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Occupational aspirations and expectations of Australian adolescents

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Abstract

Adolescents across the five years of high school (169 females and 164 males) completed a survey which identified occupational status aspirations and expectations and RIASEC coded aspirations and expectations. As the focus of the study was to explore relationships between these traditional constructs and key career development constructs. Measures of career maturity, career indecision, self-esteem, career goals and school achievement were also completed. Discrepancies between occupational aspirations and expectations were reported and the relevance of including career development constructs into these investigations was validated. Occupational status aspirations were associated with school achievement, self-esteem, and career maturity. Students who reported achieving well at school, were more career mature and had higher self-esteem were more likely to aspire to professional status occupations than students who held skilled status aspirations, and students who held semi-professional aspirations having more career knowledge than students who held skilled aspirations.

Keywords: Occupational aspirations, occupational expectations, career constructs, adolescents

The critical role of occupational aspirations and expectations in the career development of adolescents is reflected in their integral position in most career theories and in the volume of research conducted for half a century. An extended discussion of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper, however a comprehensive review can be found in Rojewski (2005). The important role of occupational aspirations and expectations in identifying future educational and career options remains an important area of study (Rojewski, 2005). Despite extensive theoretical and empirical work conducted, a clear definition remains elusive. Rojewski (2005) defined occupational aspirations as “an individual’s expressed career related goals or choices” (p. 132). Johnson (1995) referred to them as point in time expressions of occupational goals, leading several authors to regard them as important career motivational variables, proving to be predictive of later career attainment levels (Chung, Loeb, & Gonzo, 1996). Interests are sometimes used interchangeably with aspirations, however Rojewski (2005) emphasised that “Aspirations represent individual goals given ideal conditions, while interests reflect an individual’s emotional disposition toward particular career options” (p. 132). Occupational expectations represent occupations that the individual assumes might be realistic (Armstrong & Crombie, 2000; Davey & Stoppard, 1993).

Adolescents’ occupational aspirations and expectations have been viewed as significant determinants of both short-term educational and long-term career choices (Holland, Gottfredson, & Baker, 1990; Schoon & Parsons, 2002), and as a reflection of adolescents’ future social mobility and career self-concept (Rojewski, 1995). Indeed, Looker and McNutt (1989) argued that adolescents’ occupational aspirations are a cause rather than an effect of educational and career attainment, with the expression of lower occupational aspirations reflecting self or systemic limitations that constrain future opportunities (Rojewski & Hill, 1998). Rojewski and Yang (1997) and Rojewski and Kim (2003) have reported the early formation of occupational aspirations and their stability through adolescence.

While research has explored the relationship between occupational aspirations and expectations and a number of related constructs such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and school attainment, in addition to self-esteem and self-efficacy, very little work has focused on their relationship with career development constructs, for example career maturity and career decision status, despite the continuing relevance of these constructs in understanding career behaviour (Patton &

Lokan, 2001). The review by Rojewski (2005) emphasised the complexity of the processes which influence the role of aspirations in career development. The present paper reviews the empirical literature on traditional investigations into occupational aspirations and expectations, advocates for an expansion of constructs to be explored and for a higher complexity in analyses which focus on the relationships between these traditional constructs and key career development constructs, and presents some Australian cross-sectional data exploring these relationships.

Occupational aspiration-expectation discrepancy

A major research focus in this field has been on the discrepancies between adolescents' occupational aspirations and expectations. Knowledge of these discrepancies can assist in understanding the processes of circumscription and compromise, which may be part of adolescent decision-making (Gottfredson, 2002). For example, compromise can restrict an adolescent's educational choice, which necessarily would then impact career opportunities. Research has tended to focus on factors which might be related to the existence of discrepancies between aspirations and expectancies, including perceptions of abilities, educational requirements, influence of family and friends, and perceived community or societal barriers (Armstrong & Crombie, 2000; Davey & Stoppard, 1993). Again, very little research has focused on the relationship between career variables and occupational aspiration-expectation discrepancy.

Influences on occupational aspirations

Gender is considered one of the most powerful and persistent influences in the career development of adolescents (Rojewski & Hill, 1998) and a large body of research has consistently reported gender differences with female adolescents aspiring to either high or low-prestige occupations and males to moderate-prestige occupations (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Davey & Stoppard, 1993; Gottfredson & Holland, 1975; Haller & Virkler, 1993; Rojewski, 1996; Rojewski & Yang, 1997). Despite these higher aspirations, research has reported that females restrict their range of occupational aspirations at an early age and reduce their occupational expectations as they grow older (Hanson, 1994; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000), a position theoretically argued by Gottfredson (2002). In addition, a major factor in the circumscription of

occupational aspirations is adolescents' perceptions of the gender traditionality of occupations. There is considerable evidence that female adolescents aspire within a limited range of occupational choices, that this range represents less rewarding occupations that predominantly fall within Holland's (1997) Social type occupations (Meinster & Rose, 2001; Watson, Foxcroft, Horn & Stead, 1997), with a greater endorsement of occupations such as teaching and service (Meinster & Rose, 2001). Research has suggested that both male and female adolescents aspire towards gender traditional occupations or are restricted in their occupational aspirations by gender stereotyping (Lupaschuk & Yewchuk, 1998), although some research has also indicated that female adolescents do aspire to non-traditional, male dominant occupations (Reyes, Kobus, & Gillock, 1999).

Gender also has been identified as a key factor in occupational aspiration-expectation discrepancy. Davey and Stoppard (1993) found that female adolescents evidence less gender traditional occupations in their aspirations than in their expectations. The discrepancy between occupational aspirations and expectations is also evident in the status level of the occupations aspired to (Day, 1990; Wall, Covell, & MacIntyre, 1999). Differences between occupational aspirations and expectations have not been limited to females, with both male and female Scottish adolescents expecting lower status occupations than the managerial and professional occupations to which they aspired (Furlong & Cartmel, 1995). However, some research indicates a lack of gender differences, with male and female Canadian (Armstrong & Crombie, 2000) and American (Rojewski & Hill, 1998) adolescents equally likely to have discrepant aspirations and expectations.

Other variables of influence

Other cognitive-personal and contextual variables that may impact on adolescents' occupational aspirations and expectations have been less well researched. In relation to development of occupational aspirations, research has generally found them to be formed during early childhood and to maintain stability over time (Armstrong & Crombie, 2000), particularly from early to late adolescence (Rojewski, 1997; Rojewski & Yang, 1997). Rojewski and Yang (1997) found that general self-esteem had a minimal and diminishing effect on American adolescents' occupational aspirations. Occupational aspirations and expectations have been regarded as proxies

for career self-efficacy (Rojewski & Hill, 1998), but how they relate to other career variables has yet to be tested. Post, Williams, and Brubaker (1996), for instance, hypothesised that higher levels of self-efficacy would relate to less gender traditional occupational aspirations, but Lapan, Adams, Turner and Hinkelman (2000) established that both male and female seventh graders expressed higher self-efficacy when they believed that their aspirations matched their gender. Socioeconomic status, while long identified as an influential variable (Thomas, 1976), has been infrequently researched. Work that has been conducted indicates that higher socioeconomic status levels have a positive effect on adolescent aspirations (Lee, 1984), while lower socioeconomic status levels reflect a perceived lack of parental support for adolescent occupational aspirations (McWhirter, Hackett, & Bandalos, 1998) or a circumscription of future occupational aspirations in order to accommodate perceived limited local work opportunities (Furlong & Cartmel, 1995).

Adolescents' academic performance has also been researched in relation to occupational aspirations and expectations. Adolescents who experienced minimal academic risk expected occupations of greater prestige (Rojewski, 1995), while adolescents who experienced substantial risk of academic failure were more likely to report lower occupational aspirations and higher aspiration-expectation discrepancies (Rojewski & Hill, 1998). Similarly, adolescents who were confident of their academic ability evidenced a higher correlation between their occupational aspirations and expectations (Furlong & Biggart, 1999).

The present study

An area that has received little attention in adolescent occupational research is the relationships between occupational aspirations and expectations and career development constructs. This argument has been forcefully presented by Rojewski (2005) who emphasised the need for research to focus more on these complex relationships. Given the key place of occupational aspirations and expectations within the career theory literature it is important that these variables be examined in addition to the demographic, and cognitive-personal and contextual variables that have received so much attention. Further, given the early establishment of occupational aspirations, and the empirical support for the notion that occupational aspirations in

adolescents are useful predictors of later educational and occupational choices (Mau & Bikos, 2000), we need to understand more about occupational aspirations and expectations at various ages for the appropriate timing of career interventions for adolescents. The present research attempts to address some of these identified gaps by exploring the occupational aspirations and expectations of a group of Australian adolescents, both in terms of more traditionally researched variables such as gender, and in relation to key career behavioural constructs, namely career maturity, career goals and career indecision.

Method

Participants

Participants were 333 high school students enrolled in Grades 8-12 in one suburban school situated in a middle level socioeconomic part of Brisbane, Australia. There were 169 (49.20%) females and 164 (50.80%) males, with a mean age of 15.01 years ($SD = 1.55$), with 120 (36.04%) in Grade 8, 39 (11.71%) in Grade 9, 71 (21.32%) in Grade 10, 55 (16.52%) in Grade 11, and 48 (14.41%) in Grade 12.

Instruments

Status Aspirations and RIASEC Aspirations were assessed using two questions that tapped (a) the occupational status aspired to, and (b) the actual occupation aspired to. The status aspiration question asked, "What kind of job would you like to have when you finish your education: an unskilled/ semi-skilled/ skilled/ semi-professional/ professional job". Sample occupations were provided for each status level (e.g., jobs of clerical worker, firefighter, police officer, hairdresser and electrician were indicated as typical for the Skilled category). Status aspirations were coded 1-5, with higher scores indicating higher status aspirations. The RIASEC aspiration question used an open-ended response format and asked, "If you were completely free to choose any job, what would you desire most as a lifetime job?". This lifetime aspiration was coded for Holland's (1997) RIASEC categories, with, for example, electrician, truck driver and caterer coded as realistic.

Status Expectations and RIASEC Expectations were assessed using two similar questions: The Status Expectations question asked, "What kind of job do you really expect to have when you finish your education: an unskilled/ semi-skilled/ skilled/

semi-professional/ professional job”, and the RIASEC expectations question asked, “Sometimes we are not able to do what we want most. What job do you really expect to have most of your life?”. Responses to these two questions were coded in the same way as responses for the status aspirations and RIASEC aspirations questions, for status and Holland coding.

Status Discrepancies and RIASEC Discrepancies. Students were classified as discrepant/non-discrepant based on the following criteria: (a) occupational status (based on whether or not they reported the same status aspirations and expectations), and (b) RIASEC coding (based on whether or not they reported the same RIASEC aspirations and expectations). These criteria are similar to those reported by Armstrong and Crombie (2000). For RIASEC discrepancy/non-discrepancy, a student was categorised as non-discrepant if he/she reported the same aspired and expected RIASEC coding, and categorised as discrepant if he/she reported different aspired and expected RIASEC coding. For status discrepancy/non-discrepancy, a student was categorised as status non-discrepant if he/she reported the same status aspiration and expectation levels. If the student reported lower status expectations relative to status aspirations then he/she was categorised as “higher status”; if the student reported lower status expectations relative to status aspirations then he/she was categorised as “lower status”. Thus, three categories of non-discrepant, high status discrepant and low status discrepant were created for status discrepancy.

Career Maturity. The Australian version of the *Career Development Inventory* (CDI-A; Lokan, 1984) was used to measure this construct. The CDI-A has 72 items and is designed for students in Years 8-12. It measures several aspects of career development, including career planning orientation, awareness and use of resources, knowledge of the career development process, knowledge of the world of work, and knowledge and use of decision making principles. Four subscales, two composite scales and a total score can be calculated for the CDI-A. The two composite scales are reported in this study. These are the 36-item Career Development Attitude scale (a composite of the 20-item Career Planning and 16-item Career Exploration subscales) and the 36-item Career Development Knowledge scale (a composite of the 24-item World of Work Information and 12-item Decision-Making subscales). An example item from the Career Development Attitude subscale is: “How much time and thought have you given choosing a regular adult occupation?”, with response format endpoints of (1) *I give less time and thought to this than most of my classmates* and (2) *I give*

more time and thought to this than most of my classmates. A sample item from the Career Development Knowledge scale is: “The best way to find out about yourself and the world around you is to:”, with response options of (1) *Take some aptitude test*, (2) *Ask other people what they think*, (3) *Read newspapers and magazines*, (4) *Try yourself out in many different situations and activities*. Individual item scores are tallied to obtain a total score. Higher scores indicated more career maturity and knowledge, respectively. Satisfactory psychometric properties have been reported (Creed & Patton, 2003; Lokan, 1984; Patton & Creed, 2001) and represent similar properties to those reported for the American inventory (Pinkney & Bozik, 1994). Internal reliability coefficients calculated in the present study were .91 and .83.

Career Indecision. The *Career Decision Scale* (Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, & Koschier, 1976) was used to measure decision-making readiness. The 19-item inventory consists of two subscales, the 16-item Indecision subscale, which provides a measure of career indecision, and the 2-item Certainty subscale, which indicates the degree of certainty felt in having made a career decision. There is also an open-ended question that allows respondents to put their concerns in their own words. Only the Indecision subscale is reported in this study. Students responded to items by indicating on a four-point response format whether the item was *not at all like me* through to *exactly like me*. A sample item was “Several careers have equal appeal to me. I’m having a difficult time deciding among them”. Higher scores indicate less indecision. Internal consistency coefficients have been consistently reported in the .80 range (Hartman, Fuqua & Hartman, 1983). For the present study this was .89.

Self-esteem. The *Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale* (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965) was used to provide a measure of global self worth. The RSE contains 10 items (e.g., “I feel that I have a number of good qualities”), and participants were asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each. Answers were scored on four-point response format using descriptors of *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. It is the most widely used instrument for the measure of this construct (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Higher scores indicate more self-esteem. The internal reliability coefficient for the present study was .86.

Career Goals. A 6-item scale, originally devised by Mu (1999) was used to measure the level of career related goal setting. Students were asked to indicate their agreement with each item (e.g., “I have a clear set of goals for my future”) on a 5-point scale with end points of *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. This gave a

possible range of 6-30, with higher scores representing more career related goal setting. Sound psychometric properties have been reported for the scale when used with Australian high school students. For example, Patton, Bartrum and Creed (2002) reported an internal reliability coefficient of .90, and, in support of the scale's validity, found that the scale was associated with other career-related scales in the expected direction. In the present study, the internal reliability coefficient was .91.

School achievement. Students were asked to indicate their "most common level of achievement across all subjects", using nine response options ranging from *Very low achievement* to *Very high achievement*.

Procedure

Questionnaires containing the survey scales and asking demographic questions (e.g., age and gender) were administered to students in Grades 8-12 in the one secondary school that participated in the study. Classroom teachers, who had been provided with instructions regarding the administration protocol, administered the survey forms.

Results

RIASEC Aspirations, Expectations and Discrepancies

RIASEC Aspirations and Expectations. Investigative (29%), social (21%), artistic (21%) and realistic (21%) were the job categories most frequently aspired to, while conventional (4%) and enterprising were aspired to least. The job categories of investigative (25%), realistic (23%), social (23%) and artistic (16%) were most frequently expected, with enterprising (6%) and conventional (8%) least expected. There were no significant differences across grades for frequency for RIASEC aspirations, $\chi^2(20) = 20.95, p = .40$, or for expectations, $\chi^2(20) = 12.22, p = .91$. Overall, females differed from males on job categories aspired to, $\chi^2(5) = 37.81, p < .001$, and job categories expected, $\chi^2(5) = 49.98, p < .001$. Females were less likely to aspire to realistic occupations, and more likely to aspire to investigative, artistic and social occupations. They were also less likely to expect a realistic occupation, and more likely to expect social, conventional and investigative occupations. See Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 about here](#)

RIASEC Discrepancies. One hundred students (30% of total), being 54 females (32%) and 46 males (28%), reported a job expectation different from their aspiration.

These students were labelled RIASEC discrepant. A standard discriminant function analysis was used to identify which predictor variables were associated with being RIASEC discrepant versus being RIASEC non-discrepant. A discriminant function analysis will identify which predictors will cluster together to separate individuals into the different groupings. For this first analysis, we were interested in which of the study's predictor variables (career indecision, self-esteem, school achievement, etc) could be used to separate the students into the two groups of RIASEC discrepant and RIASEC non-discrepant. For a variable to be able to contribute to discriminating between the two groups it should be correlated with the outcome variable, so we only included a variable in the analysis as a predictor if this was the case (see Table 2 for summary data and Table 3 for correlations). Career decision attitude, career indecision, career goals, self-esteem and status expectations were significantly associated with the RIASEC grouping, and were thus included as predictor variables. One cluster of predictor variables (known as a discriminant function) was able to discriminate between the discrepant and non-discrepant groups. The cluster contained, in order of importance, career indecision, status expectations, self-esteem, career goals and career development attitude, with students in the non-discrepant group reporting less career indecision, higher job expectations, self-esteem, career goals, and more career planning and exploration. Thus, it was possible to discriminate between these two groups based on these predictor variables. Sixty-two percent of students were able to be classified successfully (61% of the non-discrepant group and 65% of the discrepant group), which was a meaningful improvement on chance allocation (which would have been 50%/50%).

Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here

Status Aspirations, Expectations and Discrepancies

Overall, students held high status job aspirations and high status job expectations (see Table 4), and held significantly higher aspirations than expectations, $\chi^2(16) = 420.09, p < .001$. There were no significant differences across grades for status aspirations, $\chi^2(16) = 18.09, p = .32$, or status expectations, $\chi^2(16) = 15.05, p = .52$, and males did not differ from females on status of aspired job, $t(331) = .73, p = .47$, or status of expected job, $t(331) = 1.54, p = .12$. See Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

We conducted three more discriminant function analyses to test which predictor variables were associated with level of students' status aspirations, status expectations and status discrepancies. For these analyses, we were interested in which of the study's predictor variables (career indecision, self-esteem, school achievement, etc) separate the students into the various levels (groupings) of career aspirations, expectations and discrepancies. As very few students selected the Unskilled (3 chose unskilled aspirations; 5 chose unskilled expectations) and semi-skilled categories (14 and 19, respectively), we collapsed these two categories into the skilled category, and the analyses were conducted using three levels (or groups) of the outcome variable (i.e., skilled, semi-professional and professional). Again, we only included a variable as a predictor if it was significantly associated with the outcome variable.

Status aspirations. For status aspirations, career development attitude, career development knowledge, school achievement and self-esteem were significantly associated with the outcome variable of status aspirations, and were included as predictor variables. Note that status expectations was also significantly associated ($r = .61, p < .001$), but was not included as it was not independent of the status aspirations variable. Two clusters of predictor variables (discriminant functions) were required to separate the three levels of aspirations. The first cluster contained, in order of importance, school achievement, career development attitude and self-esteem. This cluster was able to discriminate between the professional group and the skilled group, with students in the professional group reporting higher school achievement, more career planning and exploration, and higher self-esteem. The second cluster contained only one variable, that of career development knowledge. This differentiated between the semi-professional group and the skilled group, with students who held semi-professional aspirations having more career knowledge than students who held skilled aspirations. Thus, it was possible to discriminate status aspiration levels based on school achievement, career development attitude, self-esteem and career development knowledge. Forty-five percent of students were able to be classified successfully (40% of the Skilled group, 52% of the Semi-professional group, and 47% of the Professional group), which was a meaningful improvement on chance (of 33%).

Status expectations. For status expectations, career development attitude, career development knowledge, career indecision, career goals, self-esteem and school achievement were significantly associated with status expectations, and were included in the analysis. Two clusters were again identified, although only the first was

significant and could be interpreted. This cluster included school achievement, career development knowledge, self-esteem and career goals, and successfully discriminated between the professional group and the skilled group, with students expecting professional jobs reporting higher school achievement, having more career knowledge, higher self-esteem, and higher career goals. Forty-nine percent of students were successfully classified (50% of the skilled group, 35% of the semi-professional group, and 56% of the professional group), again well above chance.

Status discrepancies. Finally, for status discrepancies, career indecision and self-esteem were included as predictors as they were associated with status discrepancy. One significant cluster, of self-esteem and career indecision, was identified. This cluster successfully classified 57% of students correctly (57% of the non-discrepant group and 56% of the discrepant group), with non-discrepant students reporting less indecision and higher self-esteem. We have reported summary data for all of these analyses in Tables 5 and 6, for the statistically minded.

Insert Tables 5 and 6 about here

Discussion

Data from the present study found that students generally aspired to and expected to work within four occupational categories (investigative, social, artistic and realistic), and especially rejected conventional and enterprising as aspirations and expectations. These selections for RIASEC categories for aspirations and expectations were consistent across grades 8 to 12, thereby supporting research suggesting the stability of occupational aspirations and expectations in adolescence (Rojewski, 1997; Rojewski & Kim, 2003; Rojewski & Yang, 1997). However, there were gender differences in both these areas, with females differing from males on job categories aspired to and expected, with females less likely to aspire to realistic occupations and more likely to aspire to investigative, social and artistic occupations. Females' expectations showed a similar pattern, although jobs in the conventional category were also expected. As would be expected (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Gottfredson & Holland, 1975), more than 50% of males aspired to and expected jobs in the realistic category.

Generally, students held significantly higher occupational aspirations than occupational expectations, and held higher status aspirations than status expectations,

which is consistent with previous studies in this area (e.g., Davey, 1993). Interestingly, females and males did not differ in relation to status of aspiration and expectation. Both gender groups held high status aspirations and expectations, perhaps reflecting that these data were gathered from a school in a middle class socioeconomic area (Lee, 1984). Thirty percent of students (females and males) reported a discrepancy between categories of jobs aspired to and categories expected. Analyses identified that students who held different RIASEC aspirations to expectations were more career indecisive, held expectations for lower status jobs, had lower self-esteem, lower career goals and poorer career development attitude than their non-discrepant peers. In exploring which predictor variables were associated with discrepancies between occupational status aspirations and expectations, it was found that students who held discrepant occupational status aspirations/expectations were more career indecisive and had lower self-esteem.

One of the aims of the present study was to examine the association between the career development constructs and occupational aspirations and expectations. Status aspirations were associated with school achievement, self-esteem, and career development attitude and career development knowledge, that is, career maturity. Students who reported achieving well at school, were more career mature and had higher self-esteem were more likely to aspire to professional status occupations than students who held skilled status aspirations, and students who held semi-professional aspirations having more career knowledge than students who held skilled aspirations. These findings are supportive of other work on the relationship between academic achievement and occupational aspirations (Rojewski & Kim, 2003; Rojewski & Yang, 1997).

In relation to the variables associated with occupational status expectations, the data identified one significant function which discriminated between professional and skilled jobs, indicating that students who reported achieving well at school, were better career informed (that is, career mature), had higher self-esteem and more defined goals were more likely to expect semi-professional rather than skilled occupations. These findings are in line with those on academic ability reported by Rojewski (1995) and the general theoretical literature which identifies a relationship between academic ability and interests and aspiration (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002) and the relevance of the self-efficacy construct or as Super (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996) identified, self-concept (conceptualised in the current study as self-esteem).

While these findings are consistent with the general literature in this area, the inclusion of career development constructs and the analyses which attempted to explore the complexity of the role of these constructs in the present study adds an important dimension to our understanding of adolescent career behaviour. In particular, the findings highlight the importance of career maturity as a relevant construct to be included in our explorations in this area. There is a clear relationship between career maturity (knowledge and attitude) and occupational aspirations and academic achievement. In addition, the relationship between career decision status and occupational aspiration-expectation discrepancy points to further important implications for career development practice with adolescents. Being better career informed is a consistent predictor of academic achievement, higher self-esteem and higher status occupational aspirations. Career programs need to assist young people to fully explore all aspects of educational and occupational opportunities within a developmental and sociocultural context (Super et al, 1996; Lent et al, 2002). In addition, the stability of aspirations and expectations by adolescence suggests that this work needs to commence in earlier grades and be available as a comprehensive program, not just at transition points, an emphasis also proffered by Rojewski (2005). Just as it is important to provide a balanced view in relation to location and status of jobs availability, so too should career educators be aware of positive and negative influences on children's and adolescents' occupational aspirations (Gottfredson, 2002; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000).

Rojewski (2005) called for additional work to refine existing frameworks used to understand occupational aspirations and expectations. As the present study was conducted on a small sample, further research needs to explore the relationship of these career development constructs with occupational aspirations and expectations. In addition, research which examines outcomes of career programs at different ages on occupational aspirations and expectations is needed. Given their importance in understanding career decision-making and predicting future educational and career options, further research along these lines is vital.

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Table 1

RIASEC aspirations and RIASEC expectations; N = 333

RIASIC Coding		Aspirations		Expectations	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Realistic	Male	55	33.54	61	37.20
	Female	14	8.28	14	8.28
	Total	69	20.72	75	22.52
Investigative	Male	39	23.78	33	20.12
	Female	58	34.32	49	28.99
	Total	97	29.13	82	24.62
Artistic	Male	28	17.07	25	15.24
	Female	43	25.44	27	15.98
	Total	71	21.32	52	15.62
Social	Male	30	18.29	26	15.85
	Female	41	24.26	49	28.99
	Total	71	21.32	75	22.52
Enterprising	Male	9	5.49	13	7.93
	Female	4	2.37	8	4.73
	Total	13	3.90	21	6.31
Conventional	Male	3	1.83	6	3.66
	Female	9	5.32	22	13.02
	Total	12	3.60	28	8.41

Table 2

Summary data for study variables

Variable	Career discrepant			Career non-discrepant			Total		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Career development attitude	100	97.68	17.70	233	102.50	18.98	333	101.05	18.71
Career development knowledge	100	21.10	7.61	233	21.77	7.04	333	21.57	7.21
Career indecision	100	44.41	9.48	231	48.87	10.46	331	47.53	10.37
Career goals	100	13.17	5.31	233	11.47	5.32	333	11.98	5.37
Self-esteem	97	21.00	5.65	229	18.92	6.11	326	19.54	6.04
Status aspirations	100	4.04	1.01	233	4.14	1.02	333	4.11	1.01
Status expectations	100	3.70	1.08	233	4.08	1.00	333	3.97	1.04
School achievement	94	6.57	1.59	215	6.74	1.80	309	6.69	1.74

Table 3
Bivariate correlations; $N = 333$

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Career development attitude	-	.32***	.23***	-.41***	-.18**	.12*	.18**	.21***	.18**	-.07	.22***	-.12*	-.08
2. Career development knowledge		-	.44***	-.13*	-.28***	.14*	.18**	.22***	.19**	-.33***	-.01	-.04	-.06
3. Career indecision			-	-.22***	-.35***	.08	.14*	.22***	-.04	-.23***	-.09	-.20***	-.13*
4. Career goals				-	.19**	-.10	-.13*	-.00	.02	.07	-.01	.15**	.04
5. Self-esteem					-	-.19**	-.15**	-.18**	.12*	.02	.09	.16**	.12*
6. Status aspirations						-	.61***	.17**	-.04	-.04	-.01	-.04	-.03
7. Status expectations							-	.26***	.02	-.08	-.03	-.17**	-.25***
8. School achievement								-	-.07	-.08	.05	-.05	-.07
9. Age									-	.02	.35***	.09	.07
10. Gender										-	.12*	-.04	.01
11. Work experience											-	.07	.10
12. RIASEC discrepancy												-	.53***
13. Status discrepancy													-

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

Table 4
Frequency of status aspirations and status expectations; N = 333

Status Level	Males		Females		Total	
	Aspirations	Expectations	Aspirations	Expectations	Aspirations	Expectations
Unskilled	2 (1.2)	4 (2.4)	1 (0.6)	1 (0.6)	3 (0.9)	5 (1.5)
Semi-skilled	9 (5.5)	13 (7.9)	5 (3.0)	6 (3.6)	14 (4.2)	19 (5.7)
Skilled	48 (29.3)	49 (29.9)	46 (27.2)	49 (29.0)	94 (28.2)	98 (29.4)
Semi-professional	22 (13.4)	31 (18.9)	33 (19.5)	40 (23.7)	55 (16.5)	71 (21.3)
Professional	83 (50.6)	67 (40.9)	84 (49.7)	73 (43.2)	167 (64.2)	140 (42.0)
Total	164 (100)	164 (100)	169 (100)	169 (100)	333 (100)	333 (100)

Table 5
Structure matrix for analyses predicting RIASEC discrepancy, status aspirations, status expectations, status discrepancy containing pooled within-groups correlations between discriminating variables and standardized canonical discriminant functions

Variable	Function 1 ^a	Function 2
<i>RIASEC discrepancy</i>		
Career indecision	.70	-
Status expectations	.67	-
Self-esteem	-.56	-
Career goals	-.49	-
Career development attitude	.42	-
<i>Status aspirations</i>		
School achievement	.71*	-.20
Career development attitude	.67*	.60
Self-esteem	-.63*	.40
Career development knowledge	.40	-.43*
<i>Status expectations</i>		
School achievement	.81*	-.23
Career development knowledge	.47*	-.27
Self-esteem	-.44*	.25
Career goals	-.29*	-.07
Career development attitude	.63	.67*
Career indecision	.41	-.43
<i>Status discrepancy</i>		
Self-esteem	.83	-
Career indecision	-.81	-

Note: ^a = variables ordered by absolute size of correlation within function; * = largest absolute correlation between each variable and the discriminant function. For RIASEC discrepancy, $A = .924$, $\chi^2(5) = 25.33$, $p < .001$. For status aspirations, $A = .90$, $\chi^2(8) = 32.47$, $p < .001$, $\lambda = .96$, $\chi^2(3) = 13.84$, $p = .003$. For status expectations, $A = .88$, $\chi^2(12) = 39.29$, $p < .001$, $\lambda = .98$, $\chi^2(5) = 7.38$, $p = .19$. For status discrepancy, $A = .98$, $\chi^2(2) = 8.19$, $p = .017$.

Table 6
Functions at group centroids for canonical discriminant analyses predicting status aspirations and status expectations

Groups	Function 1	Function 2
<i>Status aspirations</i>		
Skilled	-.30	.18
Semi-professional	-.17	-.47
Professional	.24	.04
<i>Status expectations</i>		
Skilled	-.40	.10
Semi-professional	-.05	-.29
Professional	.36	.07

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Theory and Practice Q and A

1. What are the implications for career practice of the stability of OA from an early age?

It is important to begin career interventions at a young age to ensure an informed career exploration of children and adolescents.

2. What are some strategies which could be conducted in classrooms to assist adolescents to understand the relevance of the opportunity structure in occupational aspirations.

Adolescents can be encouraged to explore occupations widely, and to understand the various pathways to access educational opportunity. Use of stories of a range of individuals' career journeys can assist.