

THE PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 ON STUDENT CAREER
CHOICES

By

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ABSTRACT

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(Title)
The Perceived Effects of September 11, 2001 on Student Career Choices

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Americans are still reminded everyday of the events of September 11, 2001.

The deep luminous holes where once the twin towers stood is a constant reminder of that tragic and forever changing day in the lives of millions of Americans. It is difficult to understand just how each person has been affected by these events, but research does suggest that significant events in history can have an affect on how people feel about their chosen careers. This study intended to expand the literature and articles regarding September 11, 2001 and career choice. In order to expand this data, the researcher conducted a survey in three high school classes in a small school district in Western Wisconsin. The researcher created a survey in order to gain knowledge and understanding of student's feelings towards September 11 and career choice. The survey was two pages in length and had the students rank ten different occupations on

how they felt about these occupations before and then after September 11. The survey also included Likert Scale type questions as well as open-ended questions for the students to answer. The researcher used the SPSS method of statistical analysis focusing on frequencies, mean scores and percentages. The researcher also looked at correlation statistics as well as t-test results. Students ranked items similarly between the before and after occupational items listed. The students in this study also rated four items on a Likert Scale as well as answered four open-ended questions developed by the researcher. The results of this study show that there was little relationship between students at Ellsworth High School and September 11th as related to career choice. Hence, this paper will review articles and past literature connected to how individuals select careers, design and implementation as well as results, conclusions, and implications for future areas of research.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

On September 11, 2001 the United States was forever changed. Americans watched in horror as planes crashed into the World Trade Center buildings, and then the Pentagon. Americans watched the buildings collapse to the ground, with thousands of their relatives, friends and co-workers trapped inside these buildings. They watched the heroes of tomorrow selflessly strive to save lives, risking their own in the process. Americans were glued to the television for days and weeks' not knowing what was going to happen to their country. Americans felt vulnerable like never before, and uncertain as to the future of the United States of America.

September 11, 2001 has been seen by many Americans as life changing and has ignited a new shaping of what Americans believe to be the ultimate most satisfying career one can engage in as their life work. One professor, Nancy Lange from Michigan State University took it upon herself to administer a survey to 4,000 randomly selected students in October 2001 in order to gain information about how students have been affected from the terrorist attacks. The survey posed questions concerning their country, world issues, closeness to their families, and the role of citizenship. The survey also addressed questions concerning personal safety, news coverage, and travel to other countries after the attacks. Students were to report if these subjects had a great impact on their personal feelings, somewhat of an impact on their feelings, or if their feelings had gone unchanged. The survey showed that students were now forced to examine what it meant to be a citizen with political efforts becoming more evident and eye opening to students. These students felt unchanged when asked about their career plan, academic major

choice, community service, participation in programs or discussions on diversity and multiculturalism, and managing their emotions (Lange, 2002).

The United States has undergone many changes since the 9/11 terrorist attack on America. There are several different career industries that have been either positively or negatively affected by the 9/11 attacks. The travel industry was hit hard in the beginning due to the immediate fright Americans felt after the wake of 9/11. Americans felt uneasy about plane travel, and airline security was in question (Rossheim, 2002). In contrast, 9/11 has for some industries helped to create jobs. This is seen in law enforcement and security professions. According to Rossheim (2002), “in June 2001, law enforcement and security ranked last among Monster’s 42 industry categories in which jobs and resumes can be posted. In October, law enforcement and security ascended to a rank of 36; in June 2002, the category rose further to 26” (p. 2). Another industry that has been affected by the 9/11 attacks is that of insurance and real estate. Insurers have an estimated \$40.2 billion in covered losses that are attributed to the September 11 attacks. Although these numbers look extremely high, the insurance industry does seem to be able to stay on solid ground. The Real Estate sales in the United States have shown to be solid due to the waning faith in the stock market and record low interest rates (Rossheim, 2002). Rossheim (2002) states, “regardless of industry-specific opportunities or the lack thereof, employees are increasingly viewing their careers from the broad perspective of work/life balance” (p. 3). Overwhelmingly, Monster jobs have seen a decrease in the ever-happening job search. Monster jobs have reported that members have decreased their searching on the weekends by 24 percent on Saturdays, and 33 percent on Sundays. Monster jobs feels that a possibility to this could be that more Americans are starting to

realize that weekends are not for getting a job, but rather for getting a life (Rossheim, 2002).

According to Cannon (2002), “the attacks of September 11, 2001 have prompted many people to ask, “What am I doing with my life?” (p. 44). Many Americans have taken a step back and reevaluated what their true life’s work was meant to be. Many individuals are no longer satisfied with working for a living but instead want to work at living (Boyatzis, McKee, and Goleman, 2002). Individuals have been impacted in many ways since the 9/11 attack. Many Americans are re-examining their career choices in the light of the terrorist attacks. They watched the bravery of rescue workers and the feats of firefighters, and by comparison felt that their jobs were meaningless and irrelevant (Yin, 2001).

Financial planners have seen a change in the way working Americans are now looking at their futures and how a possible early retirement may play into their actions. People are now reexamining their financial means and settling for a smaller retirement package so they are able to abandon their careers and enjoy the remainder of their lives stress and worry free. There are also others that do not have the option of early retirement but are looking to make some major long-term changes because of the 9/11 disaster. These individuals are now planning a new career with more meaning and internal satisfaction. Nonprofit organizations are seeing more interested individuals because they want to make a difference. Other people who have chosen to work long after their retirement was possible have now taken a step back in order to reevaluate if what they spending their time and energy on is worth the sacrifice of being in the

workforce much longer than expected. These individuals are taking a time out and deciding to shift to retirement or a new path of career choice (Greene and Tejada, n.d.)

According to Cannon (2002), “though there are no hard numbers, there’s plenty of anecdotal evidence of this desire to pursue service careers. Applications for jobs at Boys and Girls Clubs of America have doubled since 9/11. Teach for America, which places fresh college grads in low-income schools, has had a threefold spike in applicants (p. 1)”. Inquires about joining the Peace Corps spiked 20% in September and October compared with the same months last year (Greene and Tejada, n.d.).

September 11 was not the first significant event in history that shifted the way people felt about their careers. Historically significant events such as war can have an effect on career choice. Today, women are accepted as a permanent part of our working society, but it has not always been that way. Our society has seen a drastic shift from stay-at-home housewives to corporate career women that can challenge any man in the workforce. According to Wolfson (1943), “the First World War expanded the industrial opportunities for women. It has been estimated that some three million women entered the industry during the period from 1916 to 1920 as thousands of men were drawn into the Army” (p.46). Many women of this era had not previously been in the workforce. Women entered into the workforce because there was a labor shortage as many men were fighting in the war. These brave women left their home and families and essentially took over the men’s role of that era in the workforce. This movement sparked the beginning of women entering into the workforce and the role of a wife and mother forever changed. Women took jobs in factories, plants, and mills that were in desperate need of workers.

These women left their aprons and put on overalls, and showed the nation that they, too, could be breadwinners in a male dominated society (Wolfson, 1943).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to describe the impact of September 11, 2001 on student career choices. A survey was conducted assessing high school student's perceptions of career choices as related to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on America. The survey was distributed during the spring 2003 semester at Ellsworth High School which is located in western Wisconsin in two sections of a Learn To Earn class and one section of an Advanced Computers class.

Research Objectives

The research objectives were:

1. To determine if September 11, 2001 had any influence on student career choices.
2. To identify factors that influence student career choices.
3. To identify student feelings and values as related to September 11, 2001 and career choice.

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms are defined:

Career Development -involvement in the life-long process of exploring and investigating self, interests and career resources.

Terrorism – the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence to intimidate or coerce, as for military or political purposes.

Hijack- to seize control of by use of force, especially to reach an alternate destination.

Assumptions and Limitations

It was assumed that students would respond to this survey in a truthful and honest manner as it is related to their level of career choices. A limitation of this study is that it was conducted in a specific region of Wisconsin. This limited the ability of the study to be generalized to other areas in Wisconsin and the United States.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the events of September 11, 2001 in detail. This will include the lives lost, job loss as result of the attack, America's concern for safety, and the heroes of September 11, 2001. This chapter will also include a section on career development theories and family influence associated with adolescent career choice.

September 11, 2001

CNN describes the events of September 11, 2001 in great detail. At approximately 8:45 a.m. American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center. Spectators watched the hijacked plane crash into the tower leaving a massive hole in the tower. At approximately 9:03 a.m. the south tower is hit by another hijacked plane also crashing into the huge building. People watched stunned as the towers engulfed in flames burned; smoke pouring out of the towers. Soon after the second tower is hit, the New York City airport is shut down and President Bush reports at 9:30 a.m. that the country has suffered an "apparent terrorist attack". Yet, minutes later at 9:43 a.m. American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon, which renders a sudden evacuation. At 9:45 the White House is evacuated, and at 9:57 a.m. President Bush departs from Florida. Americans watched in horror at 10:05 as the south tower of the World Trade Center collapses to the ground. Americans glued to their televisions watch as a huge cloud of smoke rises above the screaming terrified New York City residents running for their lives with their suits and ties on. Americans were sprinting away from the worst terrorist attack America has ever seen. Minutes later a small portion

of the Pentagon collapsed. At the same time, United Airlines Flight 93, a plane that is also hijacked crashes into a cornfield in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. At 10:28 a.m. Americans witness the north tower of the world Trade Center gives way and collapse to the ground. During the next few hours after the attack, reports were constantly coming in verifying flights that were part of the terrorist attack. Finally at 1:27 p.m. President Bush announces a state of emergency is declared by the city of Washington. Later that evening President Bush once again addresses the nation saying “thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil”. President Bush asks for prayers for the families and victims. He ends by saying, “These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve” (<http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/chronology.attack/index.html>)

Lives Lost

When asked about the lives lost of September 11, 2001 at a news conference, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was quoted as saying, “I don’t think we want to speculate about that – more than any of us can bear”

(CNN.com/<http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/11/chronology.attack/index.html>, September 12, 2001, n.p.). The tragic events of 9/11 left thousands of people without husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers just to name a few. The exact number of victims will probably never be known due to the size of the World Trade Center. According to the New York metro.com

(<http://www.newyorkmetro.com/news/acticles/wtc/1year/numbers.htm>, n.d., n.p.),

“Official figures as of September 5, 2002 reveal that the total number of people killed in the attacks is 2,819. The number of paramedics and firefighters killed in the attacks total 343. There were 23 NYPD officers killed. The number of people who lost a spouse or

partner in the attack is 1,609. The estimated number of children who lost a parent is 3,051. Finally, the percentage of Americans who knew someone hurt or killed in the attack is 20%”.

Job Loss

New York City has been hit hard since the September, 11 attacks with regards to occupational lay-offs and overall job loss. According to the Fiscal Policy Institute (2002), “over 260,000 New York City workers filed for initial unemployment claims in the six months since September, 11. New York City lost a total of 131,300 jobs in the year 2001. Finally, every industry sector experienced job loss during the last three months of 2001, except for construction where there was a small gain of 400 jobs” (p.2).

The overall economy of the nation has suffered considerably as well due to the September 11 attacks. The Bureau of Labor Statistics does state that the economy was wearing down before the attacks, but that the aftermath of the attacks enhanced economic weakness. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2002), “as of December 29th 2001, there were 408 extended lay-off events involving 114,711 workers directly or indirectly attributed to the attacks. Thirty-three states reported extended mass lay-off activity related in some way to the September 11 incidents” (p.1). The Bureau of Labor Statistics found at a statewide level that Hawaii and Nevada suffered tremendously due to the September 11 attacks because of their heavy dependency on travel and tourism (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002).

Freedom versus Safety

On September 11, 2001 America lost a great deal. America was upturned and forever changed within hours. The tragic day left Americans feeling scared and vulnerable,

horrified at the sights they had just witnessed on television and in plain sight. Americans also lost their feeling of being a safe nation untouched by terrorism. According to Gillespie (2002), “we had changed from a nation that placed a uniquely high value on privacy and freedom to one that embraced security and safety as first principles” (n.p.). Approximately one month after the September 11 attacks, President Bush signed the USA PATRIOT Act. This acronym stands for Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act. In short this new act gave the government more power in watching and observing U.S. citizens. The USA PATRIOT Act is a synecdoche for the freedom for safety swap. The Act gives the government much more power for roving wiretaps, and for spying on Web browsers of people not wanted or suspected by authorities. The Act also assessed the definition of terrorism and made it a much broader offense than it was previously stated in statues. Americans are seeing the USA PATRIOT Act enforced enormously in public places such as airports where people are expected to arrive hours earlier for a rigorous inspection before being allowed to board a plane. United States citizens have been forced to embrace these restrictions order to feel safe in a country that has been so affect by terrorism (Gillespie, 2002)

American Heroism

There is no doubt that America has embraced the firefighters and policemen who risked their lives to save the lives of people who were caught in the destruction of the World Trade Center terrorist attack. According to the New York metro.com (n.d.), “there was a total of 343 firefighters and paramedics killed during rescue attempts with 23 New York City policemen killed and 37 Port Authority police officers lost a result of the

terrorist attacks” (p. 1). These men and women are seen as true heroes for their courage and bravery. Yin (2001) stated that “ American’s overall impression of the work/career landscape seems to have altered, as people not only reconsider what they’re doing with their own lives, but also look at other people’s choices in new ways. Yin indicates, according to the American Demographics/Market Facts survey, more than three-quarters of respondents said they now see firefighters, policemen, and soldier as more prestigious occupations than before” (p. 2.) Monster Jobs (an online job service) have seen an increased interest of law enforcement, as job seekers become more benevolent in their career aspirations (<http://www.monster.com>). According to Long (n.d.), “the number of active job seekers with resumes in the law enforcement category increased 21.5 percent between June 2001 and June 2002” (p. 1).

Career Development Theories

This section will focus on three main developmental theories that guide adolescents in the career decision making process. These will include Ginzberg’s developmental theory, Super’s self-concept theory, and Holland’s personality type theory (Santrock, 2001).

The first theory developed by Eli Ginzberg is commonly called the developmental career choice theory. According to Santrock (2001), “children and adolescents go through three career-choice stages: fantasy, tentative, and realistic” (p. 438). Young children, when asked what they would like to be when they grow up commonly answer such occupations as doctors, teachers, and superheroes. Ginzberg feels that children until the age of 11 are in the fantasy stage of career choice. Adolescents on the other hand are in the tentative stage of career choice. During this

stage, adolescents are beginning to transition from the fantasy stage into a more realistic decision making stage of development. Santrock (2001) states that, “Adolescents start evaluating their interests (11-12 years old) and also their capacities (13-14 years old) and finally their values (15-16 years old)” (pg.439). From about 17-18 years of age, adolescent thinking begins to move from less subjective to a more realistic view of career choice. Adolescents begin to evaluate their career choices, and start making decision on what type of career path they are going to take (Santrock, 2001).

There have been a number of criticisms to Ginzberg’s theory that should be pointed out. The first is that data collected from Ginzberg’s studies were taken from middle socio economic status individuals who possibly had more career options and resources available to them. The second is that Ginzberg tends to discount individual differences, particularly maturity level. This criticism states that not all people will be traveling through the developmental stages at the same time. It also states that some students will not necessarily go through a fantasy stage when looking at career options (Santrock, 2001).

The second theory of career development is the career self-concept theory developed by Donald Super. Santrock (2001) states “that individual’s self-concept plays a central role in their career choice” (p. 439). Donald Super has written extensively on the topic of career development, and has proposed a process of change that is shown through a series of life stages often characterized as a sequence of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. The growth stage is identified as the physical and psychological growth. This is the time when individuals form their own attitudes and opinions that will influence their self-concept. The experiences that one has during this

time will later affect how they perceive the world of work (Isaacson and Brown, 2000). The exploratory stage can be paralleled to that of Ginzberg's developmental career choice theory in that during this stage individuals frequently have a fantasy about what type of career they would like to possess such as a cowboy or a dancer. Individuals slowly move out of this stage as they mature, and move into the establishment stage. During this stage individuals encounter real work experiences that guide them into a more realistic view of career choice. Individuals may experience trial and error attempts at finding what field of work satisfies them personally. During the maintenance stage, the individual tries to maintain or improve their work situation. Since a person's occupation and self-concept change with time, revising and adjusting is necessary for occupational satisfaction and success. The final stage is that of the decline stage, which is often seen before retirement occurs. In this stage, an individual is more concerned with keeping a position than improving or enhancing the work environment and position. This stage is terminated by an individual's withdrawal from the world of work (Isaacson and Brown, 2001).

The final career development theory is that of John Holland's personality type theory. According to Santrock (2001) this theory states, "that an effort should be made to match an individual's personality with his or her career choice" (p. 439). Holland believes that once an individual is able to find a career that suits their personality, they in turn will be more likely to enjoy and thrive in their career occupation. Holland believes that a person's personality develops as a result of interactions and experiences coupled with inherited characteristics. A person's interests expand from the activities they are exposed to at a young age (Holland, 1997). Holland proposed that there are six pure personality types that individuals fit into. These personality types are as follows:

realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. These six personality types are often considered when assessing an individual's career choice. According to Santrock (2001), "the realistic individual is attributed to being strong and competent individuals who use practical ways to solve problems. They are characterized as stable and masculine. These individuals have little social know-how and are best oriented towards agricultural, technical, skilled-trade, and engineering careers" (p. 440). The investigative personality types are seen as conceptually and theoretically oriented. These people enjoy scientific vocations, foreign languages, algebra, and creative activities such as sculpture and dance. They tend to avoid social situations and achieve the most in academic and scientific areas (Isaacson and Brown, 2000). The artistic personality type tends to rely on subjective impressions and fantasies. Artistic individuals tend to see themselves as unsociable, feminine, and sensitive. Adolescents with this personality type should be guided to a career centered on the creative arts and literature expression. Social personality types enjoy dealing with others. They have an intrinsic need for social interaction and socialization. According to Isaacson and Brown (2000), "these individuals prefer educational, therapeutic, and religious vocations and such activities as church, government, community services, music, reading, and dramatics" (p. 23). Enterprising people are often characterized as being self-confident extroverted people who prefer sales, supervisory, and leadership occupations. These individuals use their verbal abilities to lead others, dominate individuals, and sell people on ideas and products (Santrock, 2001). Lastly, the conventional personality types are characterized as those individuals who have distaste for unstructured activities. These

people tend to prefer clerical, computational tasks, and often put a high value on economic matters (Isaacson and Brown, 2000).

Family Influences on Career Decision

Career decision is a major choice that all adolescents generally do make during their high school years. The decision to attend a four year college, technical or community college, enroll in an apprenticeship, enlist in the military, or opt for on-the-job training is not something that is taken lightly. There are a number of influences that can sway career choice for adolescents in this society.

Families are changing due to factors such as dual earner income, socioeconomic status, diversity and culture. It is not easy to define what the word family means, yet nonetheless families in any form are still a huge influence on career decision. According to Herr (1974), “the family exerts a significant influence on vocational interest, occupational choice, and career development” (p. 204). The most apparent environmental conditions are that of parental personalities with regards to the workforce. There is not one type of family that exists anymore. The term nuclear family is disintegrating quickly as new types of families are increasing taking the forefront in our society. All children are not raised the same therefore we cannot assume that all children will have the same values and personalities when they become adolescents. Women are increasing in vast numbers in the workforce changing and molding a new traditional dual earner family. Girls are observing and adapting to the way their mothers are raising them and internalizing values related to careers that fifty years ago were nonexistent (Herr, 1974). According to Drummond and Ryan (1995), “Anglo-European families stress the

development of autonomy, independence, and competition. Native Americans stress cooperation and group work” (p. 43).

Families also have a prevalent impact on a child’s self-concept of themselves and who they are. Herr (1974) states “states that it is generally accepted by researchers – at least those who study the family that an individual’s concept of himself originates in the perceptions and expectations of his parents, and often of their parents and grandparents” (p. 209). It is said that often time’s parents do not want to shape their children into tiny replicas of themselves but it is often unavoidable because parents are undeniably a child’s number one role model in life. A child often times will unconsciously mimic personality traits of a parent. Children also are exposed to how a parent views the world of work in relation to their profession (Herr, 1974)

Factors That Determine Career Choice

There are many factors that can persuade or deter a person’s path of career choice.

Economic factors have an influence in career choice due to the fluctuation in our economy and the changing trends in occupations. Technology has impacted career choice in our society due to emergence of computers into the workforce. Computers have taken over many professions in which human manpower is no longer needed. It is essential for counselors in high schools to be aware of the changing demands in our economy and to direct students in the direction the economy is shifting in regards to career choice (Drummond and Ryan, 1995).

Sociological factors are another influence on career choice. The socioeconomic level of a family is a major factor in career choice. Families that are from higher socioeconomic level prepare their children to enter into a professional career as opposed

to an unskilled career requiring low educational attainment. Family socialization is also a factor related to career choice. Another factor involved with career choice is that of political issues. Government bodies have a huge influence on how a person perceives a career. Government institutions make laws regarding taxes, minimum wages, and safety, which in return influence individuals and their occupations. The demand for certain occupations may go up or down depending on government decisions regarding legislative outcomes (Drummond and Ryan, 1995).

Finally, psychological factors can determine a career choice. Psychological factors include such things as a person's values, interest, abilities, aptitudes, and achievements throughout school. As seen in Holland's theory of career development, out interests can have a major effect on what type of career a person chooses to pursue (Drummond and Ryan, 1995).

Conclusion

The research has suggested that there are many factors that influence career decision or indecision. Theories stated in this chapter give inclinations as to how students decide on a certain occupation or career choice. Although one theory is not prevalent over another it is safe to state that individuals are very diverse in the way they perceive career choice and selection. The research also suggests that September 11, 2001 had a huge impact on individuals personally and socially. Early research may suggest that it is not only the economy that has been effected but also the status of certain careers and occupations that may be linked to September 11th.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will describe the site selected for this study, as well as the procedure, and the selection of subjects. The instrumentation used in this study is also described. This chapter also discusses data collection, data analysis, and limitations to the study.

Site Selection

The site that was chosen for the distribution of the survey was Ellsworth High School. Ellsworth High School is located in the center of Pierce County, Wisconsin. It is a small rural area but the district encompasses a large amount of land area. Many residents of Ellsworth commute to the Twin Cities for employment. Large portions of families are farmers in the area. The Ellsworth school district consists of four elementary schools, one middle school, as well as a four-year high school. The district has approximately 1,900 children between kindergarten and twelfth grade. The Ellsworth population is approximately 2,300 people, and is considered part of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Ellsworth is within a fifteen-minute drive from post secondary educational institutions for both university and vocational education. Most students who graduate from Ellsworth High School continue their education at near-by universities and colleges. These include such universities as the University of Wisconsin-Stout, the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Red Wing Technical College, Chippewa Valley Technical College, Dakota County Technical College as well as a variety of colleges located in the Twin Cities area.

Selection and Description of Sample

The respondents in this study were sophomores through senior age high school students aged 16-18 enrolled at Ellsworth High School (see Table 3.1). Three classrooms were chosen to be selected for this study. The classes were two sections of a Lean To Earn class as well as an Advanced Computer class. The survey consent form (see Appendix A) was given to a total of 53 students from all three sections. There were a total of 24 students who had the consent form signed and were in turn able to participate in the survey.

The survey sample had slightly more females (54.2%) than males (45.8%) (See Table 3.2). The current level in school for the majority of the sample was that of junior status (See Table 3.3).

Instrumentation

The instrumentation that was used in this study was developed by the researcher because there was no survey available to assess the subjects analyzed. (Appendix 1) The survey included the following information in order to better understand the subjects in this study: age, gender, and current level in school. The survey included comparative lists of occupations and students were asked to think about how they felt about these occupations before and then after September 11. The survey also included four questions using a Likert Scale addressing feelings towards September 11 as well as four open-ended questions for students to answer. The students taking the survey were asked to rate the occupations from 1-10 on how they felt about them prior to 9/11, and then

Table 3.1

Demographic Information

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percent
<u>Age</u>		
16 years old	9	37.5
17 years old	11	45.8
18 years old	4	16.7

Table 3.2

Demographic Information

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percent
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	11	45.8
Female	13	54.2

Table 3.3

Demographic Information

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percent
<u>Current Grade Level</u>		
Sophomore	4	16.7
Junior	17	70.8
Senior	3	12.5

rate them one more time how they felt about them after 9/11. A rank of one indicated the occupations students felt were most important. Occupations that were included on the lists are as follows: policemen, firemen, stock brokers, pilots, flight attendants, nurses, insurance agents, teachers, doctors, and lawyers. The open-ended questions that were included in the survey are as follows:

1. How did 9/11 affect how you feel about career choice in general?
2. Have you chosen a career or area of study to pursue in the future? Please explain.
3. If so, how did you go about selecting a career or area of study? Please explain.
4. What factors influenced or possibly could influence your career choices and decisions?

Face validity was analyzed for the four sections of the instrument. Sections II and V of the instrument had low face validity because only 13 of the 24 respondents correctly completed these sections. For sections I, III, IV face validity was apparent because these sections of the survey were completed correctly by all 24 respondents and measured the desired concept.

Data Collection

The instructor of the Learn To Earn and Advanced Computer course was contacted and asked to distribute the survey in the classroom early in January 2003. The instructor felt this was a pertinent subject and fully agreed to let the researcher distribute her survey. Prior to the distribution of the survey, students in these classes were asked to please fill out the Human Research Subjects Consent Form to be completed before the

survey is distributed. This consent form had to be signed by the participant's parents if the student was under the age of eighteen (Appendix 2). The students were then informed that this was an opportunity for them to receive extra credit in their class as well as an excellent way to begin thinking about future career choice and options. All students who had the consent form filled out were eligible to partake in the survey. After students arrived at their class, brief instructions were given to all students participating in the study. A rationale for the study was given to all students, and any questions they had were answered. The survey was passed out at this time and pens/pencils were distributed to all students who were in need. The researcher reminded students to read each item carefully, and answer each item honestly and carefully. The students were given as much time as they needed in order to complete the survey in full. After all the surveys were completed and returned, the researcher thanked everyone whom participated and quietly left the classroom. Pens/pencils were collected at this time.

Data Analysis

Responses obtained through the research instrument were tabulated and analyzed using both the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 10.0) as well as a manual method of analyzing data. The data obtained from Section II of the survey was analyzed by using correlation and T-test statistics. The data from section III of the instrument was analyzed by examining the cumulative percentages of student responses. Section IV of the survey was examined by manual tabulations and answers were categorized by similar feelings and explanations communicated by the students. Section V of the instrument was measured identically to Section II using correlation's and T-test methods of statistical analysis.

Limitations

A limitation to this study is that the researcher was only able to analyze data from 13 of the 24 students for Sections II and V of the instrument because instructions were not given properly by the instructor to the students. Another limitation of this study was that it was difficult to generalize the data collected to all high school students. Since the researcher is only distributing the surveys to one high school in Wisconsin, it is not appropriate to assume that the researcher's findings can be generalized to the feelings of all high school students in the United States. Another limitation may be the demographic area of the sample selected. It should be noted that students from a high school in western Wisconsin might not feel the same as high school students from New York or New Jersey who have been affected differently when looking at 9/11. Another limitation may be that students who filled out the survey did not do so in an honest or complete manner. The student may have consciously or unconsciously want to please the researcher and therefore answer the questions in that way. It could also be that another limitation is time. Some students may feel rushed if other students finish before them; consequently some students may feel rushed to finish. In turn, they may not answer the questions in as much detail as they previously would have. The final limitation was that this survey was extra credit to students. I feel that I could have received a better percentage of students participating if the consent form was handed out earlier than one week prior to the study. This would have given students more time to take the consent form home to get signed and brought back with plenty of time spare.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess student's feelings toward the impact of September 11 and career choice. A written survey was developed and given to students at Ellsworth High School. The survey contained five sections: demographic information (Section I), occupational rank of career choice prior to 9/11 (Section II), feelings and attitudes towards 9/11 (Section III), four open-ended questions concerning career choice (Section IV), and an occupational ranking of careers after 9/11 (Section V). The demographic information was presented in Chapter 3 and Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3. This chapter will report how the findings are related to the proposed objectives.

Objective 1 – To determine if September 11, 2001 had any influence on career choices.

The first objective of this study is to determine if September 11, 2001 had any influence on student career choices.

Sections II and V were identical in the instrument. These sections presented ten different occupations pivotal to the September 11th attack (See Appendix 2). Students were asked to rank the items one through ten with one representing the occupation students felt were most important. Students were asked ranked these items first before September 11th and then after September 11th. There were a total of 24 respondents in this survey, but only 13 out of 24 ranked the items correctly in Sections II and V on the instrument. Therefore the researcher has chosen to analyze only the 13 survey results that were indeed answered correctly. The results of Section II indicate that before September 11th students felt the most highly about Doctors with a mean rank of 3.62.

Firemen, with a mean rank of 4.54 tied with Pilots, which also had a mean rank of 4.54. The occupations that students had the lowest feelings about prior to September 11th were Flight Attendants with a mean rank of 6.54, stock brokers with a mean rank of 6.96, and lastly insurance agents with a mean rank of 7.15 (See Table 4.1). The results of Section V of the study are as follows: Feelings towards Firemen after September 11th were highest with a mean rank of 3.85, followed by Doctors with a mean rank of 4.85, and Policemen with a mean rank of 5.15. The occupations with the lowest feelings were Insurance Agents with a mean rank of 6.00, Stock Brokers with a mean rank of 6.46, and last Flight Attendants with a mean rank 6.85 (See Table 4.2).

A correlation of the samples was analyzed using SPSS (10.0) to determine if there was a relationship between the before and after data compilation of Sections II and V of the instrument (See Table 4.3). All correlations were statistically significant.

A T-test was run to determine if there was any significant difference between the before and after ranking of items. The results show that there is nearly significant difference between the paired sample of Pilots (sig. .097) as well as the paired sample of Firemen (sig. .082) (See Table 4.4).

Objective 2 – To Determine how Students Select a Chosen Career.

The second objective is to determine how students select a chosen career.

Section IV of the instrument, which had four open-ended questions for students to answer (See Appendix B), focused on influences of career decision making and the factors that influence career choice.

The open-ended questions in the survey are as follows:

1. How did September 11th affect how you feel in general about career choice?

Table 4.1

Mean Scores of Student Feelings before September 11, 2001

Name of Occupation	N	Mean Score
Policemen	13	4.69
Stock Brokers	13	6.69
Nurses	13	5.46
Pilots	13	4.54
Firemen	13	4.54
Teachers	13	5.92
Insurance Agents	13	7.15
Flight Attendants	13	6.54
Lawyers	13	5.85
Doctors	13	3.62

Mean based on rank 1-10, with 1 being the most preferred career.

Table 4.2

Mean Scores of Student Feelings after September 11, 2001

Name of Occupation	N	Mean Score
Policemen	13	5.15
Stock Brokers	13	6.46
Nurses	13	5.54
Pilots	13	5.54
Firemen	13	3.85
Teachers	13	5.46
Insurance Agents	13	6.00
Flight Attendants	13	6.85
Lawyers	13	5.31
Doctors	13	4.85

Mean based on rank 1-10, with 1 being the most preferred career.

Table 4.3

Occupational Paired Sample Correlations of Pre and Post 9/11

Occupation	N	Correlation	Sig.
Policemen	13	.856	.000
Stock Brokers	13	.668	.013
Nurses	13	.934	.000
Pilots	13	.704	.007
Firemen	13	.909	.000
Teachers	13	.671	.012
Insurance Agents	13	.675	.011
Flight Attendants	13	.480	.097
Lawyers	13	.858	.000
Doctors	13	.501	.081

Mean based on rank 1-10, with 1 being the most preferred career.

Table 4.4

Paired Sample T-test Statistics on Occupational Choice Pre and Post 9/11

Occupational Choice	Pre 9/11 Mean	Post 9/11 Mean	N	t	sig.
Policemen	4.69	5.15	13	-1.000	.337
Stock Brokers	6.69	6.46	13	.303	.767
Nurses	5.46	5.54	13	-.291	.776
Pilots	4.54	5.54	13	-1.803	.097
Firemen	4.54	3.85	13	1.897	.082
Teachers	5.92	5.46	13	.762	.461
Insurance Agents	7.15	6.00	13	1.752	.105
Flight Attendants	6.54	6.85	13	-.395	.700
Lawyers	5.85	5.31	13	1.289	.222
Doctors	3.62	4.85	13	-1.618	.132

Mean based on rank 1-10, with 1 being the most preferred career.

2. Have you chosen a career or area of study to pursue in the future? Please explain.
3. If so, how did you go about selecting the career or area of study? Please explain.
4. What factors influenced or possibly could influence your career choices and decisions?

The responses from the open-ended question were then tabulated using manual statistical analysis and the researcher categorized the responses.

For the first question: How did September 11th affect how you feel in general about career choice, the most common response was that it did not affect me in any way (See Table 4.5). Four respondents indicated that September 11th made them want a career in which they could help people (See table 4.5).

The second question on the survey was have you chosen a career or area of study to pursue in the future? For this question, the researcher categorized the responses into eight separate categories. The results show the highest responses being a health related field (25.0%), and service careers (20.8%). The lowest response rate (1) was for business related and natural resource careers (See Table 4.6).

The third question asked students to examine how they selected the career or area of study. The highest responses for this question was that it was an area the individual was good at (29.2%), and it's just something I have always wanted to pursue (20.8%). The lowest response rate (1) was for school/vocational education and monetary accumulation (See Table 4.7).

Table 4.5

Question 1 - Feelings Concerning September 11, 2001 in General

Response	N	Frequency	Percent
1. Has not affected me in any way	24	14	58.3%
2. It made me want a career in which I am able to help people.	24	4	16.7%
3. I do not want to live anywhere That would be a threat to terrorism.	24	2	8.3%
4. It made me realize how dangerous jobs can be.	24	2	8.3%
5. Helped in changing my mind about a certain career choice.	24	1	4.2%
6. I have more empathy for those who lost their lives.	24	1	4.2%

Table 4.6

Question 2 – Analysis of Student Career Choices

Response	N	Frequency	Percent
Service Career	24	6	25.0%
Health Related Field	24	5	20.8%
Do not have a chosen career	24	5	20.8%
Computer Related Career	24	3	12.5%
Educational Field	24	2	8.3%
Business Related Field	24	1	4.2%
Natural Resources	24	1	4.2%

Table 4.7

Question 3 – How did Students Select Their Career Choice

Response	N	Frequency	Percent
An area of personal strength.	24	7	29.2%
Something I have always wanted to pursue.	24	5	20.8%
The job fits my personality.	24	4	16.7%
Internet	24	3	12.5%
School/Vocational Education	24	1	4.2%
Monetary Accumulation	24	1	4.2%

The last question addressed the influences of a student's career choices and decisions. The highest response for this question was parents and other family members with 25 percent, and second the second highest response was how much money the individual will earn with 20.8 percent. The lowest response rate (1) was the military (See Table 4.8).

Objective 3 – To identify student feelings and values related to September 11, 2001 and Career Choice.

The third objective of this study was to determine student's feelings and values as related to September 11, 2001 and student career choice.

Section III of the survey included four questions that focused on student's feelings toward the personal impact of September 11th on student career choice. The students were asked to rate on a Likert Scale of not at all-1 to always-5 on how September 11th affected their feelings and values related to career choice. The results indicated for question one: Did 9/11 have an affect on you personally, the mean was 2.54 (Std. Deviation 1.06). The second question: Have your feelings changed towards certain professions since the September 11th attack indicated that the mean was 2.25 (Std. Deviation .99). The third question: Have your values changed as a result of 9/11 particularly looking at career choice. The results of the data show the mean as a 1.83 (Std. Deviation .96). The forth question using a Likert Scale was: Has 9/11 been a factor in your career indecision or uncertainty at all in the past year? The mean of question four was 1.57 (Std. Deviation .66). (See Table 4.9).

Table 4.8

Question 4 – Factors That Influenced Career Decision in Students

Response	N	Frequency	Percent
Parents and other family	24	6	25.0%
Money	24	5	20.8%
Personal Motivation	24	3	12.5%
Not sure	24	3	12.5%
Making a difference in someone's life	24	2	8.3%
The job outlook	24	2	8.3%
The military	24	1	4.2%

Table 4.9

Assessment of Student Feelings and Values Associated with 9/11 and Career Choice

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Did 9/11 have an affect on you personally in some way?	2.54	1.06
2. Have your feelings changed towards certain professions since the 9/11 attack?	2.25	.99
3. Have your values changed as a result of 9/11 particularly looking at career choice?	1.83	.96
4. Has 9/11 been a factor in your career indecision or uncertainty at all in the past year?	1.57	.66

Likert Scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = All the time

Summary

The analysis of this survey show that for Sections II and V the occupations Pilots and Firemen had a nearly significant t-test difference. No other significant differences existed between the before and after occupational choices.

For section III of the instrument the mean scores for the Likert Scale ratings were very similar, and differences were minimal.

Section IV of the survey indicated that overall September 11th did not have a significant impact on student career choices, yet there were four individuals that did indicate a need to find a career where they indeed could help people as a result of September 11th.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the research on September 11th and career choice. A summary of the purpose, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis are included. Conclusions of the findings for each objective are presented as well as limitations of the study. The chapter is concluded with recommendations from the researcher.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if September 11, 2001 had any affect on student career choices. The research objectives of this study were:

1. To determine if September 11, 2001 had any influence on student career choices.
2. To identify factors that influence student career choices.
3. To identify student feelings and values as related to September 11, 2001 and career choice.

The researcher developed the survey used to collect data. The survey was divided into five sections. Section one of the survey provided basic demographic information including age, gender, and current grade in school. Section two and five were identical and asked students to rank ten different occupations related to September 11th and their feelings about these careers. Section two analyzed how students felt about these careers before September 11th, and section five analyzed their feelings about these careers after September 11th. Section three used a Likert Scale and asked students to rate four

questions concerning their feelings and values related to September 11th and career choice. Section four of the survey included four open-ended questions for students to answer. The questions were included in order to obtain information concerning personal career choice and how they determined what occupation to pursue. The researcher analyzed the data and categorized the responses into various categories.

The respondents in this study were a random sample of high school students whose ages ranged from 16-18. A total of 24 surveys were collected. The survey sample had slightly more females (54.2%) than males (45.8%). The mean age of the students was 16.79.

Responses were tabulated and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data from Section I was examined by using frequency counts, percentages, and mean for the total group of respondents. In Section II and Section V, data was analyzed by using a paired sample correlation, means, and a t-test was ran to determine significance between answers. In Section III, the means were calculated for each question. In Section IV, the open-ended questions were calculated manually by the researcher and data was analyzed by categorical grouping.

Conclusions

Objective 1 – To determine if September 11, 2001 had any influence on student career choices.

The findings of the study show that that September 11th had a minimal if any affect of student career choices. When looking at the mean scores for Sections II and V, the t-test that was ran showed only close significance to a change in feelings towards Pilots (sig. -1.803), and Firemen (sig. 1.897). These findings show that students were

less likely to want to become Pilots after September 11th and more likely to want to become a Fireman after September 11th. Still, these findings are not significant for the remaining careers showing no significance between the before and after feelings of occupations such as: Policemen, Stock Brokers, Nurses, Teachers, Insurance Agents, Flight Attendants, Lawyers, and Doctors. These leaves the researcher to conclude that September 11th was not a significant factor in student career choice.

Objective 2 – To determine how students select a chosen career.

The findings for this objective show that students have a variety of ways they find and select a chosen career. These findings do agree with the research conducted by Herr (1974) that states “the family exerts a significant influence on vocational interest, occupational choice, and career development” (p. 204). This was examined in the open-ended question four of the survey that asked students to comment on influences of career decision. The most common answer was that of parental influence or other family members with a frequency of six.

When assessing if September 11th had any affect on career choice, the findings show that overall it did not have an impact with 14 (58.3%) out of 24 students answering that it did not have any affect on their career choice. Only four (16.7%) answered that it did make them want to choose a career where they would be able help people.

Objective 3 – To identify student feelings and values to September 11, 2001 and career choice.

This section of the survey assessing students feelings and attitudes as related to September 11th and career choice found that there was really no change or impact on feelings or values as related to September 11th and career choice. The mean scores of the

four Likert Scale items were very low in terms of any influence from the September 11th attack. Question 1: Did 9/11 have any affect on you personally? The findings show that the mean was 2.54 showing very little affect on students personally. Question 2: Have your feelings changed towards certain professions since September 11th? Finding of this question show that the mean was 2.25 again showing little change in feelings towards career choice. Question 3: Have your values changed as a result of September 11th particularly looking at career choice? These findings show a mean of 1.83 with very little change in values for students. Question 4: Has 9/11 been a factor in your career indecision or uncertainty at all in the past year? This mean was the lowest of all four showing a mere 1.57 mean answer. These overall findings illustrate that 9/11 had very little to almost no affect on student career choice of students surveyed.

Limitations

The responses from the students may have been impacted due to the overall length of time from which September 11th took place and the date the students actually took this survey. Too much time may have gone by to get an accurate idea of the impact September 11th made on these students. The students may not remember accurately how they indeed felt about certain careers before September 11th took place.

In Sections II and V, the researcher incorrectly instructed the students to rate the items instead of rank the items. The researcher also incorrectly indicated to the students to rank the items as one being the lowest and ten being the highest. This is a limitation because only 13 out of 24 students correctly ranked the items. The researcher was then forced to only analyze the student's data that did rank the items correctly making the sample much smaller.

Recommendations

Even though results from this study did not yield results in which there was an affect from the September 11th attack on student career choices, it is the researcher's belief that there has been some impact on student's feelings towards certain careers. However, the data yielded from this study clearly show that the participants in this study did not feel that September 11th was a major factor in their career decision or indecision. It is possible that other factors may have influenced the manner in which the participants answered the survey. This study was limited in the number of participants and in geographical region. Perhaps if the researcher distributed the survey in a high school in New York and compared the results to students from the Ellsworth area, the results would yield much different results when analyzing the New York City high school student's feelings about September 11th and career choice. It is the researcher's belief that a large sample size would be needed in order to make concrete conclusions about September 11th and career choice. It is also possible that written information provided in the open-ended questions may have influenced answers. Thus, there are many variables that could have influenced this survey.

Recommendations for Future Study

It is the researcher's belief that one area of this study that could be altered is the geographical region of the sample size, and also increase the number of participants. It is also possible that future researchers investigate the feelings of adult participants rather than school-age students. This may yield interesting results by having a different age sample respond to alike questions.

Besides changes that could be made in surveying the sample and location, the researcher also believes that variation in occupations would be interesting to analyze. The researcher developed this instrument only looking at occupations related to the September 11th attack. In future studies, it may be beneficial to analyze feelings of generic and September 11th related career to see if there was any correlation between the differences.

Recommendations for Counselors

It is the researchers belief that if a significant event such as 9/11 should happen again in the United States, it is the counselor's duty to be prepared for the repercussions of disasters and catastrophes. The researcher would recommend that counselors be sensitive to students who are greatly affected by these horrific disasters. Significant events can impact the lives of individuals in many ways. This survey assessed only one of many outcomes to a significant event in history.

I would also recommend to counselors that if they would like to know how these events impact their students, they assess how shortly after the event has occurred when feelings are fresh and undimmed by time.

Finally I suggest that counselors remember that all students do not assess career choices in the same way. Chapter two examined only a few of the dozens of theories connected to career choice and selection. There are many assessments for counselors to implement in schools to find where student's strengths and abilities lie. If a student is dissatisfied with the results of these assessments, a counselor may choose a different approach to career counseling for each individual student depending on their needs. When looking at developmental theories, it is imperative that counselors try multiple

approaches to career selection for students. It is important to get to know your students and their backgrounds to get a better understanding of how they may assess career choice. Chapter two also discussed family influence on career choice and decision. Counselors may try to understand family dynamics when assessing career choice in order to piece together a framework for career investigation. There are many factors that influence career choice and decision. Chapter two discussed significant factors such as economic, sociological, and psychological influence. Each person is influenced in distinct ways, and counselors should be receptive to these influences when aiding a student in career counseling.

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Appendix A

CONSENT FORM**The Perceived Effects of September 11, 2001 on Student Career Choice**

Your son/daughter is invited to participate in a study of September 11, 2001 and student career choices. Your son/daughter was randomly selected from students attending Ellsworth High School. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing that your child is able to participate in this study.

This study is being conducted by Erin Olk, Guidance and Counseling Program, University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to assess the perceived effects of September 11 on student career choices. There is no penalty if your child does not complete this study, or if your child does not complete all of the questions within this study.

Procedure:

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, I would ask that you do the following things:

- 1) Sign and date this form prior to taking the survey.
- 2) Allow your child to complete the survey to the best of their ability and hand back to their classroom teacher when completed.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has no apparent risks involved.

The benefits to participation is that your son/daughter may gain insight on effects of September 11 that they may have not yet thought about prior to taking this survey. Students may also begin to think about their personal career path as a result of this study!

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private and the responses on the survey will have no personal information capable of identifying an individual. In any sort of report I might submit to the University, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

The decision whether or not to participate will not affect a students' current or future relations with UW-Stout and/or the high school, or the high school teacher. If your son/daughter does decide to participate, they are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Erin Olk, University of Wisconsin-Stout. Questions or concerns about the research study should be addressed to Erin Olk, the researcher at (715) 233-2315, or Judy Rommel, the research advisor at (715) 232-2394. Questions about the rights of research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie, WI, 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

Statement of Assent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I assent to my son/daughter to participate in the study.

Parent Signature _____
Date _____

Student Signature if over 18 _____
Date _____

Appendix B

September 11 and Student Career Choices Survey

Age: _____

Gender: ___ Male ___ Female

Grade in school: Please circle one.

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Directions: This section of the survey is designed to determine how individuals feel about certain occupations **before** September 11. For the following column, *please rate the column from one to ten with one being the lowest and ten the highest regarding how you felt about these occupations before September 11.*

- ___ Policemen
- ___ Stock Broker
- ___ Nurses
- ___ Pilots
- ___ Firemen
- ___ Teachers
- ___ Insurance Agents
- ___ Flight Attendants
- ___ Lawyers
- ___ Doctors

Directions: Please *circle* the best answer for each of the following questions. Please only circle one answer for each.

1. Did 9/11 have an affect on you personally in any way?
Not At All A Little Somewhat A Lot All The Time
2. Have your feelings changed towards certain professions since the September 11 attack?
Not At All A Little Somewhat A Lot All The Time
3. Have your values changed as a result of 9/11 particularly looking at career choice?
Not At All A Little Somewhat A Lot All The Time
4. Has 9/11 been a factor in your career indecision or uncertainty at all in the past year?
Not At All A Little Somewhat A Lot All The Time

Please Turn Over ⇒

