

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF A HISTORY-BASED  
INTERVENTION ON THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT  
OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THE ETHNIC IDENTITY  
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

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(Under the direction of ROSEMARY E. PHELPS)

ABSTRACT

This study attempted to: (a) evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention designed to increase the level of career attitude maturity of sixth grade middle-school students ( $N = 113$ ) by increasing their awareness of career options and assisting them in developing realistic career choices and aspirations, (b) improve the academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade middle school students by exposing them to an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention, and (c) increase the ethnic identity awareness of African American sixth grade middle-school students by sharing knowledge about and contributions of Africans and African Americans and the Nguzo Saba principles. Data were collected through two group administrations. The intervention consisted of six lessons delivered twice a week for three weeks.

Utilizing a two-group, pretest-posttest design and paired samples t-test, results indicated differences between scores on the measure of career attitude maturity for all

sixth grade students. Findings also demonstrated pretest-posttest differences for White students in the intervention and control conditions on: (a) the developmental and cognitive component and, (b) the affective component of ethnic identity.

Although pretest-posttest scores of ethnic identity awareness for African American students in the intervention decreased, their overall mean scores were higher than their White peers. There were no significant differences found across conditions on scores of academic, competence, or social self-concepts. Lastly, with regard to gender on pretest and posttest scores, females in the intervention and control conditions exhibited significant differences on career attitude maturity, whereas females and males in the intervention condition showed similar results on the developmental and cognitive components of ethnic identity. Differences between pretest and posttest scores were also indicated for females in the control condition for feelings of competence. Overall, the intervention had a positive affect on students and revealed that when guided, sixth grade middle school students are able to think about their interests and abilities in relation to their goals and make realistic career decisions.

Implications and recommendations for future research are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Career Maturity, Self-Concept, Ethnic Identity, Middle School Students, African American Students

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

“Know from whence you came and there’s no limit on where you can go.”

James Baldwin

The need for more comprehensive and effective career development programs in K-12 schools continues to be a concern, especially as growing trends in the economy and demographics yield new and challenging labor market changes. The School to Work Opportunities Act (SWOA, 1994), for example, created a demand for guidance and training to help students make the shift from high school to the world of work by focusing on students’ future occupations.

In addition to the demands of a changing economy and demography, increasing technological advances have made it a necessity for students entering the labor force today to have some form of postsecondary education (Valdez, 1998). Many economists believe that the nation’s economic future depends largely on greater levels of educational attainment by those who currently possess the lowest levels of education, primarily African Americans (Mau, 1995; Witherspoon, et al., 1997). It is reported that in the United States, 36% of all African Americans who are 25 years of age and older do not possess a high school diploma in comparison to 22% of White Americans of the same age (D’Andrea, 1995; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). Furthermore, research indicates that African American students consistently fall behind their White peers in academic achievement. Specifically, African American males face a number of academically-related challenges: (a) they begin to perform poorly around the third or fourth grade, (b)

they are more likely to be placed in classes for students with learning disabilities or for the educable mentally retarded, (c) they are more likely to be placed in general or vocational education curricular tracks rather than in an academic track, (d) they are suspended more often and for longer periods of time than any other group, and (e) they are more often recipients of negative attitudes and lower expectations from teachers, counselors, and administrators (Kunjufu, 1984; Lee, 1991; Lloyd, 1978). As these youth become disinterested in academics and fail to recognize the link between educational attainment and occupational advancement, the gap between the academic achievement of these youth and their White peers widens. Therefore, other avenues of achieving success become important, and some find such success through membership in gangs or other non-academic domains. These youth are often unable to envision themselves participating equally in the job market; thus, an activity such as gang membership becomes a vehicle by which they can acquire economic advantages. A lack of adequate career guidance and exposure to viable employment options adds to the underdevelopment of these youth in the area of career maturity.

These trends, coupled with the increasing diversity of K-12 students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, call for the creation of career guidance programs that adequately prepare students from a broad range of socioeconomic, cultural, and racial backgrounds. These students must be prepared for employment options that meet not only their individual needs and abilities, but also the needs of the job market and the national economy (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000).

With the growing need to better prepare students for the various social, economic, and demographic changes occurring in society, it has become apparent that career guidance programs should not be limited to the high school years (Hossler & Maple, 1993). Traditionally, school career guidance programs have centered on high school students because it was believed that they had more practical, realistic perceptions of career choices and options than younger students (Cook, et. al., 1996). However, career

education is now viewed as a significant part of guidance programs at the middle and elementary school levels; and school counselors at all levels are interested in the factors that affect students' educational and occupational aspirations (Murrow-Taylor, Folz, Ellis, & Culbertson, 1999). However, school counselors have found the development of comprehensive career guidance programs a difficult task (Ladd, 1998; VonVillas, 1995).

Although interest among professionals is apparent, research reveals that the function of childhood and adolescence in the career development process remains relatively uninvestigated (Trice, Hughes, Odom, Woods, & McClellan, 1995).

Additionally, as the diversity of elementary and middle school students increases, so does the need for a greater understanding of the impact of cultural and racial factors on career development. Moreover, there seems to be a paucity of empirical research that examines the relationship between career development and self-concept of African American youth. Although studies exist on these topics independent of each other, an examination of the literature reveals little in regard to their integration, particularly with middle school students (Slaughter & Epps, 1987; Spencer, 1985).

#### Statement of the Problem

Historically, middle school students, particularly sixth grade students, have been overlooked in the literature with regard to career development. Consequently, there exists a lack of adequate measures and research studies that examine the career development process of these youth. It was commonly believed that the educational and occupational aspirations of elementary and middle school students were unrealistic and unstable; however, researchers now believe that children as young as six possess career goals that are both stable and realistic (Cook, et. al., 1996; Trice et al., 1995). Therefore, this assertion, coupled with the changing demands of society indicate, a growing need to expose students at an early age to career development curriculum.

In addition, the steady continual decline of academic performance of African American students, their lack of adequate career guidance, and the growing gap between

them and White students with regard to educational and occupational attainment necessitate the development of interventions that seek to nurture positive attitudes toward self and direct these students toward rewarding career options. African American students are a subset of the larger middle-school population that could benefit academically and socially from such enriched relationships, environments, and interventions. Schools and teachers can be viewed as one source for providing this type of encouragement for youth. Teachers are one of the most influential adults in the lives of youth who can establish a relationship and an environment that foster appropriate academic support, cultural awareness, respect, and career guidance.

While the literature suggests that much can be debated about the differences between African American youth and youth from other ethnic groups, the adolescent experience can be conceptualized as similar among all youth. This is a time when developmental challenges impact one's self-concept. Adolescence is an age when developing one's identity becomes an emerging task which can aid in defining a middle school student's view of and belief in self. This contributes significantly to how one feels about self. Exploring ways in which students can create an affirming identity can positively affect their self-concept. This task becomes particularly relevant for African American students in that some researchers believe the primary developmental task for minority youth is the attainment of an identity that acts as the foundation for the development of a competent self (Spencer & Adams, 1990; Spencer, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1991).

Identity establishment or formation is the fifth stage of Erikson's psychosocial model of development. His model implies that identity development is not solely dependent on one's developmental history, but is also connected with the historical period of which one is a product (Spencer & Adams, 1990). Erikson (1968) states that identity "contains a complementarity of past and future both in the individual and society; it links the actuality of a living past with that of a promising future" (p. 310).

Similarly, Vgotsky recognized the importance of knowing one's cultural history as a means of understanding individual development within various ethnic groups (Scribner, 1985). While Erikson spoke to the need for individuals, irrespective of ethnicity, to understand the importance of both past individual and societal occurrences on a promising future, Vgotsky emphasized the importance of recognizing one's cultural history as an essential element in the identity development of ethnic minorities. Therefore, having a connection with one's past and an understanding of how that past connects with and demonstrates relevancy to the present provides encouragement for the future.

It is important to note that identity formation for African American adolescents is complex. The process of identity formation that results most from positive encounters and affirmation of one's identity is viewed as more stable. Therefore, whether one views Black identity formation as a response to negative social experiences or as the affirmation of one's core self is critical (Akbar, 1989). Exposing African American students to information that highlights the merits of their cultural history and providing them with opportunities to engage in positive experiences that promote a sense of pride in one's self as an ethnic being becomes an integral part of their development. However, educational systems that omit the contributions of African Americans in areas such as science, math, and world affairs communicate to African American students that they are educationally inferior to European Americans (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 1994). Some African American students in such environments begin to succumb to subliminal messages and see themselves as insignificant participants and ineffective change agents in the world around them. This, in turn, complicates the development of a positive identity.

Thus schools and teachers, by nature of their significant position in the life of adolescents, become important agents in fostering the formation of a positive identity (Nicoll, 1996). Often for adolescents, the real world is school, a key institution in the

socialization of youth, and where the most significant relationships are with those individuals of similar ages and interests (Kaplan & Sadock, 1991). Therefore, views and opinions of peers become most important to adolescents and aid in shaping their identities as well. Thus, the school environment becomes a major influence in the lives of adolescents.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study was three-fold: (a) to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention designed to increase the overall level of career attitude maturity of sixth grade middle-school students by increasing their awareness of career options and assisting them in developing realistic career choices and aspirations, (b) to attempt to improve the academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade middle school students by exposing them to an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention, and c) to increase the ethnic identity awareness of African American sixth grade middle-school students by sharing knowledge about and contributions of Africans and African Americans and the Nguzo Saba principles. The seven basic values that comprise the Nguzo Saba belief system are Umoja (unity), Kujichagalia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujaama (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith) (Karenga, 1986). While the Nguzo Saba principles have been developed for African Americans, this researcher modified their intended use in order to be relevant and meaningful for an integrated audience. The foundational meaning of the Nguzo Saba belief system was retained; however, the scope of application was expanded to illustrate and enhance career development principles.

This study attempted to add to the research by providing descriptive information and examining factors that positively impact the career development of middle school students, specifically sixth grade students. In addition, it was hoped that this study would address a growing need for developmentally-appropriate, school-based interventions that

aid in highlighting the connection between academics and future educational and occupational attainment. Finally, because much of the available literature on minority youth is either lacking in quantity and breadth or is poorly conceptualized and interpreted this study explored the relationship between career maturity and self-concept of African American students as well as their ethnic identity development (Spencer, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1991).

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions and hypotheses to be examined in this study were as follows:

Research Question 1. *Do sixth grade middle-school students possess a more mature attitude toward career decision-making after their exposure to an intensive three week career development intervention?*

#### Hypothesis:

There will be a statistically significant increase in the level of career attitude maturity of sixth grade middle-school students as measured by the Attitude scale of the Career Maturity Inventory Revised (Crites & Saviokas, 1995) after exposure to an intensive three week career development intervention.

Research Question 2. *Do the academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade middle-school students improve after exposure to an intensive three-week career development intervention?*

#### Hypothesis:

There will be a statistically significant increase in the academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade middle-school students as measured by the Academic, Competence, and Social scales of the Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992) after their exposure to an intensive three-week career development intervention.

Research Question 3. *Does the ethnic identity, of African American middle-school students increase after their exposure to an intensive three-week, history-based career*

*development intervention that incorporates knowledge of the contributions and principles of Africans and African Americans?*

Hypothesis:

There will be a statistically significant increase in the ethnic identity of African American middle-school students as measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) after their exposure to an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention that incorporates knowledge of the contributions and principles of Africans and African Americans.

Assumptions

There are several basic assumptions that guided the conceptualization of this study.

1. Although career development is a process of growth that incorporates psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors that come together to mold one's career over the course of the life span, career development curriculum refers to information and activities that enhance one's ability to make mature career-related decisions (Isaacson & Brown, 1993).
2. Self-concept is viewed as a multidimensional construct (Bracken, 1992; Marsh & Holmes, 1990; Piers 1984). While researchers have described a variety of dimensions relating to self-concept, six seem to be most frequently cited in the literature – social, competence, affect, physical, academic, and family (Coopersmith, 1967; Harter, 1978; Marsh & Holmes, 1990; Piers, 1984). However, for the purpose of this study only the social, academic, and competence dimensions were examined.
3. Adolescence is a time when youth are learning to become skilled at defining their self-concepts and relating that self-concept to the world of work (Super, 1990). They are expanding their decision-making skills, their ability to realize their limits on what they can and cannot do, and their knowledge of the world of work.

4. Schools are considered one of the major environments that aid in the development of adolescent identity (Epstein, 1990; Smith et al., in press). “[C]hildren spend considerable time and effort in the classroom setting...Consequently, their school experiences take on greater salience in the prediction of achievement” (Spencer, 1987, p. 92). Ethnic minority children in the United States typically experience their first racial boundaries and conflict in the school environment (Ho, 1992; Plummer, 1995). Three school-related factors that impact students’ racial experiences, the prominence of ethnic awareness, and the overall perception of self include the attitudes of administrators and teachers, the curriculum, and the racial composition of the student body (Aboud, 1987; Harter, 1990; McGuire & McGuire, 1988; Plummer, 1995; Thomas, Phillips, & Brown, 1995). The school environment is also where youth begin to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to understand their sense of mastery. Sadowsky et al. (1995) believe that through a dynamic “feedback loop” between themselves, peers, and teachers students form and test their separate identities and level of competencies. Epstein (1990) believes that schools together with families share common responsibilities that affect student development and learning.
5. Teachers “need the knowledge and skills for working effectively in our culturally diverse society” (Gollnick & Chinn, 1994, p. 29). Therefore, they should seek to use methods and content that are culturally sensitive to increase academic success, personal development, and individual fulfillment of all students (Chisholm, 1994, p. 46). This implies that the ethnic and cultural contributions and importance of all members of society, especially those represented in the classroom, should permeate K-12 curriculum. However, for the purpose and scope of this study, the research was limited to an examination of the effects of a career development intervention on sixth grade middle-school students in general

and African American students in particular that highlights the contributions and principles of Africans and African Americans.

6. Identity formation of African American students, also referred to as ethnic identity development, is complex and necessitates a knowledge and incorporation of classroom materials and activities that promote positive images of African American culture (Harper, 1977).
7. A number of researchers believe that the typical American school curriculum mirrors American society; thus, the curriculum reflects the views and opinions of the dominant culture (Harper, 1977). This translates into African American youth experiencing a curriculum that either transmits negative images of their ancestors and culture or fails to recognize their meaningful contributions to society at large. Therefore, special attempts should be made to ensure that African American youth in particular and all youth in general experience a curriculum that values and highlights the significance of Africans and African Americans in the development of American society. To that end, the Nguzo Saba principles were used in this current study to communicate positive aspects of African and African American culture and belief systems.

#### Delimitations

The following delimitations existed in this study:

1. This study was designed to survey students in one of their naturalistic environments – the classroom.
2. Only those students with parental consent participated in the study.

#### Limitations

The limitations of this study were:

1. There is a lack of adequate instrumentation available to assess the career development process of minority youth, especially sixth grade African American

middle-school youth. Thus, the results of this study must be interpreted with caution.

2. The sample consisted of sixth grade middle-school students from only one middle school located in the southeastern United States.
3. There was variability in data collection across the sixth grade classrooms, possibly resulting in differences in student response patterns.
4. This study examined intrapersonal and interpersonal variables. Variability among participants may be confounded by environmental, familial, or developmental variables which were not examined in this current study.

#### Definition of Terms

To clarify key terms used in this study, the following definitions are provided:

Adolescence. Adolescence is a period of growth and change. In American society, it is viewed as a time when individuals develop their unique identity, learn to manage new and intense feelings, and become interested in intimate relationships (Stone, 2000).

African. The ethnic identification label of African refers to citizens of the continent of Africa.

African American. The ethnic identification label of African American refers to the citizens of the United States of African descent. For the students who participated in this study, the term African American will be used to refer to ethnic identification labels of “African American” and “Black American”.

Career development curriculum. Career development curriculum is a structured set of teaching materials that encourage the “growth and learning that results in increases and modifications of a person’s repertoire for vocational behavior” (Savickas, 1994, p. 55). In schools, a career development curriculum contains information that helps students over time make the transition from school to the world of work (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000).

Career maturity. Career maturity can be defined as the “extent to which an individual has mastered the age-appropriate vocational tasks relevant to his or her developmental stage” (Betz, 1988, p. 77).

Career self-efficacy. Career self-efficacy is the belief that one has the ability to successfully accomplish an occupationally relevant behavior which in turn determines one’s actions, effort, and persistence (Brown, 1995).

Ethnic identity formation. Ethnic identity formation is defined as dynamic and changes over the course of one’s life (Phinney, 1990). Phinney (1990) further defines it as “attitudes and behaviors with respect to one’s own and other groups [that change] as one develops and resolves issues and feelings about one’s own and other groups” (p. 510).

Middle school students. Middle school students typically range in age from 11 to 13 years and comprise grades six through eight. Early adolescence and adolescence stages characterize the developmental experience of these students. This is a time when parental and familial influences of middle school students decrease and peer influences increase (Stevenson, 1992).

Nguzo Saba. Nguzo Saba are the seven principles that comprise Kwanzaa, a holiday created by Dr. Karenga and first celebrated in 1966 as a way for people of African descent to learn about their African history and customs. Although the seven principles that make up Kwanzaa were created to celebrate African American history and future success, people who are non-African American can also benefit from the basic, positive meaning of the principles. The basic meaning of each of the principles can assist middle school students as they consider educational choices and their future career goals. Thus, the seven principles were conceptualized in the following manner: Umoja (the unity that should exist among all and the importance of possessing a positive attitude), Kujichagalia (thinking, acting, and speaking for oneself and how knowing oneself is an integral part of that process), Ujima (the ability to work with others), Ujaama

(recognizing one's sense of responsibility to school, family and community), Nia (one's purpose or goals as related to school and career interests), Kuumba (personal creativity), and Imani (having pride and confidence or faith that one can accomplish goals).

Self-concept. Self-concept incorporates the multidimensional and evaluative beliefs individuals have about specific characteristics such as physical, social, or academic (Burnett, 1994). During adolescence, various developmental challenges impact one's self-concept and contribute to one's view and definition of self. For African American students, creating an affirming identity can positively affect their self-concept.

### Summary

The career development literature has traditionally focused on high school aged youth and older adults; thus, the career development process of middle-school students, especially sixth grade students, routinely has not been examined. Moreover, the literature reveals that the exploration of this process among African American youth, as a subset of the adolescent population, has been inadequate and insufficient. In addition, the relationship between the self-concept of African American middle-school students and the career development process has not been well defined.

The above mentioned factors in conjunction with the rapidly growing number of economic, demographic, and technological changes that are occurring in society call for the development of more appropriate career development programs in K-12 schools. These programs need to provide sufficient guidance and training to help students make mature career-related choices and develop positive self-images.

This study attempts to add to the research by developing an intervention that will assist all sixth grade middle-school students in increasing their awareness of career options and developing more realistic career choices and aspirations as well as improve their social, academic, and competence self-concepts. In addition, this study attempted to increase the ethnic identity awareness, of African American students by sharing

knowledge of African and African American ancestors and their contributions as well as the Nguzo Saba principles (Karenga, 1986).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Career development is a lifelong process with critical aspects of this development occurring during the school years (Ginzberg et al., 1951; Super, 1957). Childhood, adolescence, and early developmental processes, once largely ignored in the career development literature, are becoming increasingly more important (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Hossler & Maple, 1993; Lankard, 1991). Current empirical research indicates that children can make tentative college plans during early elementary school and display career preference as early as kindergarten (Ring, 1994; Trice & King, 1991).

#### Theories of Career Development

Ginzberg's (1952) theory, which includes the fantasy choice phase (before age 11) and tentative choice phase (ages 11-14), was one of the first general theories of occupational choice that included childhood. Ginzberg believed that the tentative phase marked the beginning of the most important career development processes. It was during this tentative phase that children's career aspirations were primarily related to interest as opposed to realistic ability. While Ginzberg felt that the choices children made during the tentative phase and especially the fantasy phase were uncertain, other researchers such as Trice and King (1991) found that their choices appeared stable and realistic. In a study conducted with kindergartners, they found that in an initial interview 74% of the students gave real careers as their first choice. This figure increased to 89% eight months later.

Havinghurst (1964) also recognized the role of childhood and adolescence in the career development process and postulated two tasks: (a) identifying with a worker (ages 5-10) and b) developing the habits of industry (ages 10-15). While these tasks have not

been directly tested, current research suggests that children may identify with the adult workers in their lives (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). Trice and Knapp (1992) found that children's occupational aspirations were closely related to their parents' occupation, and more specifically the mother's occupation. This relationship is strengthened if the child perceives the parent has a high level of job satisfaction. Children who (a.) have an awareness and knowledge of their mother's jobs, (b.) are able to identify with a role model, and (c.) have the ability to obtain first-hand information about career options have more developed career fantasies than those from households wherein neither parent is employed (Reisman & Banuelos, 1984). Therefore, children whose living environments offer greater exposure to career information are more likely to possess realistic ideas about the world of work.

Gottfredson's (1981) theory of career development is currently viewed as the most comprehensive to incorporate childhood and adolescence (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). According to this theory, occupational preferences develop in a four-stage process whereby as children grow older they begin to develop more realistic views regarding their role in the work world. As in Ginzberg's theory, these preferences are seen as stable and permanent. According to Gottfredson, the primary role of childhood in career development is the elimination of occupations based on age-related themes of power and size (ages 3-5), sex roles (ages 6-8), social valuation (ages 9-12), and personal characteristics (ages 14 and older). Of the four themes listed the elimination of occupations based on sex roles has been most widely researched. The literature has focused on the impact of perceived sex roles and career aspirations. In early findings by Looft (1971), first and second grade girls demonstrated more restricted aspirations than boys, and indicated that they had lower expectations of occupational attainment coupled with a limited scope of occupational preferences. However, in the studies that followed during the mid-1980s, girls seemed to expand their preferences for various jobs, but their expectations for occupational attainment continued to be low (Adams & Hicken, 1984;

Miller & Stanford, 1987). These studies also indicated that boys were more likely to choose stereotypical gender-defined occupations than girls and that girls more often aspired to nontraditional occupations (Franken, 1983; White & Ouellette, 1980).

Most current research on the role of gender on the occupational preferences of children is inconsistent. While Trice (1991) found no differences between 8 to 11 year old boys and girls in their identified range of career choices, Phillips, Cooper, and Johnson (1995) discovered specific differences between the career goals of fourth through eighth grade boys and girls. They found that girls tended to choose a more restricted range of occupations. In general, research findings in this area are inconsistent; and studies are primarily conducted with White adolescent boys and girls.

The studies of Ginzberg, Super, Havinghurst, Gottfredson, and others highlight the importance of creating career development programs that are developmentally appropriate for students as early as childhood and that increase students' level of career maturity by assisting them in making appropriate career choices. Career development programs should also aid students in learning what is required to make realistic career decisions that are consistent over time (Crites, 1978; King, 1989; Ohler, Levinson, & Hays, 1996). While Super (1983) offers five dimensions of career maturity: planfulness, exploration, information gathering, decision making, and reality orientation, Seligman (1994) views career maturity as a number of lifelong processes that vary from person to person. Crites (1965) suggests that career maturity consists of the affective and cognitive dimensions. The cognitive dimension represents one's career decision-making skills, and the affective dimension describes one's attitudes toward career development. As a result of such studies as Ginzberg, Super, Havinghurst and Gottfredson, there have been a number of educational efforts designed to further career development in elementary, middle, and high school. The primary aim of these efforts has been to create career development programs to assist children and adolescents in expanding their knowledge

of careers, learning decision-making skills, obtaining vocational skills, and developing a greater appreciation for themselves (Isaacson & Brown, 1993).

### Essential Elements of Career Development Curricula

By the mid-1980s, many of these efforts were replaced by the back-to-basics movement. This movement sought to replace the career development movement because it was believed to divert too much of children's attention away from core subjects. However, in 1991 the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee funded the National Career Development Guideline Project that developed and tested guidelines for establishing career counseling and guidance programs in elementary, middle and junior high schools, high schools, and postsecondary institutions. The project developed 12 general competencies that relate to three areas of career development – self-knowledge, educational and occupational exploration, and career planning. The project further identified specific student competencies and accompanying indicators of these competencies for elementary, middle, and high school students. The indicators for each competency describe the specific attitudes, skills, and behaviors necessary for competence (Lankard, 1991). For example, middle school students are expected to increase their “knowledge of the influence of positive self-concepts on career development by assessing personal likes and dislikes” (National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, 1989). These guidelines represent the most comprehensive effort to improve career development since the earlier movements of the seventies (Isaacson & Brown, 1993).

A review of the current career development literature reveals that students at the middle school level should learn more about careers and their requirements (Splete & Stewart, 1990). Activities that focus on career information, career self-efficacy, and self-concept are also identified as most important at this level. Students must not only think positively about themselves and have adequate career information, they must also believe they have the ability to successfully perform occupationally relevant behaviors (Brown,

1995). The modes through which these activities are typically conducted include individual and large group instruction led by teachers in core subject areas, teachers who teach careers, and counselors. Splete and Stewart (1990) offer the following recommendations when creating career development programs at the middle-school level: (a.) provide focused attention on self-knowledge competencies, (b.) include greater participation of individuals from business to assist students with educational and occupational exploration and planning, (c.) emphasize the benefits of educational achievement as related to occupational requirements, and (d.) increase attention to the skills needed to seek and obtain jobs. When working with minority children, Ogbu (1993, 1994) believes that they must be exposed to the history and nature of power relationships between minority and majority cultures as part of their career development curriculum. In understanding the dynamics of the power differential among minority and majority cultures, African American students begin to examine how this phenomenon relates to one's access and participation in the workforce. For example, among teenagers, African Americans had an unemployment rate above 36% in 1990, as compared to Whites whose rate was less than half of this (Brown, 1995). Statistics do not improve as teenagers mature. Swinton (1992) found that only 36.9% of African American men, as compared to 61.8% of White men were employed in "good" jobs defined as executives, managers, and administrators. African American women also share a similar plight with 28.1% employed in "good" jobs as compared to 40.8% of White women employed in "good" jobs.

Much like Splete and Stewart (1990), Refvem (2000) also found that career development programs at the middle school level should be geared toward the developmental characteristics of adolescence. As adolescents begin to learn more about themselves, their search for identity leads them to explore interests, abilities, and new experiences. Students also begin the process of examining information from numerous sources that will serve as the basis for making life decisions.

### Development of One's Self-Concept

The process of learning more about self and the search for identity is complex for African American adolescents. In addition to developing a sense of individual identity separate and apart from parents, African American adolescents have the added task of defining self as a member of a minority group within a majority Eurocentric society. This task is referred to as racial or ethnic identity development. Racial or ethnic identity research grew out of a desire of social scientists to attempt to explain perceived cultural and individual differences between the African American and White communities. Ethnic minority social scientists sought to disprove the commonly accepted beliefs highlighting the symptomology and pathology thought to be pervasive within their communities. They searched to prove that individuals from their communities often lived productive lives and developed respectful attitudes towards members of their own ethnic group. Research in this area has revealed that African American students often receive negative messages about their ethnicity through stereotypical images, omission in textbooks of positive African American influence in society, and discrimination. These negative messages contribute to the development of a negative self-concept among African American students. Thus, it becomes important for African American youth to explore many different roles or identities to build a broad coping repertoire to counteract and manage the negative messages aimed at African Americans (Anderson, 1992).

Overall, the literature supports self-concept as a significant variable in human behavior and also seems to suggest that emphasis be placed on the inclusion of career development activities that explore and enhance the self-concept when working with middle school students (Canfield & Siccone, 1993; Osborne, 1996). Although self-concept has been the focus of a variety of career development and educational programs for students in general and at-risk, disadvantaged students in particular, it continues to

vary in its definition, assessment, and interpretation (Obiakor & Algozzine, 1994; Osborne, 1996; Webb-Johnson, Obiakor, & Algozzine, 1995).

William James is viewed as among the first to address the notion of self-concept with his formula of:  $\text{Self Esteem} = \text{Success/Pretensions (Abilities)}$ . While James believed that self-concept was primarily a function of the individual's abilities and accomplishments, others have since taken into account the effects of one's context and environment (Harter, 1983; Marsh & Holmes, 1990). In addition, individuals are seen as possessing not only a global self-concept, but a range of self concepts depending upon one's environment (e.g., academic, social, physical). Therefore, there has been a shift from regarding self-concept as a unidimensional construct to a multidimensional construct. Despite the diversity in its meaning, two models of self-concept, perceptual and operational, have dominated the literature (Obiakor, 1996).

The perceptual self-concept model is more commonly referred to as the global model of self-concept and is defined as "the sum total of the attributes, abilities, and values that an individual believes defines who he or she is" (Osborne, 1996, p. 23). This model supports the idea that the self-concept is fully developed prior to an individual engaging in any interaction with others outside the home or entering school. Based on this belief, one's self-concept is viewed as stable and unchangeable despite changes in the individual or the environment. This model of self-concept is particularly unfavorable for students from disadvantaged environments, which often translates into low-income ethnic minorities. According to this model, if students from low-income ethnic minority groups fully develop their self-concept independent of non-family interactions and judge any experiences thereafter according to their earlier developed beliefs and attitudes, then their self-concept remains low particularly if their primary environment lacked adequate encouragement and support.

An alternative to the perceptual model of self-concept is the operational model. This model is described as one's range of self-descriptive behavior (Muller, 1978).

Inherent in this description is the belief that an individual's self-concept consists of behaviors that constitute a number of abilities, and can change as the context changes. For example, a student may possess several self-concepts such as those related to academics, social interactions, or specific competencies. Kleinke (1994) supports this view by stating that the self-concept is affected by both past and future experiences. Furthermore, one's self-concept is not fixed nor bound by current self-perceptions. Based on this view, students have the opportunity to monitor and alter their self-concept as they experience changes in their environment. This view also coincides with the developmental perspective in that it views adolescence as a period of self-evaluation when youth begin to view themselves as a separate being, make social comparisons, and make judgements about the comparisons (Shirk & Renouf, 1992; Whaley, 1993). They become aware of the differences and similarities among people and begin to compare themselves with others. The awareness of their differences and similarities produces a level of self-consciousness that directly affects their self-worth (Shirk & Renouf, 1992). This model of self-concept is especially appealing when working with those from low-income ethnic minority groups. African American students, despite their previous personal and environmental experiences, can be encouraged to routinely assess their abilities and competencies with the idea that positive changes can be made that will enhance their overall self-concept. In general, African American students are more likely to make mature career decisions if they develop positive self-concepts, are provided appropriate academic training that yields successes, and are encouraged to view their strengths in connection with appropriate occupational choices.

#### Impact of Self-Concept on Career Maturity

There are other researchers who have expounded upon the impact of one's self-concept, race, and socioeconomic status on career development, with particular attention to career maturity, educational aspirations, occupational aspirations, and occupational choices of middle school students. Kidd (1984) and Salomone and Slaney (1978)

conducted research demonstrating the importance of the self-concept on the occupational choices of those who are economically disadvantaged. Likewise, Super (1990) believes one's self-concept determines occupational choices. He also believes that socioeconomic status operates two-fold on career development: (a) it opens and closes opportunities, and (b) it shapes occupational choices and self-concepts. He further believes socioeconomic status functions in the same way as racial discrimination in that it hinders individuals from trying and prevents those who try from succeeding. Other researchers believe that socioeconomic status, independent of race, is the greatest variable among all students with regard to both educational and occupational aspirations (Reisman & Banuelos, 1984; Solorzano, 1992). In a study on the influence of socioeconomic background, Valdez (1998) studied how individual, peer, parental, and educational variables impact the decisions of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to attend college. Three findings emerged: (a) socioeconomic status was more salient than race or gender, (b) students from low socioeconomic backgrounds did not have the same degree of access to crucial resources, and (c) these students did not have the same skill level as students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds necessary to take advantage of existing resources.

Other research has indicated that African American youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as compared to Whites, demonstrate lower career maturity, which is the "degree to which the developmental tasks of various stages of career development are accomplished" (Brown, 1995, p. 14). Smith (1976) found that African American career maturity scores were positively correlated with views of the opportunity structure in America. Thus, if African Americans perceive that they have marginal opportunities to positively impact the workforce, then they may hold lower expectations than Whites (Gurin, 1981; Hughes & Demo, 1989). However, in general, it appears that the occupational expectations of African Americans are lower than their aspirations. In other words, while their expectations may be lower because of their experiences and perceptions of their occupational power, their aspirations remain high. This would

suggest a need for career development programs that incorporate information, resources, and activities that provide African American students with positive images of successful African Americans in a variety of occupations.

Further research in this area with other ethnic minority group members reveals that Native Americans and Hispanic students have among the lowest and least fixed educational aspirations (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Mau, 1995; Paulson, Coombs, & Richardson, 1990). Kao and Tienda (1998) in their national survey of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students found that Hispanic students had the lowest aspirations across all grade levels. Mau (1995) had similar findings in that among 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, Hispanic girls and Native American boys and girls had the lowest educational aspirations. Ramos and Sanchez (1995) believe that Hispanic students whose families are less acculturated to the United States educational system may have significantly lower aspirations. Paulson et al. (1990) further add that these aspirations are developed at an early age (e.g., second or third grade).

Although Native American, Hispanic, and African American students appear to face obstacles related to adequate career development, a few variables have been identified as important in promoting more positive development. For example, the educational and occupational expectations and support of parents have been identified as significant (Hossler & Maple, 1993; Ramos & Sanchez, 1995). Mau (1995) found that the educational aspirations of students across racial groups coincided with their perceived parental expectations. Secondly, students of color with high academic aspirations are often not taking the proper preparatory coursework, have an unrealistic assessment of their abilities, and lack the necessary information about college (Mahoney & Merritt, 1993). These findings speak to the need for career development programs that address the racial and ethnic needs of a diverse student population. For example, incorporating elements such as parental involvement, relevant academic advisement, information that explains the relationship between college and career goals, and the concept of career self-

efficacy into career development curriculum to encourage career maturity of minority youth may prove helpful.

#### Impact of Career Self-Efficacy on Self-Concept and Career Maturity

Career self-efficacy is the belief that one has the ability to successfully accomplish an occupationally-relevant behavior which in turn determines one's actions, effort, and persistence (Brown, 1995). Career self-efficacy is derived from general self-efficacy or competence theory that refers to "judgements" of personal capability or the ability to perform adequately in certain tasks (Bandura, 1997; Spencer, 1995). It is the "confidence in one's ability to reason, problem solve, think creatively and cope with the basic tasks of life" (Sweeney, 1998, p. 128). Competence is domain-specific and depending on one's stage of development and current life tasks, a specific area or domain may be more significant than other domains. For middle school students, the most salient domains are social, academic, and physical because of their increased time with peers, involvement in school-related activities, and constant engagement in self-assessment. In the critical developmental years of a student, developing a sense of competence has an immediate and long-lasting effect on the quality of one's adult life (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Edwards & Polite, 1992; Fenzel, 1991). For example, Jackson (1996) found that African American adults who demonstrate competence or self-efficacy had (a) a notion that life is working, (b) a plan for life with a sense of control, (c) the ability to get what one hopes for, and (d) an understanding of systemic forces and how they impacted one's life. Therefore, if minority youth believe they can successfully accomplish or master relevant life tasks, then it is likely that their overall level of motivation will be positively affected.

#### Interaction between Race and Career Maturity

In general, few studies have focused on the career development issues of racial and minority youth despite national surveys that demonstrate the educational and occupational attainment of racial and ethnic minority youth suggest significant barriers in

their personal, educational, and career development (D'Andrea, 1995). Spencer, Swanson, and Cunningham (1991) believe that much of the available literature on minority youth is either lacking in quantity and breadth or is poorly conceptualized and interpreted. Additionally, career development theories have been considered inapplicable to youth of color based on their irrelevance to many of their experiences (Zunker, 1994). In an attempt to better understand the factors involved in the career development of youth of color, contemporary authors have recommended that both internal and external factors affecting occupational attainment (e.g., socialization experiences, perceptions of career barriers, discrimination) be considered (Constantine et al., 1998).

Ethnicity focused research typically utilizes one of three approaches (Spencer, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1991). The first approach is a developmental one that centers on mediating processes, but often excludes an examination of context or sociocultural variables. The second approach is an outcome-oriented perspective, which often ignores the cultural clashes, mechanisms, and mediating processes experienced as structural and symbolic by minority youth and their families. Third, while ethnographic and empirical studies describe phenomena, they usually omit psychological theoretical frameworks that might assist in defining underlying mechanisms that aid in teaching and parenting.

Thus, there is a paucity of career development research examining the effects of cultural or racial differences of students. However, there is a greater degree of attention given to the effects of race and culture on the educational aspirations of youth as opposed to occupational aspirations. The research tends to focus on the effects of race on students with high educational aspirations as compared to those who actually attend college, and is generally a result of studies that address the issue of academic achievement. However, increasing the research related to occupational aspirations would highlight the need for African American students to be able to envision themselves engaged in careers or occupations they find rewarding, and allowing them to see the necessary link between academic achievement and later occupational success and satisfaction. There have been

numerous studies on increasing the academic achievement of minority students, but few that examine the relationship among career development, academic achievement, self concept, and the relevancy of understanding one's culture. Boyer and Baptiste (1996) are two researchers who have attempted to examine these factors as related to African American students. Their research helps bridge the gap between the relationship regarding the importance of understanding one's ancestral accomplishments and one's ability to succeed academically. Boyer and Baptiste (1996) have developed eight stages of ethnic growth that they view as an important contributor to greater academic achievement. In the highest stage, celebration, a student "experiences a significant, unifying culturally-induced qualitative emotion considered psychologically healthy to the point of enhancing mental health and academic security" (Boyer & Baptiste, 1996, p. 60). This is akin to Akbar's (1989) belief that positive encounters and affirmation of one's identity assist in establishing a more stable identity. However, this stage cannot be attained or maintained without constant nurturing and exposure. The lowest stage, non-existence, "could result in self-hatred, self-rejection, and ethnic self-denial due to the consistent messages of exclusion and non-endorsement received" by students in the classroom (Boyer & Baptiste, 1996, p. 52). Extensive literature deals specifically with the idea of "self-hatred" among certain ethnic groups, which usually references African Americans (Banks, 1976; Gordon, 1980). Therefore, cultural, ethnic, and social factors are central to the development of youth. Their development arises from the totality of experiences that occur in environments, of which school is one (Boyer & Baptiste, 1996). Thus, messages of cultural, ethnic, and social importance within the classroom can assist in increasing academic involvement and achievement.

Many believe that because of the significant role school plays in the life of adolescents, African American students can benefit academically from increased exposure to their ancestral accomplishments. However, it is uncertain in what type of environment this is most effectively accomplished. The majority of studies examining the

effects of infusing Afrocentric concepts into the classroom have been conducted within segregated environments. However, the focus of developmental psychology has shifted from examining one's development in isolation to examining how "different" social interactions affect development (Rogoff, 1990). Therefore, youth are seen as developing competencies through a variety of interactions. So the question becomes interactions in what type of environment (integrated/multi-ethnic or segregated) better assist African American students in their personal and academic development.

African American parents and community members in New York City during the 1960s believed that their children would best be served in academic environments that were culturally relevant (Weusi, 1973). From this and other related debates grew a large number of independent, African-centered preschools, elementary schools, and high schools. African American parents wanted schools developed by African Americans for African American children. Supporters of such schools believe that African-centered education helps students see Africa as an important contributor to the world that aids in shifting their worldview. These schools are not only concerned about curricular matters, but also about creating environments that embrace and celebrate the cultural heritage of their students. Many believe that because these elements are absent from the majority of public schools, African American students usually possess a poor "sense of identity, purpose, or direction; and little knowledge of the relationship between their schooling and what will occur in their later life" (Lomotey, 1992, p. 457). Carter G. Woodson (1933) also believed that the more African Americans knew about themselves and their culture, the better they could operate within their present culture (Morgan, 1991). Additionally, supporters of independent Black institutions believe that African American youth within such environments have a greater opportunity to increase their self-esteem and self-concept. Some believe that low self-esteem is a hindrance to academic achievement for African American students (Johnson, 1992; Lomotey, 1992; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984). Pine and Hillord (1990) stated that as a student's level of competence

increases his or her level of self-esteem also increases, which highlights the importance of teachers possessing positive attitudes toward students and utilizing appropriate pedagogical strategies to encourage academic achievement.

One pedagogical strategy apparently common among independent Black institutions is the use of the Nguzo Saba principles. Karenga (1980) states that the Nguzo Saba principles represent a basic value system that is African in origin and enables individuals to establish direction and meaning in their lives. A healthy self-image can be related to possessing an accurate knowledge of one's cultural, racial, and historical ties (Robinson & Ward, 1991). Rosenberg (1979) states that self-esteem represents a sense of confidence and satisfaction in oneself. It is believed that a positive self-image can be fostered by providing African American youth with a greater understanding of their traditions, culture, and ancestors (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 1994).

On the other hand, some researchers believe that students should be given the opportunity to socially interact with individuals from other cultural and racial groups (Phinney & Rotheram, 1987; Stover, 1990). However, increasing the exposure and number of social contacts to different cultural and racial groups, does not always ensure amicable relationships (Dutton-Terrell, 1991; Hart & Lumsden, 1989). Nevertheless, cooperation and acceptance of one another can be achieved if students are placed in roles of equal status and work together toward common goals in encouraging and warm environments (Byrnes, 1988). Research on prejudice reduction suggests that,

students in [such] cooperative learning environments have more positive race relations, greater self-esteem, greater concern for others, more positive attitudes toward school and teachers, higher levels of reasoning, increased perspective taking, more on-task behavior, and higher achievement than [in] other learning environments (Conrad, 1988 cited in Olson & Wilczenski, 1995, p. 329).

Reaching common goals by utilizing their own distinctive contributions and the contributions of those who are racially and culturally different allows students in cooperative groups to feel valued and respected (Olsen & Wilczenski, 1995).

Cooperative learning groups also allow for the examination of power-related issues among various cultural and racial groups. Ogbu (1993, 1994) points out that minority children must be exposed to the history and nature of power relationships between minority and majority cultures as part of their development.

Additionally, acquiring more knowledge about the cultural roots of involuntary minorities by minority students as well as by students of the dominant society can be accomplished in integrated settings. Acknowledging the existence and value of another culture, particularly by the dominant culture from which negative messages may have traditionally been perceived, provides validation. Schools should encourage and assist youth from involuntary minority groups to explore their ancestral cultural roots so that they can develop a positive cultural identity. Positive identities can ultimately replace the cultural conflicts that hold so much power over involuntary minority youth. Thus, an understanding of cultural roots not only creates pride in oneself and one's group, but an appreciation of other groups (Bernard et. al., 1995).

In summary, as the demands of a changing economy and demography increase coupled with technological advances and increased diversity among K-12 students, schools must recognize and address how they can best prepare their students. Career development programs should be developmentally appropriate and address the diverse cultural and ethnic needs of students as they begin to navigate their way to a successful and rewarding academic and occupational future. To this end, this study attempted to explore and examine the effects of a time intensive career development intervention on an ethnically heterogeneous sample of sixth grade middle-school students. The aim of the intervention was to increase the overall level of career attitude maturity and self-concept

of all sixth grade students, and increase the ethnic identity awareness of African American students.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide information on the research design, sample size, sample description, instrumentation, data collection, intervention, pilot study, and data analysis.

#### Research Design

Utilizing a quasi-experimental design, this study attempted to determine the effects of an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention on the career attitude maturity and self-concept of middle-school students. More specifically, the study examined whether or not exposure to a six-lesson career development intervention will positively influence the attitudes of sixth grade students regarding making career choices and their general knowledge of occupations. In addition, the study examined the effects of a career development intervention on the academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade students and the ethnic identity awareness of African American students. This study adds to the paucity of research in the area of career development, self-concept, and ethnic identity with middle school students in general and African American students in particular.

#### Sample Size

The statistical program G-Power (Version2) (Faul & Erdfelder, 1992) was used to calculate the sample size. A medium effect size of .3, significance criterion of (.05), and power ratio of .80 was used for the directional t-tests. Based on these numbers, approximately 70 students were sought for recruitment in the intervention and control conditions for a total of 140 participants.

### Sample Description

After recruitment efforts, the sample consisted of 113 sixth grade students, 49 intervention and 64 control, who attend an integrated middle school containing sixth through eighth grades. There are 750 middle school students with 264 enrolled in sixth grade with an average age of 11.3 years. Thirty percent of the sample was African American and 70% were White, while the racial composition of the total middle school population consists of 34% African American, 64% Caucasian, and 2% Hispanic or other. Although 48% of all middle school students are female and 52% are male, there were significantly more female participants (70%) than were male participants (30%). Approximately 18% of school administrators, teachers, aids, staff are minority. Over 60% of the school faculty hold advanced degrees.

The school is located in a county of approximately 15,450 inhabitants with 29% identifying as African American and 70% identifying as Caucasian. Over the last decade, there has been a decline in the number of African Americans, from 34% to 29%, and an increase in Caucasians, from 64% to 70%, residing in the county. The socioeconomic status of the school community consists of students representative of the lower to middle classes with a median family income of \$33,000. The educational attainment of those within the county by race age 25 years and older include 61% African Americans who do not possess a high school diploma as compared 31% of Caucasians.

### Instrumentation

#### Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (MSCS)

The Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992) is a four response option (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) diagnostic instrument that provides an overall assessment of self-concept from social to emotional adjustment for youth aged 9-19. It contains six scaled dimensions of self-concept including Social, Competence, Affect, Academic, Family, and Physical. The six scales can be used to derive an overall measure of self-concept or individually to examine any of the six dimensions

independently. For the purpose of this study only the Academic, Competence, and Social scales were used.

The Academic scale assumes that youth spend the majority of their time in school-related activities and as such evaluates their level of achievement, functioning, and experiences in these activities. It includes items such as “Classmates usually like my ideas” and “I have poor study habits”. The Competence scale measures the degree to which youth view themselves as competent in their efforts to accomplish goals, solve problems, affect positive change, and function adequately in their environment. It includes items such as “I am very self confident” and “I am not very smart”. The Social scale takes into account the idea that youth interact with different types of individuals such as peers, teachers, and classmates in various contexts and environments. As youth interact with others in an attempt to negotiate their needs and desires, they receive either positive or negative feedback that contributes to their evaluation of self in relation to others (Bracken, 1992). It includes items such as “I am usually a lot of fun to be with” and “ People pick on me”.

The MSCS was normed using 2,501 children in grades 5-12 and ranging in age from 9 to 19. The sample included both male and female students from each of the major regions of the United States including the South, West, North Central, and Northeast. In addition, the sample included students of African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian ethnic backgrounds. Overall, the MSCS is reportedly unaffected by race, gender or demography.

With regard to the reliability of the MSCS, the total scale score of internal consistency for sixth grade students in the norm sample is .98. The internal consistency for these students on the Academic, Competence, and Social scales is .92, .90, and .90 respectively. The test-retest reliability total score is .90; and .81, .76, and .79 for the Academic, Competence, and Social scales respectively.

There has been a general question in the literature regarding self-concept and the degree to which it is stable over time (McCarthy & Hodge, 1982; Rosenberg, 1979). Bracken (1992) and other researchers believe that a change in one's self-concept is likely not attributable to one's age and therefore is stable over time (Wylie, 1979). Therefore, the MSCS also assumes age contributes minimally to pre-and posttest differences in mean scores of global self-concept and the six individual self-concept domains.

#### Career Maturity Inventory-Revised (CMI)

The Career Maturity Inventory-Revised (Crites & Savickas, 1995) is a revised 50-item, two response option (Agree-Disagree) scale which assesses students' career readiness and measures the attitudes and competencies necessary for students to make appropriate career decisions. Since its first administration in 1961-1962, the CMI has developed into a reliable and valid measure of career maturity. It was revised in 1995 to expand its applicability to school and non-school populations, change the response format to Agree and Disagree, and to decrease administration time by eliminating subscales (Crites & Savickas, 1996). The CMIR includes the Attitude scale which examines the attitudes and feelings toward making a career choice and entering the world of work, and the Competence test which measures one's knowledge of occupations and the decisions involved in choosing a career. For the purposes of this study, on the Attitude scale was used. The total scale internal consistency estimate is .61. The Attitude scale has an internal consistency rating of .54 while the Competence test has a rating of .52. Over the years, it has been used with students in grades five through twelve as well as college students throughout the country and is considered equally applicable to both males and females.

#### Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) is a 15-item instrument that assesses ethnic identity across diverse samples. The MEIM, when originally developed in 1992, was not only a measure of ethnic self-identification but also contained

three subscales: (a) Affirmation and Belonging; (b) Ethnic Identity Achievement; and (c) Ethnic Behaviors. A 4-point Likert-type response scale was originally used and ranged from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. Phinney (1992) sought to examine the structure and construct validity of the measure. The sample included middle school students in grades six through eight from diverse ethnic groups. The results of the study led to a revision of the 1992 version of the MEIM. The measure currently consists of two factors, ethnic identity search (a developmental and cognitive component) and affirmation, belonging, and commitment (an affective component). The response scale changed from a 4-point scale to a 5-point scale as it now includes a “Neutral” response. Although there are 15 items, only 12 are used to calculate an ethnic identity total scale score and/or scores for the two factors. The remaining three items are used for identification and categorization by ethnicity. A high score on the MEIM indicates strong ethnic identity, while a low score indicates low ethnic identity.

The MEIM appears to be both a reliable and valid measure of ethnic identity for young adolescents as defined by its author. The internal consistency of the total scale and each of the two factors ranges from an alpha of .81 to .89. Reliability of the total scale and the two factors are .85, .70, and .84 respectively. Reliability of the total scale for African Americans, European Americans, and Mexican Americans are .82, .85, and .81 respectively.

#### Background Questionnaire

The Background Questionnaire is a brief researcher-developed demographic questionnaire. The questionnaire seeks gather information on students’ age, date of birth, ethnic self-identity label, gender, and overall grade average.

#### Content Questionnaire

The Content Questionnaire is a brief researcher-developed 12-item matching questionnaire designed to assess the degree to which intervention group participants

retained the information presented during the course of the intensive three-week career development intervention.

#### Satisfaction Questionnaire

The Satisfaction Questionnaire is a brief researcher developed five response option (Very True to Definitely Not True) 10-item questionnaire that measures level of satisfaction with the intervention, how one feels about self, and how one feels about his or her abilities. It also includes a section for participants to include their comments about the intervention.

#### Data Collection

All 264 sixth grade students were invited to participate in the study. There were two large sixth grade teams of students (A = 107, B = 105) and one smaller team (C = 54). Teams A and B were randomly drawn and assigned to either the intervention or control condition. Students on team C were assigned to either the intervention or control condition through the random distribution of equal numbers of intervention or control consent packets. The researcher discussed with students the purpose of the study, and procedures for involvement in the study and distributed packets containing a parent letter describing the study and consent forms (Appendices D-F). At this time and throughout the study, students were allowed the opportunity to ask questions. Students were asked to take home the informational parent letter and consent forms, discuss the study with their parents, and return the signed parental consent and student assent forms to their homeroom teacher in one week. Forty-nine students in the intervention condition and 64 students in the control condition returned signed consent forms. Students who returned consent forms were provided an incentive (candy). A coding system was established to track students for the purpose of documenting changes and making comparisons, thus eliminating the need for students to be identified by name.

Four pretest instruments, the MSCS, CMI-R, MEIM, and the Background Questionnaire were completed during mid-October 2002. All intervention participants

were pretested the same week of the start of the intervention. All control participants were pretested the same week on the following day. Administration lasted approximately 50 minutes and occurred during one class period. These four instruments were also administered as the posttest measures after the intensive three-week intervention was completed during early November 2002. In addition to these four instruments, participants in the intervention condition were also given a content questionnaire and a satisfaction questionnaire. While students in the control condition received pre- and posttest instruments, they participated only in their regular curriculum during the three-week period. The instruments were presented both orally and in written form to those students for whom consent was received.

#### Intervention

The aim of utilizing the Nguzo Saba within a career development curriculum intervention is to share this belief system with non-African American students as a way to introduce positive attributes of African American culture within a heterogeneous classroom population. It is hoped that the acceptance of positive attributes of their culture will provide African American students with the opportunity to experience a sense of validation and pride as positive aspects of their culture are being shared with and accepted by members of the dominant culture. As Cooley (1902) states, "...The one thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind" (p. 152). The idea expressed by Cooley suggests that our identity or self-concept is shaped largely by the way in which we feel others perceive us, our worth, and utility.

The intervention began in mid-October with 49 sixth grade students and was conducted by this researcher utilizing a structured teacher and student researcher-developed manual. To decrease class size, half of the 49 students met on Monday and Wednesday, while the other half met on Tuesday and Thursday for three weeks in a regular classroom as assigned by the sixth grade teacher. Each of the six lessons lasted

approximately 30 minutes. Each lesson contained the following: (a) identified objectives, (b) handouts, (c) materials, (d) procedures, (e) activity, and (f) closing. Students were given a folder in which to keep all handouts and notes. After a period of rapport building and getting to know one another, lessons began by allowing students an opportunity to share any important or eventful news with their classmates. During the course of the three weeks, each of the principles of the Nguzo Saba were presented followed by either an individual or small group activity to reinforce the meaning and application of the principle.

#### Pilot Study

In 1996, a pilot study of the current intervention was conducted with two classes (approximately 35 students) of sixth grade students who attended an integrated middle school in a southeastern county. Students in two Language Arts classes were invited to participate and assumed to be representative of the entire sixth grade population. The average age range of participants was 10-12 and included both males and females. One class was identified as the intervention group, while the other class was designated as the control condition. All participants completed pre- and posttest measures to assess their level of self-esteem and attitudes regarding careers. A history-based career development curriculum was presented twice a week for six weeks during two afternoon class periods lasting approximately 50 minutes. One finding of particular interest was the significant difference in self-identification by African American students from pre- to posttest from “Black” to “African American”. This suggested a heightened sense of ethnic identity awareness after their participation in the intervention. Based on the participants’ interaction with the curriculum and their receptivity to lesson presentations as well as further investigation by this researcher, the intervention was modified as described in the following paragraph.

The content of the pilot intervention focused heavily on African and African American history and concepts, and contained a weaker connection between the history

and concepts with career development principles. The current study utilized African and African American history and concepts to illustrate career development principles. In addition, the pilot study examined the self-esteem of sixth grade students; however, the current study focused on the construct of self-concept. This researcher believes that influencing the way in which students view themselves and their abilities is a stronger predictor of how they feel about themselves and in modifying behavior. Furthermore, unlike the current study, the pilot study assumed that African American participants would experience an increased positive awareness of ethnic identity, but no formal measure of this construct was employed. Lastly, in the current study, the amount of direct instruction was decreased while the number of hands-on activities was increased.

#### Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 10.0 (SPSS) was used to analyze the data for this study. Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations) were utilized to evaluate demographic information of the participants. Specific demographic variables that were examined include the following: (a) ethnic identity identification, (b) age, (c) gender, and (d) self-reported grade point average.

The following are the research questions that were addressed in this study:

Research Question 1. Do sixth grade middle-school students possess a more mature attitude toward career decision-making after their exposure to an intensive three week career development intervention?

#### Hypothesis:

There will be a statistically significant increase in the level of career attitude maturity of sixth grade middle-school students as measured by the Attitude scale of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised (Crites & Savickas, 1995) after exposure to an intensive three-week career development intervention.

Research Question 2. Do the academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade middle-school students improve after exposure to an intensive three week career development intervention?

Hypothesis:

There will be a statistically significant increase in the academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade middle-school students as measured by the Academic, Competence, and Social scales of the Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992) after their exposure to an intensive three-week career development intervention.

Research Question 3. Does the ethnic identity African American middle-school students increase after their exposure to an intensive three-week, history-based career development that incorporates knowledge of the contributions and principles of Africans and African Americans?

Hypothesis:

There will be a statistically significant increase in the ethnic identity of African American middle-school students as measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) after their exposure to an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention that incorporates knowledge of the contributions and principles of Africans and African Americans.

The data were analyzed for all three research questions utilizing paired samples t-tests to compare differences in the mean scores from pre- to posttest on the following variables: career attitude maturity; academic, competence, and social self-concepts; and ethnic identity. To determine the degree of difference found between the intervention and control conditions on participants' level of career attitude maturity; academic, competence, and social self concepts; and ethnic identity awareness, a mixed model analysis of within-subjects effects across time, condition, and gender was conducted.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Results of the data obtained in this study are presented in two sections: (a) descriptive statistics and (b) detailed information on the data analysis.

#### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages) were computed to evaluate demographic information of the participants. Tables 4-1 and 4-2 present the gender, ethnicity, and self-reported grade average for participants in the intervention and control groups. The average age of the participants is 11.3 years. A total of 264 sixth grade students were given the opportunity to participate in this study; however, 49 students in the intervention condition and 64 students in the control condition returned signed parental consent and student assent forms. Thirty-four African American students (30%) and 79 White students (70%) returned consent and assent forms. However, due to absenteeism, school suspension, and partial responses, not all students were able to complete pre- and/or posttest measures or participate in the intensive three-week intervention. Therefore, there were 75 female participants (70%) and there were 32 male participants (30%). Data analysis were computed on 107 participants, 46 in the intervention condition and 61 in the control condition. Of the 43 students who actually participated in the intervention, 49% attended all six lessons, 40% attended five of the six lessons, and 12% attended four of the six lessons. There were no students who attended fewer than four lessons.

The internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alphas) were computed for each subscale of the CMI-R. The internal consistency of the Attitude scale (CMI-R) at pretest

and posttest yielded similar scores (.61 and .54, respectively) as reported by Crites (.54). The 25 items in the 1995 CMI-R were drawn from the 1978 version and are thus considered to have the same reliability as the items in the earlier version.

The internal consistency of pretest and posttest scores on the Academic scale (.88 and .88, respectively) of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (MSCS) are slightly lower (.92) than reported by Bracken (1992). In addition, the internal consistency coefficients for the Competence scale of the MSCS at pretest and posttest (.82 and .85, respectively) also slightly lower (.90) than noted by Bracken (1992). For the Social scale of the MSCS, internal consistency coefficients for pretest and posttest scores (.86 and .88, respectively) are also slightly lower (.90) than observed by Bracken (1992).

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) is comprised of two factors: (a) Ethnic Identity Search (EIS) and (b) Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment (ABC). The overall internal consistency coefficient (.85) of the MEIM, as reported by Phinney (1992), is slightly higher than the pretest and posttest scores (.79 and .78, respectively) in this study. The pretest and posttest internal consistency coefficients for the two factors EIS (.61, and .67, respectively) and ABC (.78 and .78, respectively) yielded slightly lower reliability scores (.70 and .84) than reported by Phinney (1992).

### Findings Related to Research Questions

Research Question 1: Do sixth grade middle-school students possess a more mature attitude toward career decision-making after their exposure to an intensive three week career development intervention?

To investigate whether sixth grade middle-school students possess a more mature attitude toward career decision-making after their exposure to an intensive three week career development intervention, a paired samples t-test was conducted.

Hypothesis: There will be a statistically significant increase in the level of career attitude maturity of sixth grade middle-school students as measured by the Attitude scale

of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised (Crites & Savickas, 1995) after exposure to an intensive three-week career development intervention.

Results indicated a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed) on the Attitude scale of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised for participants in the intervention condition (Table 4-3). A statistically significant difference was also found between pretest and posttest scores ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed) on the Attitude scale of the CMI-R for participants in the control condition (Table 4-3). While the overall mean difference for those in the intervention condition was higher, both groups demonstrated a significant increase.

Research Question 2: Do the academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade middle-school students improve after exposure to an intensive three-week career development intervention?

To investigate whether sixth grade middle-school students improve their academic, competence, and social self concepts after their exposure to an intensive three week career development intervention, a paired samples t-test was conducted.

Hypothesis: There will be a statistically significant increase in the level of academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade middle-school students as measured by the Academic, Competence, and Social scales of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992) after their exposure to an intensive three week career development intervention.

Results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the Academic, Competence, and Social scales of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992) for participants in the intervention condition. While there was an increase in the overall mean scores from pretest to posttest for both intervention and control groups, no statistically significant differences were demonstrated (Table 4-4).

Research Question 3: Does the ethnic identity African American middle-school students increase after their exposure to an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention that incorporates knowledge of the contributions and principles of Africans and African Americans?

To investigate whether African American sixth grade middle-school students increase their ethnic identity awareness after their exposure to an intensive three-week career development intervention that incorporates knowledge of the contributions and principles of Africans and African Americans, a paired samples t-test was conducted. Although the primary focus was on the effects of the intervention on the ethnic identity of African American students, its affects on white students were also reported as they were a large proportion of the sample.

Hypothesis: There will be a statistically significant increase in ethnic identity of African American middle-school students as measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney,1992) after their exposure to an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention that incorporates knowledge of the contributions and principles of Africans and African Americans.

Results indicated that there was a negative statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed) on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure for African American middle-school students who participated in the intervention (Table 4-5). There was also a negative significant positive difference between pretest and posttest scores ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed) on the Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale of the MEIM (Table 4-5). Additionally, statistically significant differences between pretest and posttest scores ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed) were found on the Ethnic Identity Search subscale of the MEIM for White students as well as the Attitude scale of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised for White and African American students (Table 4-5) who participated in the intervention.

Statistically significant differences were noted between pretest and posttest scores ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed) for White students in the control condition on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure; the Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale of the MEIM; and the Academic scale of the Multidimensional self Concept Scale (Table 4-6). African American students in the control group also exhibited a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ( $p < .05$ , two-tailed) on the Attitude Scale of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised (Table 4-6).

When all participants in the intervention condition were considered, results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. While the overall mean score for those in the intervention condition decreased, the mean score increased for those in the control condition (Table 4-7). However, the mean posttest score for those in the intervention condition is slightly higher than for those in the control condition.

To determine the degree of difference found between the intervention and control conditions on participants' level of career attitude maturity; academic, competence, and social self concepts; and ethnic identity awareness, a mixed model analysis of within-subjects effects across time, condition, and gender was conducted. Data analyses reveal that while differences do exist, they were not statistically significant.

Participants in the intervention condition were given a Satisfaction Questionnaire and a Content Questionnaire to determine the degree to which they retained information presented during the intensive three week career development intervention. The mean score on the Satisfaction Questionnaire was 46.4 ( $SD = 2.97$ ) out of a total score of 50, while the average percent of correct responses on the Content Questionnaire was 48.2%. As part of the Satisfaction Questionnaire, students were asked to comment on their experience of the intervention. Of the 43 participants, 38 provided their comments and additional feedback. All 38 students responded positively about the program, making statements such as "I really liked to go to your class. I learned a lot about my future. I

think you should keep doing it”, “I think I really learned a lot about this program and I think more about my career and what I want to do. I think the teacher thinks about careers too”, “Thank you very much. Do you have this program for 7<sup>th</sup> grade?”, “I really understand that I needed to stay in school. I really just want to”, “I liked this program”, and “This was a lot of fun. I hope you get my stepbrother next year”. In general, comments centered around two themes: (a) how well students liked the career development intervention, and (b) what students learned from participating in the intervention.

Analyses were also conducted to determine whether or not sixth grade female and male students differed in their attitudes toward careers; on their level of academic, competence, and social self concepts; and their level of ethnic identity awareness. Results of a period samples t-test indicated that females in the intervention condition demonstrated statistically significant differences between pretest and posttest scores ( $p < .05$ ) on the Attitude scale of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised and the Ethnic Identity Search subscale of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. There were also statistically significant differences between the pretest and posttest scores ( $p < .05$ ) of female students in the control condition on the Attitude scale of the CMI-R and the Competence scale of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale. Male students in the intervention condition also revealed significant differences between pretest and posttest scores on the Ethnic Identity Search subscale of the MEIM (Table 4-8).

Table 4-1

Descriptive Statistics for Intervention Participants at Pretest and Posttest

	<u>N</u>	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Posttest</u>
Gender				
Female	35	.76	33	.72
Male	11	.24	10	.22
Ethnicity				

White	27	.59	25	.54
African American	15	.53	15	.33
Hispanic	1.0	.02	2.0	.04
Native American	1.0	.02	1.0	.02
Mixed Race	2.0	.04	1.0	.02
Self-Reported Grade Average				
A	21	.46	22	.48
B	17	.37	13	.28
C	7.0	.15	7.0	.15
D	0	00.0	1.0	.02

Table 4-2

Descriptive Statistics for Control Participants at Pretest and Posttest

	<u>N</u>	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Posttest</u>
Gender				
Female	40	.66	37	.61
Male	21	.34	20	.33
Ethnicity				
White	43	.70	39	.64
African American	17	.28	17	.28
Native American	1.0	.02	1.0	.02
Self-Reported Grade Average				
A	39	.64	33	.54
B	20	.23	19	.31
C	2.0	.03	4.0	.06

Table 4-3

Paired Pretest and Posttest Differences for Intervention and Control Participants on the Attitude Scale (ATT) of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised

	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	Degree of Significance
Intervention	2.02	3.22	4.11	.000*
Control	1.12	2.46	3.44	.001*

P < .05.

Table 4-4

Pretest and Posttest Means for Intervention and Control Participants on the Academic (ACA), Competence (COM), and Social (SOC) scales of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale

	<u>N</u>	Intervention		Control		
		Pretest	Posttest	<u>N</u>	Pretest	Posttest
ACA						
<u>M</u>	43	76.8	11.4	57	80.5	8.95
<u>SD</u>	43	77.6	10.5	57	81.8	10.3
COM						
<u>M</u>	43	76.7	7.76	57	79.5	10.2
<u>SD</u>	43	77.3	10.2	57	80.5	10.2
SOC						
<u>M</u>	43	74.1	11.3	57	78.6	10.1
<u>SD</u>	43	76.3	11.7	57	78.9	11.1

Table 4-5

Paired Pretest and Posttest Differences for Intervention Participants on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), the Ethnic Identity Search (EIS) and the Affirmation, Belonging, Commitment (ABC) Subscales of the MEIM, and the Attitude Scale (ATT) of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised by Ethnicity

		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	Degree of Significance
MEIM					
	White	.64	4.88	.65	.518
	African American	-4.80	6.08	-3.05	.009*
EIS					
	White	1.41	3.18	2.17	.040*
	African American	-.78	3.09	.95	.359
ABC					
	White	-.91	3.57	-1.25	.222
	African American	-2.92	3.45	-3.17	.007*
ATT					
	White	1.56	3.08	2.53	.018*
	African American	3.20	3.40	3.63	.003*

\*  $p \leq .05$

Table 4-6

Paired Pretest and Posttest Differences for Control Participants on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), the Affirmation, Belonging, Commitment (ABC) Subscale of the MEIM, and the Academic scale of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (ACA), and the Attitude Scale (ATT) of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised by Ethnicity

		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	Degree of Significance
MEIM					
	White	1.64	5.61	1.82	.076*
	African American	-.47	6.49	-.29	.769
EIS					
	White	1.20	3.62	2.07	.044*
	African American	-1.50	4.45	-.98	.341
ABC					
	White	2.20	6.20	2.21	.033*
	African American	-1.12	-9.88	-.466	.647
ATT					
	White	1.17	2.62	2.80	.008*
	African American	1.05	2.19	1.99	.064*

\* $p < .05$ .

Table 4-7

Pretest and Posttest Means for Intervention and Control Participants on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), and the Ethnic Identity Search (EIS) and Affirmation, Belonging, Commitment (ABC) Subscales of the MEIM

		Intervention			Control		
		<u>N</u>	Pretest	Posttest	<u>N</u>	Pretest	Posttest
MEIM							
	<u>M</u>	43	46.4	6.00	57	43.9	6.96
	<u>SD</u>	43	45.6	5.70	57	44.6	6.79
EIS							
	<u>M</u>	41	17.6	3.60	57	16.2	3.28
	<u>SD</u>	41	18.2	2.95	57	16.6	3.31
ABC							
	<u>M</u>	41	28.7	3.82	57	27.7	4.58
	<u>SD</u>	41	27.6	3.70	57	28.0	4.60

Table 4-8

Paired Pretest and Posttest Differences for Intervention and Control Participants on the Attitude Scale (ATT) of the Career Maturity Inventory-Revised, the Ethnic Identity Search Subscale (EIS) of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, and the Competence (COM) Scale of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale by Gender

		<u>Intervention</u>		<u>Control</u>		
		ATT	EIS	ATT	COM	EIS
Female						
	N	33	33	37	37	37
	M	2.54	1.03	1.51	1.67	-2.7
	SD	3.14	2.70	2.62	5.75	3.02

t	4.65	2.12	3.51	1.77	-.054
Sig.	.000*	.042*	.001*	.085*	.957
Male					
N	10	10	20	20	20.0
M	.33	-.60	.40	-.50	1.15
SD	3.02	4.27	2.0	16.1	2.81
t	.314	-4.44	.89	-.138	1.82
Sig.	.761	.668	.385	.891	.083*

\* $p < .05$ .

### Summary

The focus of this study was to determine whether an intensive three-week history-based career development intervention would increase the level of career attitude maturity and academic, competence, and social self concepts of sixth grade middle-school students. In addition, this study sought to examine whether or not the level of ethnic identity awareness would increase for African American sixth grade students who participated in an intensive three-week, history-based intervention that incorporates the knowledge of African and African American ancestors and their contributions and the Nquzo Saba principles.

Data analyses consisted of examining pretest and posttest differences of intervention and control participants. Additionally, data for African American and White students were separated and compared across the dependent variables of career attitude maturity, self concept, and ethnic identity. Lastly, data analyses of gender across the three dependent variables were conducted.

For Research Questions 1 through 3, paired samples t-tests were utilized. Statistically significant differences between intervention and control groups were found to exist between the pretest and posttest scores on the Attitude scale of the Career

Maturity Inventory-Revised (Crites & Savickas, 1995) for participants in the intervention condition. However, a statistically significant difference was also found between pretest and posttest scores on the Attitude scale for participants in the control condition; yet, the overall mean difference for those in the intervention condition was higher.

No statistically significant difference was found between pretest and posttest scores on the Academic, Competence, and Social scales of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992) for participants in the intervention condition. While there was an increase in the overall mean scores from pretest to posttest for both intervention and control groups, no statistically significant differences were demonstrated.

There was a negative statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) for African American middle-school students who participated in the intervention. A negative significant difference was noted between their pretest and posttest scores on the Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale of the MEIM. However, statistically significant differences between pretest and posttest scores for White students were found on the Ethnic Identity Search subscale of the MEIM. Lastly, both White and African American students who participated in the intervention demonstrated significant pretest and posttest differences on the Attitude scale of the CMI-R.

When all participants, in the intervention condition were considered regardless of ethnicity or gender, results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. However, the mean posttest score for those in the intervention condition was slightly higher than for those in the control condition.

Statistically significant differences were noted between pretest and posttest scores for White students in the control condition on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure; the Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale of the MEIM; and the Academic scale of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale. African American students in the

control group also exhibited a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the Attitude scale of the CMI-R.

In conclusion, while there were statistically significant differences found over a short period of time between pretest and posttest scores for those participating in the intervention across career attitude maturity, self concept, and ethnic identity, the differences are likely preexisting differences among participants and the interaction between participants and the instruments. However, it is important to consider the comments made by those participating in the intervention about their experience and its impact on their thoughts and beliefs about careers, their goals, and their future.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The demands of a changing economy and demography as well as increasing technological advances coupled with the increasing diversity of K-12 students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, call for the creation of career guidance programs that adequately prepare students from a broad range of socioeconomic, cultural, and racial backgrounds. These students must be prepared for employment options that meet not only their individual needs and abilities, but also the needs of the job market and the national economy (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). Additionally, as the diversity of elementary and middle school students increases, so does the need for a greater understanding of the impact of cultural and racial factors on one's view of self and career development. Therefore, understanding the impact of one's self concept and ethnic identity on career decision-making becomes important.

This study examined the impact of an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention on the career attitude maturity, self concepts, and ethnic identity awareness of sixth grade middle-school students. The sixth grade students attended a public middle school situated in a small central Georgia county of approximately 15, 540 inhabitants. The school contains 750 students consisting of sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Two hundred and sixty-four students were sixth graders. The purpose of this study was three-fold: (a) to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention designed to increase the overall level of career attitude maturity of sixth grade middle-school students by increasing their awareness of career options and assisting them in developing realistic career choices and aspirations, (b) to attempt to improve the

academic, competence, and social self concepts of sixth grade middle school students by exposing them to an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention, and (c) to increase the ethnic identity awareness of African American sixth grade middle-school students by sharing knowledge about and contributions of Africans and African Americans and the Nguzo Saba principles. In an attempt to examine these hypotheses, the study was conducted in the following manner:

1. Differences between pretest and posttest scores were compared for sixth grade middle-school students on measures of career attitude maturity, and academic, competence, and social self concepts.
2. Differences between pretest and posttest scores were compared for African American sixth grade middle school-students on their level of ethnic identity awareness.
3. Additionally, data analyses were conducted on gender across the three dependent variables of career attitude maturity, self concept, and ethnic identity awareness.
4. To determine the degree to which pretest and posttest differences were significant and due to the intervention, data analyses were conducted.
5. Participants in the intervention condition completed a Content Questionnaire and a Satisfaction Questionnaire to determine the degree to which they retained information presented during the intensive three week intervention as well as their affective and cognitive responses to the intervention.

#### The Importance of Career Development in Middle School

The concept of career development has been present throughout the past half century, particularly within the field of vocational psychology (Crites, 1969, p. 13). Early beliefs centered on the belief that career development was an event that occurred generally at the end of high school, or as a result of a major life occurrence. However, there is now more agreement that career development is a process that can begin early in one's life and can continue over the course of one's development (Hossler & Maple,

1993). Therefore deciding the type of career one wants to pursue is a developmental process that involves obtaining adequate knowledge about the world of work, developing realistic attitudes towards careers, and making an accurate assessment of one's interests and abilities. This study hypothesized that the career attitude maturity of sixth grade middle-school students would increase after their involvement in an intensive three-week career development intervention. Particularly, sixth grade students would be assessed based on the degree to which their attitudes changed regarding careers. The Attitude scale of the CMI-R incorporates the following attitudes and behaviors: (a) Orientation to Career Decision Making, (b) Involvement in Career Decision Making, (c) Independence in Career Decision Making, (d) Compromise in Career Decision Making, and (e) Decisiveness in Career Decision Making. The results of this study revealed a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores for sixth grade students on the Attitude scale of the CMI-R. This is similar to longitudinal studies conducted in the early years of the construction of the CMI and slightly different than research findings utilizing the CMI-R.

#### Differences by Condition, Gender, and Ethnicity on the CMI-R

Students in both the intervention and control conditions of this study demonstrated statistically significant differences between pretest and posttest scores on the Attitude scale of the CMI-R; however, the overall mean difference for those in the intervention condition was higher than those in the control condition. With regard to ethnicity, both African American and White students who participated in the intervention and African American students in the control condition demonstrated significant differences between pretest and posttest scores. In addition, females in the intervention and control conditions displayed significant differences between the pretest and posttest scores. These findings might suggest that the differences found between conditions are more likely due to preexisting differences among participants across the conditions as the mean score for students in the control condition at pretest was higher than for those in the

intervention condition. Although all 264 sixth grade students were provided the opportunity to participate, only 43% consented to participate overall. Fifty-seven percent of students consented to participate in the control condition, while 43% consented to participate in the intervention condition. It is probable that those who provided parental consent and student assent may have differed with regard to their level of career attitude maturity, self-concept, and ethnic identity awareness. Students who participated in this study may live in environments where these constructs are reinforced. These factors may serve to contribute to a difference among students from the outset.

Secondly, the less than robust psychometric properties of the CMI-R may have contributed to the mean differences. The CMI-R contained items that consistently were not clearly understood by sixth grade students. While the reading level for the CMI-R is approximately fifth to sixth grade, utilizing a different career maturity instrument whose readability appears more comparable to a sixth grade level may have been more beneficial. Currently, there has been limited analysis on pretest and posttest differences of sixth grade students using the CMI-R. Busacca & Taber (2002) conducted a preliminary psychometric investigation of the CMI-R. Their study included 157 ninth through twelfth grade students who completed the CMI-R. The internal consistency on the Attitude scale in this sample was .54. As in previous studies using the CMI, females scored higher than males on the total CMI-R and on the Competence Scale; however, no significant differences were found between females and males on the Attitude scale. Lastly, there is a paucity of research that examines the differences between various ethnic groups not only on the Attitude scale, but also on the Total scale of the CMI-R. While the present study found differences between groups based on ethnicity, comparable data are lacking.

In addition, after students were exposed to the career maturity instrument, the exposure may have served to stimulate their thinking about this topic, which served to increase scores for students from pretest to posttest in both conditions. Therefore,

reactivity to the instruments, the interaction between subject selection and instrumentation, and limited psychometric properties are possible factors that affected the results.

Lastly, students in the intervention condition remained actively engaged over the course of the six lessons and provided positive comments and feedback regarding their experience of the career development intervention. They discussed sharing what they learned from the lessons with their parents and decorated their folders, containing all lesson handouts, with drawings and sayings that illustrated their understanding and the purpose of the intervention. During and after the intervention, students commented on how much they learned about careers and the importance of setting goals and staying in school. These results would suggest a possible interaction between their degree of career attitude maturity and their level of satisfaction; thus, explaining the higher mean scores for students in the intervention condition. These results also speak to the possibility that utilizing a different career maturity instrument may have more accurately captured the experience of students in the intervention condition as well as their change in career attitude maturity from pretest to posttest.

#### Self Concept and Career Development

In general, the literature supports self-concept as a significant variable in human behavior and also seems to suggest that emphasis be placed on the inclusion of career development activities that explore and enhance the self-concept when working with middle-school students (Canfield & Siccone, 1993; Osborne, 1996).

This study hypothesized that sixth grade middle-school students would increase their level of academic, competence, and social self concepts after their exposure to an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention. The results of this study revealed there was no significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the Academic, Competence, and Social scales of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992) for participants in the intervention nor control conditions. While

there was an increase in the overall mean scores from pretest to posttest for both intervention and control groups, no significant differences were demonstrated. However when data analyses were conducted to determine whether or not there was a significant difference across ethnicity, White participants in the control condition revealed a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the Academic scale. These findings are consistent with the general findings of research using this instrument.

Self concept is viewed as a developmental, stable construct wherein change is gradual and dependent upon one's interpersonal experiences and/or changes in the environment and becomes distinct with age. Therefore, consistent with the literature, this study found results that in general seem to indicate that the academic, competence, and social self-concepts are stable constructs that are not sensitive to change over a shortened period of time.

#### Ethnic Identity Development

Ethnic identity has become viewed increasingly as an integral element of self concept that becomes particularly important during adolescence. Similar to self concept, there is much agreement on the importance of healthy ethnic identity development; however, there has been debate over how it is defined and measured (Phinney, 1990). Phinney (1990) conducted a review of the literature over the past 20 years and identified several underlying constructs that appear to be salient to ethnic identity and have been used in a number of studies with a variety of ethnically diverse participants. Phinney, (1992) used these constructs to develop the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) as a way to assess ethnic identity across a variety of ethnic groups. In the latest revision of the MEIM in 1995, Phinney identifies two factors that comprise the scale, (a) Ethnic Identity Search, and (b) Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment. The Ethnic Identity Search factor is considered to be the developmental and cognitive component that describes activities in which one can engage to acquire a clearer understanding of one's group and personal ethnicity. The Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment factor is

considered an affective component that assesses pride, attachment, and the good feeling one has about his or her ethnic group.

Although the MEIM is designed for use with a variety of ethnic groups, this researcher was primarily interested in the effects of a history-based career development intervention on African American middle-school students. While a number of studies have been conducted with African American children regarding ethnic identity development, little has been done in this area with African American adolescents (Clark, K., & Clark, M., 1939, 1947). Furthermore, few studies have integrated and examined ethnic identity development and the career development issues of racial and minority youth despite research that suggests significant barriers in their personal, educational, and career development (D'Andrea, 1995). The results of this study revealed significant pretest and posttest difference across ethnicity. These findings are consistent with those described in the literature.

In general, African American middle-school students exhibited mean scores higher than White students at both pretest and posttest. This is similar to Phinney's findings in 1994 wherein she found that White students had the lowest scores on ethnic identity. With regard to condition, there was a significant negative difference between pretest and posttest scores on the total MEIM (Phinney, 1992) for African American middle-school students who participated in the intervention. A negative significant difference was noted also between their pretest and posttest scores on the Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale. Additionally, significant positive differences between pretest and posttest scores for White students in the intervention condition were found on the Ethnic Identity Search subscale. Within the control condition, significant positive differences were noted between pretest and posttest scores for White students on the total MEIM as well as on the Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale.

When all participants, regardless of ethnicity or gender, in the intervention condition were considered, results indicated that there was no statistically significant

difference between pretest and posttest scores on the total MEIM. However, the mean posttest score for those in the intervention condition is slightly higher than for those in the control condition.

Overall, the most interesting finding related to ethnic identity is the impact of the intervention on African American students. Several factors may have contributed to the differences in pretest-posttest scores for African American students in the intervention condition. These students may have overestimated or inflated what they believed to be true about their ethnic identity at pretest and became more realistic about what they believed and felt after their participation in the intervention. Secondly, African American students seemed to exhibit a less pronounced connection between the Nguzo Saba principles and their cultural heritage. Third, the environment in which the intervention was conducted may have impacted the process that occurred during the intervention. African American students may have held the belief that they ‘should’ have known the information presented and felt somewhat discouraged when new and unfamiliar information was shared; thus, negatively affecting their ethnic identity awareness.

#### Implications

Teachers, counselors and other school staff are some of the most influential adults in the lives of youth who can establish a relationship and an environment that foster appropriate academic support, cultural awareness, respect, and career guidance. They can become important agents in promoting the formation of a mature attitude toward careers, positive self concepts, and a positive ethnic identity.

Contrary to previous research in the area of career development, middle-school students have a clear idea of which career fields interest them and enjoy discussing their future career-related goals. This study revealed that when guided, they are able to think about their interests and abilities in relation to their goals and make realistic career decisions. Therefore, middle-school students should be provided, through the use of career development interventions, the opportunity to engage in discussions and activities

that allow them to explore who they are, their strengths and weaknesses, and their likes and dislikes. Furthermore, providing them with essential information related to careers can assist them in developing mature career attitudes, thus allowing them to make more mature career decision.

This study also highlighted the potential merits of delivering a culturally sensitive, history-based intervention within a heterogeneous environment. The majority of the middle school population and surrounding community were White as well as the sample in this study. This ethnic composition may have contributed to the degree to which students encounter diverse experiences. Although this composition may have confounded the results, the White students not only commented favorably upon their experiences, they also expressed enjoyment over learning about a different culture. The results of their ethnic identity scores seem to indicate that they, too, can benefit from career development interventions that incorporate concepts and principles derived from groups ethnically different from their own. The receptivity by non-minority students can also prove to be a source of validation for African American students as positive aspects of their culture are shared and well received by members of the majority culture. Delivering such an intervention within a heterogeneous environment can aid in facilitating the development of a stronger sense of pride in their history and who they are.

African American students in environments wherein exposure to African Americans engaged in a variety of career endeavors is scarce, educational attainment for African Americans is low, and economic advantages appear limited can benefit from career development interventions that highlight the connection between what they are learning now and what they hope to achieve in the future. Additionally, African American students might experience added gains by incorporating within the career development intervention information and activities that serve to enhance their self-concept and ethnic identity.

### Recommendations for Future Research and Implementation

Additional research examining the factors that impact the career development of middle-school students is needed. Adolescence is a time when youth are creating identities separate and apart from their parents. They are exploring who they are in the context of the many environments in which they operate. Adolescents become conscious of how others perceive them and everything that represents who they are. Therefore, creating career development interventions that incorporate self-exploration that leads to the identification of strengths, an accurate appraisal of abilities, and affirms self can assist middle-school students in making more mature career-related decisions.

Secondly, in addition to creating career development interventions that speak to the needs of middle-school students in general, there is a paucity of research with African American middle-school students particularly with regard to the integration of career maturity, self-concept, and ethnic identity. One hindrance to the progression of this work is the lack of adequate instruments that measure each of these constructs independently. However, further exploration of the definition of these constructs that take into account the various experiences of different ethnic groups would aid in the construction of appropriate instruments. In addition, implementing interventions with youth from a variety of environments (rural versus urban) and a number of settings (same-race versus mixed-race classrooms) can yield rich information about these constructs.

Third, due to the demands placed on schools for increased academic instruction, time within the school day for additional instruction is often limited. Therefore, career development interventions should contain information and activities that integrate multiple curriculum requirements. Ultimately, school administrators must not only be willing to consider the incorporation of such interventions, but seek to increase the likelihood that students would be able to fully participate without interruption (e.g., being called to the office or to other classes) which could strengthen continuity and engagement in the intervention.

Fourth, creating career development interventions that contain an adequate number of lessons that occur over a nine-week period would allow students greater opportunity for interaction and reflection which can facilitate understanding and internalization of key concepts. Additionally, increasing the duration of the intervention promotes the likelihood that potential affects might be found as the time between pretest and posttest is also increased.

Finally, research that examines the multiple systems (e.g., home, school, community) that impact career maturity, self concept, and ethnic identity could shed light on the development of these variables within adolescents. Parental, peer, and neighborhood influences can contribute differentially to the existence or lack thereof of these variables.

### Conclusion

This study attempted to: (a.) to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention designed to increase the level of career attitude maturity of sixth grade middle-school students by increasing their awareness of career options and assisting them in developing realistic career choices and aspirations, (b.) to attempt to improve the academic, competence, and social self-concepts of sixth grade middle school students by exposing them to an intensive three-week, history-based career development intervention, and ( c.) to increase the ethnic identity awareness of African American sixth grade middle-school students by sharing knowledge about and contributions of African and African Americans and the Nguzo Saba principles.

The study's results indicated pretest-posttest differences on the measure of career attitude maturity for all sixth grade students, despite the condition. Findings also demonstrated pretest-posttest differences for White students in the intervention and control conditions on: ( a.) the developmental and cognitive component of ethnic identity that seeks to describe activities in which one can engage to acquire a clearer understanding of one's group and personal ethnicity and, ( b. ) the affective component

that assesses pride, attachment, and the good feeling one has about his or her ethnic group.

Although pretest-posttest scores of ethnic identity awareness for African American students in the intervention decreased, their overall mean scores were higher than their White peers. There were no significant differences found across conditions on the level of academic, competence, or social self-concepts. Lastly, with regard to gender on pretest and posttest scores, females in the intervention and control conditions exhibited significant differences on career attitude maturity, whereas females and males in the intervention condition showed such results on the developmental and cognitive component of ethnic identity. Differences between pretest and posttest scores were also indicated for females in the control condition for feelings of competence.

In conclusion, sixth grade middle-school students can benefit from history-based career development interventions. These students can also experience a qualitative difference in attitudes about careers, their goals, and their future. It is still uncertain as to whether or not such an intervention has a significant impact on the self-concepts of students; however, their self-reports seem to indicate such a change. Ethnic identity is a salient variable for African American students and should be considered when creating any type of career development intervention. In general, more concrete, descriptive definitions of career maturity, self-concept, and ethnic identity that incorporate the experiences of various ethnic groups would facilitate the development of interventions that would prove beneficial for a greater number of youth.

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APPENDIX A  
INFORMATION LETTER FOR INTERVENTION CONDITION

### Take Part in Helping Your Child Succeed!

Dear Parent(s) and Guardian(s):

My name is Lori Durham, and I am a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology at The University of Georgia. I have also taught middle school students and worked for the past two years with various middle schools across Northeast Georgia. I am interested in finding ways to help youth understand the importance of school to their future goals, do the best they can in school, and feel good about themselves. More specifically, I would like to introduce a career development curriculum aimed at helping students understand the importance of setting career goals while at the same time feeling good about themselves and their abilities.

Dr. Bennett and the Morgan County Middle School staff are also interested in helping students make the connection between their success in school and their future career goals as well as feeling good about themselves. To help us find ways in which we can best help students, I would like for your child to complete a set of questionnaires at the beginning and end of a three-week period. The information provided by your child will be kept confidential through the use of an identification number.

We would appreciate your child's participation. Please review the attached parent consent and student assent forms, sign in the appropriate space, and return to your child's homeroom teacher by [date]. The first 70 students who return signed consent forms will be eligible to participate. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 706.542.1812 or by email at [ldurham@coe.uga.edu](mailto:ldurham@coe.uga.edu).

Sincerely,

Lori Durham, M.S.

APPENDIX B  
INFORMATION LETTER FOR CONTROL CONDITION

### Take Part in Helping Your Child Succeed!

Dear Parent(s) and Guardian(s):

My name is Lori Durham, and I am a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology at The University of Georgia. I have also taught middle school students and worked for the past two years with various middle schools across Northeast Georgia. I am interested in finding ways to help youth understand the importance of school to their future goals, do the best they can in school, and feel good about themselves. More specifically, I would like to introduce a career development curriculum aimed at helping students understand the importance of setting career goals while at the same time feeling good about themselves and their abilities.

Dr. Bennett and the Morgan County Middle school staff are also interested in helping students make the connection between their success in school and their future career goals as well as feeling good about themselves. To help us find ways in which we can best help students, I would like for your child to complete questionnaires at the beginning and end of a three-week period and participate in a six-lesson career development curriculum taught during extended learning twice a week for three weeks. No instructional time will be missed. Some of the topics to be covered include recognizing one's responsibility to school, family, and the community, understanding one's goals as related to school and career interests, and having confidence that one can accomplish his/her goals. The information provided by your child will be kept confidential through the use of an identification number.

We would appreciate your child's participation. Please review the attached parental consent and student assent forms, sign in the appropriate space, and return to your child's homeroom teacher by [date]. The first 70 students who return signed consent

forms will be eligible to participate. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 706.542.1812 or by email at [ldurham@coe.uga.edu](mailto:ldurham@coe.uga.edu).

Sincerely,

Lori Durham, M.S.

APPENDIX C  
PARENTAL CONSENT AND STUDENT ASSENT  
TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH



STUDENT ASSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH<sup>1</sup>

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am being invited to participate in the study titled, “The Effects of a History-Based Intervention on the Career Development and Self Concept of Middle School Students”, which is being conducted by Lori Durham, M.S. (under the direction and supervision of Rosemary Phelps, Ph.D.) in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at The University of Georgia, Athens, GA (706.542.1812). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I understand that if I choose not to participate, it will not negatively affect my status at school.

The following points have been outlined for me and my parent/guardian:

- a) The reasons for this study are to find out if a career development curriculum will help me make better career decisions and feel better about myself and my abilities.
- b) The procedures are as follows: I will complete questionnaires at school on [dates of collection]. It will take approximately 45 minutes to complete the questionnaires in my classroom. I will also participate in a six lesson career development curriculum that will occur twice a week for three weeks during one class period.
- c) No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.
- d) No risks are foreseen.
- e) The results of my participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law.
- f) The researcher will answer any further questions about the study now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at 706.542-1812.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered, and I agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<sup>1</sup> For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, The University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address: IRB@uga.edu

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH<sup>1</sup>

My child, \_\_\_\_\_, is being invited to participate in the study titled, “The Effects of a History-Based Intervention on the Career Development and Self Concept of Middle School Students”, which is being conducted by Lori Durham, M.S. (under the direction and supervision of Rosemary Phelps, Ph.D.) in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at The University of Georgia, Athens, GA (706.542.1812). I understand that this participation is voluntary. I understand that if I choose not to participate, my child’s status at school will not be negatively affected.

The following points have been outlined for me and my child:

- a) The reasons for this study are to find out if a career development curriculum helps students make better decisions about careers and feel better about themselves and their abilities.
- b) The procedures are as follows: My child will complete questionnaires at school on [dates of collection]. It will take approximately 45 minutes to complete the questionnaires in my child’s classroom.
- c) No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.
- d) No risks are foreseen.
- e) The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law.
- f) The researcher will answer any further questions about the study now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at 706.542-1812.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian              Date

<sup>1</sup> Questions or problems regarding your child’s rights as a participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, The University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address: IRB@uga.edu

STUDENT ASSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH<sup>1</sup>

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am being invited to participate in the study titled, “The Effects of a History-Based Intervention on the Career Development and Self Concept of Middle School Students”, which is being conducted by Lori Durham, M.S. (under the direction and supervision of Rosemary Phelps, Ph.D.) in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at The University of Georgia, Athens, GA (706.542.1812). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I understand that if I choose not to participate, it will not negatively affect my status at school.

The following points have been outlined for me and my parent/guardian:

- a) The reasons for this study are to find out if a career development curriculum will help me make better career decisions and feel better about myself and my abilities.
- b) The procedures are as follows: I will complete questionnaires at school on [dates of collection]. It will take approximately 45 minutes to complete the questionnaires in my classroom.
- c) No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.
- d) No risks are foreseen.
- e) The results of my participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law.
- f) The researcher will answer any further questions about the study now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at 706.542-1812.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered, and I agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

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Signature of Participant

Date

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<sup>1</sup> For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, The University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address: IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX D

ADMINISTRATION DIRECTIONS TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS

TO BE READ ALOUD TO PARTICIPANTS BEFORE COMPLETING MATERIALS.

Hi! I am from The University of Georgia and would like to thank each of you for participating in this project. This project is to help us gather information about middle school students. I am especially interested in how you, as a middle school student, think and feel about school, your future career goals, how you think about yourself and yourself in relation to others who are both like you and different from you. There are four short questionnaires that I would like for you to fill out. It should take the remainder of this class period.

There are no right or wrong answers and your answers on the questionnaires are confidential, meaning only I will see your completed questionnaires. Your friends, classmates, teachers, parents, or school administrators will not be able to see your responses or identify you through your responses. To help us make sure your responses are kept private, a secret code has been created for each of you.

I am going to pass out the packets. Please wait until all packets have been passed out before beginning. I will read each of the questions aloud, so please follow along and answer as honestly as possible.

I am here to answer any questions you may have when filling out the questionnaires. As you are working, if you have questions please raise your hand.

Thanks for your cooperation!