process where an individual identifies an occupation that matches one's image of oneself. The extent to which people are able to implement their self-concepts in the chosen occupation is directly related to the satisfaction they derive from work. Consequently, work and life satisfaction depend on how much an individual finds outlets for abilities, needs, values, interests, personality traits, and self-concepts (Super, 1980; 1990).

*Life-span, life-space model.* Super's conceptualizations of the self are inherent in his life span, life space approach to career development. These terms represent the content and process of career development, respectively. The concept of life span is depicted in what Super identified as the life-career rainbow. On the outside of the rainbow, from left to right, are the ages and life stages of development (described in Table 2).

Table 2  
Super's Stages of Vocational Development

Stage	Age	Characteristics
Growth	Birth-14 or 15	Develop self-concept and a general understanding of the world of work. Identify with role models and gain awareness of own interests and abilities.
Exploratory	15-24	<u>Phases</u> <i>Crystallization</i> - Form vocational goals based on interests and values <i>Specification</i> - Select specific vocation <i>Implementation</i> - Train for selected vocation and begin employment
Establishment	25-44	Build skills and gain stabilization through work experience
Maintenance	45-64	Continuous efforts to persevere and be innovative
Decline/Disengagement	65+	Reduced workload, prepare for retirement

Adapted from Super, 1980

Super identified that each stage was named to reflect the important component of its life-stage task (Super, et al., 1996). An individual's developmental progression through the five broad stages is referred to as the maxicycle; when an individual revisits a stage, such as when changing jobs, it is termed the minicycle. Super proposed that people are diverse in their abilities, personalities, needs, values, interests, traits, and self-concepts, and are qualified for a number of occupations based on these characteristics. He stated that vocational preferences and abilities evolve with self-concept, over time, and with gained experience (Super, 1980; 1990).

The life space concept of Super's model is illustrated horizontally within the bands of the rainbow. Life space includes the roles individuals play throughout their lives, and considers the context of their lives. Super acknowledged that work is likely one of many roles that an individual will hold at any given time. The integration of the roles among the five stages of development depicts how the roles interact with the stages, and provide focus in an individual's life (Super, 1980).

*Model revisions.* Super revised the life-career rainbow after criticism that it did not specifically address the personal and situational aspects of career development (Super, 1990). This revision evolved into what Super termed the "segmental model of career development" or "archway model" (Super, 1990, p. 200). In the archway model, Super (1990) attempted to integrate the many facets of career development, along with the contributions of many career theorists. On the right side of the arch are personal factors such as interests, values, needs, specific aptitudes, and intelligence. On the left side are situational factors, which involve the contextual dimension of peers, school, family, society, community, the labor market, and economy. The self remains the most important component of the model, and is located at the top of the arch, implying its constant role (Super, 1990).

*Career maturity.* Development through the life-stages can be facilitated with maturing abilities, interests and new experiences. Additional factors that influence an individual's development and career pattern include parental socioeconomic level, intelligence, education, skills, personality characteristics, and career maturity. Career maturity develops as the individual encounters these new experiences and challenges. This implies that the individual gains readiness to make career decisions and to cope with demands during any given life-career stage (Super, et al., 1996).

Career maturity includes physical, psychological, and social characteristics, and is cognitive and affective (Super et al., 1996). The cognitive aspect of career maturity includes the application of knowledge of the world of work and occupational preference, as well as knowledge and application of career decision making. An individual's attitude regarding career exploration and planning is the affective component of career maturity. Super stated that in addition to cognitive and affective determinants, realism is another helpful measure of career maturity. This includes comparing the reality of the preferred occupation to occupational self-concept and vocational identity (Super, 1990).

#### *Holland's Theory of Personality and Environments*

The meaning of the person-environment relationship is the basis for John Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments. Based on six personality types and corresponding work environments, Holland's theory is one of the most influential contributions to the field of career development theory and practice. The theory is based on the assertion that most people can be identified as one of six personality types, Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional, and that the types correspond to work environments (Holland, 1997). This correspondence is based on Holland's belief that an individual's personality characteristics will draw him or her to certain work environments. Furthermore, it is believed that if a person's type is the same as his or her work environment (Social person in a Social work environment) he or she will be happy and productive (Holland, 1997). A brief description of Holland personality types and work environments is provided in Table 3.

The Self-Directed Search (SDS) (Holland, 1994) is the most common instrument used to assess an individual's personality type and corresponding work environment (Holland, 1996). This assessment tool produces a three-letter code, based on the three highest scores among the six types. The first letter of the code (the highest score) indicates the dominant personality type, which most resembles the individual. The other two scores provide additional information about the person, including secondary personality characteristics, abilities, and values (Holland, 1997).

Table 3  
Holland Personality Types and Work Environments

Types	People	Work Environments
Realistic	Mechanical and athletic abilities; like the outdoors; prefer working with machines or tools rather than people.	Structured; clear goals and leadership; work with hands, machines, or tools engineering, military, skilled trades.
Investigative	Problem solving and analytical skills; prefer working alone with ideas; problem solving or research.	Research oriented; collect and analyze data; science, math, medicine, and computer related fields.
Artistic	Creative or artistic ability; use intuition and imagination to solve problems; prefer working independently.	Non-structured; creative; flexible; rewards unconventional and aesthetic values; arts organizations, films/TV, publishing, advertising, museums, theater, galleries.
Social	Social skills and teaching ability; find fulfillment in helping others; enjoys working in teams.	People-related; helping with problems/issues; teaching, counseling
Enterprising	Leadership and speaking abilities; like to influence people; enjoy leading a team toward achievement of a goal.	Business environment; power focused and results oriented; sales, management, politics, finance, leadership
Conventional	Organizational and mathematical abilities; good at attending to detail, disciplined.	Orderly, with clear rules and policies; data, money oriented; accounting, business, finance, administration.

Adapted from Holland, 1997

One way to visualize the personality types and related characteristics is the hexagonal model created by Holland to evaluate congruence and consistency between a person and an occupation. Beginning on the top left point and continuing clockwise around the hexagon, the types are placed in the following order: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Holland, 1997). The consistency within an individual's three-letter code is indicated by the closeness of the types on the hexagon (Holland, 1997). Depending on the differentiation between the highest and lowest summary scores, a person may not closely resemble all three types. A wide range between the first and other two scores indicates that a person is most like the first type, but will exhibit characteristics of the other two (Holland, 1997). Holland, Gottfredson, & Nafziger, (1975) assessed the validity of theoretically based vocational diagnostic signs, such as the SDS. The purpose of their inquiry was to identify if a person's self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, and decision-making ability were predictable. Holland's theoretical indicators of consistency and differentiation on the SDS predicted decision-making

scores more successfully than did any other predictors (Holland, Gottfredson, & Nafziger, 1975).

Holland (1997) states that career counseling has at least three purposes; exploration, reassurance, and self-understanding, and that these goals vary from person to person. He believes that practitioners too often rely on single letters in the three letter code, instead of looking at the whole profile. Holland believes that there are not enough jobs to meet individuals' specific interests and therefore there is a need to find recreational activities to satisfy these interests (Feller, Honaker, & Zagzebski, 2001).

### *Cognitive Information Processing*

The Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) approach to career problem solving and decision making is founded upon the principals of cognitive theory, and allows practitioners to assist clients in the evaluation and execution of career plans. There are two main constructs in CIP theory. The first is the Pyramid of Information Processing Domains, which includes information about the content involved in career decision making. The second is the CASVE cycle, which includes information about the process of career decision making (Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz, 2004).

The Pyramid of Information Processing includes domains related to self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, decision-making skills, and executive processing. Self-knowledge represents an individual's awareness of his or her interests, skills, values and employment preferences. Occupational knowledge domain includes an individual's understanding of occupations, job fields, and other aspects of the world of work. The decision-making skills domain relates to an individual's awareness of, and strategy for making effective decisions. As mentioned above, the CASVE cycle provides the process aspect of effective career decision making. This cyclic process includes the following phases:

- Communication- awareness of the problem or gap between where one is and wants to be
- Analysis- combining self and occupational knowledge in order to address the problem or gap
- Synthesis- expanding and narrowing options
- Valuing- evaluating the costs and benefits of choosing an occupation of interest
- Execution- implementing the choice of occupation, taking action

The last domain in the Pyramid of Information Processing is executive processing. This refers to an individual's metacognitions, and higher-order thinking related to self-awareness, self-talk, and self-monitoring (Sampson, et al., 2004).

### Personality Development

As illustrated by Holland's theory, personality plays an important role in one's career decision making process and ultimate career choice. This section will explore personality from the perspective of the Five Factor Model.

#### *The Five Factor Model of Personality*

There are several perspectives of individual personality; however, the Five Factor Model is the most commonly referenced in personality literature. One reason for this status is the decades of personality research on the theory. The five factors or domains within the model include Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to Experience (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C). The five identified dimensions of personality are measured by the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R). In addition to the five major dimensions, the NEO-PI-R measures specific personality facets that identify each dimension (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Neuroticism (N) is identified as the difference between adjustment and maladjustment, with regard to emotional stability. A high score on the N scale of the NEO-PI-R indicates that an individual may have low impulse control, irrational ideas, and poor coping skills. Individuals who score low on the N scale tend to be relaxed, calm, and able to maintain perspective in the face of stressful or upsetting situations (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The Extraversion (E) scale measures an individual's tendency toward extraversion or introversion. Extraverts tend to be active, assertive, talkative, and friendly. They typically gain their energy from being around other people. In contrast, introverts are prone to be more reserved, have a small group of close friends, and gain their energy from within themselves. Costa and McCrae (1992) propose that introverts are harder to define. They make the distinction that introverts are not defined as the opposite of extraverts; they simply do not possess characteristics of extraversion in their personality. The authors also make the point that the typical assumptions of happy versus unhappy and outgoing versus shy should be avoided in an effort to gain a better understanding of the complexity of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The Openness to Experience (O) dimension includes characteristics such as aesthetic sensitivity, active imagination, attentiveness to inner feelings, intellectual curiosity,

independence of judgment, and a preference for variety. Individuals who score high on the O scale experience emotions more intensely than those who score low on the same scale. Their openness allows them to consider unconventional ideas and live experientially. Those who score low on the O scale experience less intensity in their interests, which tend to be focused (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The Agreeableness (A) scale relates to interpersonal characteristics. A person who is high in agreeableness tends to be sympathetic and altruistic. An individual who scores low in agreeableness may be egocentric, antagonistic, and skeptical of others. It is not ideal for a person to be either of these extremes. A high A is associated with Dependent Personality Disorder and a low A with Narcissism and Antisocial behavior (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The Conscientiousness I scale identifies an individual's inclination toward organizing, planning, and carrying out tasks. A high C indicates characteristics such as punctual and trustworthy. An extremely high C may imply tendencies toward being compulsive, such as with work. An individual with a low C is typically less reliable and less focused in goal attainment (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

### The Nature of Artists

This section explores the nature of artists, through an overview of creativity research and talent development, specifically focusing on elements related to personality and environment. Issues specifically pertinent to the life and work of artists will be explored in depth.

#### *Background of Creativity Research*

In academia, the idea of studying the nature of creativity was previously avoided and assumed to be unscientific, too mysterious, and have the potential to corrupt the training of graduate students. Before 1950 only 186 out of 121,000 entries in Psychological Abstracts dealt with creative imagination. In his last speech as president of the American Psychological Association, J.P. Guilford addressed this lack of pursuit, which initiated efforts to bridge the gaps in psychological research with regard to creativity (Barron & Harrington, 1981).

In 1956, one such effort was the organization of the first national research conference on creativity, sponsored by the National Science Foundation. This led to an increase of nearly 3000 publications in creativity research. After 1970 this number leveled off to about 250 new dissertations, articles, or books every year (Barron & Harrington, 1981). The empirical work initiated by Guilford's address focused heavily on the personality characteristics of creative

people, such as artists. Collectively, researchers have been able to identify a relatively stable set of core personality characteristics. These characteristics include a high value of aesthetic qualities in experience, an attraction to complexity, high energy, self-confidence, independence in judgment, intuition, autonomy, and a firm identification of the self as creative (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Amabile, 1996.)

### *The Systems Model of Creativity*

While early research focused on the personality characteristics related to creativity, it excluded external factors such as the environmental circumstances favorable to creativity (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Hennessey, 2003). This gap in the creativity literature was recognized by a group of social psychologists who decided to explore the impact of situational factors on creative performance. The next two decades of empirical investigation led to the Intrinsic Motivation Principle of Creativity (Amabile, 1996). That is, intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity and extrinsic motivation is often detrimental. After hundreds of investigations, researchers found that the promise of a reward, made contingent on task performance, often undermines intrinsic task motivation and qualitative aspects of performance, including creativity (Amabile, 1996).

This evidence relates to the systems model of creativity, because it implies the importance of environment. Although creativity is typically viewed as a mental process that involves an individual's insight, it is highly influenced by political, economic, and social events (Simonton, 1990). These external variables are important to explore in order to understand the way that new ideas and products become established in a culture (Harrington, 1990).

The systems model of creativity proposes that creativity can only be understood through the interrelations of a system made up of three elements; the domain, the field, and the individual. To produce something creative, a person must act within a domain such as art (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The second component, the field, includes all of the people who serve as "gatekeepers" of the domain (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004). These people decide which new products or ideas to add to the domain. In the domain of art, they include critics, talent agents, and the artists themselves. The third component to the model is the individual. According to the systems model, creativity results from a change or other contribution an individual makes within a domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). However, the individual's efforts

may or may not be selected for inclusion by the “gatekeepers” of the domain (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004).

### *The Artistic Personality*

While there are various disciplines within the world of art, a commonality among the artists across disciplines is evident. That is, artistic individuals often report feeling “different” from others for much of their lives (Eikelberry, 1996). People with artistic personalities often view and experience life through a different lens than most people, which is indicative of their personality characteristics of uniqueness, non-conformity, and openness (Holland, 1997; Ormont, 2001). Because of their value of expression, creativity, equality, and courage, artistic types often feel most comfortable living on abstract terms. In other words, their life and work is based upon inspiration and vision, as opposed to structure and deadlines. Holland’s theory provides an objective view of this group of people, which is important because artists are typically judged subjectively. Holland classifies Artistic types as open, intuitive, non-conforming, and valuing expression and creativity (Holland, 1997).

Openness to Experience, one of the five factors of personality, is related to scientific and artistic creativity, divergent thinking, low religiosity, and political liberalism (Barron & Harrington, 1981). It is often a double-edged sword, however, in that it creates the tendency toward intense feelings, both good and bad (May, 1975; Piirto, 1998; Eikelberry, 1996). Intensity of emotion is an important component of an artist’s success; it provides the vision and motivation needed to bring something into being. To the artist, this is equivalent to fulfilling one’s place in the world (May, 1975). It is helpful if ego strength accompanies this motivation, because of the risk it takes to withstand the criticism artists’ face on a regular basis (Runco, 2004).

Creative individuals, such as artists, tend to have the ability to adapt to almost any situation and use whatever resources available to reach their goals (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). They love to immerse themselves in what most people might interpret as chaos, in order to make some sense of the world. Dissatisfied with conventional or apathetic aspects of life, they direct their energy toward creation, which is what fuels their life and work (May, 1975). The way an artist devotes him or herself into the process is important because the intensity of the creative act propels the creative process. In fact, the physiological changes that occur when a person experiences this intensity are similar to those of the fight or flight response, which are typically

activated by anxiety or fear. However, the artist does not experience fear, but rather the joy and pleasure during the act of creating (May, 1975).

### *Artists' Identity Development*

An individual's identity as an artist begins early in life and is influenced by parental behaviors and family dynamics. Research finds that children are more likely to be creative when parents are personally secure and unconcerned with conforming to societal norms regarding status and roles (Amabile, 1996). In one study of high school boys, those who exhibited high levels of creativity were often raised by mothers who were relatively unconcerned with societal demands, such as making a good impression or fulfilling social expectations (Domino, 1969). Another study found that the fathers of highly creative high school boys were less conforming to sex-role stereotypes (Grant & Domino, 1976).

Evidence suggests that artistic and creative development is often fostered when parents practice low levels of authoritarianism, encourage independence, and display a somewhat distant interpersonal relationship between themselves and the children (Mackinnon, 1962). A general pattern of family characteristics found by Mackinnon (1962) includes 1) parents displayed respect for children and belief in their ability to do the right thing; 2) overall, a lack of strong positive or negative emotion in the family and a lack of intense closeness between children and the father (and sometimes mother); 3) mothers often led active, independent lives; and 4) parents emphasized importance of developing a personal code of conduct, but devoted little or no attention to formal religious practice (Mackinnon, 1962). Many creative adults report that in childhood they experienced not only freedom but an absence of expressions of warmth from their parents. In a study of creative women, low levels of maternal warmth in childhood was associated with high levels creativity, and being a "daddy's girl" appeared to contribute to low levels of creativity (Halpin, 1973).

Bloom and Sosniak (1981) examined the creative development of talented mathematicians and composers and found that their parents were very involved in their talent development during childhood. They were enthusiastic and encouraging and some parents were even role models through their involvement in the talent field. As their child's talent became evident, many parents expended large amounts of time and money to find the best training for their children (Bloom & Sosniak, 1981).

### *Artists' Career Development*

A lack of consistent jobs and the structure of a society built to value business, advancement, and financial gains, are discouraging realities for the artistic type person. It is not unlikely in a society which values exactly the opposite of what is appreciated most by artists, that there would be a limited amount of space for them in the world of work (Ormont, 2001). This complexity that contributes to artists' working lives makes it difficult for the Census data and the Bureau of Labor Statistics to accurately capture the essence of their experience (Shaw, 2004).

The ways in which artists earn a living and the conditions in which they work have received recent attention in the literature. One twenty-year investigation of alumni of arts majors was conducted in order to provide a comprehensive look at artists' working lives. The study revealed that after graduation most alumni took jobs to financially sustain them, while still devoting time to their art. When asked about their main occupation, respondents endorsed over 50 occupational categories; however, only 6.6% of alumni indicated that they had stopped pursuing their art because of financial difficulties (Shaw, 2004).

During the 1970s and 1980s the average income earned by performing and visual artists was approximately \$19,000 and \$23,000 respectively (Alper, Wassall, Jeffri, Greenblatt, Kay, Butcher & Chartrand, 1996). Those who were certified to teach did not earn much more. Although there is a need for teachers in general, this does not translate to more jobs for teachers in the arts; there is simply not the same demand. Those who aspire to teach at post-secondary institutions struggle as well. At public universities, the average salary for arts faculty was 15.6% less than faculty in other disciplines (adjusting for rank) and at private universities it was 17% less than non-arts faculty. This data confirms that jobs in the arts are harder to obtain and maintain, and that salaries are lower than non-arts fields (Alper et al., 1996; Reardon, Vernick, & Reed).

### *College Students in the Arts*

Long before most of their peers, these students begin their career planning at a young age with aspirations for success in the arts. These individuals often spend most of their early lives working on their craft, and may view a college degree as one step closer toward professional success. However, in reality, most artists cannot make a living exclusively from their art (Alper & Wassall, 2002). Recent studies indicate that arts majors consistently experience difficulties with obtaining jobs, job security, and frequent job changes (Ormont,

2001; Reardon, Vernick, & Reed, 2004). Nonetheless, both undergraduate and graduate students continue to pursue degrees in the arts, even though jobs in the arts are scarce and salaries are relatively low (Luftig, Donovan, Farnbaugh, Kennedy, Filicko, & Wzszomieski, 2003).

There are approximately 2,000 post-secondary programs that offer degrees in the visual and performing arts. According to the most recent data, there are almost 603,000 students enrolled in majors in the performing and visual arts. In addition, since 1970, the number of bachelor's degrees earned in the arts grew more than 20,000 in number. Post-graduate degrees have increased by 15,000 (Luftig et al., 2003). It is risky to pursue a career in the arts even when the economy is stable. One study estimated that the economy would support less than 60,000 jobs in the arts domain. In the visual arts, over 45% percent of these jobs were in commercial art or graphic design, while only 10% were in the performing arts. In addition, this study revealed that more students graduated in these professions than could be accommodated in the workplace (Luftig et al., 2003).

In efforts to contribute to the counseling and advising services of students in the arts, one team of researchers hoped to gain an understanding of who is pursuing arts studies, in what area, and why. The participants were identified as students who were enrolled in undergraduate and graduate arts programs in Ohio. In this study, questions were asked regarding (1) students' perceived probability of finding and keeping employment in the arts after graduation; (2) the perceived respect that students' chosen fields of endeavor have in the general population of citizens; (3) the degree of support for newcomers by colleagues in the arts; and (4) contingency plans students are making if they cannot find employment in the arts (Luftig, et al.).

Results from the study revealed that many of the students enrolled in arts majors were also pursuing certification to teach, although they did not intend to teach. This study also found that an overwhelming number of students admitted to feeling pessimistic about finding a full-time job in their field. Most students stated that they planned to stay in the arts as a lifelong endeavor (Luftig et al., 2003). However, specifically in the performing arts, students were negative and doubtful regarding the possibility of people in their field being supportive to new members such as themselves. This may be accurate in that the competition in the performing arts creates negativity among members (Ormont, 2001). However, it is also possible that students have misperceptions about their experienced colleagues, and may be projecting fears and anxieties about their place in the world of work (Luftig et al., 2003).

## Pilot Case Study

This section describes a pilot case study that explored the experiences of a college student who is pursuing a major in visual art, with career aspirations in this artistic discipline. I was specifically interested in exploring what experienced influenced the career decision making of students in the visual arts. This inquiry is based on the idea that individuals who pursue a career in the arts have unique needs in terms of career development and planning (Piiro, 1998; Eikelberry, 1996). I intended to gain insight about the individual's experience, from the individual's perspective.

The participant, Liz, (name changed for anonymity) was in her final year of college, pursuing a double major in studio art and art education, at a large southeastern university. I conducted two semi-structured interviews, to explore Liz's experience as a student pursuing a major in the visual art. Each meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes. Interview questions were created from I's review of relevant literature in the domains of college student development, creative personality, career development, and artists in the world of work. Two semi structured interviews were used to collect data, while leaving room for probing and elaboration, based on the nature of Liz's answers.

I used an inductive approach to data analysis, which included searching for themes within interview transcripts and my notes. I identified five core themes from analysis of interview transcripts. These include themes of parental control, spirituality and religion, expression, emotion, and support. A sample quote from interview transcripts related to the five themes is provided below.

### *Theme 1 – Control*

“I’m not allowed to create art in my parents’ house...I got paint on the garage floor once and now I’m not allowed to paint anywhere on the property. I wasn’t even allowed to use my own bathroom to develop my photography.”

### *Theme 2 – Religion*

“If you’re a Christian, you can’t be an artist because if you’re a Christian, everything you do...it’s supposed to invade every aspect of your life...but, I like to do classical nudes, and I don’t want to give up my art to be a Christian.”

### *Theme 3 – Expression*

“Sometimes my artwork isn’t as self-expressive as I want it to be, but maybe I’m just not there yet. Self-portraiture would be scary...you know, putting myself out there.”

#### *Theme 4 – Emotion*

“Art makes you think, it’s not just pretty...it can get you emotionally involved.

#### *Theme 5 – Support*

“I would not date a guy who wasn’t fully supportive of my art...I would like a husband who supported me. I think that’s all I would really need to be happy.”

### Critical Analysis of the Literature

This section will provide a critical analysis of the literature as it relates to the career decision making of college students in the arts.

From literature in human development, college student development, and career decision-making, we know that growth during the college years often involves important decisions about one’s future. For college students in the arts, Holland’s theory provides a theoretical and practical explanation of the Artistic personality and work environments. This is supported by researchers who identified a set of core personality characteristics associated with artistic interest and creativity (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Amabile, 1996.) For example, research on artists’ personality reveals they are often intrinsically motivated to pursue their art and value artistic expression over financial gains. Research on artists’ in the world of work reveals that they frequently face job instability and, when employed, earn less than most other professionals, even in higher education (Alper, 1996; Alper & Wassall, 2002). For career counselors, understanding the artistic personality and work is particularly important because despite the lack of jobs and low salary, college students continue to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees in the arts (Luftig et al., 2003).

#### *Gaps in the Literature*

As a population, college students in the arts have been neglected with regard to understanding of their decision-making experiences. Due to the current nature of education and employment in the arts, it is important to explore the experiences of these students, their thoughts about their profession, and plans for the future. Luftig et al. (2003) conducted a study on the career thoughts and outlook of college students in the arts. However, they were unable to find another study with which to compare their data, and noted the need for more research on pre-professionals in the arts. Specifically, there are no studies that have explored the actual experiences of career decision making among college students in the arts. The present study is the first to focus on the phenomenological perspective of the decision to pursue a major and

career in the visual arts. The present study is also the first to specifically explore the role of family and other important people in the student's life, with regard to his or her career decision making experiences. While the pilot study described earlier provided a general indication of five core themes associated with one student majoring in the visual arts, the specific nature of these themes, as well as the interaction among the themes needs further examination. Also, exploration of the five themes needs to be examined with a larger number of participants.

#### Definitions

The following terms are defined as they relate to the present study.

College major – may be completed at either a four year university or specialized school for the arts

Visual art – any non-performing artistic domain that focuses on the creation of artworks which are primarily visual in nature

Creativity- the mental process and insight involved with the contribution or change an individual makes within a domain or area of interest, such as art (Simonton, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Career decision making – the process an individual engages in when identifying and pursuing an occupation of interest

Sensitizing concepts- concepts derived from a review of relevant literature that provides focus in a qualitative study (Blumer, 1969).

## CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes a description of the research procedures used in this study. The areas addressed include the research question; research design and qualitative paradigm; assumptions and delimitations; sensitizing concepts; population studied; criteria and selection of participants; data collection; data analysis; and study limitations. The current study expands the pilot case study (Cooley, 2005), through a qualitative exploration of the career decision making experiences of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts. A total of eight college students participated in semi-structured interviews; four individuals beginning a major in visual arts (first or second year college students) and four individuals preparing to graduate from the visual arts department (fourth or fifth year college students).

### Research Question

What are significant experiences that contribute to the career decision making of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts?

### Research Design

This section will describe the research design utilized in the present study, including an overview of qualitative research and the phenomenological perspective; assumptions and delimitations; sensitizing concepts; credibility and trustworthiness; and an explanation of my experience with the topic.

This study explored the research question through qualitative methodology from a phenomenological perspective. I chose to conduct a qualitative exploration due to the phenomenological focus of the research question, and the lack of existing information related to the phenomena of interest. In order to contribute to knowledge, there is a need for exploration and understanding before variables or hypotheses can be identified. Therefore, the qualitative, phenomenological approach was utilized in this study to explore, gain understanding, and contribute to the development of a future quantitative study.

### *Qualitative Research*

There are three core themes in the design of qualitative research, which are reflected in the current study. These themes include naturalistic inquiry, emergent design flexibility, and

purposeful sampling. Naturalistic inquiry reflects the foundation of qualitative research in that research occurs in real-world settings and the phenomena of interest (individual, group of people, event, etc.) unfolds naturally. Emergent design flexibility allows the researcher to adapt the inquiry as understanding deepens and/or situations change. Accordingly, some aspects of this study were planned in advance and some were determined as the study evolved. This will be discussed further in this chapter. The third core theme in qualitative research is purposeful sampling, in which the researcher selects participants for study because they are useful for illuminating the phenomena of interest (Patton, 2002).

### *Phenomenological Perspective*

The philosophical tradition of phenomenology, or the study of how people describe things and experience them through their senses, emerged from the work of German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl's basic assumption of phenomenology was that human beings can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that stimulate our conscious awareness. In other words, we initially receive information about our experience with a phenomenon from our senses, but these sensory experiences must then be described and interpreted. Phenomenologists study the way in which we put together our experience in a way that shapes our worldview. Thus, according to the philosophy of phenomenology, there is no single, objective reality for people. There is only what they know about their experience and the meaning they attach to it.

The application of phenomenology as a research perspective in the social sciences is based on the work of Alfred Schutz (1899-1959). The purpose of phenomenological exploration in the social sciences is to grasp and interpret the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or a group of people. Instead of proving or disproving a hypothesis, research conducted from a phenomenological perspective often leads to new variables or questions for future research (Patton, 2002). It is important to clarify elements of phenomenological exploration that are often misunderstood in the literature (Patton, 2002). A study from a phenomenological perspective and a phenomenological study can be different explorations. A researcher can use a *phenomenological perspective* to illuminate the importance of gaining information and understanding about people's experience, without conducting a *phenomenological study* that focuses on the nature of shared experience (Patton, 2002). This is an important clarification for the present study; I did not intend to focus on the nature of "shared

experience” (Patton, 2002, p.106). Instead, for this study, the phenomenological perspective provided the framework for exploring the career decision making experiences of college students in the visual arts. This includes an exploration of the specific events that contributed to their experiences.

Research from a phenomenological perspective begins with determining if the research question is best examined using a phenomenological approach. The research question that best fits this framework is one in which the researcher seeks to understand several individuals’ experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In the present study, I determined that the phenomenological perspective was most appropriate fit for the research question: What are experiences that contribute to the career decision making of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts?

After determining there is a good fit between the research question and approach, the researcher identifies the phenomena of interest to be studied. The researcher also identifies a group of people who have experience with the phenomenon of interest as the population to be studied (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the identified phenomenon of interest is career decision making. The group of people in which this phenomenon was explored is college students who pursue a major in the visual arts.

The researcher then addresses the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology, such as the combination of objective reality and individual experiences. The researcher also brackets (or separates) his or her own experiences in order to fully explore how participants’ view the phenomenon. This is done through the researcher consciously reflecting upon his or her own experience with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Related to the present study, the assumptions of research from a phenomenological perspective, and reflection of my own experience with the phenomenon, are provided later in this section.

Data collection involves communication with individuals who have experiences the phenomenon of interest. This typically involves in-depth and audio recorded interviews with 5 to 25 participants (Creswell, 2007). During the interviews, participants are asked two broad, general questions related to: 1) what they have experienced in terms of the phenomenon and 2) what events or situations influenced their experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). In this study, elements of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) were used to inform the wording of the general interview questions (Flanagan, 1954). This interview approach elicits

information about the content and context (the “what” and “how”) of participant experience with the phenomenon, thereby providing a deeper understanding of these experiences. The researcher gathers information about the phenomenon itself, and the situational factors that influenced participants’ experience with the phenomenon. Additional open ended questions are often asked for the sake of elaboration and clarification (Creswell, 2007). In this study, additional questions were constructed based on the pilot case study (Cooley, 2005) and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

During the data collection process, the researcher may keep a journal of personal reflections regarding interactions with participants. In this study, I kept a journal of notes reflecting on the content and process of each interview. Additionally, email exchanges with participants were saved in a file to reflect upon. Participant interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and emailed to participants for their review. Participants were invited to clarify or elaborate upon any part of their interviews.

During data analysis, the researcher reads each interview transcript and highlights significant statements, which include sentences and quotes that provide an understanding of how each participant experiences the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The researcher then identifies themes that emerge by synthesizing information from these significant statements (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). These themes are used to create a description of the “what” and “how” of participants’ experience of the phenomenon; that is, what participants experienced and how they experienced it in terms of context and situation (Creswell, 2007). In the present study, the identified themes were grouped according to Specific Experiences, Perceived Benefits, and Difficulties and Challenges.

The researcher then writes a summary presenting the “essence” of the phenomenon, using the common experiences of participants (Creswell, 2007). This is usually a paragraph or two, and provides the reader with a sense that he or she understands what it is like for someone to experience that phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989). In this study, the common experience of career decision making that appeared to occur among most participants is presented. Following this summary, differences among participants’ experiences are presented along with possible explanations for these differences.

### *Assumptions*

The core assumptions of a qualitative, phenomenological approach include the following:

1. The purpose is to contribute to knowledge and theory through exploring and describing the subjective experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people.
2. Research designs are emergent rather than fixed.
3. Conducting research in the natural setting is the best way to achieve knowledge about phenomenon of interest.
4. There is not a single reality; perceptions of reality are different for each person and change over time.
5. Meaning is produced through perceptually putting pieces together.
6. The researcher's active role in data collection and analysis is valued as an important part of the research process. The researcher interacts with participants and actively works to minimize the distance between the two parties. This differs from quantitative research, where the researcher maintains objectivity in an effort to remain unbiased (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

### *Delimitations*

Delimitations imposed by the researcher to narrow the focus of this study included:

1. Research participants will only include individuals who are pursuing a college major in the visual arts; not the performing arts or other artistic discipline.
2. Research participants will include students entering the visual arts department (in their first or second year of college) and students preparing to graduate from the visual arts department within the year.

### *Sensitizing Concepts*

Sensitizing concepts are used in qualitative research to introduce preliminary concepts that can be refined throughout the study. According to Blumer (1969), "Whereas definitive concepts [hypotheses] provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look" (p. 148). Sensitizing concepts provide focus while allowing the researcher flexibility to include important concepts that emerge through data collection and analysis. This contrasts the quantitative, deductive approach, where hypotheses are created and variables identified before data collection begins. In qualitative research, the data are not

grouped according to predetermined categories. Instead, the researcher uses a process of inductive reasoning to identify potential themes as they emerge (Guba, 1978). Thus, sensitizing concepts are used to guide the research study. In the present study, sensitizing concepts were drawn from the relevant literature and themes identified in the pilot case study (Cooley, 2005). The sensitizing concepts used to guide this study include the following:

- 1) The decision to pursue a college major in the visual arts is a process that often begins with childhood involvement in the arts.
- 2) The decision to pursue a college major in the visual arts is influenced by significant life experiences and self-knowledge gained from such experiences.
- 3) The decision making experiences of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts are influenced by the involvement and opinions of people such as family, teachers, and peers.
- 4) College student in the arts experience self-doubt regarding their career decision making because of anticipated challenges associated with their career decisions.
- 5) Although they are intrinsically motivated, college students in the arts feel most inspired when they are part of a creative, supportive community.

#### Credibility and Trustworthiness

This section will explain the methods used to address credibility and trustworthiness in the present study. This includes a summary of my own experience related to this study, for the purpose of practicing reflexivity and to address possible researcher bias.

The terms credibility or trustworthiness are often used to describe validation in qualitative research. The credibility of qualitative research is dependent upon rigorous methods of data collection and analysis, credibility of the researcher, and the philosophical belief in the value of qualitative research (Patton, 2002). There are multiple perspectives regarding validation in qualitative research. Creswell's (2007) suggestions for documenting strategies used to verify credibility and trustworthiness were used in the present study. He recommends that researchers use at least two strategies for any given study (Creswell, 2007). The strategies used in this study include prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, clarifying researcher bias (or reflexivity), peer review, and member checking.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe prolonged engagement (spending sufficient time at the research site), and persistent observation (focusing in detail on the most relevant elements of the

study), as critical to trustworthiness. In this study, I practiced prolonged engagement and persistent observation initially by visiting the visual arts department to meet with the academic advisor. I also spent time observing students in between classes to gain an overall feel of the culture in the department. This engagement and observation continued through ongoing correspondence with participants before, during, and after their in-depth interviews. For example, if an important element in the study was not thoroughly addressed in the interview, I emailed the student to obtain more information. I also maintained contact with the academic advisor via email.

Triangulation of sources and methods (to provide corroborating evidence) was employed through my ongoing consultation with the academic advisor in the visual arts department. The advisor provided information about the culture of the art department that corroborated the insight I gained through the participant interviews. I also practiced triangulation by comparing students' emails to me with the information obtained during their interviews. Finally, I consulted with a long-time faculty member of the visual arts department about her general experience as an instructor.

Clarifying researcher bias was used by practicing reflexivity by acknowledging my own experience in the arts. This is presented in the following section. Additionally, I practiced ongoing reflection of my experience as the study progressed by keeping a journal. I wrote my initial reactions after each interview and the next day after reflecting upon the experience. I also reflected upon interview material that reminded me of my own experience in the arts, in order to be aware of my bias.

Peer review was provided by a mentor with knowledge and experience in qualitative research. This person is a psychologist who conducted a qualitative dissertation in graduate school, with an advisor who conducts qualitative research. She also published a book based on this research. This mentor served as a consultant to provide feedback regarding the data collection and analysis process.

The final strategy, member checking, involved soliciting participants' feedback. Participants were provided with interview transcripts and a summary of preliminary interpretations of the data. They were asked to give feedback or clarification as needed, along with any insights about preliminary interpretations.

### *Researcher's Experience*

In effort to limit researcher bias, it is important to practice reflexivity by addressing the experiences and values that I bring to this qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). This can be best explained in two parts: 1) my own experience with and appreciation for the arts and 2) my experience as a career advisor at a large undergraduate university. My own experience with the arts began long before I could speak. As a child, I memorized lyrics to the music my parents played in the house. Throughout my childhood I played the piano, but was more excited about singing. I went to an arts high school that specialized in music, dance, theatre, communications, and visual art. Although I loved my experience as a vocal music major, I did not plan to pursue my art as a career. I wanted to help people, and thought I would major in education or psychology. Many of my friends did have ambitions of pursuing their art in the future; however, few of them realized the difficulty of work in the arts. In addition, their parents were somewhat skeptical of their career ambitions. As we prepared to graduate high school I became increasingly aware of the difficulty they faced regarding career decision making.

During college I pursued a major in education and was involved with the music department in my spare time. My experience in education provided me with a developmental foundation that shaped my perspective about the ways human beings learn and grow over time. After college, while pursuing my master's degree in mental health counseling, I became involved with a peer career counseling program at the university. During my Ph.D. program I worked as a career advisor at the university career center. After a semester in this position I began to realize students that from the arts majors at the university did not utilize the services of the career center as often as those in other majors. I thought this was strange considering the career center's positive reputation, and the many arts majors at this university. It made me wonder if there was more we needed to know about these students and their career decision making in order to appropriately assist them.

With regard to the values I bring to this project, I believe that artists' contributions to our society are often overlooked. I believe that the statistics regarding lack of employment in the arts make it important to understand the career decision making experiences of individuals who continue to pursue a college major in the arts.

At the beginning of each interview I briefly shared my interest in the arts and in career advising. I expressed that the purpose of the study was to explore and gain understanding about

their career decision making experiences in the visual arts. This seemed to excite a few participants who expressed something like, “it’s about time someone paid attention to us.” Participants’ awareness of my interest in their career decision making and planning may have helped them speak more freely about their experiences. In addition, sharing my general interest in the arts may have also helped participants feel more comfortable in the interview experience.

### Population Studied

This section provides a description of the population studied. This includes an overview of purposeful sampling and participant criteria. The researcher identified the population to be studied as college students entering and completing a major in the visual art. This was informed by the research question presented earlier in the chapter.

#### *Purposeful Sampling*

In qualitative research, purposeful sampling involves selecting participants that will provide in-depth information about the experience of the phenomenon of interest. This is considered a valuable asset in qualitative research, whereas in quantitative research it would be considered a bias. This is because qualitative research places priority on gaining insight and understanding, rather than empirical generalizations, as in quantitative research (Creswell, 2007; Paton, 2002).

The credibility, meaningfulness, and insights that result from qualitative inquiry are more related to the richness of participants selected and analytical abilities of the researcher, than the sample size of the participant group. Accordingly, there are not specific guidelines for sample size in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). As described earlier, in conducting a study from a phenomenological perspective, Polkinghorne (1989) recommends that researchers interview between 5 and 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon of interest. In this study, purposeful sampling was used to identify eight participants; two groups of four individuals who meet certain criteria (Patton, 2002). These criteria will be discussed below.

#### *Participant Criteria*

In this study, participant criteria were that individuals must be entering the visual arts major, in their first or second year of college, or preparing to graduate from the major within the year. I identified four individuals for each of the two groups. These specifications are based on my interest in looking at the experiences of artists at different points in their career decision making and schooling. This will be beneficial for comparison during the discussion of results.

## Procedures

This section describes the procedures involved in this study, including participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. As explained earlier, this study was conducted using a phenomenological approach to explore the career decision making experiences of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts. The primary measure for gathering data was the semi structured, in-depth interview.

### *Participant Selection*

The population identified was college students in their first or second year and final year of pursuing a major in the visual arts. I contacted and arranged to meet with the undergraduate academic advisor in the Visual arts department at a large west coast university. The advisor suggested that participants would best be reached through email from the department listserv. I wrote an email and sent it to the advisor, who forwarded it to students. See Appendix F for the content of the email. The email explained students were invited to participate in a voluntary research project exploring the career decision making experience of college students in the visual arts. The email stated that students would receive an iTunes gift card for their participation in one 90 minute, in person interview, and follow up conversations via email. Initially the advisor sent the email only to first year and final year students, because I wanted to obtain the widest range of participants (related to time at the university). However, after a week, I received only one response from a first year student and eight responses from fourth and fifth year students. I consulted with the undergraduate advisor, who stated that most students do not enter the visual arts major until their second year. Therefore, I decided to invite second year students to participate as well. The advisor then sent the same email to these students. Within a day, I received four email responses from second year students.

I solidified participant involvement by emailing the students back to ask their specific year and availability to meet. Approximately five students who initially volunteered were ultimately unable to participate because of schedule conflicts. I informed the other students that participation would consist of one in person interview that would last approximately 90 minutes, and one to two follow up conversations via email or telephone. In this email, I also invited participants to call or email about initial questions they have about involvement in the project.

### *Data Collection*

The interviews were conducted in my office, located in the building next to the visual arts

department. The university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the use verbal consent. This was done at the beginning of the interview by the participants reading the letter of consent and deciding to continue or discontinue their participation. Participants were also invited to ask questions if indicated. The verbal consent script is included in Appendix B. After consent was obtained, participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire to provide information including name, age, hometown, year in college, specialization within the visual arts, and career aspirations. This information is provided in Appendix E and the narrative description of each participant in the Results section.

### *Measures*

The primary measure used to collect data in this study was the semi structured, in-depth interview. An interview guide was created to provide a standardized framework for each interview (Patton, 2002). The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed room for additional open-ended questions to be asked as the interview progressed. Moustakas's (1994) recommendations were used to inform the phenomenological focus the interview. This provided a foundation for the interview guide by focusing on two general areas: 1) what the participant experienced in terms of the phenomenon; and 2) what situations or contexts influenced his or her experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

The interviews were structured using principals of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954). This approach was used to elicit specific information about participants' behaviors related to experiences with the phenomenon of interest, as well as their feelings associated with such experiences. Critical incidents are identified as specific experiences, epiphanies, or transition points in a person's life. The CIT provides a flexible set of procedures for researchers to gain information about behaviors. Patton (2002) explains that the CIT is useful in qualitative inquiry because the specific incident provides a descriptive unit of analysis. The CIT was originally designed to provide a "systematic way to gather specific incidents of effective and ineffective behavior with respect to a designated activity" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 328). The technique emerged from research in occupational behavior, where the focus was creating procedures for employee selection and training, classification of job positions, and evaluation of job performance. Over time, the CIT became a method of observing and categorizing human behavior in order to solve problems and develop psychological principals (Flanagan, 1954).

For the purpose of this study, the CIT was used to elicit information about experiences that have contributed participants' career decision making experiences and overall development as an artist. I first asked participants to identify three "positive" experiences in his or her experience as an artist. Next, I asked participants to identify three "negative" experiences in his or her development as an artist. Participants were asked to describe the experiences in detail, including what happened before, during, and after. Follow-up questions were used for further exploration or to elicit elaboration as the interviews evolved. These questions were created from the literature review and pilot case study (Cooley, 2005), related to the research question. Examples of such questions or topics are listed below.

- When did you know you wanted to pursue a major in the arts?
- How did you know you wanted to pursue a major in the arts?
- How have important people in your life responded to your decision to pursue a major in the arts?
- What challenges have you faced as a result of your decision?
- How have you coped with these challenges?
- What motivates you to continue pursuing your art?

#### *Treatment of the Data*

Each interview was digitally audio-recorded. After each interview, I wrote down the major themes that emerged from the interview. Additionally, I kept a journal of initial impressions and reactions to each interview and participant interaction. The interviews were transcribed by a transcription agency. I was in communication with the owner of the agency throughout the transcription process to ensure appropriate treatment of the data. A confidentiality statement from the transcription agency is included in Appendix C. The audio-recordings and paper transcripts were kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office. The electronic transcripts were stored in a password protected file, on a computer only accessible to me. I emailed each participant a copy of his or her transcribed interview. Participants were instructed to review the interview transcripts for accuracy, to clarify any statements and/or add information as needed. Participants emailed back to confirm that they read the transcript. If they provided clarification or elaboration, participants also emailed this version of the transcript.

In this email, I also briefly shared some preliminary impressions of the data and asked participants for their input. I also reminded participants that I would be emailing them follow up

questions as the research project progressed. All participants emailed back and stated that they welcomed the follow-up questions. Examples of these questions included clarifying a participant's parents' occupations, and whether another participant had siblings. Finally, I offered participants a follow up meeting if they had additional questions or comments. Two participants expressed interest in following up for help with job search strategies and writing a resume. After the project was concluded, I met with these two participants separately and provided them with direction and resources.

### *Data Analysis*

The following steps were used to analyze the data:

1. I read through each interview transcript to gain a sense of each participant's experience with the phenomenon of interest (career decision making) and general themes that emerged from each interview.
2. Biographic/demographic information on each participant was compiled into a biographic summary, highlighting themes from each participant's interview.
3. The raw data was condensed by eliminating text from each interview transcript that was not relevant to the research concerns (e.g. participants' discussing the weather or their plans for the weekend).
4. The relevant text from interview transcripts was reviewed again to identify significant statements, consisting of sentences or quotes that provide information about the content and context of participants' experience with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).
5. Themes that emerged from the significant statements were recorded, compiled, and analyzed, with particular focus on:
  - a. The experiences that influence participants' career decision making.
  - b. The role of family, teachers, and peers on participants' experience of career decision making.
  - c. The positive and negative experiences associated with participants' career decision making.
  - d. The sources of motivation that facilitate participants' experience of career decision making.

6. Themes were grouped according to meaning and labeled Significant Experiences, Perceived Benefits and Difficulties and Challenges.
7. A summary of the common experience of career decision making that appeared to occur among the participants was written.
8. Thematic differences were examined according to participants' year in college and other demographic information.
9. Suggestions were made regarding areas for further investigation.
10. Suggestions were made regarding the application of this research to the field of career services and future quantitative studies.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### *Overview*

This chapter includes biographical descriptions of each participant and a brief summary of the themes that emerged from each interview. This is followed by an overview of the themes that were consistent across interviews. Three to five interview quotes are provided for each theme. Thematic material is presented as it relates to the primary research question. This question is the following: What are experiences that contribute to the career decision making of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts? Finally, a summary of the common experience of career decision making that appeared to occur among the individuals is described.

In the course of this study, I interviewed eight college students pursuing a major in the visual arts about the experiences that have contributed to their career decision making. Four participants were students entering the visual arts major (in their first or second year of college), and four participants were students preparing to graduate at the end of the year. Chapter Four contains the findings of this study. The Results section is intended to be a presentation of participants' statements during their interviews. Interpretation and further analysis of participant responses, including comparison between the two groups of participants, are presented in the Discussion section (Chapter Five).

#### Participant Biographies

This section contains a brief biographical description of each participant; including general demographic information, year in college and specific program of study, career aspirations, and a summary of prominent themes that emerged from each participant's interviews. This information is reported below in narrative form and illustrated in Tables 3 and 4 at the end of this section. The four participants entering the visual arts major are identified as Group 1 and are described first, followed by the four participants identified as Group 2. All names used in reporting the data are fictitious to protect participant's confidentiality. Only identifying information that is not crucial to the substance of this study was changed to protect anonymity. For example, if a participant mentioned the name of the university, this was omitted and replaced with [the university].

*Group 1- first or second year students*

*Jenny*

Jenny is a 20 year old female, who self-identifies as Asian-American. She is currently a second year college student, entering the visual arts department with a focus in media. Her career aspirations include “possibly a film director, advertising, or working with design/graphics.”

Jenny grew up in Southern California and has one older sister who is a college student in the Midwest. Her mother and father both work in upper administration for large corporations.

Jenny reports she was very creative as a child. She began ballet classes at a young age but reports she never wanted to study ballet professionally and thought of it as more of a hobby. Her dance training made her realized that she will always need some kind of “creative outlet” in her life. Jenny also recalls she was very drawn to fantasy as a child, both in books and movies. She had an active imagination and enjoyed thinking about “what things could be like.”

Jenny describes her family as very close. She expresses wanting to please her parents and receive their approval regarding life and career decisions. Though she describes her parents as supportive, she also reveals hesitancy about sharing her true career goals for fear they will disapprove. She expresses worrying they will ask “What are you going to do with it [visual art major]...be a starving artist?” She has decided that she won’t “drop the bomb” about possibly wanting to go into the film industry until she is certain. Jenny reports that she has an uncle who is a successful Hollywood stunt man. She says that witnessing his success in the film industry gives her hope and motivation to pursue her real career aspirations.

Jenny knew when she entered college that she did not want to major in science or engineering, but was indecisive about what she did want to study. Jenny recalls looking at the visual arts department website early in her first year but thinking, “Oh, I don’t want to major in art. That seems a little too out there.” She says, “Visual art was always something that kind of interested me but I didn’t really think I could ever make anything out of it so I didn’t want to major in it.” She changed her major four times during her first year of college because she felt like she felt pressure to major in something like political science, communications or international relations. She describes her experience in classes for those majors as “boring and safe.” She enrolled in a visual arts course, and recalls feeling excited and challenged for the first time in college; shortly after she changed her major to visual arts.

### *Joanna*

Joanna is a 19 year old female, who self-identifies as Russian-American. She moved to Northern California from Russia with her parents and grandparents when she was eight years old. She is a first year college student, entering the visual arts department with a focus in studio art. Her career aspirations include being an “artist.” Her father is an architect and her mother is a computer programmer. Joanna is an only child but reports she grew up around a lot of extended family who also emigrated from Russia. She describes feeling like she has siblings because she grew up with children whose families also emigrated from Russia at the same time as her own.

Joanna reports that she was enrolled in art classes as a young child. In high school, she realized that her talent might actually be more than a hobby. She recalls the experience of working on a mural with other students and being encouraged by the positive feedback they received. Soon after, her individual artwork was recognized through an art class she took outside of school. To her surprise, she received encouragement from critics while showing her work through the art academy.

Joanna chose to attend a four year university because she was also eager to move away from home, and wanted her parents’ approval about the type of education she sought. She anticipated they would not support her if she decided to pursue her education at an art school. Joanna describes her family as “really close but really unsupportive” of her decision to major in visual art. She describes herself as the “oddball of the family.” She says, “Everyone is good at math and science in my family...like, if my dog could do math he would.” She explains that she was always a good student but, “I don’t understand certain things, like when my parents want to try to explain these concepts to me, it just doesn’t make sense. So they get really frustrated, and then I get frustrated.” She reports that even though her family knows she is studying art, they still ask about any math or science classes she might take. Joanna says that although this is difficult, she finds support from her peers who encourage her to keep pursuing her art. She also finds motivation through working on projects that she feels “give something back to society” such as her first film, about Russian immigrants.

### *Oscar*

Oscar is a 19 year old male, who self-identifies as Hispanic. He is currently a second year student, entering the visual arts department with a focus in media. His career aspirations include “video editor/producer in a reputable company.” Oscar grew up in Southern California and has

four older siblings. He reports he is the first person in his family to pursue a college education. He expresses pride when sharing that his father worked a sanitation worker for 30 years after emigrating from Mexico. His mother works in packaging for a candy company.

Oscar recalls wanting to be a civil engineer since he was a child. However, the summer before his senior year of high school he changed his mind. At an orientation for the engineering department at the university he planned to attend, he reported feeling “a weird vibe that it wasn’t where I was supposed to be.” He didn’t feel a connection with the faculty and was “drawn away from that field.” Instead, he spent the summer in an interactive media course at the local community college. He enjoyed the course because he felt “naturally talented in it” and decided to pursue interactive design in college. He also enjoyed the involvement of the teachers, which motivated him to be invested in the coursework.

Oscar reports that his family is close and his older siblings all “do very well for themselves even though they didn’t go to college.” He says his parents have been supportive through the change in his college and career plans. Oscar says he is enjoying his major but has been disappointed by the lack of student involvement within the visual arts department. He feels there is not a sense of community at the university or in the department. He shares that this has been difficult for him to adjust to since entering college. However, he reports putting effort toward creating a sense of an art school community in other ways.

### *Mark*

Mark is an 18 year old male, who self-identifies as Asian-American. He is a first year college student, entering the visual arts department with a focus in Interdisciplinary Computing and the Arts (ICAM). His career aspirations include working at “Pixar Studios.” Mark grew up in Northern California and has one younger sister, who is a high school student. His mother is a project manager for a large corporation and his father is a lawyer. Mark’s parents divorced when he was nine years old. He reports that he and his sister became each other’s primary sources of emotional support. After their parents’ divorce, Mark and his sister moved every three to four days to spend equal time with their mom and dad. He describes the experience as feeling like “you always have to be changing your lifestyle back and forth.” He says this is one major thing he was excited to leave behind when he went to college.

Mark identifies his sister as the “artistic one in the family.” He says he never considered himself particularly artistic or creative until a few years ago. His parents enrolled his sister in art

classes growing up, while Mark mostly succeeded in academics and basketball. He planned to study engineering in college because “I’d always been good at physics and calculus.” However, after taking a summer course at an art academy, and being voted “best in class,” he was inspired to further explore his creativity. His interest was solidified when his Dad shared his experience after a behind the scenes tour at Pixar studios. Mark says that having family members who work at Pixar gives him hope for the future.

Mark describes his parents as “not the kind of typical Chinese immigrant parents who tell you what to do and what not to do. They’ve been pretty hands off with my life.” Mark says his father told him to always “keep my doors open, my options open.” After Mark earned high SAT scores and was accepted into top universities, his Dad believed that Mark earned the “right to make whatever decision I wanted to make with regard to my future.” This empowered Mark to choose the university because of the art department, rather than a more prestigious school to which he was accepted. His mother is not as supportive as his father. He reports that she says, “Well, you really should get a general computer science degree because you can always do something with that.”

Mark shares that his faith in God helps him feel confident in his decisions. In addition, close friends from childhood often provide him with the perspective of “do whatever you want to do, don’t worry so much about the consequences.” He says this is encouraging to hear because he does worry about his mother’s comments, and the reality of work in the arts. He says that he knows he is “going to have to work hard to succeed in computing in the arts,” but that even small improvement in a project keeps him motivated. In addition, he expresses that his classes challenge him in a way that science and math never did.

*Group 2- fourth or fifth year students, preparing to graduate*

*Keri*

Keri is a 21 year old female, who self-identifies as Caucasian. She is a fourth year college student, pursuing a major in the visual arts department with a focus in art history/criticism. She is also pursuing a major in cultural anthropology. She plans to graduate in spring 2007. Her career aspirations include “possibly a Ph.D. in art history.” Keri grew up Southern California with her parents and younger sister who is currently a first year college student. Her mother is an interior designer and her father is an aerospace engineer. Keri describes her father as “really, really smart.”

As a child, Keri wanted to be an artist when she grew up. She was inspired by her grandmother who was very artistic and taught Keri how to paint, bead, and do embroidery. Keri also learned the value of creativity from her parents, whom she describes as “do it yourselfers who hate paying people to do things,” so they build and paint their own furniture. Keri describes her creativity as something she has currently put aside while she finishes college. She admits this may partially be because she is not as confident in her artistic ability as when she was younger.

Keri is very close with her mother and says “she would support me in anything I do.” Keri says she was a “Daddy’s girl,” who was close to her father until high school, when she began struggling in science and math classes. She recalls this changed their relationship dramatically; Keri felt she lost her father’s approval because she could not succeed in science. Furthermore, she says she gave up trying in science because of frustration, which distanced her father even more. She reports that her high school art history class was the first empowering experience she had in school. Although it was one of the most challenging courses, she recalls feeling inspired to work hard because she loved the material and the teacher.

Since choosing a major in the visual arts, Keri says she has felt “naturally good at something” for the first time in her life. She senses that her father wishes she had chosen a different major, which makes her “obsessed with trying to make him proud of me.” This has influenced her planning for after graduation because she still wants to make decisions that will earn her father’s approval. She says her decision making is further hindered because of the lack of guidance from her department related to career planning. She recalls especially noticing this after returning from studying abroad. Before leaving the country, Keri was a member of the university tennis team, which provided her with a sense of community. It was not until she returned from abroad, and was no longer on the tennis team, that she realized the lack of community within her major.

### *Lenny*

Lenny is a 23 year old male, who self-identifies as Swedish and Mexican-American. He is a fifth year college student, pursuing a major in the visual arts department with a focus in studio art. He plans to graduate in winter 2008. His career aspirations include “comics and animation.” Lenny grew up in Southern California with his parents and younger brother. His mother is a consultant at a special education school and his father is a retired firefighter. His brother is a college student.

Lenny reports that as a child, his parents encouraged creativity by enrolling him in a school with a philosophy of “alternative education.” From kindergarten through eighth grade he attended this school, which had very small classes and valued self-directed learning. He says he liked his friends there, but recalls feeling out of place with teachers. In this environment where creativity was encouraged, he felt conflicted between what they wanted him to do with his art and what he wanted to do with it.

A high school internship at the Cartoon Network solidified Lenny’s ambition of pursuing art as a career. However, his mom was not supportive of this idea. He recalls she took him to several education and career counselors throughout high school to convince him that pursuing art was not realistic. He describes applying to college as a “battle” because he and his mom “constantly butted heads.” He reports she wanted him to study biology and said “it would be such a waste if you didn’t do something with science.”

In retrospect he thinks that the university “wasn’t the best choice for me,” but that it was a good compromise with his mom. When he came to college he declared biology as a major and then switched to business, both of which made his mom happy. He recalls not being able to tolerate these majors for very long. After consulting with an advisor at the career services office he changed his major again to visual arts, which is what he wanted to study all along. He enjoys his major but has been disappointed by the department because it is “very theory based” and his artistic style is “much more free flowing.”

### *Lisa*

Lisa is a 22 year old female who self-identifies as Caucasian. She is a fourth year college student, pursuing a major in the visual arts with a focus in media. She plans to graduate in spring 2007. Her career ambitions include the “photographic arts and international media.” Lisa grew up in Northern California with her parents. Her mom works in business and her dad is a former broadcaster who is now a teacher.

Lisa reports that she was interested in art at a young age and admired her Dad’s ability to draw. She says she didn’t have confidence in her own artistic ability until she was encouraged by a school assignment. However, Lisa describes her mom as “very black or white, not an artist in any capacity.” This led to tension between them as Lisa got older because her mother did not understand Lisa’s desire to pursue art in college. Consequently, Lisa initially majored in international relations but felt bored and unfulfilled. She made the difficult decision to declare

visual art as her major, which caused conflict with her mom because she “just doesn’t get it.” Lisa says her Dad often acts as a buffer “when things get to be too much with my mom.” She says he is very “emotionally supportive” because he understands the importance of “pursuing something I am passionate about.”

Lisa says her Dad’s support is very important, especially because as a visual art major she often has not felt valued as a part of the university. She says she works harder than most students she knows, but people still make comments such as “Oh, you’re an art major. What do you do all day?” These comments and assumptions that “art is not a real major” used to bother Lisa a lot. However, after studying abroad in South Africa last year, and filming her experience for a documentary, Lisa is no longer upset by people who do not understand the passion behind her art. The people she collaborated with in South Africa and her experience of the culture changed her perspective about her future. She says she is now more confident that hard work and being open to new experiences will continue to bring her new opportunities. This confidence and her evolving identity as an artist are what keep her motivated in the face of challenges.

### *Ted*

Ted is a 28 year old male, who self-identifies as Caucasian. He is a transfer student, in his fifth year pursuing a major in the visual arts with a focus in studio art. He plans to graduate in winter 2008. His career aspirations include “artist and professor of visual arts.” Ted grew up in Southern California and is an only child. His mother works in a photography lab and his father is a mail carrier. Both of his parents are also musicians so Ted grew up with the arts.

As a child, Ted says he spent a lot of time drawing. He says his parents and family friends encouraged his artistic ability. In high school he began to consider pursuing art as a career. He enrolled in community college but was disappointed by his experience in the art courses, and began taking courses toward a major in psychology. He says he was interested in, but not inspired by, his psychology courses. After transferring to the university, he took an art course and was inspired by the professor he now considers a mentor. He says “if I hadn’t found that mentor I would probably still be a psychology major, in a lab killing mice or something.”

His family has been supportive of his decision to pursue art as a career. Ted believes this is because they are used to him doing what he wants and not caring what other people think. Ted says he thinks a lot, sometimes “compulsively,” because endless possibilities excite him. He enjoys the process of creating and hates feeling bored and unchallenged. He says his professors

have had the greatest influence on his experience in his department. However, he notices that many of his peers lack awareness of what they need to do to further their career as new artists. He says if he hadn't taken the initiative to develop relationships with professors and teaching assistants, he might feel similar to his peers.

Tables 4 and 5 summarize the demographic information of participants included above.

Table 4  
Participant Summary

Name (Gender)	Age	Ethnicity	Yr. in College	Career Aspirations
Jenny (F)	20	Asian American/Caucasian	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Film Director/Advertising
Joanna (F)	19	Russian-American	1 <sup>st</sup>	Artist
Oscar (M)	19	Hispanic	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Video Editor/Producer
Mark (M)	18	Asian American	1 <sup>st</sup>	Computer Animator
Keri (F)	21	Caucasian	4 <sup>th</sup>	Art History Professor
Lenny (M)	23	Swedish/Mexican-American	5 <sup>th</sup>	Cartoon Illustrator
Lisa (F)	22	Caucasian	4 <sup>th</sup>	International Photographer
Ted (M)	28	Caucasian	5 <sup>th</sup>	Artist/Visual Arts Professor

Table 5  
Participant, Mother's Occupation, & Father's Occupation

Participant	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation
Jenny	Administrator	Administrator
Joanna	Computer Programmer	Architect
Oscar	Packager	Sanitation Worker
Mark	Project Manager	Lawyer
Keri	Interior Designer	Aerospace Engineer
Lenny	Educational Consultant	Firefighter
Lisa	Business Manager	Broadcaster/Teacher
Ted	Photography Technician	Mail Carrier

### Common Themes

The remainder of this chapter includes a description of the significant themes that emerged across participant interviews. As described in Chapter Three, sensitizing concepts were used to guide data analysis. Significant statements, including quotes about participants' experience of career decision making were selected from interview transcripts. From these statements, common themes were identified. These themes were grouped according to meaning

and labeled Specific Experiences, Difficulties and Challenges, and Perceived Benefits; they are presented below. Differences in thematic material between participant groups 1 and 2 (those entering the major and those preparing to graduate) are explored in Chapter Five.

Thematic material is presented as it relates to the primary research question: What are experiences that contribute to the career decision making of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts? The common themes are presented to depict participants' actual experiences, and the characteristics and context involved with their experience of the phenomenon of career decision making. As explained in Chapter Three, this provides information about the "what" and the "how" of participants' experience, thus leading to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest. For theme presented, I will include three to five quotes that represent what most participants reported. Several quotes are included for each theme to provide the reader with a sense of how different individuals in the study articulated the important themes. Finally, an overview of the common experience of career decision making that appeared to occur among the individuals will be presented.

### *Specific Experiences*

In discussing experiences that impacted participants' decision to pursue a major and career in the visual arts, individuals mentioned themes related to childhood artistic/creative development, teachers and mentors, being part of a creative community, and considering a career path unrelated to art.

*Childhood artistic/creative development.* Six out of eight participants reflected upon early artistic development as something that played an important role in their current self-awareness and career decision making. Participant's artistic/creative development at an early age varied from taking formal art classes, to being introduced to art by a family member, to discovering his or her own talent.

As Lenny states:

I guess it's [art] kind of been my thing forever, ever since I was a little kid. Maybe from the time that I was, I don't know, three years old or something, I had a need to express myself by drawing. Not that it was any good or anything; it's three-year-old drawings, but I would just – apparently, for a while my mom had to carry pen and paper around, because I'd just say, "Mom, I want to draw".

Ted recalls:

I spent a lot of time as a kid drawing. It was like one of the first things I learned how to do actually, and it was encouraged by friends and family. And my mom's good friend. They were like best friends at the time. They still are, I guess, but yeah, she would baby sit me, and she'd like draw a line, and then I would make something out of that line too, and then she'd continue, and then we'd keep going like that, and there was like a process that came about, and it – I think that really had something to do with it.

Keri recalls her childhood aspirations of becoming an artist:

I always liked art when I was little, and like I wanted to be an artist when I was younger. I just was really like into arts and crafty things, like real dorky like that and like beading, and my grandma painted a lot and so like I used to do arts and crafts with her and do like – she taught me how to do embroidery and things like that.

She went on to say that the experiences with her grandmother instilled a sense of self-confidence and self-awareness:

I think I just liked painting. I don't know if I was ever very good at it or anything like that. I just liked it, and I remember we had to do for like – it was like a first grade project maybe, or it was first or third grade. You had to make like your folder that has all your stuff in it for that year, and you have to put on it like what you want to be when you grow up, and mine was like... a picture of me being an artist and like painting something.

Lisa describes how a school assignment contributed to her artistic development:

We had this exercise in an English class where you had to write – or the teacher would look up what your name meant and then you had to write a whole entry or paper or whatever it was on whether or not you felt your name suited you and whether or not you – your personality went with what your name really came from, and mine means “artist”, and at the time, I said, “Absolutely not. I'm no artist. This is ridiculous.”, and it's funny because that was the same year I started painting, and that was the same year I started taking pictures, and – yeah.

She continued to explain the impact of this development and how it contributed to her self-awareness:

It was a big year of my life, and my mom looks back at that, and I had found the paper later about it and read it out loud, and my mom started laughing and she goes, “I really didn't know you were either until I saw that first painting that you did.”. It was a pair of ballet shoes. I don't know why. I just did it. I was home from school for like a week and sick, and I just painted, and she goes – she said to me, “From then, I knew. You just had this thing”

Joanna conveys that her artistic development as a child was fostered outside of her family:

I'm like the oddball in my family. When I was younger I wasn't sure what was going on or why I felt that way from my family. I went to art school...my like elementary school was an art school. So we did piano, singing, choir, art, photography, like the whole humanities just all in one, and I just remember like coming home and just pulling out my like pieces of paper and like drawing for fun even after school, and that definitely had like an effect on me for sure, just influenced me to appreciate art because I know a lot of people don't understand it per se and then therefore don't appreciate it.

In sum, participants shared that their artistic/creative development during childhood contributed to their decision to pursue a college major in visual art. These early experiences provided self-awareness that participants used when making a decision about their college major.

*Teachers and mentors.* Six out of eight participants identified experiences with teachers and mentors as having a significant contribution to their career-decision making and overall development as an artist. For some participants, these teachers or mentors were the first to notice their artistic ability or potential. For others, these teachers or mentors served as allies who validated and encouraged participants' artistic ability and development as an artist. These allies were especially important when some participants doubted their ability to succeed in the arts.

Mark explains that he didn't realize his own artistic ability until a summer course where he received attention from the instructor. He recalls:

A couple of years back, my friend wanted to take a class at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, and this was a summer arts program and he said he wanted me to take it with him. So, I said, "All right. That sounds cool". So, we took Intro to 3D Modeling and Video Game Design. I found out that I really enjoyed just modeling on the computer and it was pretty fun...the teacher gave us specific projects, which my friend and I totally passed with flying colors and our final project was pretty cool...I remember getting a Best in Class. That made my day.

Oscar had a similar experience when he participated in media arts courses, instead of a summer engineering program he planned to attend in preparation for studying engineering in college. He recalls the role his instructors played in his realization that he wanted to pursue art:

I kind of felt like, yeah, this is the arts, particularly working with media, and particularly the video editing, music editing. So, I don't know, I felt this natural tendency to kind of just want to pursue this. It took quite a while to kind of come to that realization...after just kind of working with the [media] programs, I started getting some attention from my instructors. I think that's what really kind of made me come to that realization, just the fact that I had instructors that noticed in a sense, but I wasn't sure of myself at that moment. I think it was the instructors that I had in those particular courses, in the visual

arts courses, that were really motivating and they were saying they found that natural talent.

Ted remembers doubting his motivation to pursue art after not feeling inspired by art classes at a community college:

I was always interested in doing something with art. When I went to community college, that was my original choice, but the classes there actually didn't inspire me so much, and I ended up switching to psychology, and then I transferred down here, and I still wanted to do something with art. So...I was going to minor in art, and then I took a course in it, and it kind of – it opened my eyes up to – I got lucky. It was my professor, Professor McConnell. He showed us a broad range of things that had to do with art that I didn't really know about, and as soon as I saw that, my interest came alive again, and I was going to double major, and then I just wanted to teach art.

Keri describes a teacher who influenced her decision making:

I loved my high school art history teacher. I loved the class so much and we had so much fun in the class, like all the students, we all like learned together, and even for our tests, we like would study with really like weird acronyms and pseudonyms to like memorize different artists and like paintings and stuff like that, and it was just something I found that I was like good at without trying hard.

She went on to explain that his expectations and high standards were motivating to her:

He expected a lot out of you...he taught at a – I think a higher level than a lot of my other high school classes were, and I had a lot of respect for him because he seemed really smart at the time, like I have no idea how – what his education is now, but he seemed to really know his stuff and he made it interesting, and I liked the way he could take something like a painting or a sculpture and make you look at it like a different way. By the way he explained it, it made you see things that you wouldn't see by yourself.

Joanna also expresses that a mentor's high expectations motivated her:

I haven't had like one specific mentor, but I had a few, like my art teacher in my – for like ten years when I was younger. She was definitely like amazing. She pushed me to do things that I thought I couldn't even do, like paint at an advanced level, and she had levels of art classes, and I was always like this little 10 year old with all the 20 year olds who are advanced, and like that really like helped me out because I could see that – not that I was better than they are because you can't really judge it that way, but if I had the passion, then I would definitely – it would drive me in the future.

*Being part of a creative community.* Five out of eight participants described experiences of being part of a community where their creativity was fostered, often through collaboration with others. Lisa recalls that her experience abroad was particularly inspiring because of the community of people she worked with:

Studying abroad in South Africa was a great experience. I was working for an NBC show and filming my experience there and taking pictures for this big show about studying abroad, which was really amazing. I got to work with, again, great people, and the difference was immediate, something that I love, something that I was passionate about just – I saw that difference just getting your creative juices flowing, really being able to think about things and contemplate things, and it was a really great time to be able to do that. So that's been huge for me.

She also notes the contrast between her experience of community before and during her time abroad, and the impact this had on her:

...especially because before I left I was so frustrated with kind of this college, walls of gray mentality and being pushed in a certain direction by a university style art department, and then being there and having that freedom was a big, huge thing.

Joanna explains:

Well...I painted this mural at my high school that meant a lot to me. It was like dedicated to someone really special...and it was like a really small group of people working on it, and we got to decide everything and paint – do everything ourselves, and I was a major part of that. It was exhilarating, absolutely like amazing because, first of all, working in a group...just working together like in the same like space, almost like one on top of the other, was just so amazing. Just thinking back...If I didn't have that experience, I don't even know where I'd be.

She also describes currently being part of a community of artists who are collaborating to make a documentary film:

Now, I'm filming a movie...it's like part of Citizen Film Productions. It's for the Jewish Film Festival in San Francisco – well, I guess everywhere, and it's about Russian Jewish immigrant kids and their relationships with their grandparents, and I'm basically like filming, writing, directing, everything, and it's really interesting just to have like a different side of like the arts spectrum, and that's really making me reevaluate things. I learned so much in like an hour of doing interviews or an hour of filming...I do have a good time – doing it with my friends, and we just hang out and then like we get things done, and it's a lot of work.

Ted explains that when working on a project, being part of a community of artists keeps his creative momentum going:

... it's helped to have like other people, like I try to make a lot of artist friends because everybody's perception is different, and I mean, ultimately, it's always up to you, and you should rely on that, but like you need other people's perspective because you get too trapped in your own world like to figure anything else out I probably would keep doing it even if I didn't know any other artists, but it definitely does help because I like seeing what other people are doing, and it's encouraging just to see what other people are doing, and it's like a revival too of like the spirit inside it. You just see something else that

somebody's doing, and so I mean, like part of it is, I guess, going and looking at other people's art too.

In summary, participants expressed the importance of experiences in which they were part of a creative community. While some participants mentioned the collaborative aspect of community, others focused on the community as an important source of feedback and encouragement.

*Considering a career path without art.* Six out of eight participants recalled negotiating with themselves, through considering a major and career path not involving art. For some this was expressed in the form of initially exploring other majors, either to please their parents or in response to their own uncertainty, and later realizing they wanted to study art from the beginning. For others who already were pursuing an art major, there was a sense that they also negotiated with themselves by anticipating they would change their minds or need a back up plan.

Jenny recalls that, early in her first year, she was excited about majoring in art, but spent the year trying out four other majors:

Well, my first year, which was last year...I recalled actually just looking on line at the vis arts web site just to get a better feel for what [the university] had to offer other than biology, physics, the sciences and the engineering, because I knew I didn't want to go into that area...Then what happened was I thought, "Oh, I don't want to major in art. That seems a little too out there". So, I actually started out – I was Communication, International Studies – all different. I changed my major four times in my first year. I didn't really think I could ever make anything out of it [art] so I didn't want to major in it, but then I looked through like curious and I browsed through the whole array of, I guess, career options I would have. It seemed to pretty much apply to what I thought I might want to do. So, I took a class and I liked it so much better than this other class I was taking for my major that I just changed. I'd thought communication would kind of give me a happy balance between the two...advertisement and journalism...without having to be Vis Arts, so I'd get communication instead of, I guess, just art. Then I didn't really like the class.

Lenny explains his mother's opinion contributed to his experience of negotiating:

When I first changed my major, it was science, so she [Mom] supported it. When I changed my major again, it was business. She supported it. I changed my major to art, and she said "At least get a minor in some kind of a science.", and so I sort of looked into that, but it never really happened. So, I kind of did a lot of sort of soul searching...talked to advisors, department advisors, and it was all actually really helpful just to kind of remind me of what I wanted to do in the first place because I felt so lost. I realized that art was really what I want to do...So, I just went to a Studio Art Major.

Lisa recalls how difficult life felt when she wasn't pursuing what she really wanted to study:

I realized it's something I would be doing on the side anyway and diverting so much energy and attention to that that it's something I'd rather concentrate on and apply my other gifts and skills to that. And, while that might be scary in terms of career objectives, it's fun and I'm really loving it. So it's been a blessing and a huge opportunity for me. I look at who I am now, and I look at the way that I can see myself being happy in any situation as long as I am doing what I really feel like I need and want to be doing, and I look at the times that I've spent in those jobs that were so menial and almost absurd to me, and that – and not utilizing the skills that I really want to be using, and I realize how much more – I don't want to say dark, but I look back on those times, and it's kind of a dark period in my own history, and I really look at my unhappiness in that situation and the depression in that situation, and that's something I never want to go back to and that I'm really glad to have escaped it.

Joanna shares that, although she entered college as an art major, she tried to live without art by leaving all of her art supplies at home, nine hours away:

When I just came to [the university] last quarter, I didn't bring any of my art stuff – at all – because I was like, “Well, I know I'm in the art major, but maybe it'll pass. Maybe I'll find something really cool that I like.” Well, it didn't pass, and like this quarter when I went back, I brought everything. I tried to live without it but, well, I just had like a yearning... it's my release, and when I do get frustrated, like I know what other people do, they go to the gym. I don't. I'll go and like draw a picture or something, and I didn't have that, and I bought a lot of stuff here too because I couldn't live without my paper and pencils and all that.

Mark explains:

It's kind of weird that I'm going into arts because it seems to me like I would fit in the, I don't know, an engineering major, but I'm kind of like, “Do I really want to do that?”...I don't really see myself...If this [art] falls through, I may have to go through that. I don't know, it seems to me like art is such a hit-or-miss kind of field.

Thus, some participants negotiated by actively pursuing majors other than art, which was their primary interest. Others seemed to passively negotiate with themselves by not getting too attached to the idea of pursuing art and imagining a back up plan. From what participants shared, it seems that 1) the experiences associated with considering other majors illuminated participants' awareness of their genuine interest in pursuing a major in visual art; and 2) gaining accurate information about pursuing a major and career in the visual arts allowed participants' to feel more confident about their decision.

### *Difficulties and Challenges*

Participants shared difficulties and challenges that were primarily related to parental influence on their decision to major in visual art, and a lack of career planning resources or support from their university.

*Parental influence.* Six out of eight participants reported that at least one of their parents was outwardly unsupportive of their decision to pursue a major and career in visual art. Those who had at least one parent that was supportive of their major expressed feeling that they had an ally or buffer to deal with the other parent. Those whose parents were both unsupportive said they turn to friends and mentors for support and encouragement.

As Lenny explains, his mom played an important role in his decision of a college and a major:

Applying to college was interesting for me. Me and mom butted heads a lot about it...I think my mom also has much more socially – constructed ideas about being a doctor, lawyer, a scientist and make money...and you have the really fancy sounding word for your nature that ends in ology. [She said] “It would be such a waste if you didn’t do something with science”. So, I did that for a little while and it was okay, but I don’t know. As much as I can do biology and I can do math, chemistry is iffy for me and organic chemistry is incomprehensible to me.

He went on to share that artistic ability runs on his mom’s side of the family and that her parents might have discouraged her from pursuing it as a career:

...you know, talk about kind of these inclinations being sort of inborn. My mom’s dad, he was a high-up, like a drafts person for Hughes Aircraft. So, he did art for a living, but it was technical drawing. My mom never went that way, and it might have been because she was discouraged from it, because I think that her parents discouraged their kids from doing art because they didn’t think there was any money in it. So, my mom never really got into art, but every time I’ve seen her try something it’s really impressive. So, she has something there. She just doesn’t use it.

Keri explains the experience of realizing that her career aspirations would negatively impact her relationship with her Dad:

In high school, I did not get along with my dad very well...I’d always been a daddy’s girl until science got too hard for me in like freshman year...in chemistry, I just gave up. He was definitely not happy with me because he told me that I should be either an engineer, a lawyer, or a doctor. Those were my three choices, and I was like, “There’s no way I’m doing any one of those three things like ever.”, and so that was always kind of difficult, and I still have trouble with that now.

She went on to share how their relationship is still affected by her choice of a college major:

I know that he wishes I had chosen something differently, and I know that if I don't succeed in what I do that I'm always going to hear about it for the rest of my life... maybe if we had spent more time together and stuff like that and he knew me better, maybe he would have realized from the beginning that it's not something that I wanted to do, like go into math and science, and that would have been – it may have made things easier.

Lisa describes her parents' reaction to her decision to change her major:

I changed my major from international relations to Vis Arts...it was a big decision, which made my parents very uncomfortable at first because obviously international relations has a specified career path and specified options, whereas arts majors don't so much in many senses...but I've realized that it's something that I can't not do...my father is – he teaches video and film and so he understands that when that's your passion, you really have to pursue it, and he's been very supportive of that. It's been challenging...when it gets to be too much with my mom, he kind of steps in...I don't want to blame my mother for anything...but she does not have – she is not an artist in any capacity...she's very, "What are you going to do with this tomorrow?" Undermining the validity of what anyone is working so hard towards is a difficult thing, especially when you're related to them.

She went on to explain:

...if I'm happy with what I'm doing and I'm advancing professionally and personally, that's enough for me. When I say that to my mother, it's like, "Well, there are so many options that what if you never pick one?", or, "There are so many options, but what if they don't pay well enough?", and those are valid concerns. They're concerns I have myself, but I'm not going to let it stop me.

Joanna shares:

My parents being very unsupportive...because they think it's [art] a hobby and not a career choice. I mean, they want me to become a doctor or a lawyer or something. So that was really hard...they're really unsupportive. They're just like – just keep pushing me to do these like science and math-y classes or at least something not directly with visual arts or especially studio arts...they're just like, "Why are you sitting at home? Are you going to paint a picture?"...listening to those remarks like, "Well, why don't you do something else? Why don't you find another hobby or something you can do with your career that's more beneficial, and this could be your hobby and not something you could – your life would depend on?". Just hearing that like over and over and over again it – stinks.

In summary, participants reported that their parents' opinions of their major highly influenced their experience of career decision making. Furthermore, this impacted participants' relationship with their parents, often creating distance between them.

*Support/Resources.* Five out of eight participants reported a lack of career planning support and resources from their university and art department. As Ted states:

...if the art department had more going on...I'm actually part of what's going to be – well, I was part of the senior art show last year, and I'm going to be part of it this year, and part of its purpose is to kind of drive like the [university] faculty and everybody at the school to recognize the art department more and have everybody else benefit because sometimes...it's like, "Yeah, you guys are just artists. Whatever. This is a science school."

Lisa expresses a sense that the university community is uncertain of what kind of career planning support and resources the art students need:

I mean, this university is a science institution and there's only so much you can research about what inspires a person or where they want to go – it's not linear...and I think that's frustrating for an institution in the first place, but especially one that prides itself on that kind of step by step mentality. In an academic setting, art does not have the respect that it deserves in many senses...People don't see it as a valid field of study. They see it as kind of what the crazy people that dress weird do, and while I understand where the stereotype comes from...at the same time, there are a good number of us that have skills and opportunities to use what we are doing and we would appreciate some help.

She went on to specify the ways in which she notices that the resources are limited for art majors:

...if you are pre-med, if you are an engineer, if you are all of these things, there are student societies for you, and there's programs set up for direct internships, and there's academic planning for all kinds of things, and in the art field, it seems like it's just – they want to set you up with a museum and that's all, and that's fine...museums are great places, but it's like the field of art has shifted and academia has not shifted to suit it.

Joanna explains:

I went with my friend to a job fair and it was all like just papers thrown at you for like, I don't even know why, and you don't even have to be like a grad student. Just like people are like, "Oh my God, we need you here in science and math." Okay, but then like with the art stuff, I feel like it's not up in your face...I don't feel like there's people...think it's out of your own like volition to go and search for that.

Keri expresses disappointment after anticipating that she would receive guidance from an advisor:

In my honors seminar we're supposed to be finding advisors, and it's absolutely impossible, like I really just feel like most of the professors here...it's a very research oriented school in all the majors, but even in art history, you would think at least that somebody would give a crap, but it's still very research based and professors are distant,

and it – I think that probably I could have gotten a better degree in art history at a different school... if somebody would give you more guidance, and that was what I was hoping for a little bit when we did this art history seminar because you're supposed to get the advisor and you'd hope that you could develop a relationship with at least that person.

She also describes what she would find helpful:

If people paid attention a little bit more to the majors that aren't just science majors, and I think the department could be a lot more helpful in trying to – I mean, the only job fairs that are advertised for art majors are for graphic design jobs for insurance companies, like that's not going to help me, and I think that they could – they and – the department and the career services could try and works towards – not just my major, but trying to reach out to other departments where people are like, “What the hell am I going to do when I graduate?”

Thus, participants reported feeling disappointed by the lack of relevant career planning support and resources from their department and university. Furthermore, those who tried to partake in resources such as job fairs conveyed a sense that these resources were not applicable to their needs as visual art majors. In addition, even when participants recalled seeing job listings for artists, the opportunities were very limited and only applicable to one type of artist.

#### *Perceived Benefits*

Participants expressed several benefits to their decision to pursue a major and career in the visual arts. These benefits included a sense of internal congruence between their major and identity as a person, being motivated by challenges and the possibility of challenging others, and the opportunity to make a contribution to society.

*Congruence with identity.* Six out of eight participants expressed a sense of benefit from pursuing a field of study that felt congruent with their identity. Several students shared they noticed this benefit after feeling “bored” or “uninspired” in other majors or jobs. Other students expressed a sense of “fit” or a “vibe,” which attracted them to or away from a major that did not feel congruent to them.

As Keri says:

I enjoy doing the work that I do have to do – it makes it way easier to commit to something if it's...something you enjoy and something that comes naturally. It's way too hard here to try and take like a science class or like any science major or any math major type of thing if you're not good at it or if you don't like doing it because it's so competitive. I figured...I might as well have fun now, study the things that I want to study, and then just use the degrees to get me in the door somewhere.

Oscar aspired to be an engineer since childhood. He shares how a sense of incongruence changed his plans:

I went to the engineering program orientation and, I don't know, I had this weird vibe. Something drew me away from this particular field. I didn't feel a connection with the faculty. I didn't feel a connection with the students that were around me, the peers that were also going into that field. Then I had another offer at a local community college to take some video editing and interactive media courses. So, after about a few weeks, talking it over with my parents...it [the engineering program] just seemed like a good opportunity, but I just said, "You know, I had this weird vibe that I didn't belong there".

Joanna shares how she expresses her need to pursue art to her family:

I tell my mom... "Do you want me to do art, or do you want me to do drugs?" If it is something I'm good at which other people are not, like my parents, then, I mean, it is something special, and I'm not going to leave that just because they don't want me to do it. I mean, if listened to them when they say I can't do a lot of things, I wouldn't be here. When I do my own art, it kind of makes me feel like I fit into the world in a certain way. So maybe I won't be famous. That's not really important to me, but if someone sees the work, they will learn about what was going on in that time period with this certain type of person maybe.

Lisa describes how she realized that she needed to pursue a field that was congruent with who she is as a person:

If I weren't an artist I would be bored and frustrated, to be perfectly honest, bored and frustrated. I worked in the customer service industry, in public relations, in a number of different capacities, and I've always been good at the job and I've always worked with great people, but...even when there is opportunity to move up or to expand, it doesn't excite me... While it's frustrating that I can't say, "I'm an engineering major. I'm going to be an engineer. Here's the steps that I'm taking to get there.", if I were interested, I would be an engineer, period. That would be the end of the story, and if that's what I loved, that's fantastic – but it's not, and for me with art, there are any number of options that I can take, and they may not even be what I do forever, but if I'm happy with what I'm doing and I'm advancing professionally and personally, that's enough for me.

She adds that part of an artist's journey is discovering his or her identity:

Every artist has to struggle with their identity as an artist and that's okay. Once you have that solid enough in your own mind that you're – I mean, on some level, you'll always be scared of failure, but as long as you don't let that stop you...

Thus, many students expressed that the experience (or possibility) of feeling incongruent with their major made them willing to sacrifice a guaranteed job or financial success associated with some majors, for the benefit of feeling that their chosen major was congruent with their identity.

*Motivated by challenges.* Seven out of eight participants expressed that they are motivated by the challenges or risks involved with pursuing a major in the visual arts. Some explained that feeling somewhat uncertain excited them because it meant endless possibilities. Others relayed excitement about the opportunity to challenge others through their art. Jenny explains her experience after changing her major to art:

I felt really challenged actually, because I'm not the best artist or anything or the best at, I guess, conceptualizing my ideas all the time...but it's about trying to think outside of the boundaries we set for ourselves. So, yeah, I guess the challenge of getting out of your comfort zone and getting comfortable with really trying to express yourself in a way that might not seem like it applies, but it does. It's kind of like a different feeling of confusion and unrestricted freedom I haven't really had yet. So, I kind of like it in that sense.

She compares this experience to the courses she took for other majors:

I was bored with the material and I didn't really – I don't know. It felt more safe, I guess, to pursue a major in political science or communication...I just felt like it safer to go that route than it was to pursue a career in art.

Keri explains feeling motivated by the self-directed nature of many of her courses this year:

Part of it was the challenge I think. I played tennis the first three years I was here, and then I quit this year. So I'm like pretty competitive, and so there was nothing really competitive left for me to do, but this kind of gave me like a new challenge to kind of like get my competitive juice out, and I'm like – I don't know. I think that was part of it, and the fact that you could do something that was your own and kind of do something original that nobody had done before and try and contribute something that's unique.

Lisa explains that, as an art major, feeling challenged is motivating even when her peers in other majors do not understand:

We're working harder on projects than a lot of people. I have a schedule set out for the projects that I'm doing this quarter, and I've already started working on them. It's the first week, while my roommates haven't touched their books and they're kind of lounging around. So it's absurd when people say things to me about how art isn't a real major or – and that's okay. They don't understand. It is something that you have to be into to really comprehend, I guess.

Oscar explains he is motivated by artists who challenged people through their work:

Looking at other artists who kind of pushed the boundaries in their time kind of gives the art student this sense of being a pioneer in the sense that they can become a pioneer...it [art] highly encourages creativity, and you always have to be on your creative toes and always coming up with new ideas...not just stick to particular formulas, particular techniques. I mean, there are techniques that are set out that artists tend to follow, but

then again you do have those that kind of move on and go away from traditional techniques say of painting...especially now with the computer art and digital media. It's creating a whole different spectrum of art.

Ted explains that challenges play a role in his resiliency and continued motivation:

it's about...my goal, like staying focused on my goal of like becoming an artist and teaching the technique or whatever to somebody else. That goal has always kept me motivated because like if something in my life starts to fall apart, then I realize that everything that I've been working on towards that goal is also like diminishing, and then I start to like get frustrated, and then I'll want to do something again, and like I'll go sign up for a show space in the Annex or something like, "No, you have to do this. It's really important, like get your head out of ass."

Mark shares his perspective of being willing to take on challenges:

I think in art a lot of art...or especially computing in the arts – it's going to be wanting to put in that extra effort to make that piece that much nicer. In the beginning, it's like you put in this much work and you're going to get this much detail out of it, but towards the end of the project it's going to be like, all right, you put in this much work and you'll get this out of it.. Is that much return worth it? I think that has to be worth it all the time for me.

In summary, participants are motivated by the opportunity to be challenged and to challenge others through their art. In reporting incidents involving uncertainty, many participants expressed feeling more motivated than if they did not have the anticipation of taking a risk. In addition, participants often used the word "boring" to describe the experience of not being challenged, such as in taking courses for other majors.

*Making a contribution.* Five out of eight participants shared the benefit of their career decision because of the opportunity to give back or contribute to society through their art.

Keri states:

I work at a nonprofit art museum... and I enjoy that and I like the idea – one of my ultimate goals is that I don't want to have a job where I feel like I'm not giving back. I want to like die knowing that I did something good for society. So that's kind of like a big factor in what I choose to do.

Oscar shares:

I really want my art to kind of transcend boundaries of urban landscape and the traditional environments of art. I really have a sense of pride coming from that particular [urban] area and being exposed to that environment and then coming here to the university and being exposed to a completely different environment. I want my art to expose people to the two different settings and not necessarily just focus on one setting and then focus on the other and then look at the differences between the two, but in a way

kind of blend the two together and kind of make it seem like it's one cohesive image or one cohesive environment.

Lisa explains:

I want to help people, and I don't know what that looks like in my future or in my career path, but I want to help people through my art. I taught photography at a Title I school, an elementary school downtown. It's an art program and it's bringing the arts back into schools – through teaching artists, which was really cool to be able to share what I was doing with kids that were language learners... Teaching is a very noble profession, especially if you're an art teacher. You get to impart that same kind of freedom to the kids that you're teaching, that – the art of expression, and that's a wonderful thing.

Joanna says:

...having my work on display for other people...when I do get those positive remarks, it makes me feel like I'm doing this not only for myself and I can benefit like the rest of society because, I mean, like being a doctor, you help people, being this, but this is like very visual...when people appreciate it and maybe it brightens up their day or something, that just makes me feel really good.

#### *Common Experience of Career Decision Making*

With regard to the common experiences that contributed to career decision making, 6 out of 8 participants appeared to begin with sense of self-awareness that was rooted in childhood artistic development. This awareness of themselves as a creative person led them to consider studying visual art in college. However, uncertainty and a lack of support from parents led participants to negotiate with themselves and consider majors unrelated to art. For many participants this created a sense of internal incongruence, which resulted in their reconsideration of art as a major. These participants expressed that the experience of incongruence felt worse than the uncertainty or challenges associated with pursuing a major in the visual arts. In fact, many of them realized that the challenges associated with the major and career path actually motivated them. Thus, participants expressed coming to the realization that they would rather experience a sense of internal congruence between their career decision and who they are as a person, than meet external expectations of parents or society.

#### *Chapter Summary*

This chapter described the results of this qualitative study; interpretation and further analysis are provided in Chapter Five. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, in which participants were asked to describe significant experiences that contributed to their decision to pursue a college major in the visual arts. In addition, participants were asked to discuss their

overall experience of career decision making since deciding to pursue a major in the visual arts. In discussing experiences that influenced participants' decision to pursue a major in the visual arts, individuals mentioned themes related to childhood artistic/creative development, teachers and mentors, being part of a creative community, and considering a career path unrelated to art.

Participants expressed that most of the difficulties and challenges they experienced were related to parents' opinions of their major and career aspirations and a lack of career planning support and resources from the university. They discussed being aware that at least one of their parents was outwardly unsupportive of their college major and aspirations for a career in art. In addition, they discussed how the lack of support both from their parents and lack of resources from their university impacts their career decision making and level of confidence in their decisions.

Participants reported that despite difficulties, they experience many benefits from their decision to pursue a major in the visual arts. Such benefits include congruence between their college major/career decision and their identity, the opportunity to be challenged and to challenge others, and making a contribution to society. They indicated that a sense of internal congruence was more important than making career decisions in response to external feedback, such as other's opinions or financial gains. Participants also expressed feeling excited and motivated by the challenges associated with pursuing a major and career in the visual arts. In addition, many reported looking forward to the opportunity to challenge others throughout their career in the visual arts. Finally, participants expressed wanting to contribute to society by giving back through their career.

A display of the thematic of the material discussed above is presented in Tables 6 and 7. Table 6 illustrates the nine themes as they were grouped according to Specific Experiences, Difficulties and Challenges, and Perceived Benefits. For each theme, the ratio of participants who made statements related to the theme, and the names of these participants are presented. Table 7 displays a summary of participants' report of specific experiences that contributed to their overall career decision making.

Table 6  
Summary of Thematic Material

Themes	#/Total Participants	Participant Names
<b>Specific Experiences</b>		
Childhood artistic development	6/8	Lenny, Ted, Keri, Lisa, Joanna, Jenny
Teachers/mentors	6/8	Mark, Oscar, Ted, Keri, Joanna, Lenny
Creative community	5/8	Lisa, Joanna, Ted, Lenny, Mark
Career without art	6/8	Jenny, Lenny, Lisa, Joanna, Mark, Ted
<b>Difficulties/Challenges</b>		
Parental influence	6/8	Lenny, Keri, Lisa, Joanna, Mark, Jenny
Support/resources	5/8	Ted, Lisa, Joanna, Keri, Oscar
<b>Perceived Benefits</b>		
Congruence with identity	7/8	Keri, Oscar, Joanna, Lisa, Ted, Jenny, Lenny
Motivated by challenges	7/8	Jenny, Keri, Lisa, Oscar, Ted, Mark, Joanna
Making a contribution	5/8	Keri, Oscar, Lisa, Joanna, Ted

Table 7  
Summary of Participants' Significant Experiences

Participant	3 Positive Experiences	3 Negative Experiences
Jenny	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Childhood dance classes</li> <li>2. Enjoying college courses after switching major to art</li> <li>3. Witnessing uncle's success in film industry</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Boredom in college classes before changing major to art</li> <li>2. Insecure about ability in art classes</li> <li>3. Keeping artistic career aspirations from parents</li> </ol>
Joanna	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attending arts elementary school</li> <li>2. Recognition from teachers/critics at art academy</li> <li>3. Painting mural in high school</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parents' negative comments</li> <li>2. Being identified as the "oddball" of the family</li> <li>3. Attending job fair at university</li> </ol>
Oscar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognition from teachers in first art course</li> <li>2. Feeling naturally talented in something [art]</li> <li>3. Challenging people through art</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of student involvement in art department</li> <li>2. Adjusting to first year of college with minimal artistic community</li> <li>3. Trying to create an artistic community</li> </ol>
Mark	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Receiving award in first art class</li> <li>2. Being challenged in a new way</li> <li>3. Dad's support for career aspirations in animation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mom pushing major in computer science</li> <li>2. Thinking about competition for jobs</li> <li>3. Worrying about consequences of not pursuing engineering</li> </ol>

Table 7 Continued

Participant	3 Positive Experiences	3 Negative Experiences
Keri	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating art with grandmother in childhood</li> <li>2. Studying abroad in Italy</li> <li>3. Being challenged and feeling successful in art courses</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distance in relationship with dad</li> <li>2. Unable to find advisor in art department</li> <li>3. Lack of university career resources for art students</li> </ol>
Lenny	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elementary school that encouraged creativity</li> <li>2. Internship at Cartoon Network</li> <li>3. Classes after changing major from science to art</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mom pushing him to major in science</li> <li>2. Uninspired and bored in science major</li> <li>3. Lack of university career resources for art students</li> </ol>
Lisa	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Studying abroad in South Africa</li> <li>2. Contributing to community through teaching art</li> <li>3. Enjoyed college after changing major to art</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of university career resources for art students</li> <li>2. Mom's negative comments/doubts</li> <li>3. Depression/darkness before changing major to art</li> </ol>
Ted	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Babysitter encouraged drawing</li> <li>2. Transferred to university and was challenged by art professor</li> <li>3. Relationships with art professors and other art students</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uninspired as a psychology major</li> <li>2. Lack of artistic community at university</li> <li>3. Lack of university career resources for art students</li> </ol>

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### *Overview*

Chapter Five contains a discussion of the findings in this study. This chapter begins with a review of the research question and sensitizing concepts used to guide this qualitative study. This is followed by a summary of the findings according to the nine themes presented in Chapter Four. A summary of the common experience of career decision making that appeared to occur among the participants is described. Next, an examination of any differences between the experiences of participants entering the major and those preparing to graduate are presented. This is followed by a summary of other variations in participant experiences and possible explanation for these differences. The common themes, common experience of career decision making, and differences between the two groups of participant experiences are then discussed with regard to relevant literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

#### *Research Question*

It is important to reiterate the overall purpose of this study and the specific research question. What are experiences that contribute to the career decision making of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts? In addition, I wanted to explore these experiences according to the students' year in college and overall development. This exploration was framed by the phenomenological perspective. I selected career decision making as the phenomenon of interest, and identified the population of college students in the arts, to explore their experience with the phenomenon of interest.

#### *Sensitizing Concepts*

As stated earlier, sensitizing concepts in qualitative research are comparable to hypotheses in quantitative researcher, in that they are concepts used to guide the study. The sensitizing concepts used to guide the present study were constructed from a review of relevant literature and a pilot case study (Cooley, 2005). Because the sensitizing concepts will be used to discuss the findings in this study, they are presented for review below:

- 1) The decision to pursue a college major in the visual arts is a process that often begins with childhood involvement in the arts.

- 2) The decision to pursue a college major in the visual arts is influenced by significant life experiences and self-knowledge gained from such experiences.
- 3) The decision making experiences of college students who pursue a major in the visual arts are influenced by the involvement and opinions of people such as family, teachers, and peers.
- 4) College student in the arts experience self-doubt regarding their career decision making because of anticipated challenges associated with their career decisions.
- 5) Although they are intrinsically motivated, college students in the arts feel most inspired when they are part of a creative, supportive community.

### Summary of Findings

This section will present a summary of the findings in this study. The significant experiences participants' reported that contributed to their career decision making overlapped with the difficulties and challenges and perceived benefits associated with this decision. For the purpose of organization, these areas were presented separately in the Results section. Overall, participants reported that the decision to pursue a major in the visual arts was challenging, but came with many benefits. The experiences participants reported contributing most to their decision-making included childhood artistic/creative development, teachers and mentors, being part of a creative community, and considering a career path unrelated to art.

#### *Specific Experiences*

Most participants reported experiences that contributed to their career decision making began with a childhood interest in the arts. These early experiences seemed to result in self-awareness as a creative being. Some participants' exposure to art was through formal classes, but most were drawn at an early age to express themselves through art on their own. Regardless of how participants' were introduced to the arts, they all reported that someone helped foster their artistic development. Many reported that family members such as a parent or grandparent also had artistic talent. These participants recalled sharing valuable time painting or drawing with these family members, which encouraged them to further explore their artistic ability. Other participants' interest in art was peaked through early school assignments. And finally, one participant who felt out of place in her family, found encouragement through taking art classes even though she was more than a decade younger than most of her classmates.

Participants also noted experiences with teachers and mentors who played an important role in the development of their artistic ability and self-confidence. For some participants, experiences with teachers and mentors came early in their development as an artist. This was especially important for individuals whose families did not encourage their artistic development. For the two participants who were not exposed to the arts in childhood, teachers and mentors facilitated their artistic development at a later age. Both of these participants expressed that, were it not for teachers and mentors, they might have never realized their artistic interest and talent. All of the participants expressed that their most significant teachers and mentors challenged their students and had high expectations. Participants reported being motivated by these high expectations, which inspired them to work harder. In turn, participants learned about themselves as individuals and as developing artists, which contributed to their career decision making.

The experience of being part of a creative community also contributed to participants' decision-making by encouraging self-awareness of their artistic ability. This seemed to be most important for participants whose families were unsupportive of their artistic endeavors. In addition, participants who already had decided to pursue a major in the visual arts, but felt uncertain about this decision, reported that being part of a creative community reaffirmed their career aspirations. Overall, participants shared that having a creative community was most important at times when they felt uncertain about, or unmotivated to pursue, their art. Interestingly, participants shared that it did not matter if they were collaborating with, or competing against other artists as part of a creative community; either way, it was a positive, motivating experience. This may be related to participants' shared view that it is difficult for people not involved with the arts to understand their love for or desire to pursue their art.

One of the experiences that participants expressed as most significant was considering a career path unrelated to art. Almost all of the participants expressed knowing that their interest was in the arts, but feeling pressured to explore other options. Some felt pressured by parents who did not approve of their major and others because of the inconsistent nature of work in the arts. One participant shared that, although she knew entering her first year of college that she was going to pursue a visual arts major, she purposely left all of her art supplies at home nine hours away. Shortly after beginning college, she remembers wanting to paint but could not afford to buy new art supplies. She recalls this was when she knew she would not be considering any majors unrelated to art.

### *Difficulties and Challenges*

Participants expressed two main challenges associated with their experience of career decision making. First, parental influence or parents' opinion of pursuing a major in the arts affected many participants' decision-making. Some participants reported that their parents were outwardly unsupportive by threatening to restrict financial support for college if they majored in the arts. Others simply reported they sensed their parents would prefer they major in a field like science or math. In both situations, this lack of support created distance in participants' relationships with their parents. Some expressed feeling misunderstood and "different" from their family, who did not understand their passion for pursuing their art.

The second challenge participants' reported was a lack of career planning support or resources from their current university and art department. One participant expressed feeling like the visual arts department was "the ugly stepchild of the university." Many shared this opinion not only because of the lack of guidance they felt from faculty, but the condition in which they were expected to learn and produce creative work. Several students reflected upon the fact that, on a campus where multi-million dollar buildings are being constructed for the science and engineering departments, their desks are falling apart and paint is peeling off the walls of their department classrooms.

Students also reported feeling neglected by the career services office at their university. They recalled attending job fairs and career services workshops that were not designed to meet their needs. They reported that when they did see job listings directed toward the visual art department they were only applicable to one type of artist, such as graphic designer. Students who were disappointed by the career services office seemed to accept that they might be less aware of their needs, compared to those of students in engineering or science. Most students seemed more upset by the lack of guidance from their department; they expressed a sense that their faculty misled them to believe they would receive individual attention from advisors. Some students admitted they assumed they would get individualized attention just by being in the art department because of the sense of community the department promoted.

### *Perceived Benefits*

The strongest perceived benefit participants echoed was the experience that their career choice was congruence with their identity. Many expressed that it was more important that their self-awareness and values were aligned with their choice of a major, than the potential for

financial success or job security. Interestingly, this was consistent across participants who aspired for a career in the arts since childhood and those who discovered their artistic talent and interest later in life.

The only apparent difference seemed to be that those who knew since childhood had a deeper level of self-awareness as a creative being than those who previously planned to pursue other fields, such as Mark or Oscar. This self-awareness was apparent in their willingness to maintain the possibility that they might still change their major; Mark and Oscar expressed that they would consider changing their major if it became unrealistic to pursue a career in the arts. However, participants such as Joanna and Lenny placed more importance on a feeling of congruence with their career choice, possibly reflective of their strong artistic self-awareness since childhood.

Overall, however, all of the participants expressed the importance of feeling congruent with their choice of major. Some used the word “vibe” or “fit.” Others described how they explained it to parents; Joanna expressed, “Do you want me to do art or do you want me to do drugs?” Additionally, the feeling of boredom was often what led participants to this sense of incongruence. Almost every participant mentioned feeling “bored” or “uninspired” as if it was the strongest indicator to them that they needed to make a change. Overall, the journey of discovering their identity as an artist seemed to be a sort of compass that directed participants’ congruence or incongruence related to their choice of a major.

This relates to participants being motivated by challenges. Almost all of the participants expressed that both previous and anticipated challenges keep them motivated to pursue their art. This is relevant because, when participants’ reflected upon the potential for feeling bored or uninspired, it seemed to come with a fear that depression or some kind of “darkness” was looming. Being challenged, and the opportunity to challenge others, seemed to keep participants from succumbing to the negative aspects of the difficulties associated with their career decision making.

Finally, the opportunity to make a contribution to society and give back to the community was a benefit participants perceived as motivating their career choice. Some participants expressed wanting to help people through their art. Others hoped to challenge and push cultural and societal boundaries. More than half of participants expressed wanting to “give back” in some way, even if they were unsure how or what this would look like in their future. Some participants

knew it might be through teaching art or bringing art into communities of people who would otherwise not be exposed.

### *Participant Group Differences*

Participant Group 1 included college students entering the visual arts major, in their first or second year of college. Participant Group 2 consisted of college students preparing to graduate from the visual arts major within the year. Similarities were presented earlier through the common themes identified among most participants. Differences between the two groups were most reflective in the themes of support/resources and considering a career path without art.

Students who were entering the major (group 1) expressed more concern about the lack of community within their department than absence of specific resources. In contrast, students preparing to graduate (group 2) expressed more disappointment with the lack of specific resources and guidance in the art department, than the sense of community. While participants in group 2 did mention an awareness of the lack of community within their department, they were more concerned about the lack of relevant career planning resources and advising. Participants in group 1 expressed more disappointment about the lack of a cohesive community within their department. While group 2 expressed disappointment about this issue, they seemed to resolve early in their college experience to find or create a cohesive community of their own.

The second notable difference between groups 1 and 2 relates to students considering a career path without art. While 7 out of 8 participants recalled a common sense of negotiating, the difference was notable in their account of this experience. Three out of four participants seemed to currently be in negotiations with themselves about pursuing their art long term. This contrasts all of the participants in group 2 who reflected upon the experience of negotiating as something that happened in the past. There are two possible explanations for this difference. The first is participants' year in school and therefore difference in experience and development. These participants may simply be more confident about staying with their art than those just entering college. Another possible explanation is that living without their art was such a negative experience that they do not share the same sense of doubt, or willingness to explore other options as participants in group 1.

### Discussion of Findings

This section will discuss the findings in terms of relevant literature reviewed in Chapter Two. This includes a discussion of the limitations of this study, implications for practice, and

recommendations for future research. As explained earlier, the purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding about the experience of career decision making among college students in the visual arts, including the specific experiences that influence their decisions.

The pilot case study (Cooley, 2005) served as an initial exploration into the experiences of a college student who was pursuing a major in the visual arts. Consistent with the case study, one of the most important findings in the present study is that the decision to pursue a career in the visual arts is a process that often begins early in life. Specifically, participants' account of experiences involving early childhood interest in the arts, and the impact of teachers and mentors, reflect a process that begins long before these students entered college. This was represented in the pilot case study of Liz, who shared experiences that impacted her self-awareness as an artist early in life. This is reflective of Super's model of vocational development and the impact self-concept has on career decision making (Super, 1980; 1990).

Like some of the participants in the present study, the case study participant Liz recalled feeling "different" from her family. She remembered she was drawn to painting and writing, while her mother pushed her to take ballet classes. She expressed her interest in art during middle school, but her parents assumed it was just a phase. When she decided to pursue art in college, her parents restricted her from producing art in their home, regardless of how careful she was to not make a mess. Participants in the present study reported that early experiences that contributed to their career decision making often involved family or important teachers or mentors. Six out of eight participants in the present study recalled an early awareness of themselves as creative and artistic, which was different from their peers or families. For many participants in the present study, they felt encouraged by teachers and mentors to pursue their art, despite feeling different from their family or peers. An interesting difference between Liz and most participants in the present study was that she did not report the experience of having the support of a teacher or mentor. This is notable because as she prepared to graduate from college she expressed more uncertainty and insecurity related to career decision making, than any of the participants in this study who did recall having a supportive teacher or mentor.

As explained above, for Liz and many participants in the present study, the environment played an important role in their development as an artist, and therefore in their career decision making experiences. This finding is reflective of the Systems Model of Creativity, which focuses on the role of situational factors artistic and creative development (Amabile, 1996;

Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This model also relates to participants' comments about the lack of guidance within their art department. Additionally, these comments are reflective of Chickering's (1993) and Astin's (1984) work, and the role the university plays in college student development.

Some participants in this study reported feeling annoyed when they were initially instructed to find an advisor within their department. This may be reflective of research findings that artists and other creative individuals are most productive when they are motivated intrinsically (Amabile, 1996). While they might have been resistant, these students also expressed feeling hopeful that an advisor would help them synthesize their ideas about career planning and make plans for the future. However, when participants were unable to find an advisor who would follow through, they expressed great disappointment in the system (department and university) as a whole. This may be reflective that the Systems Model of Creativity (Amabile, 1996) not only applies to the way creativity is fostered, but the way in which creative people, such as artists, make career decisions.

The components of Cognitive Information Processing theory CIP (Sampson et al., 2004) that were most relevant to this study include the Knowledge domain (self and occupational knowledge) and the Valuing and Execution phases of the CASVE cycle. Related to the Knowledge domain, participants in this study seemed to display a level of self-knowledge and that began with their early experiences in the arts. In addition, these students seemed to have acquired specific occupational knowledge through these early experiences in the arts. Self and occupational knowledge are also reflected in the theme of congruence with identity, in that participants in this study placed more importance on a sense of congruence with their choice of a major than the potential for financial gain or job stability. This may be an indication that early self-awareness provided these students with a stronger sense of identity than their peers in college. In addition, working closely with mentors or art teachers may have contributed to students' early awareness of options for using their art in the world of work.

Related to the CASVE cycle, because the process of decision-making for most participants in this study began early in life, they appeared to spend most of their time during college in the Valuing and Execution stages. This might indicate that they went through the Communication, Analysis, and Synthesis stages along with early artistic experiences during their formative years. This is supported by the finding in this study that students entering the visual

arts major (group 1) did not seem to be at a significantly earlier stage in the CASVE cycle than those preparing to graduate (group 2); overall, both groups seemed to vacillate between the Valuing and Execution phases. The only apparent difference between the groups seemed to be their confidence in the experience of negotiating or considering a career path without art. Students preparing to graduate expressed that the experience of negotiating was something they had moved through and did not foresee revisiting, while students entering the major seemed less confident.

The theme of early artistic development is relevant to Holland's theory (1997) as well, because many Artistic types display personality characteristics of creativity early in life. In addition, Artistic types are often highly intuitive and more sensitive to their surroundings than non-Artistic types. This is relevant to participants' statements about feeling "different" from their family and/or peers early on, and those who sensed their ambitions for a career in the arts would not be supported. Also reflective is the way specific experiences influenced participants' development in their art, because Artistic types often learn best experientially (Holland, 1997; Piirto, 1998). These experiences had a strong impact on participants' development in their art, and therefore on their career decision making. For many of them, it was the first time they felt both challenged and successful in school, close to a family member, and/or believed in by a mentor.

The theme of support and resources is another notable finding that emerged from the case study and the present study. Both Liz, and most participants in this study, reported experiencing a lack of support and resources related to their career decision making and planning. This seemed to especially impact participants whose parents were also unsupportive of their career decision making. When their parents were unsupportive of their decision to pursue a major in visual art, some participants' seemed to interpret this as doubt in their ability to make a good career decision. Some participants seemed intent on not caring about their parents' opinions. However, it was apparent they did care, because many tried majors supported by their parents before following their original interest in visual arts. This is particularly reflective of the literature in college student development. According to Chickering (1993), participants' experience in the stage of developing autonomy relates to the impact parental opinion has on their sense of competency.

Among the findings in this study, the presence of intrinsic motivation is an undercurrent of many themes. This is worth noting because of the role intrinsic motivation has been found to play in artistic and creative development (Amabile, 1996). Additionally, it is considered to be a personality characteristic that contributes to creativity. Although participants were discouraged by the lack of resources or guidance from their art department, their motivation was nonetheless intrinsically driven. Almost all of the participants in this study mentioned that being challenged and the ability to challenge others motivated them to continue pursuing their art. Although many participants mentioned external sources of motivation, such as teachers and mentors, it seemed to be the role these people had in tapping into participants' intrinsic motivation that was important.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

One limitation of the present study is that it is not generalizable to all college students in the visual arts. In addition, a limitation of the sample used in this exploration is that the students interviewed all attended the same west coast university, an institution primarily known for scientific research. Thus, the perspective of the students in the visual arts department may be impacted by the nature of the university culture. Another limitation is that all participants were raised in California. This also has implications for the way participants' responses might have been impacted by the culture in which they grew up; participants who were raised on the east coast or Midwest might have responded differently. In addition, most participants grew up with parents who attended college; only one participant identified as a first generation college student. This relates to family expectations of obtaining a college education and the potential difference in expectations of a student whose parents did not finish high school. A limitation to the measure used to collect data is that the interview questions, although informed by relevant literature, were constructed by me.

#### *Implications for Practice*

The findings of this study can be helpful in contributing to improved career services for college students in the visual arts. One important implication for career counseling with college students in the visual arts is the awareness that their experience of career decision making likely began early in life. This is crucial for career development professionals to understand; while these students may not be able to verbalize their experience of deciding to pursue a major and career in the arts, it is nonetheless a decision with a history.

When career counseling students in the visual arts, counselors might implement questions related to the roles of teachers or mentors. Evaluating whether students have experienced the support of a mentor can contribute to our understanding of their experience and process of career decision making. Additionally, the present study has the potential to inform our understanding of the role of family in the career decision making experiences of college students in the arts. This is relevant because students may be hesitant to seek assistance if they are used to receiving criticism or judgment for their career decision.

Finally, career counselors can encourage students to find or create a creative community, since this seemed to inspire and motivate many participants in the present study. This may be especially relevant if students have become discouraged, bored, or are feeling uncertain of their artistic potential. This also has implications for our approach to career services. Instead of individual career advising as the primary method of service, creating a group where students in the arts collaborate and process their ideas, may provide a sense of creative community. Additionally, interactive workshops on topics such as searching for an internship or apprenticeship might engage these students because of the involvement of community.

#### *Implications for Future Research*

Future research exploring students enrolled at art colleges or institutes would be helpful in addressing one of the limitations of this study. This would provide a group with which to compare the experiences of visual art students at four year universities. In addition, future research on the experiences of students in other artistic disciplines, such as the performing arts, would be helpful. For example, dancers must consider the element of age and potential for injury in their career planning. In addition, many actors, especially women, must factor their physical appearance and youth into their career outlook. These dimensions ultimately play a role in the overall experience of career decision making for these groups. Further exploration would provide specific insight about similarities and differences, as compared to the experiences of students in the visual arts.

Research involving students' Holland code, and specific score on the Self-Directed Search, may be helpful in exploring the range of career decision making experiences and needs among Artistic Types. This may provide insight into any differences in career decision making and planning among individuals with significantly higher Artistic scores than other scores (level of differentiation). Additionally, exploring the closeness of a primary Artistic person's second

letter in their Holland code (consistency), and using a projective measure such as an occupational card sort, may elicit information regarding the individual's awareness of possible career planning or decision-making difficulties.

Finally, exploring the career decision making experiences of artists throughout their careers would be informative; in their transition from college to the world of work and future transitions such as finding a partner, having a family, planning for retirement, etc. This would contribute to our understanding of the experiences and needs of Holland Artistic types and their development over time. It could also provide information about the way artists make career and life decisions at different developmental stages in their lives, and what experiences contribute to these decisions. For example, it could be helpful to explore at what point college students become less concerned with obtaining their parents' approval regarding their career decision in the arts. This may lead to better understanding of the role of the university community in artists' career decision making experiences. Furthermore, it could provide information about how and in what context these experiences evolve for artists as they continue to make career decisions over time.

*Gender and ethnicity.* This study has implications for future research that includes an examination of any gender and cultural differences in the career decision making of college students in the arts. In the present study, the participant group was ethnically diverse. The only apparent experiential differences related to cultural group were in the experiences of participants whose parents immigrated to the United States. These participants may have put more pressure on themselves to succeed because of their parents efforts to achieve the "American dream" for their children. Further exploration into the career decision making experiences of college students in the arts, specifically related to gender and ethnicity could provide important information about how these elements influence artists' decisions in life and work.

### *Conclusion*

The purpose of this qualitative exploration was to expand upon the pilot case study of Liz, to gain deeper understanding of the experiences involved with the career decision making of college students in the visual arts. The primary tool of data collection was in-depth interviews with eight participants; four entering the visual arts major and four preparing to graduate. Sensitizing concepts derived from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two were used to guide the data analysis. Interview transcripts were reviewed to identify significant statements about

participants' experiences of career decision making. From these statements, nine common themes were identified and grouped according to specific experiences, difficulties and challenges, and perceived benefits associated with their career decision making. The nine themes identified were: 1) Childhood artistic/creative development; 2) Teachers and mentors; 3) Being part of a creative community; 4) Considering a career path without art; 5) Parental influence; 6) Support/resources; 7) Congruence with identity; 8) Motivated by challenges; and 9) Making a contribution. The common experience expressed by participants was that their decision to pursue a major and career in the visual arts was challenging, but also very rewarding.

This exploration provides insight into the career decision making experiences and needs of college students in the visual arts. Additionally, differences between students entering the major and those preparing to graduate, provides information about their experience at different stages of their development. The findings of this study have implications for research and practice in career counseling with college students in the visual arts. As career development professionals, we may not be able to change the fact that job opportunities in the arts are on the decline. However, we can apply a deeper understanding of these students' experiences to design career services that meet their unique needs as they make important decisions about their future.

**APPENDIX A**



061104S

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO  
HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTIONS PROGRAM**

RE: Project #061104S

The Career decision making Experiences of Individuals Who Pursue a College Major in the Visual Arts

Dear Ms. Cooley:

The above-referenced project was reviewed and approved by one of this institution's Institutional Review Boards in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations on the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50 and 56), including its relevant Subparts. This approval, based on the degree of risk, is for 365 days from the date of **IRB review and approval** unless otherwise stated in this letter. The regulations require that continuing review be conducted on or before the I-year anniversary date of the IRB approval, even though the research activity may not begin until some time after the IRB has given approval.

**Date of IRB review and approval: 10/4/2006**

Approval of an oral consent has been granted. The IRB under CFR 46.117 I will waive the requirement for the PI to obtain written signed consent because this research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to the subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Caligiuri", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Caligiuri, Ph.D.  
Director, Clinical Research Protections Program  
(CRESP) (858) 455-5050

Note: All Human Subject research conducted at the VA facility and/or utilizing VA/VMRF funds **MUST BE APPROVED** by the VA Research and Development Committee prior to commencing any research. In addition, please ensure that the clinical trial agreement or other funding is appropriately in place prior to conducting any research activities. IRB approval does not constitute funding approval.

Approval release date:  
12/6/2006

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent

0611045

Dear Participant,

My name is Jill Cooley I am a graduate student in the Educational Psychology and Learning Systems Department at Florida State University. For my dissertation project, I am conducting an exploration of the career decision making experiences of individuals who pursue a college major in the visual arts.

Your participation in this study will involve approximately two interviews; each interview will last approximately 1 hour. The purpose of the interviews is to explore your career decision making experiences as an individual who is pursuing a major in the visual arts. During the interviews you may choose to skip any question you do not want to answer. There will be no penalty for choosing not to answer certain questions. The interviews will be audio taped and transcribed and a pseudonym will be used in place of your name in the transcription. The tapes and transcriptions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office (Muir College, HSS Room 2056) and will be accessible only to me (the researcher). You will have the opportunity to review your interview and the group discussion transcripts in order to clarify the content, or confirm that it is an accurate representation of your participation. The transcripts will be destroyed by August 11, 2011. For the purpose of confidentiality, a pseudonym will be used in place of your real name. Furthermore, any information obtained during the course of the study will remain confidential, to the extent allowed by law. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your signature at the bottom of this page will imply your intent to participate in this study. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you as a participant in this study. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is future career and life planning assistance for people pursuing a career in the arts.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact me at (858) 534-5905, [jcooley@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:jcooley@admin.fsu.edu). In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research study, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Human Research Protections Program at (858) 455-5050.

Sincerely,

Jill A. Cooley



## APPENDIX C

### TRANSCRIBE IT QUICK ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTION CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

This Confidentiality Agreement ("Agreement") is made and effective the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2007 by and between Jill Cooley ("Owner") and Transcribe It Quick, LLC ("Recipient").

#### 1. Confidential Information.

Owner proposes to disclose certain of its confidential and proprietary information (the "Confidential Information<sup>f</sup>") to Recipient. Confidential Information shall include all data, materials, products, technology, computer programs, specifications, manuals, business plans, software, marketing plans, financial information, and other information disclosed or submitted, orally, in writing, or by any other media, to Recipient by Owner. Confidential Information disclosed orally shall be identified as such within five (5) days of disclosure. Nothing herein shall require Owner to disclose any of its information.

#### 2. Recipient's Obligations.

A. Recipient agrees that the Confidential Information is to be considered confidential and proprietary to Owner and Recipient shall hold the same in confidence, shall not use the Confidential Information other than for the purposes of its business with Owner, and shall disclose it only to its officers, directors, or employees with a specific need to know. Recipient will not disclose, publish or otherwise reveal any of the Confidential Information received from Owner to any other party whatsoever except with the specific prior written authorization of Owner.

B. Confidential Information furnished in tangible form shall not be duplicated by Recipient except for purposes of this Agreement. All Confidential material will be burned onto hard disk and deposited in a safe deposit box at Wachovia Bank, 3992 Roswell Road, Atlanta, GA 30342 for the period of two (2) years. All material will otherwise be removed and destroyed upon delivery of proprietary information to its rightful owner. Owner may opt out of this hard disk burn, notifying of such request in writing. Recipient shall provide a written certificate to Owner regarding destruction within ten (10) days thereafter.

#### 3. Term.

The obligations of Recipient herein shall be effective from the date Owner last discloses any Confidential Information to Recipient pursuant to this Agreement. Further, the obligation not to disclose shall not be affected by bankruptcy, receivership, assignment, attachment or seizure procedures, whether initiated by or against Recipient, nor by the rejection of any agreement between Owner and Recipient, by a trustee of Recipient in bankruptcy, or by the Recipient as a debtor-in-possession or the equivalent of any of the foregoing under local law.

#### 5. No License.

Nothing contained herein shall be construed as granting or conferring any rights by license or otherwise in any Confidential Information. It is understood and agreed that neither party solicits any change in the organization, business practice, service or products of the other party, and that the disclosure of Confidential Information shall not be construed as evidencing any intent by a party to purchase any products or services of the other party nor as an encouragement to expend funds in development or research efforts. Confidential Information may pertain to prospective or unannounced products. Recipient agrees not to use any Confidential Information as a basis upon which to develop or have a third party develop a competing or similar product.

#### 6. No Publicity.

Recipient agrees not to disclose its participation in this undertaking, the existence or terms and conditions of the Agreement, or the fact that discussions are being held with Owner.

7. Governing Law and Equitable Relief.

This Agreement shall be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of the United States and the State of Florida and Recipient consents to the exclusive jurisdiction of the state courts and U.S. federal courts located there for any dispute arising out of this Agreement. Recipient agrees that in the event of any breach or threatened breach by Recipient, Owner may obtain, in addition to any other legal remedies which may be available, such equitable relief as may be necessary to protect Owner against any such breach or threatened breach.

8. Final Agreement.

This Agreement terminates and supersedes all prior understandings or agreements on the subject matter hereof. This Agreement may be modified only by a further writing that is duly executed by both parties.

9. No Assignment.

Recipient may not assign this Agreement or any interest herein without Owner's express prior written consent.

10. Severability.

If any term of this Agreement is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unenforceable, then this Agreement, including all of the remaining terms, will remain in full force and effect as if such invalid or unenforceable term had never been included.

13. Notices.

Any notice required by this Agreement or given in connection with it, shall be in writing and shall be given to the appropriate party by personal delivery or by certified mail, postage prepaid, or recognized overnight delivery services.

If to Owner:

Kara Crohn

Address:

If to Recipient:

Transcribe It Quick

6124 North Guava Lane

Lantana, FL 33462

13. Headings.

Headings used in this Agreement are provided for convenience only and shall not be used to construe meaning or intent.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF. The parties have executed this Agreement as of the date first above written.

**Owner Jill Cooley (electronic signature legally binding)**

**Recipient Eileen M. Unger (electronic signature legally binding)**

**Eileen Unger, Operations Manager, Transcribe It Quick**

**Transmitted through E-mail server TechXI**

APPENDIX D

**Florida State  
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the Vice President for Research Human Subjects Committee  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742  
(850) 644-8673 FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 5/24/2006

To: **Jill Cooley**

**3909 Reserve Drive, Apt. 1022**

**Tallahassee, FL 32311**

Dept.: **EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND LEARNING SYSTEMS**

From: **Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair**



Re: **Use of Human Subjects in Research**

**A Qualitative Exploration of the Factors that Influence the Career Development of  
Individuals Who Pursue a College Major in the Arts**

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Exempt per 45 CFR § 46.101 (b) 2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process.

**The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.**

If the project has not been completed by **5/23/2007** you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project. You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: James Sampson  
HSC No. 2006.0354

**APPENDIX E**

Participant Information Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Year/Class \_\_\_\_\_ Hometown \_\_\_\_\_

Major/Specialization \_\_\_\_\_

Career Aspirations \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Participant Email**

Attention Visual Arts Majors. Share your story of how you decided to major in the arts by participating in an interview with a researcher who is exploring the career decision making experiences of artists. You will receive an iTunes gift card in appreciation for your involvement. Additionally, you may benefit from the experience by clarifying some of your career goals and plans. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Jill A. Cooley, M.S.  
Psychology Intern

This project is approved by the Human Research Protections Program (#061104S)

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jill A. Cooley pursued her doctoral work in the Combined Program in Counseling Psychology and School Psychology, with an emphasis in counseling psychology, at Florida State University in Tallahassee, FL. She completed a Master of Science degree in Mental Health Counseling and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Stetson University in DeLand, FL. Currently, Jill is working as a pre-doctoral intern at the University of California, San Diego, Psychological and Counseling Services Center.